

Studies in the Gospel According to Matthew

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW BY E. SCHUYLER ENGLISH

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EDITORIAL NOTE: Schuyler was a [Plymouth Brethren](#) and his work is distinctly dispensational, so one needs to keep that in mind as you read some of his comments. While I have been accused of being "dispensational" in all honestly I am more of a "literalist" than anything else. Some of Schuyler comments regarding "dispensation" need to read with a Berean mindset (Acts 17:11+) See [Does the fact that dispensational theology is a recent development argue against its legitimacy?](#)

FOREWORD By Donald Grey Barnhouse, D.D.

The first Gospel is the doorway to the whole of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit has undoubtedly placed it where it is in the order of the books. It is safe to say that whosoever understands the Gospel according to Matthew will be a fair distance along the road to an understanding of all the New Testament. The misunderstanding of the Gospel of Matthew has been responsible for many a shipwreck. When it is the wreck of a Tolstoi who, enamoured with the great utterances of the Sermon on the Mount, devoted the remainder of his life to an impossible attempt to force this discourse onto the pattern of an unregenerate world, it is sad enough. But when theologians and ministers forsake God's plan for the present age and improvise a plan of their own devising, attempting to build a Kingdom where God is calling out a Church, the result is disastrous to the whole body of Christendom.

There have been many commentaries on the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Some of them are mere paraphrases of the recognized translation without throwing any light on the meaning of the passages. There are some which start out with false premises of misunderstanding and move forward logically to conclusions that are confusion. There are some which are satisfactory on the main points of the Gospel but which turn a neat path around many of the real difficulties. There are, of course, volumes which cover the ground in large compass and in much detail and with a great degree of satisfaction.

What we have not seen in the course of our reading is a study that makes no claim to great erudition, no pretense to a detailed analysis, but without verbosity goes to the heart of every great passage, gives a clear silhouette of all the peaks of the first Gospel, covers none of them with fog, and descends into enough of the valleys to give the casual layman, the busy Sunday School teacher, the beginner in Bible study, a competent grasp of the Gospel. We believe that in large measure this book by Mr. English fills this particular need.

D. G. B.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

PREFACE By Frank E. Gaebelein, Litt.D.

So fundamental is the Gospel of Matthew to a proper understanding of Scripture that its thorough study ought to be required in every school or class that approaches the Bible with the aim of grasping God's message to humanity. Indeed, on one's understanding of the issues presented in this Gospel depends in good measure his thinking about such great subjects as the Person and Mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, the relation of Law and Grace, and the future of God's chosen people, and the divine purpose for the age in which we live. Mr. English deals with these subjects from the dispensational point of view -- and quite rightly so. For a comprehension of the exceedingly vital distinction between the old dispensation of Mosaic legalism, the present period of Grace, and the future Kingdom Age during which Israel will be restored to her land is an essential requisite for the study of the First Gospel. But it would be superfluous to anticipate by further discussion the author's clear treatment of these matters.

There are, however, several things that ought to be said regarding this book. At a time when dispensational teaching is being attacked its appearance is timely. It is written out of a heart warm in love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently the devotional element is conspicuously present in these pages, and the searching evangelical appeal to the heart and will of the reader is frequent. Mr. English has avoided the barren hair-splitting that afflicts so many commentators, dispensational or otherwise, and has seized opportunity after opportunity to address himself directly to the consciences of his readers. It is safe to say that no one can go through this book, or even any considerable portion of it, without being directly confronted, and that more than once, with the great

question of the ages, "What think ye of Christ?"

The author's experience as Managing Editor of a great Christian periodical has taught him the value of saying a thing with simple directness. There is in this book, therefore, no attempt at that wretched thing called "fine writing," the result being that, while it deals with many of "the deep things of God," it does so with a refreshing lack of pretence. Moreover, the spirit of the studies is one of positive but not dogmatic conviction; notice is generously taken of the views of others, although these views may in some instances run counter to those of the author. As an introduction to the Gospel of Matthew this volume fills a real place in the shelves of literature helpful to that great group of Bible-believing Christians which God is today raising up throughout the various denominations. It should find also long continuing use as a textbook for Bible classes in churches, schools, and colleges.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The accompanying "Studies in the Gospel According to Matthew" are presented humbly, and in much prayer that the Lord will use them in a real way in the hearts of the readers of this book. The author makes no claim to originality. He knows far too much of his own limitations, and far too little of the Word of God to be able to write such a volume. These notes were first prepared as a series on the International Sunday School Lessons appearing in the columns of Revelation, and have since been revised and published in book form at the request of some who have found them helpful. The very nature of their original purpose demanded reference to many commentators. Eleven commentaries on Matthew's Gospel were carefully consulted, as well as a score of volumes on the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the Parables and the Miracles. Thus there is little in this volume that cannot be found somewhere, but on the other hand we know of no book that contains all that will be found herein.

Whenever the author has quoted directly from another's work, he has so indicated in the accepted manner. In addition to this just formality, he wishes to express especial acknowledgment and gratitude to his esteemed friend, Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein, for without the help of Dr. Gaebelein's masterly exposition, The Gospel of Matthew (650 pages), which so clearly and faithfully sets forth the dispensational aspect of this Gospel, the present book could never have been written.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness also to the works of J. P. Lange, G. Campbell Morgan, Donald G. Barnhouse, Henry G. Weston, and Bishop J. C. Ryle, which were so helpful in the research entered into in preparation of this volume, and from which he appropriated certain expository thoughts.

Studies in the Gospel according to Matthew should be read only as a companion to the Word of God. In this way alone can the reader benefit from this book. That a soul may be won to the Lord Jesus Christ through this book, or that a saint may be edified and strengthened in the faith -- this is our prayer. May God grant it to His glory.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:5-7).

E. S. E.

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INTRODUCTION

AN IMPORTANT BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE

The Bible contains no biography of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, there is much of His life which remains untold. The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are records of the facts which pertain to salvation, wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ in His life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. The human authors of these accounts wrote as instruments of the Holy Spirit Who guided each hand so that the combined result is a universal Gospel message.

The three great civilizations of the first century of the Christian era were the Jewish, the Roman, and the Greek. The Jew was the man of history of the past, who could hark back to Moses and the prophets, who had Abraham as his father, whose very foundation was in the Scripture where he beheld the Genesis of all things in Eden, and before Eden, in God. The Roman was the man of the

moment, of the present and the future. By his strength and prowess he had grasped victory and consequent power. The Greek was the dreamer, the man of philosophy. Though he had lost his political empire, he still reigned in the world of thought and culture. Three of the Gospels were written especially for these three race groups. For the Jew, the man of tradition, we find especially written Matthew's Gospel of fulfilment; for the Roman, the man of energy and action, Mark's Gospel, brief and direct in its account of the three years' ministry of our Lord; for the Greek, the man of thought and idealism, Luke's Gospel of our Lord's humanity in His Kingship. There is yet a fourth classification of the civilization of the first century, a class composed of Jews and Romans and Greeks, yet neither Jews nor Gentiles, but all one in Christ, the called-out-ones, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is yet a fourth Gospel, John's, the Gospel of love and of life -- God's love, and the believer's life through Jesus Christ. The Old Testament closes with Israel looking for the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning their coming Messiah; the New Testament opens: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Thus our Lord is instantly identified as the Messiah, the Anti-type of Old Testament history, the fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant of Sovereignty (2 Sam. 7:8-16), and the climax of the Abrahamic Covenant of promise (Gen. 12:3). The Gospel according to Matthew is the Genesis, not of the heavens and the earth, but of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, Who is the Crown of the Old Covenant, Whose death and resurrection instituted the new dispensation, Who is to return in glory to reign upon the earth, and Who is to make new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (Rev. 21:1, 5).

The Gospel according to Matthew is a Jewish book. Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, the promised King. In the genealogy of our Lord He is traced back to David the King; and the place of His birth is told, Bethlehem, the city of David (see Micah 5:2). In Matthew alone is recorded the visit of the wise men to worship Him "Who is born King of the Jews." The ministry of John the Baptist is reported in fulfilment of Malachi 3:1. Constantly throughout the Gospel there are to be found references to Old Testament Scriptures, with the comment, "for thus it is written by the prophet." In Matthew the King presents Himself and His Kingdom to His people, He is rejected, -- and then?

We know that Israel was God's "peculiar treasure," chosen to be "a Kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). But we know also that the recognized people of God today are the saints, the Church, who have been made "a Kingdom of priests" (Rev. 1:5, 6). How can these facts be explained? Matthew answers the question. The Jews reject their Messiah-King; He pronounces judgment against them: He turns to the Gentiles with the blood-purchased offer of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Not only does Matthew record the genealogy of Christ back to David the King, but he goes still further, to Abraham. But in point of time, it is not until after our Lord is rejected as the Son of David that He presents Himself as the Son of Abraham, obedient unto death, the Anti-type* of Isaac (Gen. 22). (See Appendix E.)

The Gospel according to Matthew is a Jewish book, but it is a book for the whole world, also, for flowing from the Cross of Calvary is the blood of the Lamb, by which all who believe on Him are washed clean from the stain of sin, and are presented "faultless before the presence of His glory."

The Gospel according to Matthew is dispensational* in its teaching. (See Appendix A.) To understand it fully, one must have a background knowledge of the place of the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church in the plan of God. The foundation of Matthew is Old Testament prophecy concerning the coming of Messiah and the promised Kingdom, but in its development it reaches forth into a new dispensation and the mysteries of the Kingdom, and points onward to the beginning of the millennial* age when Christ shall rule upon earth with His saints. (See Appendix G.) Our Lord's Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and 25) is the mold from which is taken much of the further teaching on yet unfulfilled prophecy. The course of this age, the Great Tribulation* period (See Appendix F.), the return of the King in glory* (See Appendix D.), and the Kingdom age are all outlined in detail here.

One must understand that the Kingdom of Heaven (lit., "the heavens") which John the Baptist preached and our Lord presented in His early ministry is to be distinguished from "the Kingdom of the heavens" of the thirteenth chapter; the former means that Messianic earthly rule of our Lord which was offered to the Jews but which was rejected, while the latter refers, not to the Church, but to Christendom, that is, the sphere of Christian profession, not only during the present Age of Grace (See Appendix C.), and through the Tribulation (See Appendix F.), but in the next dispensation also, the Kingdom Age, when the Lord Jesus shall return in glory as King to reign. "The Kingdom of the heavens" will one day merge into "the Kingdom of God" when Christ, having put all His enemies under His feet shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

One must recognize that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered when the Kingdom of the heavens was being announced as "at hand." The Beatitudes declare the principles of the Kingdom, the divine constitution for a government of righteousness upon the earth. If Israel had accepted the King, such a rule would have been established then and there. But Israel did not accept the King; and as a consequence there will be no reign of righteousness until He shall return in glory. To teach that all man needs to do to inherit eternal life is to live by the Sermon on the Mount is unscriptural and utter folly. This is purely ethical teaching, and denies the essential atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, one should be careful not to become so ultra-dispensational in

his study and thought as to lose the practical value of Scripture for his daily living. Such an attitude borders on Pharisaism, living in the letter of the law rather than in its spirit. We are instructed to divide the Word of Truth aright, but we are also told that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for instruction in righteousness." The Christian must be careful to meditate upon the Word of God in true humility, his heart open to the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew, the one whom the Holy Spirit has used as the author of the first Gospel, was a Jew of Capernaum, and was known also as Levi. He was one of the twelve disciples of our Lord, and it is thought by some that the name Matthew, meaning Gift of God, was a new name given him by the Lord Jesus, as He called Simon, Peter. Matthew was a publican, a tax-collector serving the Roman government, and as such was despised by his own people. It is possible that he had been a man of corrupt life, and of avarice, because of his profession, but of this there is no Biblical proof. The date of the book's authorship is believed to have been A.D. 37.

Matthew's Gospel falls into three important divisions:

I. Jesus, Son of David

- (a) Genealogy, birth and infancy of the King (Chaps. 1, 2)
- (b) King and Kingdom presented and rejected (Chaps. 3-11:27)
- (c) New Message of the King (Chaps. 11:28-12:50)
- (d) Mysteries of the Kingdom (Chap. 13)
- (e) Ministry of the rejected King (Chaps. 14-23)
- (f) King will return in power and glory (Chaps. 24, 25)

II. Jesus, Son of Abraham

- (a) Sacrifice of the Lamb (Chaps. 26, 27)

III. Jesus, Son of God

- (a) Resurrection of the Lord (Chap. 28:1-8)
- (b) "I am with you alway" (Chap. 28:9-20)

CHAPTER I

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). It is in such an attitude as this that we must contemplate the birth of the Lord Jesus. Conceived of the Holy Spirit, was this Emmanuel, God the Son, God with us; born of the virgin Mary was this Jesus, the Son of God; perfect in His Deity, perfect in His humanity. The One Who as a little babe lay on the bosom of Mary in human dependence was the same One Who was cruelly crucified, but Whom God raised up from the dead, "because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). The Lord Jesus Christ is the "Seed of the woman" Who, as God had promised, should bruise the Serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). He is the Messiah through Whom, as God decreed to Abraham, all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12:3). Furthermore, Jesus is the King Who, as God hath ordained by His oath, should sit upon the throne of His father David, which shall be established for ever (2 Sam. 7:16). It is of Him that Isaiah the prophet wrote by the Holy Spirit: "His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

It is not a matter of wonder that as Mary, after the power of the Highest had overshadowed her, greeted her cousin Elisabeth, Elisabeth's child leaped for joy, recognizing the presence of the Saviour. Nor do we marvel that on the night the Child Jesus was born in Bethlehem there appeared to the shepherds an angel of the Lord, and a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. Neither is it strange that the Magi came from the East to Jerusalem and, guided by the star, to Bethlehem, to worship Him Who had been born king of the Jews, to present to Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. That which is to be wondered at, that which is really wonderful, is that the Messiah, the Christ of God Who had been promised centuries before and for Whom Israel had been watching and hoping, should come to earth as the Saviour of His people, to present Himself as their King, to offer them the Kingdom, and that these Gentiles, the Magi, should have to inquire as to His whereabouts, some considerable time after His birth; that they alone should have gone to Jerusalem to pay rightful honour to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

As we study the genealogy, the birth, and the infancy of the Lord Jesus let us remember that if we fail to recognize in Him the Saviour Who died for us, and if we neglect the true worship of the Lord of all, we reject God's gift of eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). With hearts full of gratitude and joy to God the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ we should approach these studies of the

earthly ministry of our Lord and Saviour.

Matt. 1:1-17

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Since Matthew wrote especially to the Jews, it was necessary that it be proven without the shadow of a doubt that the Lord Jesus was in the kingly line, the true heir to the royal throne of David. Likewise it was essential that our Lord be shown to be descended from Abraham, the Seed through Whom the whole earth should be blessed. It is interesting to note that though Abraham lived more than one thousand years before David, the order in the verse is "Son of David, Son of Abraham." Why did the Holy Spirit so direct Matthew? Because our Lord was first to present Himself to His own people as King, then as Saviour. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:11, 12).

Very often Christians are inclined to skip over the portions of Scripture which they call "the begats." But God has given us the genealogies that His Word may be comprehended fully. It is not our purpose here to compare in detail the two genealogies of our Lord, as found in Matthew and in Luke. An important paragraph quoted from Dr. A.C. Gaebel's Gospel of Matthew will clarify most of the difficulties which may arise in connection with the two records:

"In the genealogy of Matthew Jesus Christ is shown to be the King legally; in the Gospel of Luke we have His genealogy as the Son of Man, and as such linked with the whole race. The genealogy in Matthew proves that Joseph is a descendant of David, through the house of Solomon. There is in the Gospel of Luke proof that Mary, the virgin, is likewise a descendant of David, but not through the house of Solomon. She is connected with David through the house of Nathan. The Messiah was to be born of a virgin, one who must be a descendant of David. But a woman had no right to the throne. As the son of the virgin alone He could not have had a legal right to the throne. For this reason, to make the One begotten in her of the Holy Ghost, the rightful heir to the throne of David in the eyes of the nation, the virgin had to be the wife of a man who had a perfect, unchallenged right to the throne. Now the genealogy in Matthew shows that Joseph is the son of David, and thus entitled to the throne, therefore Jesus is legally in this way heir to the throne. He is the legal descendant and heir of David through Joseph, but never Joseph's Son. He was supposed by the people to be the Son of Joseph. (See Luke 3:23, 4:22.) His claim to being truly the Son of David was therefore never disputed. Now if He had been the Son of Joseph according to the flesh, He would never be and could never be our Saviour. ... On the other hand, if He had been the Son of Mary, without her being legally the wife of a son of David, the Jews would have rejected His claim from the very outset. We see then that legally He was the Son of Joseph; in His humanity He is the Son of Mary, and then we step higher, as we read in the closing verses (of our chapter), He is the Son of God."

God always keeps His Word. He had promised David and Abraham that through their seed salvation should come to Israel, in the Messiah-King. The genealogy of Matthew's Gospel proves that Jesus Christ is "The Son of David, the son of Abraham;" God's promises were fulfilled.

Matt. 1:18-24

"Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His Name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was in this wise. ..." (Matt. 1:18). There follows the history of the conception and birth of our Lord. Had the record of Jesus Christ ended with verse seventeen, we would know of a certainty that He was born legal king of the Jews, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, but it is from the story of His birth that we know Him to be the Son of God. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph when he was about to put Mary away, 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 Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20, 21).

"Shall call His Name Emmanuel (God with us)."

"Shalt call His Name Jesus (Jehovah is the Saviour)."

What greater proof do we need that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, God with us, and that in Him is salvation for the lost? It is neither Matthew nor Isaiah who tells us this; God has spoken. "An angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph saying, thou shalt call His Name Jesus." "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, they shall call His Name Emmanuel."

The child was born, the Child Whose Names are "God with us" and "Jehovah is the Saviour." God has manifested Himself to His people, to all the world, in the form of a Man, Jesus the Christ. He is God; He is the Saviour. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Do you believe in Him? Are you standing on the Rock? May you receive Him now, if you have never before done so.

CHAPTER II

Matt. 2:1-10

"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, saying, Where is He Who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him" (Matt. 2:1, 2).

The story of the visit of the wise men to worship the Lord is told only in Matthew. It is deeply significant of the whole teaching of this book which presents the Lord Jesus as King. The record of chapter two is symbolic of the Kingdom of the heavens offered to Israel: the King is unknown in Jerusalem, His own city where His throne is; the rulers and even the ecclesiastical authorities do not recognize His presence; worship and honour are accorded Him not by His own people but by representatives from among the Gentiles; His life is sought by those who should have been looking for Him with rejoicing at His coming.

It is frequently taught that the wise men (and nowhere in the Word of God is it stated that there were three of them) came into the stable, and before the manger, worshipped and presented gifts. In view of the fact that these men came from afar at the sign in the heavens, and inasmuch as verse eleven tells us that "When they were come into the house, they saw the young Child," in all probability it was some considerable time after His birth that the Magi arrived. No doubt they entered Jerusalem believing in their hearts that this King Whose star they had seen would everywhere be known and worshipped. But in this great city, the seat of religious activity and interest, where the Messiah's coming should have been welcomed with rejoicing and praise, He was unknown. Finally Herod, hearing of these things, gathered the chief priests and scribes to make inquiry as to where the Child should have been born. When he learned that the Scriptures said that Bethlehem in the land of Juda was the chosen city, he advised the men of the East and commanded them to return unto him when they had found the Child. Then Herod waited, not that he might worship, but that he might destroy the true King.

How many people there are today who know not the King, the Lord Jesus Christ! In Christian lands and even in many of the churches which bear His Name, He is not recognized. The Jews had the Old Testament Scriptures, full of predictions concerning the coming of the Messiah; the scribes and chief priests especially should have been on the watch for His appearing. But, occupied with ceremony, with ritual, with the world, His coming was an offence to them. We are even more at fault today. God has given us His Word which tells of the Lord Jesus; but still many know Him not, and the teaching of how He may be found is often an offence to the world. Yet, praise the Lord, there are those who grasp at the light that they see, as did the Magi, to find that in Him is life and joy and peace, without end.

Matt. 2:11, 12

"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, frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. 2:11).

It is significant that the Holy Spirit wrote through Matthew, "When they saw the young Child with Mary His mother," not Mary with the young Child. He it is to Whom must go the worship and honour, not to the mother.

The Magi worshipped Him before they presented gifts. It is not by service that we are saved, nor by worship. Worship in Spirit and in Truth can only be offered after one has received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2-8 9). God wants the personal passion of a yielded heart rather than cold gifts of service. When the wise men had seen the Lord, they worshipped Him and presented gifts. When any man or woman really sees the Lord, as did Paul on the Damascus Road, he must worship Him. Then it is our "reasonable service" to present our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1).

Finally, the gifts were holy and acceptable: gold, indicative of the kingship of the Lord, and of His power and glory; frankincense, speaking of the altogether lovely One and of the fragrance of His life; myrrh, a burial spice, telling of the Saviour Who should lay down His life a ransom for many, for you and for me. When He comes again He shall again receive gifts; gold and frankincense (Isa. 60:6); gold, a symbol of His Power and Might and Glory, as the King; frankincense, because He is altogether lovely and because His very Being is fragrant with Love and Grace. There will be no need of the myrrh then, for Christ "being raised from the dead dieth no more," but He shall reign forever upon the throne of His father David.

"And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way" (Matt. 2:12).

Matt. 2:13-23

The balance of Matthew two is concerned with the flight of Joseph into Egypt with the young Child and Mary, the slaughter of the male children of Bethlehem under Herod's wrath, and the return of Joseph's family into the land of Israel and thence to Nazareth.

That which particularly draws our attention is the keeping power of God, and the repeated affirmations of the fulfillments of prophecy in the events surrounding the early years of the Lord Jesus.

Five times in the first two chapters of Matthew we find such statements: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (Matt. 1:22); "For thus it is written by the prophet" (Matt. 2:5); "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (Matt. 2:15); "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet" (Matt. 2:17); "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets" (Matt. 2:23).

The Word of God is full of the record of Satan's attempts to destroy the line leading to the birth of the Messiah. Foiled in his hopes, beginning at the infancy of the Lord Jesus, Satan continually tried to destroy Him that He might not accomplish His work on Calvary. But God has all power and is faithful, and will ever fulfil all that He has purposed and promised. God's Word is true. He has said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); but He has also declared that "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

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CHAPTER III

"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" (Mal. 3:1).

In type (See Appendix E.) and in promise the Old Testament is replete with prophecies concerning the Messiah and of those things which shall attend His coming. But the prophets saw both advents blended in one horizon and were unable to distinguish the separating interval between the first and second coming of our Lord. The Lord Jesus clearly pointed to this fact when His disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given. ... 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" (Matt. 13:11, 17). It was their failure to discern that our Lord was to come in humiliation before He should come in glory which led Israel to reject their King. In Malachi 3:1, quoted above, we have a clear illustration of the confusion in the prophets' minds of the two advents of the Lord Jesus. That the first portion of the verse, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me," refers to John the Baptist is evident, for our Lord so stated, as recorded in Matt. 11:10. The balance of the verse, however, surely speaks of Him when He shall return in glory with His saints after the Great Tribulation, and not of Him when He was rejected by His people in His humiliation.

The forerunner of Messiah, John the Baptist, he of whom Isaiah and Malachi spoke, was the last of the Old Testament prophets. His rejection and ultimate cruel death were a symbol of that which should befall the Light concerning Whom he bore witness. With the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection the New Testament was established, and henceforth those who prophesied spoke not of the first covenant which was made old by the new, but of the new covenant of grace whereby "They which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

Matt. 3:1-6

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt. 3:1, 2).

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). John the Baptist came not to the high places, but in the wilderness, outside the camp; his raiment was of camel's hair, his meat was locusts and wild honey. Yet this was the one of whom the Lord Jesus said that he was more than a prophet: "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11); of him also the angel spoke these words: "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, ... and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, ... and many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:15, 16).

John the Baptist was not afraid to speak of the sinfulness of man. "Repent ye" -- return to God, obey the law. That was the proper message, that man should forsake his evil ways and return in repentance to the Lord. Today we live in the age of grace when salvation by grace through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is freely declared. But under law then, or under grace now, man is a sinner. It is just as necessary that we preach of man's sinful condition under the new covenant, as it was under the old, for unless man is convinced of his own need of salvation, and repents in his heart, he cannot receive the Saviour.

"The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." As was pointed out in our introduction, "the kingdom of the heavens" has three aspects:

(1) That Kingdom which had been covenanted to the seed of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 13), of which Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the Son of David should be the King established for ever. The Kingdom was here offered. The King was rejected by His people Israel, and consequently, the Kingdom was postponed.

(2) That Kingdom which, after He was rejected, the Lord described in the parables recorded in Matthew thirteen. This had to do with Christendom, the sphere of professing Christianity, and will be discussed more fully in the study of the thirteenth chapter.

(3) That Kingdom as it will be set up upon the earth when the Lord Jesus returns in glory with His own, when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, when there shall be no end of the increase of the government and peace of the Prince of Peace, but His Kingdom shall be established even forever.

It was fitting that John the Baptist should have preached that the Kingdom was "at hand," for the King was upon the earth and was soon Himself to declare that the Kingdom had drawn nigh. But Israel did not repent, but turned its back upon the King and His kingdom. We shall find that Christ then turned to the Gentiles with a new message. He shall yet sit upon the throne of His Father David: "After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down: and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord, Who doeth all these things" (Acts 15:16, 17).

"Repent ye" was the message to Israel, and many went out to him "and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Vs. 6). Throughout the Word of God the Jordan is a type of death. When Israel left the wilderness and crossed the Jordan into Canaan (Joshua 3), Jordan was a symbol of death, of crucifixion with Christ and entrance thereby into the heavenlies. So John baptized, and those who confessed their sins and repented in this manner witnessed to the death which they deserved. John, of course, knew nothing of the fact that our Lord was to be rejected and crucified, nor did Israel; therefore, John's baptism was not Christian baptism, that is, into Christ's death. Nevertheless, we can see in the ceremony a foreshadowing of our Lord's death and resurrection for us.

Matt. 3:7-10

Already early in His ministry those two religious classes who later proved to be the greatest enemies of our Lord, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, made their appearance (Vs. 7). The Pharisees were a sect who were the most moral and religious men of their day. They were ritualists, and concerned themselves with abiding within the letter of the law, and even with creating new laws; but their godliness was in form only, and not in spiritual power. The Sadducees were the rationalists, who denied things supernatural. Angels, spirits, the resurrection, the ascension of our Lord -- in these they did not believe. John, by the Holy Spirit, was immediately aware of their insincerity, and denounced them with biting words: "Generation of vipers!" These men did not believe that they needed to repent. They thought that the wrath to come, the judgment of wickedness which should accompany any rule of righteousness, would be unleashed upon the Gentiles, not upon Israel. "But," said John, "do not think because you are Jews you do not need to repent. God is able to raise up children of Abraham from stones, if He wills. Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Right now the axe is to be laid to the root of the tree. The Kingdom is at hand, the King is here. There will be judgment, and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire."

Matt. 3:11-12

"I indeed baptize with water unto repentance, but He Who cometh after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, 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" (Matt. 3:11, 12). We learned above that very often the Old Testament prophets, though they wrote of the Spirit, were themselves unable to distinguish between the first and the second coming of the Lord Jesus. John the Baptist was of that school, and consequently we find in verses eleven and twelve, references, literally in the same breath, to Christ's first and second advents. First, in true humility and in full realization of Who the Lord Jesus is, John exalted Him. Then he said: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Now we know that the Lord Jesus Christ has baptized the called-out-ones, the Church, with the Holy Spirit, Who came at Pentecost. In 1 Cor. 12:13 we read: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." And we know also that we have not been baptized with fire. The baptism with the Holy Spirit refers to His first coming: the balance of the prophecy has to do with our Lord's second coming, when He returns in glory. Then He shall baptize with fire; that is a baptism which the believer, who already has been baptized with the Spirit, does not desire and will not receive; for coming in judgment as well as in glory, with His fan in His hand He will purge the threshing floor, and when the wheat has been gathered and put into the garner, the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire. We talk so much of the love and mercy of God, and it is right that we should, since the believer's destiny for eternity has been determined by that love and mercy; but God is also just and holy. Let us not forget that. There is a hell as well as a Heaven. When He shall come again, those who are out of Christ, who have never appropriated that which He has accomplished for them, will be eternally damned. Too many Christians emphasize the grace of God alone; God grant that there may be others like John the Baptist who will rise up and speak of

the wrath to come. And may God bless such teaching to bring souls into the knowledge of the love of God Who sent His Son to die that they might be gathered into the garner of eternal life with Him.

Matt. 3:13-15

The baptism of John signified a confession of sin and repentance. No wonder John marvelled when the Lord Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized. Our Lord knew no sin; our Lord could not sin, yet He came to be baptized of John's baptism of water. He had nothing to confess, He needed not to repent, but He was baptized into death. Since He came to earth to take the sinner's place, He took it here in symbol of death, and before men signified His work upon the earth. The Lord was here, at the outset of His public ministry, to receive His anointing. From Exodus 29:4, 7, we learn that before the high priest was anointed, he was washed, and so our Lord was baptized for His anointing for His high-priestly office which began when He offered Himself without spot to His Father.

"And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the Same is He Who baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that He is the Son of God" (John 1:32-34). How pure and holy the countenance of our Lord must have been! John the Baptist did not know that this was the Son of God Who came to Jordan to be baptized until after the rite, when the Spirit descended, yet he knew that this Man Who approached him was a holy and righteous man, and he consequently said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

Matt. 3:16-17

When He was baptized, the Lord Jesus went up 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: And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16, 17).

The Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was manifested at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. These are they Who before the foundation of the world planned your salvation and mine; these are they Who in Eden said, "Let Us make man in Our Image." The heavens were opened unto Him, unto Him Who came from Heaven, and in Him they are opened unto every child of God. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." The Father delights in the Son; let us also find our delight in Him, which is well pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

As the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ was typical of His going down into death for sin, so His coming out of the Jordan was a type of His resurrection by which He was declared to be the Son of God by the Father (Rom. 1:4).

CHAPTER IV

Matt. 4:1, 2

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil" (Matt. 4:1). It is the Word of God that so speaks. There are many who say there is no personal Devil; God says there is, and that our Lord was led of the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Him. If there is no personal Devil, then the Word of God is untrue; if the Word of God is untrue, then there is no Truth; if there is no Truth, then there is no God, and so it goes. But we know that the Word of God is true, and that the Lord Jesus was led of the Holy Spirit, immediately after His anointing and immediately preceding the beginning of His ministry, into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan.

First, we must look at the word "tempt." It has the meaning, to entice or to allure, especially toward wrongdoing, with the thought that there is response in the object. It also means, to try or to test. Our Lord is and was absolutely holy, there was in Him no sin; He was perfect in His Manhood and in His Godhood. There was no "old nature" in Him, no iniquity; consequently He could not sin. The word tempt here can only mean test.

Suppose one had a lump of pure gold. Gold is tested by being dipped in acid; if it is entirely pure, the acid does not affect it. Such was the testing of our Lord by Satan. He was pure throughout, and the testing resulted in victory for Himself, and defeat for the Devil.

The Word tells us that our Lord was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). The three temptations with which Satan tried to beguile the Lord Jesus, covered the full field of possible temptations to you and to me, "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16), the temptations under which Adam and Eve fell, in Eden. Satan's whole object was that the Lord Jesus should act for Himself, independently of His Father.

Matt. 4:3, 4

"And when the Tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 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"

(Matt. 4:3, 4). The first temptation came to the Lord as Man. Satan is very subtle. He did not accost our Lord with an invitation to do some great and obvious evil, but attacked Him with a suggestion that at first glance would hardly seem contrary to God's will. The Lord had been fasting forty days. He was hungry, and Satan suggested that the Lord satisfy that hunger. "If Thou be the Son of God" -- Satan did not doubt Jesus' Deity, for he knew that He was God. That was why he tried through Herod to have Him slain when but a child. It is in the sense of "Since Thou be the Son of God" that he appealed to Him. Now what would be wrong, since the Lord Jesus was God, in His satisfying His hunger? Simply this: He had come to earth as a man, and as Man He was subject to the physical requirements of man. Had the Lord changed the stones to bread to satisfy His hunger, might He not also have refused the agony of the Cross when the time came? And further, there is no recorded miracle ever performed by the Lord Jesus which was not to the glory of God; following Satan's suggestion would have been acting under His own will, not His Father's. So He answered, "It is written," and quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3.

Matt. 4:5-7

"Then the Devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He will give His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:5-7). The second temptation came to the Lord as Messiah. Satan suggested to our Lord a way which would assuredly convince Israel of His Messiahship, for if they should see Him gliding slowly through the air and landing safely on the street, they would know that He was God manifest in the flesh. Satan had been defeated by Scripture in the first temptation, therefore he quoted Scripture in the second case. But he did as he and his agents always do; he misquoted, leaving out the important phrase "and keep Thee in all thy ways" (see Ps. 91:11, 12). It is significant that though the Lord Jesus did not descend upon Jerusalem in the way Satan suggested, when He comes again He will descend in glory upon the Holy City, and will be accepted by His own. Our Lord knew the words which Satan left out, "to keep Thee in all Thy ways," and He knew that the Father's way was the way He should come unto His own in humiliation, so again He answered, "It is written," quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16.

Matt. 4:8-10

"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; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. 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" (Matt. 4:8-10). The last temptation came to the Lord as King. Satan, the prince of this world, stood there on the mountain top and offered to our Lord the Kingdoms which are his, and which one day will be the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. "All these things," all he had he would give if Jesus would fall down and worship him. He was still the usurper. Before the creation of the world, before his fall, Satan had said, "I will ascend into Heaven. ... I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14). It was the worship due to God that he wanted ages before, and it was still his desire. But God has promised that Satan will be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, ... and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

The Lord Jesus, having been tempted in all points, apart from sin, said, "Get thee hence, Satan," and again, "It is written." "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Deut. 10:20).

"Then the Devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Every child of God has the power over Satan and his wiles that our Lord had. We have been baptized of the Holy Spirit, Who indwells us, and we have the Word of God which is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). The Lord, tested in His humanity, did not take recourse to His Deity, but fought the devil with the very weapons which we have, to defeat him. Yielded to the Holy Spirit, Christ living in us, and feeding on His Word, we may shield ourselves from every fiery dart of the enemy. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps. 119:11).

Thank God, Satan is a defeated foe, his head has been bruised at Calvary. Praise God for the Lord Jesus, "the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world."

We must always bear in mind that the Author of the Word of God is the Holy Spirit. Critics of the Bible continually call attention to the fact that the chronology of the life of the Lord Jesus is apparently inaccurate, and that the four Gospel records do not agree. Had the Holy Spirit been pleased to give us a full account of the life of our Lord, including every detail in its chronological order, He could have done so. But for His own purposes the Spirit chose to have recorded through the human authors four separate accounts covering certain events in the life of Christ, each of which should portray the Lord in a different character: as the King, as the Servant, as the Man, as God manifest in the flesh, the Only Begotten of the Father. Through Matthew the Holy Spirit has written of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews, Who presented Himself to His own who rejected Him. Consequently the Gospel according to Matthew is concerned only with those details of the life of Christ which pertain to His character as King.

Matt. 4:11-14

There was a very obvious interval of time between that which is recorded in Matthew 4:11, "Then the Devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him," and the twelfth verse, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee." The events which transpired during this period may be found in John's Gospel, beginning at the thirty-fifth verse in chapter one. It was when our Lord went into Galilee that He began to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom: "Repent: for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." Matthew began the record of the official work of the King after the herald, John, had been rejected and imprisoned. The Lord then left Judaea and went into Galilee. It is the old story over again: there was no room in the inn, and so He was born in a stable; there was no safety in Judaea, and so He had to be taken as a child into Egypt; there was no place for Him in Jerusalem, and so He departed into Galilee.

"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet" (Matt. 4:12-14).

"And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum." That is all that Matthew's Gospel records of Jesus of Nazareth leaving the place where He had lived for nearly thirty years. There is an interesting account in Luke 4:16-30 of the reason for His departure. In the synagogue on the Sabbath the Lord Jesus had been reading from the prophet Isaiah, and He had come to one of those portions in which the prophet had foretold of the coming of Messiah, but where once again the promises of His first and second comings were intermingled, Isaiah 61:1, 2, but our Lord knew the Word, divinely, and He read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor: He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And He closed the book. Why did He stop there? The verse in Isaiah goes on, "And the day of vengeance of our God." He stopped there because those things spoken of Messiah up to that last clause have to do with His first advent; the last clause is still in the future. The Lord Jesus stopped reading at that point, and said: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." In other words: "I am the Messiah; I am He of Whom the prophet wrote." But when He went on to indicate that only the Gentiles would receive Him, "all they in the synagogue ... were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill ..., that they might cast Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way, and came down to Capernaum" (Luke 4:28-31).

Matt. 4:15, 16

So God brought it about that our Lord should go into Capernaum of Galilee, the darkest and most depressed province, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet (in Isa. 9:1, 2), 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" (Matt. 4:14-16). The Jews of that day comprehended the contempt in which Galilee was held, and it was there that God chose that our Lord's ministry of the Gospel of the Kingdom should begin; not in the great temples and palaces and cities, but in Galilee of the Gentiles, "a portion of the country which had been overrun more than any other by the foreign invader, and therefore known as the region of the shadow of death." Here it was that the new Light should arise and manifest Himself, the Light that was to be salvation to all that believe on His Name.

Matt. 4:17

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Here was the King ready to establish the Kingdom. The Kingdom being "at hand" meant that all had been accomplished which was necessary before the bringing in of the Kingdom. God in His foreknowledge knew that Israel would reject their King and His Kingdom; nevertheless here the King offered Himself, and theirs was the choice, whether they would accept or reject Him. The Kingdom was "at hand;" it was set aside, but there will come another day when heralds again shall announce "The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." In that day "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

Matt. 4:18-22

In John 1:35-46, while John the Baptist was still at liberty witnessing, before the Lord Jesus had departed into Galilee, is the story telling of Andrew and Simon Peter becoming believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world. We call attention to this because often the "Follow Me" (Matt. 4:18-20) is used as the Gospel call to these two brothers. The Lord was not calling them in the record of Matthew, for this was at a later date, after John had been imprisoned. "Follow Me" is not the Gospel; "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is the Gospel. "Follow Me" is the call to the believer for service. And having been called of God, Andrew and Simon Peter immediately answered the call. These were simple fishermen, but the Lord used their vocation to a greater calling: "I will make you fishers of men." Fish were caught to die and be eaten; men were called to live and to be fed. Of all those to whom the Lord Jesus spoke, only the simple folk of Galilee responded; not the lordly Pharisees or the brilliant Sadducees, but fishermen: Andrew, Simon Peter, James and John; "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Cor. 1:26, 27). And so we who are

His elect should respond to any call to service in His Name, ready to forsake all and count all things but refuse that we may be used to the glory of His Name.

Matt. 4:23-25

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, ... preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness" (Matt. 4:23). There is much teaching today of healing by supernatural power, a sign that the Lord's return and a new dispensation draw nigh. Healing is associated with the Gospel of the Kingdom, an outward sign that the King is God. "The Gospel of Grace needs no sign outwardly by healing of disease to demonstrate that it is God-given. Nowhere in the Epistles have we the promise that Gospel preaching is to be connected with healing of every bodily weakness and disease" (A.C. Gaebelien).

The Lord Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom from this time until its final rejection by Israel, recorded in Matthew twelve. "And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Matt. 4:25). What a glorious picture? No -- what a sad picture! Our Lord was not deceived by the multitudes; He knew how shallow were their praise and conviction, He knew that within a short time they would revile Him and kill Him. Yet He loved them enough to die for them. Glorious Saviour! "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name; that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

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CHAPTER V

"The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." So had the herald, John the Baptist, proclaimed, and now the King Himself was preaching, "Repent: for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). The King was upon the earth, His Kingdom was at hand; it would naturally follow that the King should make a manifesto of the constitution of the Kingdom, and it is that which Matthew has recorded in chapters five, six, and seven. This discourse is generally called the Sermon on the Mount and is often misapplied in our churches.

Before we consider the discourse in any detail, let us look for a moment at its setting and its audience that we may have the proper background for complete understanding. As brought out in the foregoing chapters, the Holy Spirit has not given us in the four Gospels any chronological synopsis of the life of the Lord Jesus, but each Gospel presents our Lord in a particular manifestation of Himself. In Matthew He is shown as the King, in Mark as the Servant, in Luke in His Humanity, and in John as the God-Man, the Only-Begotten Son. Now concerning the manifesto of the Kingdom, no report of such a lengthy discourse will be found in Mark, Luke, or John. In fact, Luke alone mentions "The Sermon on the Mount" in Luke 6, while the so-called "Lord's Prayer" is recorded upon a different occasion, in Luke 11. In leading Matthew to present the Lord Jesus as the King of the Jews, the Holy Spirit guided his thoughts and his pen into giving us the complete constitution of the Kingdom at the beginning of the King's ministry, for our better understanding of its full meaning and application.

"The Sermon on the Mount" is not for the unsaved. It does not reveal the way of salvation, but speaks of the characteristics of those who are already saved. Redemption is through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and "The Sermon on the Mount," like the law, can only be our "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). Neither is "The Sermon on the Mount" to be considered as exclusively Christian, though the greater part of it, at least, was spoken to the disciples. Had the Holy Spirit meant the application to be for the Church, He would have brought the discourse to our attention after the Lord first mentioned the Church, in Matthew sixteen. Church doctrine is revealed in the Epistles. The Christian has a heavenly calling; "The Sermon on the Mount" is to a great extent earthly in its application. Nor is "The Sermon on the Mount" exclusively Jewish. There are some who say that it has no application whatever to Christian believers and should be ignored by the Church. This is false teaching. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

In our study of this portion of God's Word, let us remember that "The Sermon on the Mount" is the manifesto of the constitution of the Kingdom of the heavens, which is to come upon the earth in the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus, and which shall be delivered up by the Son "to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. 15:24). Yet it behooves us who are Christians, who are to reign with our Lord upon the earth, to meditate upon the picture of the character which is the perfect result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for us. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Who is in Heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Matt. 5:1-12

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are ..." We have already pointed out that the manifesto of the Kingdom was proclaimed to the disciples, believers in the Lord Jesus, and consequently heirs of the Kingdom. It is safe to say that even His disciples were

astonished at the constitution of the Kingdom which was set before them. Our thoughts of a Kingdom are somehow closely concerned with power, and might, and pomp and armaments. The Old Testament speaks of a visible and powerful Kingdom, but it also states that those who share in it shall be poor in spirit and meek (Isa. 11:4; Psa. 72). It was their failure to recognize this that caused the Jew to reject the King and His Kingdom.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of the heavens." First let us look at this from the believer's view-point. The Lord called him "blessed" who is conscious of utter spiritual poverty. Only he who is willing to take God's grace as a free gift is so blessed. But the Christian, who has admitted that there is nothing of merit in himself, who has received the Lord Jesus as his Saviour by the Holy Spirit, is already, in Christ, blessed. Secondly, the remnant of Israel, waiting through the Great Tribulation in the midst of persecution and sufferings for the Lord Jesus to establish the Kingdom, will be poor in spirit (Isa. 66:2), and they, too, will be blessed.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." From the believer's standpoint, this mourning is not over personal sin, for that has all been washed away by the blood of the Lamb. It is rather a mourning over the sin that exists in the world, and the results of it. He is blessed to whom sin is not a light matter, and who is concerned about the sins of his fellow man. He is comforted because of the finished work of the Cross. The remnant of Israel will mourn in an evil day (Micah 7:1-6), but will be comforted (Micah 7:7), for the Lord shall come and restore the Kingdom to Israel.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." We are inclined to think of meekness as timidity, but the original meaning of the word is far from that. It is pictured by a colt, powerful and energetic, which has been bridled for the first time; power and energy under control. The Christian is blessed who is so yielded to God, and he shall rule in the Kingdom on earth. It is Israel's promise that they shall inherit the earth. "For evil doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth. The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psa. 37:9, 11).

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." "This is the way of the heirs of the Kingdom, waiting for the manifestation of it" (Arno C. Gaebelein). These first four blessings show us the characteristics of the believers as heirs of the Kingdom of the heavens waiting for the Kingdom.

The next three blessings are the manifestation of the divine nature in the heirs of the Kingdom, presently in the Christian, and one day in the remnant of Israel that shall inherit the Kingdom of the heavens. "Blessed are the merciful ...; Blessed are the pure in heart ...; Blessed are the peacemakers." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3). The Lord Jesus Himself is the fullest manifestation of these seven "blesseds" of the Kingdom.

The last two blessed, as relating to the Christian and the remnant of Israel, are further set forth in 1 Peter 2 and Revelation 20, respectively. It is 1 Peter 2:21, 22 that is for the Christian: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;" Revelation 20:4, 6 for the Jewish remnant: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

Matt. 5:13-16

"Ye are the salt of the earth. ... Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13, 14). The Lord was speaking to the disciples, believers on Him. It is to the Christian that this message speaks today. We are the salt of the earth. Salt prevents decay, but if it has lost its savour, it is "good for nothing." We are the light of the world, but if our light is hid, it is of no value. "Ye are the salt ...; ye are the light;" to preserve and to shine; this should be our witness to the Lord. He is the true Light; our light is a reflection of Him. The Word does not say, "Let your good works so shine," but "Let your light (the Lord Jesus Christ) so shine." Are we a living testimony to Him in this age? May the Lord grant it by His Holy Spirit.

Matt. 5:17-42

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, but to fulfil. 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" (Matt. 5:17, 18).

No greater illustration of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfil the law in full could be found than in Matthew five; first,

because He said so; and secondly, because in His proclamation concerning the righteousness of the Kingdom age, He showed that the law of Moses shall be exceeded, that it will be a law of love.

Think not that He came to destroy the law. He was made under the law (Gal. 4:4); He lived in obedience to the law (1 Peter 2:21); He fulfilled the types of the law (Heb. 9:11-28); He bore for us the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13); and He redeemed us from the position of servants of the law to that of sons of God (Gal. 4:5). No longer is the believer under the law, for he has a new nature, the indwelling Spirit, by Whom he has the perfect law of liberty. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4).

Matt. 5:43-48

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies. ... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Who is in Heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:44, 48). The standard of the heirs of the Kingdom is the perfection of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. 5:1, 2).

"The day will come when such righteousness and love and perfection as the King here describes will dwell amidst His earthly people and will be manifested in the earth. It will be in the day when the Kingdom has come and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. But every child of God born anew has put before him the highest standard, which includes all that which the King here expounds and that is in possession of Himself, Who is the true God and the eternal Life, 'to walk even as He walked.'" (A.C. Gaebelien)

CHAPTER VI

While it is true that some of the people heard "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 7:28), we know that it was spoken directly to the disciples of our Lord (Matt. 5:1, 2). Now the disciples were believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, believers in Him as King and as the promised Messiah. But we must remember that the disciples were Jewish believers, that they were living under Law (See Appendix B.), not under Grace (See Appendix C.). The Lord Jesus had not yet died on the Cross; God was still to be approached through the high priest and through sacrifice. And we must also bear in mind that the King was still presenting the Kingdom.

The King was here before the disciples, and the Kingdom was "at hand." Therefore, the King was proclaiming the constitution of His Kingdom to the heirs of the Kingdom, to those who believed in the King. He had come to fulfil the law; indeed, under the manifesto which He was proclaiming, the law of Moses was to be exceeded in righteousness by the law of the Kingdom, which should be a law of love. The standard for the Kingdom, which was rejected but which will yet be established, is the perfection of God, the character which is the perfect result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and in us. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Who is in Heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

The key verse of Matthew six is found in the thirty-third verse: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This message which our Lord gave to the Jewish believer who was an heir to the Kingdom then being presented is the message which the Holy Spirit has given in the Epistles to the Church since then established: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3).

Because "The Sermon on the Mount" is of the old covenant, do not miss its blessing to you. It is for the heirs of the Kingdom of the heavens, and we who are born again are heirs of God, "heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (James 2:5).

Matt. 6:1-8

Our Lord had, as recorded in Matthew five, taught the disciples of the righteousness which the heirs of the Kingdom should practice. Christians possess this in Christ; but in the Epistles as heirs we are urged to practice it also. The Lord Jesus then made known the motive which should underlie the practice, the desire to be well-pleasing to God.

There are three divisions in the first eighteen verses: (1) Righteousness, or man's relationship to man; (2) prayer, or man's relationship to God; (3) fasting, or man's relationship to self.

Righteousness. The word alms in verse one is better translated righteousness. The Lord had just said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." "Take heed" -- the Lord Jesus said that if we are to be perfect, we are not to try to be men-pleasers. "God looketh on the heart." In our righteous acts, we are not to call the attention of men to our deeds. If that is what we do, we already have our reward. Men have given it to us. But we are to give alms in secret: "and thy Father Who seeth in secret

Himself shall reward you openly."

Matt. 6:9-18

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father Who art in Heaven ..." There follows, Matthew 6:9-13, that which is called "The Lord's Prayer." Volumes have been written on this subject which we must discuss in a few words. This is not the Lord's Prayer; He never offered this prayer. He could not, for He had no sins to be forgiven. The true Lord's Prayer is recorded in John seventeen. This prayer was given to the disciples as a model. Our Lord had just said, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions ... your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. After this manner pray ye" (Matt. 6:7-9). "After this manner," not "in these words." The disciples were believers, therefore they could say "Our Father." But we must remember that this was a prayer, in the Age of Law, for the disciples, at a time when the Kingdom of the heavens was at hand. It is not a prayer for this age. We may pray, "Thy Kingdom come," but rather should we pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" for we know that before the Kingdom we shall be "caught up ... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so, shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17), and "we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Christians can never pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." What, then, of grace? Our sins are forgiven because the Lord Jesus died on the Cross for us; He "washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5). Christians are not forgiven as they forgive others, but they forgive others because God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them (Eph. 4:32). However, let no Christian ask to be forgiven when he has in his own heart anything against any man. In such a way the Christian may ask forgiveness, on the ground of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ of course, as he forgives his debtors. Christians are to approach the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ; when our Lord was about to go to the Cross, the Kingdom having been rejected, He said, "Ask, in My Name" (John 14:13, 14; John 16:24). There is no thanksgiving in this prayer, Christians are told, "Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Yet we must not misunderstand; the so-called Lord's Prayer, the disciples' prayer, is a model which it is well for us to follow: "it teaches that right prayer begins with worship; puts the interest of the Kingdom before merely personal interest; accepts beforehand the Father's will, whether to grant or withhold; and petitions for present need, leaving the future to the Father's care and love" (C.I. Scofield). But let us remember to approach our heavenly Father on Church ground, through the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Name, claiming for ourselves His finished work, recognizing our standing in Him; such is prayer in the Holy Spirit. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He Who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Fasting. Here again, what is the motive? If to please men, then be of sad countenance, let men know what you are doing. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." If the motive of fasting is to please God, then "anoint thine head, and wash thy face; ... and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Matt. 6:19-34

Is the counsel of "The Sermon on the Mount" to be taken literally by the Christian in the Age of Grace? Perhaps we can best find our answer by looking at two events in the life of our Lord. In Matthew 10 is recorded the sending forth of the twelve to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, and they are told: "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" (Matt. 10:9, 10). In Luke 22 we find the record of our Lord's last instructions to His disciples before His death on the Cross: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" (Luke 22:35, 36). "The reason that the Lord Jesus gave for His reversal of orders ... was that He was about to die. It was this death which fixed the boundary between the test of law to which our Lord had put His people and the test of grace under which we are yet living" (Donald Grey Barnhouse).

Perhaps therefore we cannot apply "The Sermon on the Mount" in its entirety to the Christian, yet there are certain words of counsel which are just as applicable to the born-again believer who is a stranger in this earthly pilgrimage as to the Jewish believers who were expecting the Kingdom which was being offered. This view is confirmed by the Scripture of similar portent found in the Epistles. There is not space to make a verse by verse application of this section of Matthew 6, so let us consider the two most important statements of our Lord.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. ... But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven" (Matt. 6:19, 20). The natural man cares for and lives for the earthly things, for treasure, possession, position; the believer, the new man, belongs not to earth but to Heaven; he dwells in the heavenlies. He looks "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but those that are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). In the Epistles the believer is also told, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. ... But ... in Heaven." "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. For the love of money is the root of all evil: ... But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith,

love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:8, 10, 11).

"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Matt. 6:25). Using the marginal translation, we find the meaning "Have no anxiety," instead of "Take no thought." This message is not for the unsaved; it is for the heirs of the Kingdom. God will provide for His own in the Kingdom age as well as in this age. The Christian has such a message: "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6), and "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

We have a Father in Heaven Who careth for us. He asks us to trust in Him. How often we look in our anxiety to earthly help, not committing our way to the Lord. He knows our every need, and rejoices in accomplishing His loving purposes in our lives. Yes, these messages are for the Kingdom age, when our Lord shall establish His millennial reign on the earth, but they are messages of love and comfort for Christians also, and we should take them to our hearts. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The promise is ours today.

CHAPTER VII

In chapter five there are recorded the characteristics of the heirs of the Kingdom of the heavens, characteristics which believers in the Lord Jesus Christ already possess in Him, for He is the perfect manifestation of the law of love. In chapter six we find the proclamation of what should be the attitude of the believer toward the world, while in chapter seven we shall see what the believer's relationship with other heirs of the Kingdom should be like. Let us remember that the laws and the perfections of character set forth by our Lord in "The Sermon on the Mount" are not something by the attainment of which one may inherit eternal life; but that these are the characteristics of the heirs of the Kingdom of the heavens, and thus the present possession of every born-again believer. Eternal life is not obtained by the works of man, but is received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who died that we might have everlasting life and fellowship with Him, free from the guilt of our sins. We are possessors in Christ of a new nature, Himself, by which the attributes of the heirs of the Kingdom are already ours; it is a sad trait of human nature that we do not appropriate to the full that which we possess. Let us consider prayerfully and personally what the attitude of the Christian should be toward his brother in the Lord.

Matt. 7:1-6

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, ... rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). To divide the Word aright we must be careful not to take a passage of Scripture out of its context, and equally careful to compare Scripture with Scripture. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). Our Lord was speaking to His disciples, believers. This fact is further made clear, for we see in verse three that He asked: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye?" Now the Lord Jesus later gave the Christian the right to judge the actions of a brother, Matthew 18:15-17, and in the Epistles we have further authority for so judging: "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth" (1 Cor. 5:12, 13). Then what did our Lord mean when He said, "Judge not"? By the Scripture above, and by the words of the Lord Jesus recorded in verse 20: "By their fruits ye shall know them," we certainly have the right to judge evil and good actions. It is evident that He referred to the judgment of the motives behind the actions, and this is confirmed in the Epistles. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? ... Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:3, 4, 13).

"Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Actions are seen by men; them we may judge, for "by their fruits ye shall know them." But our judgments are to be in the fear of the Lord and with an eye single to His honour. Motives are seen only by God; them we must not judge, for in so doing we are assuming our heavenly Father's prerogative: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: ... and why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" If we busy ourselves in censorious fault-finding and criticism we are inclined to be watching a small error in our brother's life and forgetting a grave error in our own. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgest his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: ... who art thou that judgest?" (James 4:11, 12).

"First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly. ..." That is the test. What is our relationship to our Lord? We are saved, but are we surrendered? Are we so busy finding fault with other Christians that we do not notice the sins in our own lives? Let us be humble before the Lord, not judging others, but ourselves. Then shall our eyes see clearly, and be single to the glory of His Name.

"Give not that which is holy to the dogs." The Lord was speaking of our attitude to our brothers. Surely this does not mean that the Gospel should not be preached to the unsaved, as is sometimes stated. Who are the "dogs"? In Philippians 3:2, "Beware of

dogs, beware of evil workers. ..." In Isaiah 56:10, 11, we find reference to dogs, which slumber, which cannot understand, which are greedy, and look to their own gain. They are the professors, who later shall say "Lord, Lord," but who shall not enter the Kingdom. Our Lord's counsel is that when we see clearly, we will be careful not to discuss the things of the Spirit with those who cannot understand, and who profess because of gain to themselves. "They have their reward."

Matt. 7:7

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). There is little exposition needed for this passage. If the heir of the Kingdom needs counsel, he is to ask of the Counsellor, and it shall be given. If one is troubled about the proper procedure, he is to ask, to seek, to knock, and his Heavenly Father will answer with good gifts. There is a parallel passage for the Christian: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). What a wonderful blessing we have in prayer. If we, who are evil, will care for our children, how much more will our Heavenly Father meet our every need. "Ask ... seek ... knock ..." There is no condition but that we be children of God, and He has provided the Way into Sonship through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matt. 7:8-12

"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." There are thousands upon thousands who make no profession of Christianity, but who say: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. The Golden Rule; that's my religion." But they do not keep the rule, nor can they. It is a summary of Old Testament law, and no man can keep it, for man is a sinner. Our Lord has given the believer this exhortation because in Him he has love, and in love alone can the Golden Rule be kept. The law of love is further given for the Christian in 1 John 4:19-21: "We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." The result of receiving the Lord Jesus as Saviour is love, because He first loved us; the result of communion with our heavenly Father is love of our fellow men. Thus the Golden Rule cannot save, but should be the normal fruit of salvation.

Matt. 7:13-14

"Enter ye in at the strait gate. ... Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." It is the Person of the Lord Jesus Who is the Gate and the Way. "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9); "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). "And why then is the gate narrow? Not because certain conditions and hard terms are to be fulfilled, but because man does not want to give up his own righteousness, and clinging still to his miserable, filthy rags, he refuses God's Way and God's Door of salvation, which is Christ, and Christ alone" (A.C. Gaebelien). Do you know the Lord, or are you on the broad way that leads to destruction? It is not necessary that you lead a life of carnal and flagrant sin to be on the broad way, for the broad way is any way other than Christ. It may be self-righteous and moral, it may be as a follower of some religion, but if it is Christless it leads to destruction. He is the Way, He is the Door, "and few there be that find it." But you may enter in by receiving Him today as your Saviour. His blood will cleanse you from sin, His life will then dwell within.

Matt. 7:15-20

"Beware of false prophets." These are the "dogs" of Philippians three. We must be ever so careful to test the teachings of men by the Word of God. If you want pears, you do not go to an elm tree. Our Lord told the disciples, and He tells us; "ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. ..." These are solemn words. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. What of our lives? As Christians, are we bringing forth good fruit? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22, 23); does this fruit show forth in our hearts? Do those who know us see the Lord Jesus in us? That is the test.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." We know that because we have believed in the Lord Jesus we shall never be judged for our sins. Verse 19 refers to those who are false teachers, who are lost, yet it cannot but remind us of the day when rewards shall be given for our service in the Lord's Name. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

Matt. 7:21-29

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of the heavens."

When the Lord Jesus comes to reign upon the earth, there will be many who, having come to believe in Him during the Tribulation, will enter into the Kingdom of the heavens. But there will be others who will merely profess His Name, but who, because of unbelief, will not be heirs of the Kingdom, for He will say: "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." This passage does not refer to the Church; "in that day" we shall already have been caught up to meet Him in the air. Yet there is teaching here for this dispensation also, for there are many today who call upon His Name who are none of His. For their own gain, tools of Satan, in the Name of Christianity, they may profess Christ, but they do not know Him as Lord and Saviour. When "that day" comes, to them also will He say, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

Our hope is built either upon the Solid Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, or upon the sand of self-righteousness. If the latter is the case, then when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and this mortal life is gone, our hope is vain, and great will be the fall into eternal damnation. But if our hope is built upon the Lord Jesus, come what may, founded upon a sure foundation, the Rock, faith in Him will carry us into everlasting life. How wonderful a Saviour He is. In Him we are safe for eternity.

"On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

CHAPTER VIII

Matt. 8:1-4

"The Sermon on the Mount" was ended, and we read, Matthew 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." If all that man needed for salvation were counsel, a rule for life, then the Holy Spirit might have ended the Gospel according to Matthew with the seventh chapter. But man is a sin-sick soul; he needs more than guidance. The rules for his life, the law, are only a schoolmaster to lead man to the Truth, the Lord Jesus Himself. In Matthew 4:23 our Lord's ministry is described as "teaching ..., and preaching ..., and healing." The teaching and preaching were accomplished in "The Sermon on the Mount;" then He came down from the mountain, and cleansed the lepers, drove out the demons, restored sight to the blind, and raised the dead. In such a way He manifested by more than His words that He was Jehovah -- Jesus, the King of the Jews. Yes, He came down from on High, He has cleansed us from our sins, He has restored the sight to the spiritually blind, He has given us life. He is Jehovah-Jesus, our mighty Saviour, and to Him be glory and dominion now and forever.

In our "Introduction" we have pointed out that Matthew's Gospel is a dispensational book. The miracles recorded in Matthew are also recorded in the other Gospels, but the order is not as in Matthew. Such apparent discrepancies have caused the critics high delight. To us these same variances prove the words of Paul by the Holy Spirit: "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); they prove without the slightest doubt the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Gospel according to Matthew was written for the Jew, whose King came and offered His Kingdom, the record of the miracles having been arranged by the Holy Spirit in the perfect order in which they are presented in order to show God's plan for Israel, and to manifest in a very simple way that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour. The miracles were more than miracles, they were signs manifesting the King and His Kingdom, as promised in Isaiah 35, and are typical of spiritual cleansing, of resurrection, and of the power of the Lord over Satan and his hosts.

Dispensationally, the leper represented Israel, sinful and unclean. If Israel's prayer had been what it should have been: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," the Messiah would then and there have said: "I will." The Lord Jesus was still presenting Himself to His people at the time that the leper appeared before Him, and consequently He showed by the healing that which He was willing to do for Israel. But in His divine foreknowledge of His rejection He showed what was to happen. "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." It was proper that the cleansed leper should show himself to the priest; it was still the age of law, for the Lord Jesus had not yet died nor been raised. But when the cleansed man appeared before the priest, the latter should have recognized by the healing of this man the sign of Messiah, and should have run to the Lord to worship Him. That this leader of religious life rejected the testimony was a type of what Israel should do.

Leprosy is a most hideous and loathsome disease, and throughout the Word of God is a type of sin. This leper is the representation of all mankind, lost in sin, and outcast, death alone staring him in the face. Every sinner who comes to the Saviour with the petition: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," will be answered as was he: "I will." Our Lord did not say: "My good man, the sermon I just preached sets forth the rules of proper conduct. Live by that and you will gradually get better and better." He said: "I will; be thou clean." "And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Such is the grace of God. By the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ there is remission of sins, and immediately upon receiving Him as Saviour, we are cleansed.

Matt. 8:5-13

Dispensationally, the healing of the centurion's servant represented the age of the Gentiles, after the rejection of the King. The Lord Jesus, the Healer, would be absent, but by His Word the servant should be healed. The centurion is a type of the Gentile who

believes, though the Bridegroom be absent in body. Very clearly here our Lord pointed to His coming rejection and to His turning to the Gentiles, Matt. 8:10-12: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 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 the heavens. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness."

Faith in the Lord Jesus' power to save will ever be rewarded as was the centurion's: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." What is your attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you believed in Him? Then all is well, for "as thou hast believed," so has He saved thee.

Matt. 8:14, 15

Dispensationally, this sign is typical of the Lord Jesus, after the age of the Gentiles, entering again the house of Israel to heal the sick daughter of Zion, who will then serve Him.

Leprosy and palsy are types of sin wholly possessing the victims. In the case of Peter's wife's mother, the fever typifies the illness of one who is a member of the Body, but who is dangerously beset by sins and who needs the keeping power of the Lord Jesus. The result of contact with our Lord immediately healed her, and that is our portion if we come to Him for His care.

Matt. 8:16-18

Dispensationally, the many who were brought to Him possessed of demons, and His subsequent healing of all that were sick, represented the day when Satan and his angels shall be cast out and bound. Today it tells us that "Whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Matt. 8:19-22

"And a certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. 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" (Matt. 8:19, 20). We never hear that he followed the Lord. The call to service means the giving of life. This scribe perhaps sought earthly gain, but the Lord Jesus indicated rejection. "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." For our sakes He, the Son of God, became poor, the Son of Man, Who should suffer death before exaltation. Our Lord sees not only the outward appearances of sin, the diseased body and the flagrantly sinful life, but He knows the heart and mind of man and also sees there his sinfulness. This scribe would not have counted it joy to suffer in His Name, and so he turned away.

"And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead." Our thought might be that it was a proper request that the disciple made. But God never makes a mistake. Then what is the teaching? That nothing must hinder our devotion and full obedience. No earthly thing, no occupation nor relationship is to come between the Lord and His chosen ones. "Let the dead bury their dead." It would seem that the family of this disciple were unbelievers, dead in trespasses and sins, and the association with them might have been detrimental, if not fatal, to his spiritual progress. So the Lord Jesus said: "Follow Me." May we be freed from all earthly bondage, with our eyes single to the glory of our Saviour and Lord.

Matt. 8:23-27

"Kept by the power of God." In presenting Himself as King, Jehovah-Jesus, our Lord must show Himself not only Lord of nature, but Lord of all its forces. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Again we may see that these were not only miracles that our Lord was performing, but signs as to Who He is. "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" He is God, manifest in the flesh, Jehovah-Saviour of His people.

The disciples came to Him, saying: "Lord, save us: we perish." "Then He arose and rebuked the winds (only He Who is God could rebuke the winds!) and the sea; and there was a great calm." "Lord, save us, we perish." He alone can save us, from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin. Have you uttered that cry? Without Christ we perish; in Him we live. Then there will be a great calm, "The peace of God which passeth understanding."

Matt. 8:28-34

The subject before us is one on which a volume could be written: Demon Possession. The record of this miracle follows the stilling of the storm by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. For there are storms in the spiritual world as well as in the physical world. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

Two men possessed of demons met our Lord. The demons recognized Him. "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?" It may have been that "His own received Him not;" but the instruments of Satan recognized in our Lord Him Whom Israel yet

refuses to acknowledge. They knew that He was the Son of God, that He would judge them, and that the judgment was yet to be; "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to judge us before the time?" At His Word, "Go" -- the demons left the men and possessed the swine. What power is His! As the Son of God all power is His, and one day, though we may not recognize Him now, every knee shall bow to Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

The whole city sought Him that He should depart from them. It was illegal to raise swine, and their gains were lost when the demons forced the swine into the waters. So He was rejected; those who preferred their swine to the Son of God and His righteousness besought Him to "depart out of their coasts." Is there some sin in our lives that we prefer above the Son of God? Thanks be unto God Who can and will give us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER IX

Matt. 9:1-8

"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 in a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemeth" (Matt. 9:1-3).

This is not the first time that our Lord healed one afflicted with palsy, but it is the first time He used this method: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Perhaps this man's disease was the direct result of sin in his life, for our Lord said: "Son, be of good cheer." Some sin no doubt was on his conscience. This was the time that the Lord Jesus selected to show by a sign His power, not alone to heal disease, but to heal the disease of the soul. "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

Certain of the scribes thought (said within themselves), "This Man blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). And the Lord Jesus, knowing the thoughts of their words, asked, "Is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? 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. And he arose, and departed to his house. And when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, Who had given such power unto men."

Dispensationally, this miracle spoke of what our Lord will do for Israel when He shall return in power. Israel, sin sick and crippled, will be healed in soul and body, and they shall leap for joy and glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The healing of the palsied man is also a type of what our Lord will do for the sinner in the age of grace. By faith in His shed blood our sins are forgiven, and He at the same time gives us a new life, through which we leap for joy and glorify God. He enables us anew to "Arise, and walk."

Matt. 9:9-13

We pass over verse nine, the call of Matthew, with only a comment concerning his immediate obedience. The Lord said to him, "Follow Me." "And he arose, and followed Him." That is all, yet is it not a beautiful example of the devotion which our Lord requires?

The Lord Jesus sat at meat in Matthew's house (see Mark 2:15) with many publicans and sinners. The publicans, of whom Matthew was one, were Jews, but the most despised class. They were tax-gatherers, in the employ of the hated Roman government, lending themselves as tools to pry the taxes from their own people, and most of them were extortionists on their own account, enriching themselves in their trade. Our Lord called one of these as a disciple, and ate with others of their number, whom the Pharisees would not touch, and with whom they would not even speak. So, instead of looking to the Lord as their King, the Pharisees found fault with Him. Our wonderful Lord came not only to forgive sin, but to welcome sinners to Himself; that is why you and I are saved if we believe on His Name. His answer silenced them: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. 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." Such is the marvellous grace of God: the poor, the wicked, the thieves, the sinners; they are the chosen who receive Him and are used as His instruments. Satan's men are the self-righteous, religious, and proud. It was so in our Lord's time and is so today.

Matt. 9:14-17

The disciples of John the Baptist also came to question the Lord Jesus. Theirs was not critical interrogation, but a seeking after the truth. "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" The King had come; no longer was it necessary to mourn, the Bridegroom was here. There follows the first revelation of the new order of things. The coming of the King, His death on the Cross, has done away with the old order. One does not put a new patch on an old garment, for a rent worse than the former takes place. One does not put new wine in old skins, for then the skins will burst. The old garment was Judaism. It was no longer good, but worthless. With the death of our Saviour, grace entered in, and the law has been cast aside.

Matt. 9:18-34

That our Lord not only has the power to heal disease, but to give life to the dead, He proved when He raised Jairus' daughter. The horrible disease of the soul, sin, may be cleansed by His blood, if you receive Him as your Saviour. More than that, He will at the same time impart to you a new life, His life, and in Him the victory over the flesh may be yours.

He healed the sick woman, gave sight to the blind, cast out the demon from the dumb man. When we come into touch with the Lord Jesus Christ, all our weakness may be removed. Once we were blind, but now we see; once we were dumb, but now we delight in witnessing to His saving grace.

"And the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out the demons through the prince of the demons."

Matt. 9:35-38

"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. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion at them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:35, 36). "The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand" -- that was the signal; "healing every sickness" -- that was the sign. The King was present among His people, the Shepherd was calling to His flock, but they were scattered "as sheep having no shepherd." Ezekiel 34, which speaks of the future Kingdom of the Son of David, touches on the condition which our Lord found: "And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd. ... I will both search My sheep and find them out. ... I will seek that which was lost. ... I will make with them a covenant of peace."

The Lord was moved with compassion, and He said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." There were only twelve in all Israel whom He would send forth then. There is a harvest today also, but the labourers are few. Among the last words of our risen Lord before His ascension were, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." It is the Gospel of Grace which is to be preached today to the whole creation. "The harvest truly is plenteous. ... Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." All signs point to His near return. May the Lord grant that many new labourers will venture forth by faith in Him that souls may be won to a knowledge of His saving grace before it is too late.

CHAPTER X

Matt. 10:1-6

"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. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; ..." (Matt. 10:1, 2).

The Kingdom of the heavens had been announced as at hand. Its nature and laws had been set forth by the King. He had demonstrated that He had authority over sickness and death, over the elements, and over Satan and his demons. He had shown by proclamation and by power that He was indeed the promised Messiah. It was now necessary that some method of the propagation of the Kingdom be adopted. Israel was scattered without a shepherd, and the good Shepherd was ready to take means that all the flock should hear and see, by signs, that the King was present and the Kingdom at hand.

The sending forth of the twelve in the tenth of Matthew is very definitely not the missionary commission for the present dispensation. These were sent to Israel, to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, and were instructed in particular not to go to the Gentiles. They were given power to heal all manner of disease, and to raise the dead. There was no Gospel of grace as yet for "whosoever will;" redemption was limited to Israel, which was to "Repent; for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." The instructions are found to be in two divisions; in verses five to fifteen the words of our Lord have to do with the personal ministry of the apostles during that time when the Gospel of the Kingdom was being preached. The places which they were to visit, the persons to whom they were to speak, the proclamation which they were to deliver, the power with which they were to work, the provision which they were to make, the people with whom they were to associate, the promise of what should happen to those who would not receive them -- all these things were definite, and ended with the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. From verse sixteen to the end of chapter ten we find a twofold application. The instructions were for the twelve but also looked forward to the testimony of the Lord's chosen ones in this age, for the Lord Jesus knew that He was to be crucified and that the new age of grace was then to be introduced.

First, let us see that the power which the disciples had was not their own, it was of the Lord. That is an important understanding. If we minister in His Name, and our ministry is blessed, it is of the Lord. We can accomplish nothing for Him, but we must let Him

work through us to the glory of His Name.

Secondly, the names of the twelve apostles are listed. It is interesting to observe certain signs of apostleship: (1) They were eye-witnesses of the risen Lord Jesus; (2) They were called directly by the Lord, or in the case of Barnabas and Matthias, by the Holy Spirit; (3) They were endowed with special miraculous powers; (4) The future relation to the Kingdom of all names in Matthew ten (with the exception of Judas Iscariot) and of Matthias, chosen in Judas' place, will be that of judges over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). The word apostle (one sent forth) is used of our Lord (Heb. 3:1), and is used of the twelve here mentioned; of Matthias (Acts 1:26); of Paul, called to apostleship by the risen and ascended Lord Jesus; and of Barnabas, called by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2).

"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." "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But ... as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His Name" (John 1:11, 12).

These apostles were sent forth to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to Israel alone. Israel rejected their Messiah, and He turned to the Gentiles. Praise God for His grace whereby we are saved.

Matt. 10:7-15

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses" (Matt. 10:7-9).

"The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand" is the message, and the signs of that Kingdom are: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons." There are those who claim that the power to heal the sick and cast out demons goes with the Gospel of grace. If that is so, why do they leave out "Raise the dead"? The Lord can heal, and does heal, but it is as He wills, and the power to do so does not accompany the preaching of the Gospel. In verse one we are told that He gave them power to do so; we have no record of His giving us such power in this dispensation.

"Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses. ..." As they were to be dependent upon the Lord for power, so were they to be dependent upon Him for their provisions. The instructions are those of haste and urgency. And as the apostles went forth in full dependence, so must we look to Him today. The message that we have is a different one, but a glorious one; His coming again may be soon. Let us with haste proclaim the Gospel of salvation, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to give forth His Word which shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it (Isa. 55:11).

Matt. 10:16-23

The instructions now are for the apostles, primarily, but they reach forward into the present dispensation, and into the Great Tribulation. Our Lord now told them how they should be received. The persecutions for the most part did not begin until after His ascension. It was then that they were delivered up before councils and synagogues, before governors and kings, before Gentiles and Jews. There is some record of such persecution in the Acts, but the great fulfilment will be during the Tribulation.

"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death ..., and ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake; but He that endureth to the end shall be saved. ... For verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. 10:21-23). The Son of Man was already with the disciples, presenting the Kingdom. Then, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come," must mean some future coming. And so it does. The proclamation which was begun at this time by the apostles is incompleting. We are living in a parenthesis, the Church age. When the Times of the Gentiles shall end and the saints shall have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, the parenthesis shall end. Then, in the Tribulation, once again the remnant of Israel shall take up the incompleting proclamation, and once more shall they preach, "The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." It is then that "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Today, he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ is saved, now and for eternity.

Matt. 10:24-42

"Fear not." The balance of the chapter is a record of words of encouragement and comfort from the Lord Jesus as He sent forth His disciples. The message was for them as they faced hatred and persecution for His sake, it was for the martyrs of the early centuries, it is for us today, it is for those who shall be hated and ostracized and slain during the Tribulation. "Fear not. ... Whosoever ... shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Who is in Heaven. ... He who loseth his life for My sake shall find it. ... He that receiveth Me, receiveth Him Who sent Me ... 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." What a marvellous blessing and benediction our Saviour has left for us. He Who is the Creator of all things says: "Fear not." If we confess Him, He will confess us before His heavenly Father. God grant that all who read this study may confess Him before men.

CHAPTER XI

We have come to the day of the crisis in the life of the Lord Jesus. It was the day when the full manifestation of Israel's enmity against the Lord was made known and the Kingdom was rejected. By His miraculous birth and the circumstances surrounding it; by the message of the forerunner, John the Baptist; by the proclamation of the Kingdom, its constitution, and the startling signs of power which accompanied His ministry; by all these things, our Lord had shown conclusively that He was Messiah, the King, God manifest in the flesh. But as had been prophesied, Israel had no heart for the Lord Jesus; and, typical of that which should follow, He found more faith among the Gentiles, the wise men and the centurion whose servant was ill, than among His own. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "Then (rejected by His people) began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done." Then He brought a new message: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then, on the same day, "went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside," a breaking off of His relationship with Israel and a turning to the Gentiles.

Matt. 11:1-15

"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?" (Matt. 11:2, 3). John the Baptist was he of whom it had been written, "Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee" (Matt. 11:10; cf. Mal. 3:1). John, the forerunner, had previously testified of our Lord: "This is He of Whom I said, after me cometh a Man Who is preferred before me: for He was before me. ... And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the Same is He Who baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:30, 33, 34). It is hard to say of such an one as John the Baptist that he doubted the Lord. He had known, he had visible proof from on high, that He was the Son of God, and he testified to that effect. Yes, it is not easy to say "He doubted" of one of whom our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). But there is only one sinless One, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the very fact that John's faith was weak and failed him is sure evidence that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." John had been in prison a long time (see Matt. 4:12); while he was there he "heard the works of Christ." We have pointed out in a previous chapter that John was the last of the Old Testament prophets and was confused between the first and second coming of our Lord. Of Him John had said: "Now also the axe is laid unto that root of the trees. ... "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" (Matt. 3:10, 12). This is Second coming truth, when our Lord shall return in glory to rule on the throne of His father David. John looked for the Kingdom now, and judgment; he did not understand the Lord's present ministry.

Contrast John's imprisonment with Paul's. There was no doubt in Paul's heart. "I, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord," and there follow rejoicing and praise. What is the difference? Paul was of the Age of Grace; the Lord Jesus Christ indwelt him by His Holy Spirit, and that is also our position in Christ. How did our Lord answer John? By freeing him through a great miracle, and earthquake? No. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew 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 unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (Matt. 11:4-6). "Tell him again; these signs should prove Who I am" -- that is the message of the Lord, and then "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Many were offended with the Lord Jesus, many did not understand Him because they did not know the Scriptures. John wondered, the scribes and Pharisees rejected Him, His disciples forsook Him at the Cross, and after the resurrection, "When they had heard He was alive, ... believed not." Doubts as to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ today are the result of the same ignorance of the Scriptures. These are they which testify of Him. "Art Thou He Who should come?" Yes, praise be to God, it is He, and by His death and resurrection all who believe have been saved and justified. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

That the enemies of the Lord Jesus and of John the Baptist might not think that by these words our Lord was criticising John, and that they might see the love and grace of God, the Lord added the wonderful words of praise which we have quoted above; and then: "notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of the heavens is greater than he (John)" (Matt. 11:11). "Positionally greater, not morally," says Dr. Scofield in his Reference Notes. Our Lord was speaking of the Kingdom of the heavens which was then "at hand" and which will at His return be fully established upon the earth. The little ones who are in the Kingdom will be greater than John who announced it. It seems almost incredible, but because our Lord said so, it is true. The wonderful blessings we have in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Matt. 11:16-19

"Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 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 wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."

About to pronounce judgment upon Israel, about to turn to the Gentiles, our Lord told the multitude what they were like. They were like children playing. Some say to others: "Let's play wedding!" But these fellows did not want to. Then others say: "Let's play funeral!" And they do not want to. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They wanted their own way, their own religion. God's way they would not accept. Yes, He is the Friend of sinners. He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13). But there were some who believed, who were His children, and of them, He (Wisdom is an Old Testament name of the Lord Jesus; see Proverbs eight) is justified.

Matt. 11:20-30

"Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not" (Matt. 11:20). The King had presented Himself to Israel, and the cities in which He did His greatest works, rejected Him. The rejection in its finality took place at Calvary (Matt. 27), but here our Lord acknowledged the renouncement, and pronounced judgment which speaks for itself (Vss. 21-24). In passing, let us note that there shall be degrees of punishment for the unsaved, just as there shall be degrees of reward for the saved (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of the heavens 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" (Matt. 11:25, 26). "In everything ... with thanksgiving" -- that is perfect obedience. No if or why, but in everything, thanksgiving.

"No man knoweth the Son but the Father" -- "now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). We must think and speak reverently when we think of the Lord Jesus Christ -- only the Father knows Him fully. "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son. ... The Son will reveal Him." "Revealing the Father is what our Lord did and is doing. In resurrection He is Son of God with power, and all who receive Him are brought to God and become children of God, to know the Father" (A. C. Gaebelain).

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Then began the new message, the first invitation. Judgment had been pronounced, but at the same time the symbol of the Gospel of Grace, which was to follow after His death and resurrection, was offered. "Come unto Me, all ye. ..." To Jew and Gentile alike this message was and is given. "I will give you rest." That is the fulness of Christ. How wonderful these words have been, through the ages. "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." The yoke is that which was used to join together in teamwork two beasts of burden. "Take My yoke upon you." "Be linked together with Me." What a marvellous thought: To be united with our Lord. His yoke is easy (light) and His burden is light. Coming to Him, and living with Him, we have rest to our souls. Is it not true, Christian?

CHAPTER XII

Matt. 12:1-8

"At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered; 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" (Matt. 12:1, 2). The scribes and the Pharisees, those bitter enemies of our Lord, false prophets in sheep's clothing who inwardly were wolves, those who had first attacked the Lord Jesus when He forgave the sins of the palsied man and healed him, were now so wrought up that they accused Him of breaking the Sabbath.

The seventh day, the Sabbath, was a Jewish day. Its keeping was embodied in the Ten Commandments, and its keeping to the present day is of the utmost importance to the Jews. The seventh day was the day on which God rested after He made the earth, which He made known to Israel at Sinai (Neh. 9:14). The Sabbath was a sign upon Israel, just as was circumcision. The one was a spiritual sign, the other a physical sign distinguishing them as God's peculiar people. The Jew prided himself not only on keeping the Sabbath according to the fourth commandment, but in observing injunctions, which had been added by the elders, and which were even more binding, and in a great many cases ridiculous. So it was considered a sin to pluck an ear of corn on the Sabbath day, and this was the Pharisees' accusation against Jehovah-Jesus the Creator.

In passing, one may ask: Does not the Christian keep the Sabbath? No; the Christian observes Sunday, the first day of the week, as a day of rejoicing and fellowship with the Lord, and of worship of Him. Sunday, the Lord's day is the day of resurrection. This has

been kept since the beginning of the Church age in memory of Him Who was raised from the dead, and Who is seated on the Father's right hand in Heaven. It is wrong to call the Lord's day the Sabbath, just as wrong as it would be to call Christmas the Fourth of July; Sunday is the first day, the Sabbath is the seventh day.

There is no law for the Christian to keep Sunday as the Lord's day. But this is a liberty which Christians enjoy, who "have been called into liberty" (Gal. 5:13). We quote: "Israel was commanded to observe the Sabbath day; the Church is privileged to enjoy the first day of the week. The former was the test of Israel's moral condition; the latter is the significant proof of the Church's eternal acceptance. The Sabbath day manifested what Israel could do for God; the Lord's day perfectly declares what God has done for us." The Sabbath was a commemoration of a finished creation; Sunday, the Lord's day, commemorates a finished redemption.

Our Lord answered with Scripture as He answered every attack of the evil one (for the Pharisees were Satan's instruments). "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them who were with him, but only for the priests?" The reference is to the time of David's persecution by Saul. A fugitive, hungry, rejected by Israel -- that these things were so was sin on Israel's part, and as a consequence the holy ceremonies given to Israel by God ceased to be holy and the consecrated shewbread became common in God's sight (1 Sam. 21) -- David's experience was typical of the present occasion. The King was rejected, and while He was rejected nothing in Israel was holy.

"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 very act of carrying the sacrifices for the temple on the Sabbath was work, yet they were blameless.

"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. For the Son of Man is the Lord even of the Sabbath day." The stupendous claims of the Lord Jesus Christ! There are those who say He never claimed to be God. Ridiculous! Throughout His ministry this was His constant affirmation; He not only claimed it, He proved it. Israel knew He said He was God, and they took up stones to kill Him, because they said it was blasphemy. "I and My Father are One" (John 10:30); "Before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58); "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9); "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son" (Matt. 11:27); "That in this place, is One Greater than the temple ... (Ye would not have condemned the guiltless). For the Son of Man is the Lord even of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:6-8). Yes, He is God. By His Word, the sword of the Spirit, every mouth is stopped. Like the Pharisees, men today follow Christ at a distance. They are constantly finding fault with the work that He came to do; they say, "God would not kill His Son to save the lost," and "We are all right; God is merciful and we are living as best we can." But that is not God's way. No man cometh unto the Father but by the Son. "There is none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Matt. 12:9-50

Lack of space forbids us to go into the other significant events of this important day. We must pass over the record of the healing on the Sabbath of the man with the withered hand (Vs. 10-13), saying only that the man is the type of withered Israel. Our Lord had come to restore, but Israel, unlike the man, did not have faith to "Stretch forth Thy hand." The miracle performed before them concerned them to such a degree that "the Pharisees went out, and held council against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Matt. 12:14).

One possessed with a demon, blind and dumb, again typical of Israel, was brought to our Lord, and He healed him. The Pharisees then charged that the Lord cast out the demon by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. In all wisdom the Lord Jesus replied: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" (vs. 25-26). Satan would not cast out Satan. It must be God Who casts out the demons. "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you" (vs. 28). Another claim of Deity by our Lord! "I ... cast out demons by the Spirit of God ... therefore the Kingdom of God (the King) is come unto you." "I have power to bind the strong man, Satan." These are our Lord's claims; they are the claims of God alone!

We shall touch for a moment upon the unforgivable sin mentioned in verses thirty and thirty-one. The definition of the unforgivable sin is "to ascribe to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit," or "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." Man may reject God the Father, and yet come to know Him through the Lord Jesus Christ; man may reject the Lord Jesus, and yet be convicted of sin by the work of the Holy Spirit and so come to know the Lord Jesus as his Saviour; but if man has rejected God the Father, and God the Son, and hardens his heart against the working of the Holy Spirit, speaking against and blaspheming His pleadings and ministrations, then there is no hope for him, and his sins shall not be forgiven him, in this age or in the ages to come. Rejecting the Father and the Son, and speaking maliciously of Him by Whom the Son was working meant eternal condemnation to these Pharisees who believed not when the Son of God made Himself manifest.

The Lord foretold of His death and resurrection: "For as Jonah 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" (Matt. 12:40). The so-called higher critics say that the story of Jonah is a myth. The Lord Jesus believed it; He said it was true. When one denies the story of Jonah and the great fish, he is not showing his own wisdom, for he is calling the Lord Jesus Christ a deceiver.

Finally, our Lord established a new relationship which is eternal (vs. 46-50). His mother and His brothers came, desiring to speak with Him, for they too were alarmed at His actions. They too thought that He was beside Himself (Mark 3:21, 31). The Lord said, "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! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." The new relationship was established. He was rejected; no longer did He recognize His own, but those are His who do the will of His Father. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on His Name, who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). Whosoever -- for the first time this word was used, and it means you. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father ..., the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." "And this is the Father's will Who hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him Who sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39, 40).

Do you stand with those who doubt the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you standing with faith in Him that He is God, and in His promises that you are a son of God by believing on Him and that everlasting life is already yours? His Word is true. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Him.

CHAPTER XIII

Matt. 13:1, 2

We have said that it was a most important day in the life of our Lord which we are studying. For this was the day on which His crisis came, the day when it was evident that the Kingdom of the heavens which He had been offering was to be rejected, the day when He first said "Whosoever" and began the new message: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." On that "same day Jesus went out of the house (typical of Israel), and sat by the seaside (typical of the Gentile nations)" (Matt. 13:1), and spoke in parables, the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens.

You will recall that in the Introduction to these studies in Matthew's Gospel we learned that "the Kingdom of the heavens" has more than one meaning. That which John the Baptist preached to be "at hand," for the King was present, and which our Lord presented to His own people Israel, was the Messianic earthly rule of the Lord Jesus, the Son of David. This was rejected by the Jews. That Kingdom of the heavens which is spoken of in Matthew thirteen we shall find does not refer to that Messianic earthly reign, nor to the Church, (and by the Church we mean the Body of believers), as it is so often misinterpreted to mean, but to Christendom, that is, professing Christianity during our Lord's bodily absence from the earth.

Matt. 13:10, 11, 34, 35

Such a conclusion is based on the very definite teaching of our Lord Himself. His "disciples came, and said unto Him, why speakest Thou unto them (the multitudes) in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:10, 11). The dictionary definition of the word mystery is: Something unknown, unexplained, or incomprehensible in its nature. "Because it is given unto you to know the things which are unknown or unexplained of the Kingdom of the heavens." Eleven times the word mystery is used in the Word of God for something which is then being explained: in other words, the Bible definition of the word mystery is: A previously hidden truth now divinely revealed. Further, in Matthew 13:34, 35, we read: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: 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."

Matt. 13:12-17

Now we know that the Kingdom of the heavens as presented to Israel by our Lord, the Messianic earthly reign when He should come to sit upon the throne of His father David in a glorious and visible manner, was known and foretold by the prophets, yet here our Lord said to His disciples: "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" (Matt. 13:17). Therefore, the mysteries which heretofore had not been revealed, the things which the prophets of old had not seen or heard, could not have been the Kingdom of the heavens announced by John the Baptist, presented by our Lord and rejected by Israel. No; here the Lord Jesus Christ, the Anti-type of Joseph, the revealer of secrets, was unfolding in the parables not the old, but new truths, the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens. We have said that the Kingdom of the heavens of this chapter is not the Church (we repeat that by the Church is meant

not the great ecclesiastical organization, but the Body of believers), but that it represents Christendom, that is, professing Christianity. The Church is only mentioned twice in Matthew's Gospel, in 16:18, where our Lord spoke of building His Church, and in 18:17. Where the Church is mentioned in the Word of God by a name other than His Church, it is called the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, the Habitation of God, a Temple, a House, but not the Kingdom of the heavens. We have stated that our conclusion that the Kingdom of the heavens of these parables represents Christendom rather than the Church is based on the definite teaching of the Lord Jesus. Let us look at the parable of the wheat and the tares which the Lord Himself interpreted in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. Using as a key the interpretation, the parable reads: The Kingdom of the heavens is likened unto the Son of Man Who sowed the children of the Kingdom in the world; but while men slept, Satan came and sowed his children among the children of the Kingdom, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth the fruit, there appeared the children of the wicked one also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto the Son of Man, Sir, didst Thou not sow the children of the Kingdom in the world? From whence then hath it children of the evil one? He said unto them, Satan hath done this. The servants said unto Him, wilt Thou then that we go and gather them up? But He said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the children of the wicked one, ye root up also the children of the Kingdom with them. Let both grow together till the consummation of the age: and in the time of the consummation of the age I will say to the angels, Gather ye together first the children of the wicked one, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the children of the Kingdom into My barn." The only necessary comment at this point is that the Kingdom of the heavens cannot mean the Church, the Bride of Christ, for in the Bride of Christ there can never be children of the wicked one. The Kingdom of the heavens therefore must be Christendom, composed of saved and unsaved; the Church is a part of Christendom, but it is not Christendom.

There are eight parables in Matthew thirteen, the seven parables of the mystery of the Kingdom, and the final parable of verse fifty-two which instructed the disciples as to the position of the revelation given them in relation to Old Testament Scripture. The seven Kingdom parables are divided into two sections: the first four were told before the multitudes, the final three to the disciples alone. There is a relationship between the parables and the message to seven churches of Revelation two and three which it will be impractical for us to study here, but which is suggested for your consideration. The key to the interpretation of all of the parables is our Lord's own unfolding of the first two; if the man who sowed the seed in the second parable is the Son of Man, the man of the first, fifth and sixth parables is also the Son of Man. If in the second parable the field is the world, then surely the field in the third and fifth parables is also the world.

"And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow. ... The Kingdom of the heavens is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field. ... The Kingdom of the heavens is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field. ... The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal. ... The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto treasure hid in a field. ... The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. ... The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea ..."

Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold" (Matt. 13:3-8).

The Lord Jesus interpreted His own words (vs. 19-23). He did not say who the sower was, but in the second parable He explained that the "man who sowed good seed" was the Son of Man, and since the seed was the Word (vs. 19) we know the sower was the Lord. "The sower went forth" -- this was a new beginning; no longer was the message for Israel, but He now went forth unto the Gentiles.

"Some (seed) fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up." Is the world to get better and better, as we are often told? Will the world be converted? The Lord Jesus taught His disciples to the contrary. The Word was sown by the Son of Man, but some fell by the wayside; only one-fourth of the seed took deep root. The Word continues to be sown by The Sower, The Son of Man, Who by the Holy Spirit scatters the Word through believers, and as it was not received by all who heard it in our Lord's day, at the beginning of the new age, so it is not universally received today. Some falls by the wayside and the wicked one catches it away.

"Some fell upon stony places, ... and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." There are those who hear the Gospel with great joy, but they only endure for a while. Trial, misunderstanding, persecution -- these are the Devil's instruments that wither the rocky-ground hearer, and he is offended.

"Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them." There are those who hear the Word, but because of the world, the deceit of riches and power, the Word is choked. Satan has attacked -- the Devil, the flesh, and the world have defeated the wayside hearer, the stony-ground hearer, and the thorny-ground hearer.

"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." The Word finds deep root in some hearts, which are fruitful. May you be one of these. But not all bring forth an hundredfold. Are you fruitful? Does your heart bring forth thirty, sixty, or an hundredfold for the Lord Jesus Christ?

Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43

"The Kingdom of the heavens 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. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 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? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather of the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the 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" (Matt. 13:24-30).

Again the Lord was the interpreter (vs. 36-43). Some comment on this parable has already been made. The sower is the Son of Man; the field is the world. The good seed is not the Word in this case. The seed of the first parable has taken root and has been fruitful; the Word has brought forth children of the Kingdom. The good seed represents the children of the Kingdom; the tares, the children of the wicked one. The enemy is Satan; the reapers are the angels; the harvest is the end of the age.

The children of the Kingdom were sown in the world. While men slept, not The Sower Who neither slumbers nor sleeps, but while men slept, Satan sowed his children among the others. It was manifest when the blade sprung up: in the time of Paul the children of the evil one began to manifest themselves freely. No sooner had our Lord revealed the truth, than Satan began his further work. The wheat and the tares will grow together during this age, but at the end of the age, the children of the devil will be bound for eternal punishment, while the children of the Kingdom will be taken to be with the Lord. Not until then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (vs. 43). It is not of our works or our own righteousness that we shall be there, but if we are believers, then, clothed in the righteousness of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall shine forth in Him, as the sun, in the Kingdom which He shall deliver to His Father and to our Father.

Matt. 13:31, 32

"The Kingdom of the heavens is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: 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."

If the Kingdom of the heavens here were, as many suppose, the Church, the Bride of Christ, then the Body of Christ should grow into a great tree, in which the sinners of all nations would find refuge. But comparing Scripture with Scripture, we cannot believe that our Lord so taught. The fowls of the parable of the sower are the wicked one and his agents, the birds of Revelation 18:2 are unclean and hateful, and are connected with the devil; therefore it is indicated that the birds of the air of this parable are the children of Satan. The teaching becomes clear when we see that the Kingdom of the heavens is Christendom. The Sower planted seed, the Word. This seed, deeply rooted in the field, the world, has sprung up into a monstrous growth (for the mustard plant is a bush, and not a tree), the great ecclesiastical organizations of Romanism, Protestantism, the world system. In the branches of this great organization the devil's agents lodge, the birds, unconverted, who possess only the outward form of Christianity but are none of Christ's, who find shelter in the tree.

Matt. 13:33

"The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Many of the great commentators of this century and the past have come to the conclusion: the woman is the Church, the leaven is the Gospel, the three measures of meal represent humanity. Therefore, hiding the leaven (the Gospel) in the meal (humanity) means that the Gospel will permeate humanity. We quote from Dr. John Peter Lange, known as "the Prince of Commentators:" "The woman, the Church; the leaven, the Gospel; the three measures of meal, humanity; result -- the life from God in its progressive victory over the natural life of the world." Heubner wrote of this parable that it shows "the all-penetrating power of the Gospel and of its economy, especially of the blood of reconciliation in the death of Jesus." We do not quote these able servants of God merely to show their mistake, but to indicate how universal is the interpretation that the Kingdom of the heavens is the Church. But is it not contrary to all the teaching of the Word of God to believe that the Gospel will permeate the world, that the little leaven of the Gospel will leaven the whole lump? Let us look, by the Holy Spirit, into the meanings of the symbols of the woman, the leaven, and the three measures of meal where they are used elsewhere in Scripture.

First, what does leaven mean in the Word of God? If you know any orthodox Jews, ask them what leaven stands for. No Jew could imagine it to indicate anything good, but only evil. Even today the Jew, at the feast of unleavened bread, purges his house of any piece of bread that might contain leaven, that he may not be denied. The Lord was speaking to Jews, you must remember, and they knew that leaven symbolized evil. What does the New Testament teach of leaven? In Matthew 16:11, 12, our Lord said: "How is it that ye do not understand that I spoke 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 the bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The leaven then was not good, but evil. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Your glorying is not good, know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened" (1 Cor. 5:6, 7). Only as they were unleavened could the new life be manifest.

What does meal mean as used in the Word of God? Meal comes from wheat, not tares; the wheat is the good seed. Meal is a symbol of good, not of humanity, in which there is no good thing. In Genesis 18:6, 7, when Abraham wished to give good things unto the Lord, and to find favour in His sight, he prepared three measures of meal, and a calf: "And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf, tender and good." Meal, in three measures, and the calf, are types of the Lord Jesus Christ. The three measures of meal in our parable therefore stand for His work, for the Word, which is pure and undefiled.

And who is the woman? Is she the Church? In our Lord's message to the fourth church, in Thyatira, which corresponds to the fourth parable, the woman, Jezebel, is not the Church, but the great worldly ecclesiastical organization professing Christ (Rev. 2:18-29).

Now let us look again at the parable of the leaven. "The Kingdom of the heavens (Christendom) is like unto leaven (evil doctrine), which a woman (the great ecclesiastical organizations) took and hid in three measures of meal (The Word as planted by Christ), till the whole lump was leavened (permeated)." Is not that the teaching of the Lord Jesus? Have we not found from history that the evil doctrine of Satanic forces, of Modernism and of those who do not accept the Word of God in its verity, mixed with the purity of the Gospel, "attacks in a hidden way that which is good"?

Matt. 13:44

"The Kingdom of the heavens 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."

The man of this parable, as of the first and second mysteries, is the Lord Jesus Christ. The treasure is His chosen people Israel, His peculiar treasure (Ex. 19:5), who rejected Him and who have been put aside for a season. Meanwhile He sold all that He had, He gave His life to redeem the field, the world, and one day He shall take again to Himself Israel. We do not read that He obtained possession of the treasure until after He had sold all that He had.

This and the parable to follow must teach that the Lord Jesus is the One Who sold all that He had. It cannot be the sinner selling what he has to obtain Christ, for the sinner has nothing to sell; Christ is not hid, and if He were found, He would not be hidden again.

Matt. 13:45, 46

"The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Here, again, the Lord Jesus is the man. It is He Who seeks the sinner, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The pearl of great price is the true Church, the Bride, and for her He went and sold all that He had; for "though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Matt. 13:47-50

"The Kingdom of the heavens 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."

Our Lord now spoke of that which should happen at the end of the age, during the Great Tribulation. The Kingdom of the heavens shall be like a great drag-net cast among the nations, when the good and the evil shall be separated. "So shall it be at the consummation of the age: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."

Matt. 13:51, 52

"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe who is instructed unto the Kingdom of the heavens is like unto a man who is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

The Lord Jesus Christ has in the store of His knowledge the Old Covenant, and the Word of God as given by the prophets; but He is God, all things are known to Him, and here He set forth the course of this Age of Grace, things which were new, things which had been "kept secret from the foundation of the world." Everything which has ever happened has taken place in knowledge of God that it should occur, and all things which are before us are known to Him.

The mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens have been revealed, the hidden things have been uncovered, the course of this age has been set forth. Is there something for our hearts in this teaching? Have you understood all these things? May God grant that our hearts have been good ground, bringing forth fruit an hundredfold. God grant that we are a part of the pearl of great price, the Church, the Habitation of God, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ went and sold all that He had, His very life at Calvary, that in Him we might have eternal life.

Matt. 13:53-55

"And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence" (Matt. 13:53). The Gospel according to Matthew is replete with symbolism. Our Lord, having revealed in the parables of the Kingdom of the heavens the course of the present age, during which He should be absent in body, departed from them. The final verses of chapter thirteen demonstrate further that "His own received Him not." Coming into Nazareth, "He taught them in their synagogues, insomuch that they were astonished, and said: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:54, 55). "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" Not the King, not the Son of David, not the Christ, but this man -- "and they were offended in Him." It is so that He is looked upon today by unbelievers; not as the Saviour of the world, God manifest in the flesh, but as a man, a good man, perhaps, but a man. And the world is offended in Him, and in His Cross, yet our only course is that "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

CHAPTER XIV

Matt. 14:1-14

The Herods were appointed by Rome as rulers over Israel. Theirs were kingdoms of awful cruelty and abominations, typical of world kingdoms and the coming reign of Anti-Christ. It was Herod the Great under whom the Jewish male children were slaughtered not long after the Lord Jesus was born; it was his son, Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. John had denounced Herod because he was living in open adultery with Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife. Herod's anger was kindled against John, but he was afraid to take his life; then by a clever ruse Herodias demanded the head of the prophet, and he of whom our Lord said, "Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28), was cruelly murdered. "And his (John's) disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Matt. 14:12). There is no record of the words of comfort which our Lord said to John's disciples, but we can be sure that He ministered to them. No one has ever come to the Lord Jesus for comfort and help that He has not met his needs. In the verse which follows, verse 13, "when Jesus heard it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart;" what He heard does not refer to the Lord's hearing of the death of John, but to the fact that Herod thought that He was John raised from the dead, and might have tried to lay hands on Him. The murder of John is recorded in parenthesis to tell why Herod was concerned about the mighty works of the Lord. The Lord Jesus came to earth to die at Calvary, but His time was not yet come, and so He departed into a desert place.

The multitude followed the Lord up into the desert place, and "He was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick" (vs. 14). Could He Who felt compassion for those who soon should rise against Him and cry, "Crucify Him," have failed to have been touched by the death of John, and by the heart-broken wonder of John's disciples? Some have said that the Lord was cold in His attitude about John's death, but we know Him, and we know that He spoke words of comfort and joy and promise to the disciples.

Matt. 14:15-21

The narrative before us needs no exposition. For a more detailed account, see John 6:1-14. Our Lord fed this multitude by the use of five barley loaves and two fishes which were in the possession of a small lad. Why did He do that? The Lord Jesus is God; He could have called down manna from the heavens, He could have created the food on the instant. It is to show us God's grace and mercy that the lad's supplies were used. It is through men that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ becomes known today. God could call witnesses from Heaven, He could make known the Name of the Lord Jesus in sundry ways, but because of His grace He uses His children and their personalities to reach the hungry souls in the world today. How can we be used? By following the

example of the lad, who had little, much too little for the five thousand men and the women and children, but who gave all that he had. What was the result? They were all fed. If every born-again believer would give all that he has for the Lord's ministry, perhaps all who have never heard His Name might receive the Bread of Life, broken for them.

Matt. 14:22-36

"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. 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" (Matt. 14:22, 23). "He was there alone" -- alone with His Father. Steadfastly His face was set toward Jerusalem, and there was need of communion with His Father. If Christians would only go apart, alone with their heavenly Father, there would be a greater display of power in the Church today.

We have noted that the Gospel according to Matthew is dispensational in its teaching. Let us remember this as we look at the verses which follow which recount the miracle of our Lord walking on the water.

The Lord had gone apart, up into a mountain to pray. The ship in which the disciples were crossing to the other side "was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." There is great teaching here. The ship is a symbol of Israel, the disciples are the remnant. He has dismissed them, and has gone apart, on high, for a time. The night is far spent, and Israel is tossed with the waves of the nations, and the wind of persecution is contrary. But the fourth watch is drawing nigh, when He shall return, and in power over the waves and the wind, shall succour His people. "And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, ... and they cried out for fear." There are many who are not looking for His coming, and who will not recognize Him and will cry out for fear. But He will speak to them, and will say, with a voice as the sound of many waters, "It is I" -- and He will calm their fears. Then "Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee in the water. And He said, Come." Peter here stands for the Church, called out from Israel among the nations. Peter is also a type of the Church which will be caught up to meet Him in the air, before persecution and distress cease, before He comes to Israel a second time. And when He comes, the wind shall cease, and they shall worship Him, saying: "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." Nor do we want to over-dispensationalize this event. We may know that as we are in the world today, beset on every side by the waves and the wind, the fourth watch is at hand. He is absent, but He is watching, and at the proper time He will come and lift us up. Then forever the wind will cease for the Christian. God grant that meanwhile we may be looking for Him, and that in the power of the Spirit we may so live and teach that many may be brought to say before He comes: "Of a truth, Lord Jesus, Thou art the Son of God. My hope for eternity is based, not upon myself, but upon Thy Finished Work at Calvary."

So they came to Gennesaret. "And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him ... they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." It may be that there is one who studies this passage who is sick in sin; only let the Lord Jesus come into your life -- if the knowledge of His redeeming work touches you, and you believe in Him you will be made perfectly whole.

CHAPTER XV

Matt. 15:1-20

The religious Jews believed, and still believe, that there were two sets of laws given to Moses on Mt. Sinai: One, the written law, and the other, the oral law. The oral law was handed down by word from generation to generation until finally it was transcribed, and is called the Talmud. In the Talmud are found many additions to the law as given to Moses, and it was on this that the scribes and Pharisees based their question about the washing of the hands. But the Lord saw into their hearts: He knew that they interrogated Him only to trap Him, and by His question He turned the tables on them. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 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 honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites. ..." The Jews had added to the law of God by saying a son had to support and clothe his father and mother, but the Jews also found a way out. It was necessary only to say "Corban," that is, they dedicated to the temple whatever they should have given to their parents, their possessions or themselves, and they were released from any obligation. "Ye hypocrites!" How the Lord hates hypocrisy, lip worship, not life worship. May we search our own hearts, and pray that our worship of our Lord is from the heart, in Spirit and in truth.

Matt. 15:21-31

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed unto the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 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

demon. But He answered her not a word." Why did the Lord pay no attention to this woman of Canaan? We know Him; we know He is full of compassion; we know that He always hears those who call to Him, and that during His life on earth He heard all them that were brought to Him. He did not answer just because of His compassion. Canaan was the enemy of Israel. This woman appealed to Him as the Son of David, the King of Israel. When the rightful King of Israel sits upon the throne of David, "in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 14:21). As the Son of David His only action with her must have been judgment. So, in His mercy and grace, when the disciples asked Him to send her away, He said (so that she could hear, we may be sure): "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "He speaks; of course, as the Son of David, and oh! how wonderful is this word, though it has been often declared as harsh. He puts her, so to speak, in the right path to receive the blessing. It is one little word around which all is centered. The little word is lost. He gave her thus to understand He had come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and if they were lost and need a Saviour, how much more she, a Canaanite? And it is this word, lost, which faith lays hold upon, and through which she is enabled to draw near and ask His help simply as a needy one" (A.C. Gaebelien). She heard, and immediately, recognizing her own worthlessness, she cried, saying, "Lord, help me." You see; it was grace that kept Him from answering the first time; it was grace that led Him to meet her need the second time. He tested her a little more, to see if she was willing to admit her utter dependence upon Him; then in loving mercy He lifted her up: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole at the very hour. It is His great desire that we come to Him as did the woman of Canaan, in the knowledge that we are lost sinners, apart from His grace. Then He will have mercy on us and bring us salvation. It may be that at times we shall be tested, but if we survive as did this Canaanite woman, we shall some day hear Him say: "Great is thy faith."

Then Jesus departed and came to the sea of Galilee, and multitudes of lame, and blind and dumb were brought to Him, and He healed them. The multitudes wondered, and they glorified God. It was not a lasting worship, but when He comes again in power to His people Israel, and establishes His Kingdom, they shall see Him and wonder and glorify God forever, and there will be peace on earth.

Matt. 15:32-38

The lessons that we learned from the feeding of the five thousand in the preceding chapter may be applied to this miracle, too, so we will pass over it without comment.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul."

CHAPTER XVI

Matt. 16:1-12

Again the Pharisees, and with them the Sadducees! We have learned who these men were (see chapter iii, verses 7-10). The Pharisees and Sadducees were bitter enemies, but they met together in combined opposition against the Lord of glory. We see a similar paradox today: the Pharisees, those who profess Christianity by outward form but who do not know the Lord as Saviour, and the Sadducees, the liberals, are gradually combining their forces in various federations opposed to the Deity of our Lord. These enemies of our Lord come to Him seeking a sign, but in His wisdom He said: "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 today: 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? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. 16:2-4). "You are looking for a sign?" He asked. They could see the signs in physical life, but not in the spiritual sphere, because their hearts were evil. The Lord knew that if He should give them a sign, even then they would not believe. Thus He said that no sign should be given, "But the sign of the prophet Jonas." That refers, of course, to His own death, the three days in the tomb, and His resurrection. Even then they would not believe; today, after nineteen hundred years of combined opposition to the fact of His resurrection, they will not believe.

So, said our Lord: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (vs. 6). We learned in chapter thirteen that leaven is always used regarding evil. "Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees," He told His disciples. They needed that warning, and so do we. Let us not be so occupied with the things of earth, with food and the events of our daily lives, that we take our eyes off the Lord. And, too, let us not become so occupied with mere doctrine as to have no time to dwell upon Him. The doctrine of the Pharisees was over-ritualism; the doctrine of the Sadducees was liberalism and compromise. It is the Lord Whom we should see; it is upon Him that we should dwell. He is ever loving and tender and gracious to those who truly look at Him, but He is fierce in His hatred of the hypocritical worship of His enemies.

The doctrine of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ is that on which the whole Word of God is based, and upon our attitude towards Him and His work hinges the salvation of our souls. If He were only a man, a great teacher, a psychic leader, or a master magician, His death was valueless and our faith vain. He would never have been crucified had He not claimed to be God. The

multitudes were perfectly willing to admit that He was a man of marked powers and wisdom; but He is God, and it was His insistence upon this fact which brought about that death which is life to you and me, the result of our heavenly Father's all-loving grace and of our Saviour's all-pervading love.

Matt. 16:13-20

"When Jesus came unto the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

Men did not know what to think! They replied: "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." He claimed to be Messiah, He presented Himself as King, but men did not believe that. If He were the One that the prophets foretold, then He should have come in military power and ruled them from Rome. They were ready to acknowledge Him as unusual, perhaps from God, one of the prophets returned to them; perhaps He was Elias, the forerunner of Messiah. They wondered at His works, but they did not receive Him. Truly "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He knew what men thought. It was not for information that He asked the question of His disciples. He was leading up to the all-important personal question that every being in the world must face. "Whom say ye that I am?" What have you done with that question? Is He to you a good man, the founder of Christianity, or is He very God? Since He is God, is He your Saviour? Have you taken Him into your heart; are you resting your only hope in His finished work? And is He Lord of your life? "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." That was a wonderful confession of Peter's. Today our Lord has been known through centuries by His called-out people as God the Son, but at Caesarea Philippi it was not so. On all sides He was being rejected, "And Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven." It is not the natural man who receives the things of the Spirit of God, but they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). Through the Son the Father revealed Who the Son is.

Then follows a portion of the Word which is most important and which is so often misunderstood. Let us approach it prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth. "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." "Thou art 'petros' (a movable stone, a piece of rock), and upon this 'petra' (the essential rock) I will build My Church (ecclesia -- called-out people, assembly); and the gates of Hades (the grave) shall not prevail against it." The Lord Jesus did not say He would build the assembly of saints upon Peter, but upon the essential Rock, Christ, the Son of the living God; upon petra, the Rock upon which the house which fell not was founded (Matt. 7:24, 25). If it had been Peter on whom the Church was to be built, would He not have said, "Upon thee will I build My assembly"? "Upon this Rock." "Remember, He was talking to Jews. If we trace the figurative use of the word rock through Hebrew Scriptures, we find that it is never used symbolically of man, but always of God. So here at Caesarea Philippi, it is not upon Peter that the Church is built. Jesus did not trifle with figures of speech. He took up their old Hebrew illustration -- rock, always the symbol of Deity -- and said, 'Upon God -- Messiah, the Son of the living God, I will build My Church'" (G. Campbell Morgan).

This is the first time that our Lord used the word Church -- _ecclesia. It means a selected, called-out people, an assembly; it is this, the Organism, His Body, which is established on this Rock Jesus Christ, not the great Organization. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven" (Matt. 16:19). From childhood we can remember seeing cartoons of the gates of Heaven, at which stands a man with a white beard and in flowing robes, with wings, standing upon a cloud. In his hand is a great ring of keys. This is Saint Peter! The authority for these cartoons, and this false conception of some special power assigned to Peter is the verse before us. Now in the first place, Peter was given no more authority than the other disciples. Our Lord was speaking to Peter in this instance for all the disciples, for in Matthew 18:18 is recorded the same promise to them all. Secondly, they were not the keys of Heaven that were given to him, but the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens, professing Christianity. What are the keys to the Kingdom of the heavens? Undoubtedly, the Gospel. It is generally conceded that Peter used the keys for the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and for the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, the keys entrusted to Peter and to every born-again believer, open the door by the Holy Spirit; if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

"Then He charged His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ" (Matt. 16:20). He had presented Himself as Messiah, and was rejected. He had to go on to the Cross; therefore He charged them to tell no man these things.

Matt. 16:21-27

"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" (Matt. 16:21). "From that time forth," after He first mentioned the Church, He began to tell of those things which He must suffer. He alone knew what that meant; He had known since before the foundation of the world. See how we, as His Church, are identified with His death, burial and resurrection. Peter then rebuked His Lord! "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." How often we fall from the heights to the depths! But

the Lord understands. His rebuke was not to Peter, it was to Satan. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." The Lord Jesus knows how Satan works in our hearts to hurt our witness to Him, and it is often when we have been in the mountain-top experiences that he overcomes us. Christians, let us keep our eyes on the Lord, not on circumstances. We cannot condemn Peter, for we too are subject to the same experiences so often. Let us remember that the Lord recognizes who is working in us, and that by His death He has empowered us against all the fiery darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:16).

"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" (Matt. 16:24). All religions practice self-denial; Christianity alone proposes denial of self. This is not a putting aside of some pleasure, but the crucifying of self with Christ, of which our Lord is speaking. "Take up his cross." These words are not to be understood as meaning that we should choose a cross. Begin only with self-denial and the cross will come of itself. He says "his cross;" for He does not teach that we should bear the identical Cross which He bore. Everyone's cross has been prepared according to the measure of each one's strength (Martin Luther). Identification with Himself; it is His desire for us, it should be our joy for Him. "For whosoever will save his life will lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what is 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?"

We will consider verse twenty-eight with chapter seventeen, for there we have the full explanation of the Spirit's meaning.

CHAPTER XVII

Matt. 16:28

"Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). Many have read this last verse of chapter sixteen, and have closed the book, wondering as to the meaning of it. It is said that His coming refers to the destruction of Jerusalem; that may be so, in part. It is said that in the preaching of the Gospel and the power of the resurrection life His claims were substantiated; there is truth in that belief. But the clearest and truest interpretation is surely found in the record of the first five verses of chapter seventeen.

Matt. 17:1, 2

"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" (Matt. 16:28). "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them" (Matt. 17:1-2). "There be some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." Here, Peter and James and John saw the Lord in His glory. In later years Peter wrote: "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 eye witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of its own interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:16-21). For centuries the Old Testament prophets had spoken of the coming of the Lord Jesus in power and glory. "These are not cunningly devised fables," said Peter, "for the Word of prophecy is made more sure by what we, James, John and I, have seen. Prophecy is not by the will of man: but the Holy Spirit speaks through man. But to make it doubly sure that these promises are true about the power and glory of our Lord, we have been eye witnesses of His majesty. For when He received honour and glory from God the Father on the mount of Transfiguration, we heard the Voice from Heaven, God's Voice, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.'"

Surely that is what our Lord meant, that these three should not die until they should see this preview of the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.

Matt. 17:3-8

He "was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as light, and behold there appeared unto Him Moses and Elias talking with Him" (vs. 2, 3). The transfiguration scene is a foreshadowing of that which shall be when our Lord comes in Glory: (1) He appeared in His body of glory; (2) There was Moses, typical of the saints who have died in Christ and whom He shall bring with Him; (3) There was Elijah, typical of those believers who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before He comes in glory, whom He shall bring with Him; (4) There were Peter, James, and John, typifying the remnant of Israel who shall look up and see Him coming; (5) There were the multitudes at the foot of the mountain, the nations who are to be brought into the Kingdom after it is established.

Then Peter, who had made that wonderfully truthful confession shortly before: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," suggested the building of three tabernacles. It was the natural man's desire for the Kingdom, without the Cross. As if to rebuke him

for daring to put Moses and Elijah on the same plane with our Lord, "while he yet spoke, 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." Do not look at these others; they are but men. Moses was the representative of the Law; Elijah, the representative of the Prophets, the Lord Jesus is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. Peter was trying to do what the Modernists are doing today, classifying the Lord Jesus with men. Moses and Elijah were not on the same level with our Lord, nor can we by any words or theories of ours place a Gandhi or a Confucius on an equality with the Lord Jesus. This, the Lord Jesus, is My beloved Son; hear ye Him. It makes no difference what men say, hear Him. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; hear Him. "And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces ... and when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only." We will reach the full measure of our Christian growth when we see Him, and Him alone. He was transfigured before them: the word translated transfigured is used again in the New Testament, in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, and it is used in speaking of believers: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (transfigured) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Let us hear no man save Jesus only; let us see no man save Jesus only.

Matt. 17:9-13

"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. And His disciples asked Him, Why, then, say the scribes that Elias must first come?" (Matt. 17:9, 10). Even the disciples did not realize the significance of His coming death. They knew from the Old Testament prophets that Elijah should be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus upon His coming. They had seen Elijah, and the Lord in glory; now they were told to say nothing of what they had seen. Why did the scribes say that Elias must first come? Here they had seen him, and they were not to tell! "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 spoke of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:11-13). John had come in the power and spirit of Elijah; he was rejected and slain. His rejection and cruel death was a picture of that which should happen to Messiah. Elijah will still come, before the Lord returns with His own in glory, and on this occasion his testimony will be received gladly by some.

Matt. 17:14-21

We can only touch upon this portion. Coming down from the mount of transfiguration they found that Satan had been active during the Lord's absence. There was brought to the Lord one who was demon-possessed. The teaching here is dispensational, as is the whole Gospel of Matthew. This experience is typical of the Lord's return in glory. Satan has been very active during the Lord's bodily absence. When He returns then, He will find multitudes waiting for Him, but He will find many possessed of Satan's handiwork. The remnant, typified by the disciples, will be preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, with power to heal, but they will be helpless because of unbelief. Only the Lord Himself can cast out the devil from this world, and upon His coming again He shall do so.

Is it not a wonderful promise that we have? "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 to you" (Matt. 17:20). These promises are given to the disciples, heirs of the Kingdom, but we as believers are joint-heirs with Christ, and all these blessings are ours. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Prayer is communion with the Lord, fasting is self-denial, the death of the flesh. Only by unbroken fellowship with the Lord and a life entirely yielded to Him may these promises be wholly appropriated.

Matt. 17:22-27

Finally, the Lord again spoke of His approaching death. "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again" (Matt. 17:22, 23). The disciples at last began to understand, "And they were exceedingly sorry."

The miracle of the tribute money taken from the mouth of the fish was another demonstration of the Lord Jesus' coming in humility and subjecting Himself as man to the ordinances of the world in which He dwelt but of which He was never a part, and of His power and might as God in having dominion not only of the great seas and winds, but of the course of a small fish.

Truly this is the Son of God. Nothing is impossible with Him. Why do we not trust Him fully?

CHAPTER XVIII

We have seen the Lord Jesus presenting the Kingdom of the heavens to His people, Israel. By proclamation and by power He demonstrated that He was the Messiah; but in His divine wisdom He knew that He would be rejected, and that "His Hour" was approaching. Consequently it was expedient that more and more He should draw His disciples to Himself that they might know Him, and that He might instruct them in the Way in which they were to go. It is always necessary that we know Him before we can make Him known to others. It was in Paul's knowing Him, "and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering" (Phil.

3:10), that he was so able to reveal Him to others. As Christians it is our duty to feed on the Word of God which reveals God's Son, so that we may be emptied of self, and then filled by the Holy Spirit to make Him known to our fellow men.

Our Lord did not cease to heal and comfort, in His ministry, for He will always meet our needs when we come to Him; but increasingly He revealed Himself to His disciples, and spoke of His coming death and resurrection, that they might be instructed in the things of God.

Matt. 18:1

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of the heavens?"

At the same time, the disciples asked this question. In the preceding chapter we find that just before the miracle of the tribute money the Lord Jesus was talking to His disciples of His betrayal, death, and resurrection, as in Mark nine. At the same time the disciples asked, "Who, then, is the greatest?" In the verse before us the word then does not appear in the Authorized Version, but is included in both the Revised and the American Standard Versions. "Who, then?" You say You are going to die, Lord -- who, then, is the greatest? Do we not have here a striking example of the selfishness of man's heart, and of the love of God? These men who were so close to the Lord Jesus Christ had no thought of Him when He spoke of His coming death, but only of themselves. "Who, then, is the greatest?" No words of rebuke passed the lips of our Lord, for these were His own, but only loving counsel from Him Whose Name is Counsellor.

The disciples did not yet understand what was to happen in the Church Age. They were still expecting the establishment on earth at that time of the Kingdom which Messiah had come to offer. And so they sought the place of honour! May we learn from the teaching of the Word that every imagination of the thought of man's heart is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5), and may we bow humbly before our Lord, seeking His glory and not our own.

Matt. 18:2-5; 19:13-15

Lovingly the Lord Jesus called a little child into 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 the heavens" (Matt. 18:3). Who shall be greatest? Why, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of the heavens unless you become as little children. How does a child come into being? By being born, of course. And to enter into the Kingdom of the heavens, to enjoy eternal life with God the Father and God the Son, one must be converted, turned about; one must be born again. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of the heavens." Humble himself as this little child? Yes, humility and dependence -- that is the secret of greatness. Having been born again, we are to look in lowliness but in trust to our heavenly Father, as the child does to his earthly father. The new life will grow as a child grows, but nothing will stunt spiritual growth as much as confidence in self. Humble, willing to be chastened for our own development -- this is the pathway to greatness. "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:9, 10).

Further reference to the same subject is made by our Lord later, when "there were 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 the heavens" (Matt. 19:13, 14). He did not say of them, but of such -- the child is the type of the believer, the born-again one. Of such is the Kingdom of the heavens. And as He laid His hands upon them and blessed them, so He does for every child of God. We can be sure that our Lord did not just touch them with one or two fingers, but that He enfolded them within His arms. It is because He holds us in this way that He can say "neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

Matt. 18:6-10

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones who 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. Woe unto the world because of its offences! 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" (Matt. 18:6-8).

"Woe!" These are strong words that our Lord uttered. "The great thought here put before us is the identification of the Lord with every little one, every one who has become a little child, that is, who is born again. He is their Father and their Lord, closely identified with them. It reminds us of that beautiful word, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye' (Zech. 2:8) ... and so honour done to one of the little ones is done unto Him; injury done to one of them is injury done to Him. What glory of the believer this reveals! How this fact should teach us how to behave one towards the other and not despise any one who is Christ's. How apt we are to do this. This one or that one is so little taught in the Word, he is so ungracious -- and with all our criticism we forget he is, after all, one of Christ's own" (A.C. Gaebelien).

The eternal fire of these verses is not for us; the Lord, in speaking of the Kingdom of the heavens here, was speaking of the Kingdom of Matthew thirteen, professing Christianity. Those who offend and are to be cast into Hell fire are the professors of the Kingdom. The believer is never lost; "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). But the warning can be taken into our hearts, too. We cannot be honoured or used of Him if we put a stumbling block in our brother's way, nor can we enter into fulness of life if a hand, a foot, or an eye offend. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:8, 10, 13).

"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 Who is in Heaven."

Matt. 18:11-14

"For the Son of Man is come to save that which was "lost" (Matt. 18:11). The word seek is left out of this verse, for the Lord had been speaking of children. Seek indicates that the object is actively wandering, and that is not so in the case of children of whom the Lord was speaking. But that our Lord does seek is clearly shown in the verse which follows: "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? And if so be that he find it, Verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth. ..."

Yes, the Son of Man, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, came to earth to seek and to save the lost. He died on the Cross that we might live in Him, that ours might be everlasting life. It is not His will, nor the will of our Father Who is in Heaven, that one of the little ones should perish, or one of the grown up ones. He died that you might live. "Ye must be born again." Have you received Him as your Saviour; have you yielded to Him as your Lord? "I am the Door of the sheep, ... by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Our Lord had been drawing His disciples to Himself, to a fuller knowledge of His will. He had been teaching them the essentials of salvation: one must become as a little child to inherit the Kingdom, one must be born again; the Son of Man came to seek and to save, not the righteous but the lost, for it is not His will that one should perish. And in the passage before us He told His disciples of forgiveness. Who better can teach forgiveness? He Who is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person," Who upholds "all things by the word of His power" came to earth and purged us of our sins -- God is the ultimate in forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Matt. 18:15-20

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass (sin) against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15).

Moreover; here was an indication that that which was to follow had a bearing on that which had preceded, and was an additional detail of importance. The discussion had been on who should be the greatest, and our Lord had pointed out that he who humbled himself and became as a little child should be great; that he who took care to put no stumbling block in the path of another should be great; that greatness was by humility, for it is only because it is not the will of our Father Who is in Heaven, that any should perish, that any are saved.

"Moreover, if thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Here was another rule of greatness, forgiveness of the trespasses of a brother. God alone is great; He alone knows how to forgive. And let us remember that these words were spoken to the disciples, believers. This was not merely the granting of permission for certain action; it was a command from the lips of the Lord Jesus. "If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him his fault." We are not to tell someone else -- there is no excuse to gossip here. "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; then if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." If he will hear, he is gained back into fellowship.

"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" (Matt. 18:16). The Lord commanded that first we should endeavour to establish peace between a brother in the Lord and ourselves by talking directly to the brother who has trespassed, alone. But then if he will not hear, we are not to take him before the assembly, nor to refuse to fellowship with him, before his sin has been established before two or three witnesses. This is a fulfilment of the law: "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15).

The Lord Jesus Christ died to forgive us our sins, past, present, and future. Our only condition for such forgiveness is that we confess that we are sinners and receive His sacrifice. And so He has commanded believers that they shall give every opportunity to

one of His own children to repent of iniquities, that they may be in full fellowship with Him and with the saints.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church (ecclesia-assembly); but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican" (Matt. 18:17). God's loving grace is wonderful to behold. As through the ages He has given man every opportunity to be restored, so here, our Lord has commanded that we should not refuse to fellowship with an offender until every resource to restore him has been tried. The members of His Body are to be forgiving, as He was forgiving. You will recall a further instruction to believers in Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." We know from the previous command of our Lord that this restoration is dependent upon repentance. Knowing God's love, and that the brother of whom the Lord was speaking was a child of God, we know that this letting him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican is not as the measure of ostracism except to chasten, that that one may be brought to a consciousness of his sin and God's grace, and may be restored. Such surely is God's will for those whom the Lord came to seek and to save. There is no place for hardness or coldness in the Church; we cannot be hard, when we consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted. It is only by God's grace when we are not the offending ones.

There follows one of the great and precious promises of the Word, which has been of comfort to the Church through the centuries: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father Who is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:19, 20). First, these words relate to the conditions of which our Lord had been speaking. The effort to restore one who has sinned is to be in love and prayer to the Father. It is not to be done in bitterness, but in the grace of the Lord Jesus, among those who are spiritual. Secondly, in our Lord's words is established the fact that His presence was no longer to be confined to a tabernacle or a temple, but where two or three of His own are gathered together in His Name. In His Name! If it is not in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, then no church building, no matter how magnificent nor how dedicated, contains the presence of the Lord. But when two or three are gathered together in His Name, then, whether in a church, or a house, or a room, or wherever, "there am I in the midst of them." Born-again believers are new creatures in Christ, Who indwells them, and Whose presence is a promise in their gatherings together unto His Name.

But while this great promise refers directly to the case at hand, it is not limited. On that day to His disciples, today to you if you are a believer, the promise holds touching anything. "If two or three of you agree touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father Who is in Heaven. For when two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." What wonderful works may be accomplished by the united prayer of believers of the same mind, gathered together unto His Name.

Matt. 18:21-35

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21, 22). Peter, again the spokesman for the disciples, attempted, it would seem, to indicate how very often he was willing to forgive, how generous he was. Scattered throughout Rabbinical teaching may be found references to forgiveness, that one is to forgive a brother once, twice, and in some cases even three times, but never more than that. Peter was willing to go much farther than the teaching! But the Lord showed him how little he knew of the limitless grace of God. Seven times? No, seventy times seven; and that is the privilege of the believer: "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13). How has God the Father forgiven us? He has blotted out all our transgressions and will remember them no more; in like manner we Christians are to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).

"Therefore is the Kingdom of the heavens likened unto a certain King. ..." We have mentioned in our early studies that there are two meanings in the Gospel according to Matthew of "the Kingdom of the heavens;" one, the earthly Messianic rule of the Lord Jesus from the throne of His father David, which He offered to Israel and which was rejected, but which will be established when He comes again in glory to reign during the Millennial Age; the other, professing Christianity, of which the Church is a part, the mystery revealed in the parables of Matthew thirteen. We believe for reasons which we shall set forth, that "the Kingdom of the heavens" of the parable before us refers to our Lord's Messianic rule during the Millennium, and not to professing Christianity in this age, as do the previous Kingdom parables.

First, here our Lord is mentioned as a certain King. In Matthew thirteen, where the parables in which He is pictured mention Him, it is as a sower, a man, a merchant man, an householder. But these references to Him are made of a period when He was on earth presenting the Kingdom, or absent but not yet ascended to the throne of David. Secondly, the teaching of the parable under study tells us of a King Who forgave a servant a debt of ten thousand talents (about ten million dollars, more than he could ever pay) but later was wroth at that servant because on his part he refused to forgive a debt of one hundred pence (less than twenty-five dollars) "and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due." Such cannot be the action of the Lord dealing with sin during the Age of Grace, when forgiveness means blotting out, remembering no more, for that would be contrary to all Scripture.

Thirdly, the parable has to do with forgiving us as we forgive others. Now the so-called Lord's Prayer, the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught to His disciples when He unfolded the constitution of the Kingdom of the heavens, recorded in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:9-13, is a Kingdom prayer; that is, it was included in the manifesto of the Kingdom as it shall be when He rules in Jerusalem. And in that Kingdom prayer He taught: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We know that in the Age of Grace we are forgiven by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not because we forgive someone else. Forgiveness on our part today is the result, not the cause, of Christ's forgiving us (Eph. 4:32).

With this light upon the parable before us, it becomes clear that the dealing of the King with His unforgiving servant is a picture of how justice shall be measured in the Millennium. It has nothing to do with the Christian, who will never be judged for his sins, but only for rewards according to his works, and who will not be at that time a servant, but a co-ruler with Christ.

"So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18:35). The parable is completed in verse thirty-four. The Father is the Judge here, not the Lord. This, then, cannot be the judgment of the believers' works; nor is it for believers' sins, for we know that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). This judgment therefore has to do with professors, not possessors, who show by their lives that they are none of His.

How it constrains us, partakers of the divine nature, to have the mind of Christ, forgiving others, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

CHAPTER XIX

Again we find our Lord going into Judaea, His face set toward Jerusalem publicly to offer Himself as King, to be formally rejected by His people and to be crucified. In this passage He is approached by four different types of people for four different reasons: the multitude came to Him with their physical needs; His enemies came to trap Him with ethical questions; those who loved Him brought their children for His blessing; and some approached seeking eternal life. In every case the Lord Jesus heard and answered in all power, wisdom and compassion, meeting each need as it was brought to Him. It is in such a fashion that He hears us when we call upon Him, for our souls' salvation, or for the spiritual or earthly needs of His own. "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Matt. 19:1, 2

"And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came unto the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there." God says: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). There is only one remedy for the sickness of sin: cleansing by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He healed them there." You are saved? Then He has empowered you to have the victory over the temptations of the daily life. You have not received the Lord Jesus as your Saviour? Then, here and now, you may do so, by bowing down to God and saying: "Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and I receive you now. Thy Word tells me: 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6:23). Wash me clean in Thy shed blood and I shall be free."

Matt. 19:3-12

"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?" (Matt. 19:3). Once more the Pharisees! Instead of bowing down to worship Him Who was the fulfilment of all the prophets, God Himself in the flesh, they attempted to entrap Him. This was a question on which even the Pharisees themselves were not in accord, so that no matter how the Lord might answer, they thought to confuse Him. Once again entered the question of the oral law, rabbinical injunctions which had been added to the law. Some contended that there was no cause for divorce except unfaithfulness, while some thought it lawful to put away a wife for every cause, no matter how small. Our Lord answered from Scripture: "Have ye not read ... that He Who made them at the beginning made them male and female, 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? (See Gen. 2:24.) Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:5, 6). How could these Pharisees hope to ensnare by certain rabbinical interpretations Him Who "was in the beginning with God," by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not anything made that was made (John 1:2, 3)? The Lord Jesus Christ created them male and female, He made them one flesh. "But," said the Pharisees, "why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" Just as their father the Devil misquoted Scripture, so they distorted it in their endeavour to entrap the Lord Jesus. They were referring to Deuteronomy 24:1, but our Lord then told them that Moses did not command, but allowed them to put away their wives for a reason. "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered (allowed) you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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 who is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:8, 9). God instituted marriage as a permanent relationship. In His grace, He has recognized human frailties, and for one cause alone countenances divorce, for the

cause of unfaithfulness. How highly He regards marriage may be seen in Ephesians five, where Paul by the Holy Spirit uses the husband as a type of Christ, and the wife as typical of the Church, the Bride of Christ. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ... For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:22-27, 31, 32). Born-again husbands and wives who regard their relationship to each other as a type of the relationship between the Lord Jesus and themselves will have little difficulty with the bill of divorcement which Moses allowed.

Verses ten to twelve cover a difficult passage we shall only touch upon. The disciples felt that if there was danger of divorce, it was not good to marry. Our Lord then explained that there were some who did not marry because they were born with physical disabilities, some who had been cruelly mutilated and as a result should not marry, and that there were others who felt that for the sake of the Kingdom they should never marry. Paul, too, spoke of this: (1 Cor. 7), the implication in both instances is that there are a few who feel that they can be used of the Lord more fully if they remain unmarried. "But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. ... He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:11, 12). Let him who is so led abide in this teaching.

Matt. 19:13-15 See 18:2-5.

Matt. 19:16-26

"And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Here was one who was morally a good man, who called forth the compassion of our Lord, Who, looking on him, loved him (Mark 10:21). This young man had good intentions, the desire for eternal life, but his theology was poor. First he approached the Lord Jesus as a Teacher instead of as God, and secondly, he thought to attain eternal life by his own merit, by the law. But the law is only our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24), to show us our need of a Saviour. This man, typical of the many moral and religious men of our own day, was ignorant of the fact that eternal life is not a result of what we do, but of what God has done. And so the Lord Jesus met him on his own ground. Our Lord said, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God." The Lord said, in other words, "God is the only One Who is good. If I am good, then I am God, and not just a teacher. If I am not God, then I am not good." And then, having pointed out this fact of His Deity to the man to whom He was speaking, He said: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Here is an interesting bit of dispensational teaching. You will recall that a similar question was asked of Paul and Silas, by the Philippian gaoler, in Acts 16:30: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Lord Jesus said: "Keep the commandments;" Paul and Silas said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Who was right? They were both right, of course. The young man who came to the Lord in Judaea was living in the Age of Law. Men were responsible to keep the law perfectly, though, since all men failed to keep the law, God had provided the blood. Yet the law was the test. But since then Christ has died for the remission of sins, and the law is no longer a means of testing. Today, in the Age of Grace, salvation, eternal life, is to be had in one way only: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"Keep the commandments." Which? "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 commandments which the Lord told this man to keep were those which affected his relationship with his fellow man. "And the young man saith unto Him, All these have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" Now here was a moral and righteous young man, in the eyes of the world, "touching the law blameless." How did the Lord Jesus answer this? In wisdom He showed the young man how he failed in obeying, that though he was earnest and desirous of righteousness, he did not love his neighbour as himself. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come, follow Me. But when the young man heard it, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:21, 22). Yes, no doubt he was sorrowful, but we know that our Lord's heart was more touched than was the young man's, because that man would not recognize his own failure and his need that God alone could save him.

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. 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" (Matt. 19:23, 24). The needle here mentioned is a common sewing or embroidery needle, rather than a small gateway through which a camel can go. In answer to the disciples' question, "Who, then, can be saved?" the Lord replied, "with men it is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Of men salvation is impossible; there is nothing we can do to be saved, for salvation is by the finished work that Christ has accomplished for us.

Matt. 19:27-30

"Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19:27). The Holy Spirit has revealed Peter in the Gospel of Matthew in all the weakness of the flesh. Only once did he speak words worthy of commendation, and then it was revealed to him by the heavenly Father (Matt. 16:16). Yet Peter was the great apostle of the record of early Acts! The Holy Spirit has revealed to us in Peter the power of His regenerating work, to show us that no matter how weak we may be in the flesh, He can mold us and use us to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"What do we get? We have given up all; what is our portion?" Surely it was the flesh speaking. Yet the Lord did not rebuke him, but told him of one of the things which had been prepared for His own. "Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). This portion of the Lord's reply applies only to the disciples. The regeneration when the Son of Man shall reign, refers to the millennial rule of our Lord, when creation shall be renewed. (Refer to Isaiah 11:6-9; Zech. 12:8; Rom. 8:19.) Then the disciples reigning with Messiah, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, a restoration of this method of ruling Israel (Judges 1:11; 2:18) as promised to His people: "And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isa. 1:26).

"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 a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:29). While the disciples alone shall rule over the twelve tribes of Israel, all those who have received the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, every one that for His sake hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or parents, or husbands, or wives, shall receive an hundredfold, shall inherit eternal life, and "shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). The exceeding and precious promises of God's Word shall come to pass. Let us not be concerned with "what we shall have," for our heavenly Father is better able to know our needs and to prepare our inheritance than are we, but let us be occupied with Christ and the glory of His Name. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

CHAPTER XX

We must be careful, in studying yet another of the Kingdom parables, to note to whom and under what circumstances our Lord spoke in parables. The one before us was addressed to the disciples, heirs of the Kingdom, upon the occasion, directly after Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19:27). Our Lord had assured the disciples that they should "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" in the regeneration when He should take His place upon the throne of His glory. Then, that they might know that rewards should be made according to His will, He said: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30).

Matt. 20:1-16

Since the verse above, Matthew 19:30, introduces the parable, and since the parable concludes with "So the last shall be first, and the first last," we are fully justified in interpreting that the teaching has to do with those things about which the Lord Jesus had been speaking.

"For the Kingdom of the heavens is like unto a man that is an householder ..." and the parable follows, verses one to sixteen. First, who is the householder? In the last parable of Matthew thirteen, the householder is the Lord, and consequently we may be sure that it is again He in this instance. There are some who have taught that the servants are sinners, and that no matter when they receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour, their reward is eternal salvation. This interpretation can hardly be so, for salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Also, such an interpretation would be taking the parable out of its context, which has to do with reward for service and not with salvation.

The householder is the Lord Jesus; the servants are His disciples, children of the Kingdom. The disciples had become occupied with their future position, the rewards for their faithfulness. In His loving way the Lord was reminding them that everything that they were, or should be, was a result, not of their self-efforts, but of God's grace. He, in His divine sovereignty, alone could give the rewards, and He would do so according to His will, and not according to their thoughts. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

And by His Word, the parable before us, He is reminding us also that all that we have is a result of grace. There is only one foundation: Jesus Christ. One day He shall judge the believers for their works, when "Every man's work shall be made manifest" (1 Cor. 3:13). But though this be so, our Lord does not want us to dwell upon our rewards, but upon the riches of His grace by which He made us free. One simple truth is taught here; a man's reward shall be, not according to the length of his service, nor according

to the notoriety of his service, but under the will of God according to his faithfulness to the opportunity afforded him. "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be (the) called, but few chosen" (Matt. 20:15-16).

Matt. 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." Little comment is needed. Gradually, but surely His hour was drawing near, when He should fulfil that which had been in the mind of God from Eternity. His disciples did not understand; the full realization of what He should suffer was hid from them (Luke 18:34). But He knew all that the bitter cup should mean. Matchless love!

Matt. 20:20-28

"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" (Matt. 20:20, 21). They could not have understood His words, or they would never have come in this fashion. While the mother of James and John is here mentioned, the chief censure should be upon James and John. In Mark's record of the event, they asked the favour, and our Lord's answer here was to them, indicating that they had a part in the request, and were at fault. But we repeat, they could not have fully understood the previous statement of the Lord. Again no rebuke came from the mouth of our Lord, but He answered, "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." Had they understood, they would never have so answered. They desired to sit the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in the Kingdom. Were they able to drink of the cup that our Lord should drink of, would they have been willing to hang one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in the place of the thieves at Calvary? Yes, later they were able. The Lord said: "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup" -- but would they have been able then? No -- it was His death and resurrection which empowered them to face martyrdom and exile. As yet they were not able, but "they understood none of these things."

"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" (Matt. 20:23). The Lord Jesus came in humiliation, to do the will of, and to exalt, the Father in Heaven. Consequently, even the bestowal of the honoured places shall be left to God the Father. The Lord is now raised and seated in Heaven awaiting the completion of His Body, the Bride, but He is subject to His Father. When every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, it will be to the glory of God the Father. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be All in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

"And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren" (not the mother). But the Lord Jesus called them to Him. He said that in the Gentile world the princes and the great exercise authority over others. "But it shall not be so among you (heirs of the Kingdom): but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26, 27). The Kingdom is not like the world; those who are greatest in God's sight are those who humble themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the greatest of all, "came not to be ministered unto, but to give His life a ransom for many." "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 8:8, 9).

Matt. 20:29-34

"And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. ... So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him" (Matt. 20:29, 30, 34). This was the last act in the public ministry of the Lord Jesus before He formally presented Himself to His own people Israel in His own city, Jerusalem. Recorded as it is in this Gospel, it has a deeper significance than simply the account of another miracle. The multitudes were following the Lord, but they did not recognize Him as Messiah, the Son of David. It is true that in the excitement of His entry into Jerusalem they cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord." But there was no meaning, but hysteria, in this, for not long after the same voices were screaming: "Crucify Him." By the wayside sat two blind men who heard that Jesus was passing. What was their cry? "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David." They recognized Him as the One for Whom they had been looking, though they could not see Him, and He opened their eyes that the fact that He is the Lord, Son of David, might be established in the mouths of two or more witnesses, according to law (Deut. 19:15).

These men are also a type of the remnant of Israel at the end of the age, after the Church has been taken, who, in darkness will cry to the Lord Jesus as the Son of David, calling upon Him to deliver them. Though Israel will not see Him, they will believe on Him

as the promised One. Then He will enter Jerusalem in honour and glory, and the remnant of Israel shall behold Him and will sing praises to His Name: "Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord."

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CHAPTER XXI

The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point of the history of the ages. From eternity, from the creation, the Cross was God's plan for the redemption of the race; so in the fulness of time God sent His own Son to be born of a virgin that He might die for your sins and mine. The Lord Jesus came to earth in humiliation, He lived His life in perfect obedience to the Father's will, steadfastly setting His face toward Jerusalem that His death might be accomplished. The chapter before us records important events which led up to the fulfilment of the Father's decree and the Son's purpose; for here our Lord publicly offered Himself as King to His people, and within one week He was publicly rejected in the most positive way He could be rejected, by being put to death. The Lord Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem has been called His Triumphal Entry. From the world's view-point, it could hardly be termed triumphal, for it led to His arrest and death. But in God's wisdom, it was a triumph; the very fact that it led to the Lord's death accomplished our salvation, God's triumph over Satan and sin, and over the power of death, by which our sinless Lord could not be bound.

We have seen the King born, we have heard the Kingdom of the heavens proclaimed, we have read the constitution of the Kingdom, we have been warned that the King would be rejected, and have seen the growing hatred of the religious leaders toward that end, we have observed the manifestation of the King's power that He is God; we shall see in the portion before us that though He was acclaimed as the King should have been: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord," the multitudes neither knew Him nor understood what they said. For when, Jerusalem having been stirred, they asked, "Who is this?" the multitude answered, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

Matt. 21:1-5

"And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethpage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, 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 say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them" (Matt. 21:1-3).

Heretofore the Lord Jesus had never sought prominence. He had entered Jerusalem before, quietly and unheralded; He had ministered to the multitudes in the villages and on the hillsides; He had told many whom He healed: "Go, and tell no man." This "Triumphal Entry" was not by chance, but by deliberate design. "Go ... find the ass ... the Lord hath need." This was to be the occasion for the public offer of Himself as King, and consequently He in His foreknowledge arranged the acclamation to suit His time. Surely He is God; all that we have seen in the Gospel proves that. And here again He demonstrated His power. Was it not by His Holy Spirit that the prophet Zechariah had written more than five hundred years before: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass"? Surely, then, Messiah God knew where the ass would be found, and what question His disciples would be asked (See Mark 11:3-6) when they went to loose the beast. Again He demonstrated His identity before His disciples and the multitude. In passing, it should be noted that Matthew 21:5, in quoting Zechariah 9:9, leaves out a clause: "He is just, and having salvation." This is just another proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Had man written Matthew's Gospel he would have quoted the full verse, but under the Holy Spirit's guidance a clause is left out which should be left out in this Jewish Gospel, for "He is just, and having salvation," because Israel rejected her King, will not apply to the Jewish nation until the Lord's second coming, in power and glory, when the remnant of Israel shall receive Him as their Messiah and King.

Matt. 21:6-9

"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 strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21:6-9). Here described is the greatest moment in the history of the nation Israel. Their King, promised through the centuries, was here before them, presenting Himself as He entered the Holy City of His father David. That event of which the prophets spoke, which father had handed down to son in great and desired hope, was at hand. We shall see what Israel did with it.

The greatness of our Lord's humility is portrayed here. He Who was rich for our sakes became poor. The King of kings and Lord of lords was making His "triumphal entry" to the seat of His Kingdom! With the blare of trumpets, on a white charger, with the clash of arms, in regal attire? No -- but with the cry of the common people, on a beast of burden, with the swish of branches, in His peasant's garments. There was a great stir so that all the city was moved, but Rome was not worried. Rome was used to military display when the emperor entered its cities: Rome saw no arms, no cause for dismay; in fact, Rome paid little attention to the event, for later Pilate said: "What evil hath He done? I find no fault in Him." There was no accusation of sedition. Yes, it was a lowly and

meeK King Who entered Jerusalem on that day, but it was none the less God the Son fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah. The stately procession of the victorious Caesars and the rulers of other nations have been forgotten long since, but the "triumphal entry" of our Lord Jesus Christ is recorded in God's Word and will never pass away. For a brief moment the Lord Jesus was acclaimed, "The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord." Five days later the multitudes again cried, this time shouting: "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him: He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Isa. 53:3).

Matt. 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" (Matt. 21:10, 11). Rejected! "Who is this? This is Jesus the prophet." Here was the first step in the rejection after the Lord's public presentation of Himself. Their cries were for the Son of David, but even as they shouted in their enthusiasm, they did not believe their own words. They were carried away for a season by His power, but at the moment when He would have come as Messiah to His own people, a Deliverer, they despised Him and turned Him away. Not Messiah, not the King, but "This is Jesus the Prophet." With these words the Son of God was rejected and Israel cast aside her blessing, and the dispensation of the Law approached its end. But the Lord Jesus will come again to Jerusalem. Then He shall come from the heavens, sitting upon a white horse, His eyes shall be as a flame of fire, on His head will be many crowns, He will be clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and His Name shall be called the Word of God, King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16). Then Israel shall see Him Whom they have pierced, and they shall bow down and worship Him, the Son of David: "Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord."

Matt. 21:12-13

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:12, 13).

The first official act of the King was the cleansing of the Temple, His Father's House and His. This is but a shadow of what shall occur when He comes in glory. Upon this occasion He found His House a den of thieves, housing the moneychangers, who at gain to themselves exchanged the official coinage of Rome for Jewish money for temple gifts; He found those who sold and bought doves, for offerings. Here, coming as the King to be rejected, He cast out the thieves, saying, "My House shall be called a house of prayer," quoting from Isaiah 56:7, "but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Jer. 7:11).

Yes, our Lord Jesus will come again, in power and in glory, and then He shall find the re-established temple much more besieged by the children of Satan. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). Then He will fulfil the prophecy of Malachi 3:1-3, only foreshadowed upon the present occasion: "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. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

Matt. 21:14-16

"And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them. 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. And said unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say?" (Matt. 21:14-16). From a scene of judgment we are taken to a picture of the blessing that followed our Lord's first coming as King, and that will follow His second entry, as King in power, when all diseases shall be healed.

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did" -- the chief priests and scribes! Now we know that there was trouble. How blind! Those who should have fallen down in worship, who should have been happiest in shouts of joy: "Hosanna to the Son of David," were sore displeased. "Hearest Thou what these say? Why, these children are crying for joy: 'Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord.' Stop them! It's blasphemy!" "And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength" (Psa. 8:1, 2). Our Lord signified that the Psalms of David speak of Him, and truly it was fulfilled: out of the mouths of children was His praise perfected. Thus was the enemy stilled.

Matt. 21:17

"And He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and He lodged there" (Matt. 21:17). He, the true Son of David, had come as King, and had been rejected. In the morning there were shouts of praise; in the evening they were sore displeased. Night has come upon Israel; the King has left them because of their unbelief. But He will return, and a remnant of Israel, in her darkest hour shall see Him and believe.

Matt. 21:18, 19

"Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered" (Matt. 21:18). "He hungered" -- not only is the Lord Jesus perfect God, but He was perfect Man subject to human feelings with us. But we believe that here there was more than physical hunger; there was also a spiritual hunger. The fig tree which He saw in the way (v. 19) is a type of Israel. There was nothing on it but leaves; no fruit. In Mark eleven we are told that it was not yet time for figs. Thus Israel was barren; there was religious formality, the leaves, and one might expect to see early fruitfulness. But God in His knowledge knew that it was not yet the time when Israel should be fruitful, to believe. So finding no fruit, He said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." In the same way He spoke to unbelieving Israel. "And presently the fig tree withered away."

Matt. 21:20-22

"And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!" (Matt. 21:20). Israel, who should have been ready to establish the Lord Jesus as Messiah and King, was only a hindrance to Him, an obstacle in His path. The Lord Jesus then told the disciples: "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 (a mountain typifies any obstacle), Be thou removed, and be cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:21, 22). Now we well realize that some say that this promise was in relation to unbelieving Israel, the mountain, and that the promise applies only to the disciples. We do not believe that it is so limited. Our Lord was speaking to His disciples, believers, children of the Kingdom. We who are born again are His disciples, and the promise says: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask." There is a like promise for the Church: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14, 15). The only limitation is our faith; "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Matt. 21:23-27

"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?" (Matt. 21:23). The narrative is found in the Word, and little exposition is needed. The Lord, on the preceding day, had cleansed the Temple; on this day He began teaching, no doubt to multitudes of Jews who had come into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. Then the scribes and elders of the people, an official body representing the priesthood and the laity, asked Him by what authority He did these things, that is, the cleansing and the teaching in the temple. One of our Lord's names is Wisdom. He knew that their questioning was insincere, that they who would not receive the testimony of the forerunner, John the Baptist, could not receive His testimony either. And so the Lord met them with another question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from Heaven, or of men?" That was a tester! They knew that they should say: "From Heaven." But if they said that, the Lord would ask why they had not received John and his testimony as to Who the Lord is, who said: "He must increase, but I must decrease." They wanted to say: "Of men," but they were afraid of the multitudes who believed in John as a prophet. So they answered: "We cannot tell." Our Lord replied, "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things." It is folly to argue heavenly things with one who is insincere and will not tell the truth. The Lord knows men's hearts, and He knew that these who would not receive John's witness to Him, that He is God, would not receive His own testimony concerning Himself.

Matt. 21:28-32

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today 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. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" (Matt. 21:28-31).

The teaching is very clear. The Lord had just said He would not tell them on what authority He did these things. Then -- "What think ye? A certain man had two sons. ..." Now John had come with the following message: "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." The first son typifies the publicans and harlots, who pretended no interest at first, but afterwards repented. The second son speaks of the religious leaders who should have been interested, who said, "I, sir" (The word go is italicized and does not appear in the Greek). "I, sir" -- they pointed to themselves in contrast to the others, they called attention to their own righteousness, but they repented not. The Lord Jesus forced them to bring their own verdict upon themselves. "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 harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

"The Son of Man came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13).

Matt. 21:33-42

"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" (Matt. 21:33). In Isaiah 5:7 we read: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." The husbandmen are the religious leaders who should have kept the vineyard for Jehovah God so that it might be fruitful to His glory. But when the time of the fruit drew near, one by one the servants whom God sent, that is, the prophets, were not respected but were rejected and maltreated. Finally God sent His own 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" (Matt. 21:38). Here before the elders and scribes, the husbandmen, stood the Son Himself. What did they do? Did they receive Him; did they believe on Him? No -- "And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him" (vs. 39). Blind Israel; "blind leaders of the blind"! In the previous parable the Lord had forced them to return the verdict against themselves; in this one He forced them to pronounce judgment upon themselves. "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 to other husbandmen, who shall render Him the fruits in their season" (Matt. 21:40, 41).

Our Lord predicted in this parable what should befall Him. He knew the awful death that should be His, but for you and me, for the joy that was set before Him, "He endured the cross, despising the shame," that we might share His inheritance. The scribes and elders also predicted what should befall them, for the Lord Jesus made them say that they were miserable sinners who deserved punishment at the hands of a righteous God, but they did not yet know or realize the meaning of their own words. Then the Lord said to 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" (Matt. 21:42, quoting from Psalm 118:22, 23, proving again the Messianic portent of the Psalms of David). He is the Stone Whom they (the builders) rejected. Hear Paul: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). Listen to Peter: "Unto you therefore who believe He is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the Same is made the Head of the corner, and a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:7, 8). On this Rock, Christ crucified and raised again, is the Church built. Can you sing with other believers: "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand"? Believe on Him, and you shall be saved. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Matt. 21:43, 44

Then the Lord pronounced judgment: "Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: but on whosoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:43, 44). The Kingdom of God is taken from unbelieving Israel. They had been rejecting the King; He in turn rejected them.

Part of the prophetic teaching (of verse forty-four) has been and is being fulfilled: Christ a stumbling block to disbelieving Jew and Gentile. The other portion is yet future when the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Stone cut without hands," shall fall and grind to powder the Gentile world-powers (See Dan. 2; Rev. 16). That will be when He comes in glory. Praise the Lord, we His Bride, before that time will have been caught up "to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Matt. 21:45, 46

"And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables (plural), they perceived that He spake of them" (v. 45). At last light appeared to the blind; yet they did not repent. "But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet." We pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to any unsaved one who reads these words, to convict of sin, and to bring that one to the Solid Rock, the Lord Jesus, Who will save to the uttermost them that believe. As for believers, may we look to the Lord for His teaching, and may we look for His soon coming for His own. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

CHAPTER XXII

Our Lord had entered Jerusalem to offer Himself as King, and at the same time He entered into the last week of His earthly ministry before His crucifixion. Fearlessly He upbraided His enemies, the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the

Sadducees. You will recall that chapter twenty-one closes with the record of two parables which so disturbed and angered the Lord's opponents that they sought some means of destroying Him. "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spoke of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet."

Matt. 22:1-14

"Then Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables and said, The Kingdom of the heavens is like unto a certain king, who made a marriage for his son. . . ." Now there is no doubt who the King is, and who the Son is. The King is God the Father, and the Son is Jesus Christ our Lord. The parable speaks of the Kingdom of the heavens offered to Israel; that is, the Kingdom over which the Son was to reign. God the Father sent forth His servants, the prophets ending with John the Baptist, "to call them that were bidden to the wedding." Who was that? Israel, of course. Israel rejected Messiah; and He was crucified.

"Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them who are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" (Matt. 22:4). Who was bidden? Israel, of course. Messiah had been crucified, but He was raised again: all things were ready for Israel to come. "The other servants" are the apostles. The invitation to Israel as a nation is recorded in Acts 3:12-26. It was not the Gospel of Grace that Peter preached upon this occasion, but an invitation to Israel the nation: "Ye men of Israel ... the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers. ... But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, Who before was preached unto you. ... Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." This was not a message to the Gentiles; it was Jewish, exclusively. The times of refreshing and restitution was a promise to Israel, when Messiah should reign on earth (Deut. 30:1-9; 2 Sam. 7:16; Zech. 12:8). God the Father was ready then for the Son to return to reign; so the Gospel of the Kingdom was again preached: "Repent ye." "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them" (Matt. 22:5, 6). The persecution began immediately (see Acts 4:1), and reached its climax with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 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" (Matt. 22:7). History tells us of the complete fulfilment of this prophecy, and that of Luke 21:20-24,, in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when Titus came upon the city, and destroyed it, and Israel was dispersed. Then God's dealing with Israel as a nation was completed; He will deal with the nation again, after the Age of Grace. In the meantime, during this Church Age, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all men may come to God through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray for the Jews, and to be used of God yourself in dealing with them that they, too, may be convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit, that many may come into the knowledge of God's grace and salvation in these last days.

"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who 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" (Matt. 22:8-10).

The interpretation generally accepted by those who have a knowledge of dispensational truth is that this invitation: "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage" (vs. 9), refers to the new message, the Gospel of Grace, which was sent out to the Gentiles. We have the deepest respect for the men of God who are so led, yet we believe such teaching to be inconsistent with the accuracy of detail in the parables of our Lord. A certain king made a marriage for His Son; the Son is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom. Where there is a bridegroom and a wedding, there must be a bride. Who is the bride? The Church, of course, the Body of believers of this age trusting in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus. The Gospel of Grace is an invitation to become part of the Bride of Christ, not to be a guest at the wedding. We are told in verse eight: "The wedding is ready." When will the marriage of the Lamb take place? After the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, at the end of Jacob's trouble, just before the second coming of the Lord Jesus in glory (Rev. 19). After the second invitation was rejected, Jerusalem was destroyed and Israel scattered. We believe that the third invitation is also to Israel, during the Tribulation; that the going out into the highways and gathering together of all as many as they found, both good and bad, refers to Israel regathered from all nations to her land. Then Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the King, with His Bride, the Church, will come to reign; then the Kingdom of the heavens will be established upon the earth. This is the wedding feast of joy and blessing to which Israel was invited, and which she twice refused. It was the same invitation in each instance. And Israel the nation, both the good and the bad, who have not been slain during the tribulation, will gather for the feast.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 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. For many

are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:11-14).

"And when the king came to see the guests." The King of verse two is the Father; but is not the King of verse eleven the Son? The Bridegroom and the Bride have been invited; the Father has given the Son the throne of David and He has come upon the earth to rule. He is now the King, and when He came to see the guests, He saw one not clothed in a wedding garment; not in the righteousness of Christ, but in his own righteousness. "Friend, how comest thou in thither not having a wedding garment?" "How? -- You were alive at the time of the Rapture? (See Appendix D.) You have lived through the Great Tribulation? You have seen the signs of Messiah's return in glory? And yet you have not believed on Me?" Before the Lord every mouth is stopped; "and he was speechless." "Then said the king ... bind him, ... and cast him into outer darkness." When the Lord returns in glory, He will judge Israel as to who shall enter the land of Kingdom blessing. "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. ... And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge from among you the rebels and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 20:33-38; see also Malachi 3:2-5).

Matt. 22:15-22

"Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk, 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, ... Tell us therefore, what Thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" (Matt. 22:15-17).

The Lord Jesus had finished the parable of Israel's unbelief. The Pharisees, like the man not having a wedding garment, were speechless before the Lord. Instead, they went and counselled with the Herodians, who like the Sadducees were hated enemies. The forces of Satan combined to entrap our Lord, just as today they are allied in trying to destroy the Word of God. The Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees -- the record of this chapter shows us their efforts to entangle the Lord Jesus. Ritualism, Worldliness, Rationalism -- these are the devil's forces of unbelief and hatred against the atoning work of our Lord, but God will prevail. Satan has been defeated at the Cross of the Lord Jesus; and by His resurrection.

"Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar?" On this subtle question their hopes were based. If the Lord should answer "No," then the Herodians, who favoured Roman authority, would accuse Him of conspiracy against the government. If He answered "Yes," then the Pharisees, the religious leaders, would have claimed that He favoured subjection to Rome and therefore could not be Messiah. But our Lord knew their thoughts. Again, He Whose Name is Wisdom, overcame Satan's agents and struck back at them with His answer: "Shew Me the tribute money. ... 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." Once more they were speechless. The answer was perfect: This is Caesar's image; give tribute therefore to Caesar. But ye hypocrites, render unto God the things which are God's. That is where you fall down, not in the tribute paid to Caesar, but in the tribute rendered to God, Whom you are supposed to serve. Render unto Him those things which are His. "When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way."

Matt. 22:23-33

"The same day came to Him the Sadducees, who 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. 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" (Matt. 22:23-28).

We can imagine the attitude of the Sadducees when they asked this question of the Lord: first, contempt for their enemies, the Pharisees and the Herodians, who had failed to trap Him; secondly, unbelief in the Lord and the Scriptures; thirdly, a sarcastic sneer at the question of the resurrection, for they did not believe in life after death, in spirits or angels. What did our Lord say to them? "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." He did not try to prove that the Scriptures are the Word of God, but He accused them of ignorance. "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" (Matt. 22:29-30). "In a few words, the Lord affirms the truth of the resurrection, the existence of angels, which they denied, and shows that their carnal imaginations were but the result of their carnal hearts. The body of humiliation will not be continued in resurrection, and earthly relations such as marrying and giving in marriage will cease there" (A.C. Gaebelein).

"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 a God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:31, 32). In speaking to Moses, God had said (Ex. 3:6): "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob." Not I was the God of your fathers, but I AM. The Lord Jesus here affirmed the resurrection by the words of God. No further proof is needed. "And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine."

Matt. 22:34-40

"But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, who was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, what is the great commandment in the law?" (Matt. 22:34-36).

Here was the third testing. As the Lord Jesus was tempted three times by Satan, so He was by Satan's instruments. But the Devil knew Who Jesus was; he approached the Lord, "Since Thou be the Son of God." The world, however, does not believe, and these men in each instance approached the Lord Jesus not as Lord but as Master (Teacher). To them He was only human.

Then a lawyer brought up a question on which there was much divergence of opinion, as they thought He would not answer with finality. "Which is the great commandment in the law?" He Who made the Law, Who was the fulfilment of the Law, in all wisdom and knowledge answered truth; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). What man who understands these words is not condemned? But God has provided a way, by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe on Him, receive Him as your Saviour, and it shall be counted unto you as righteousness, and you shall be saved. Again His opponents marvelled; in Mark twelve it is recorded that the lawyer answered, "Thou hast said the truth," a great admission for an enemy of the Lord. And the Lord Jesus replied: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." Not far? No, for he recognized the wisdom and the truth. But "not far" is not in; you must receive the Lord Jesus personally, and put your trust in His finished work.

Matt. 22:41-46

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?"

It was now the Lord's turn, and He did not fail as they failed. "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" That seemed an easy question to the Pharisees; were they not the teachers of the Scriptures? Why, Messiah, Christ, was to be the Son of David, and to sit upon David's throne. Yes, they knew the Scriptures, but they did not understand them. The Lord then asked: "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? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?" (Matt. 22:43-45). Yes, Messiah is the Son of David, but He is also the Son of God. Otherwise, why would David, in Psalm 110, speaking of his son, call His Son His Lord? "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" That is a question equally as important to us as to the Pharisees. Is He a Man only, the Son of David, or is He also Son of God? By His genealogy He is proved to be the Son of David, by His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His Spirit, His Word, He is proved to be the Son of God. One day He will sit upon the throne of His father David, and God the Father will make His enemies His footstool. Have you received Him as your Lord and Saviour? "What think ye of Christ?"

CHAPTER XXIII

Matt. 23:1-36

In Revelation 19:11-16 we are told of the Lord Jesus' return in glory: "His eyes as a flame of fire, and on His head many crowns; ... 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. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a Name written, king of kings, and lord of lords." "Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword" -- just a glimpse of all this is given us in Matthew twenty-three as He denounced the Pharisees. Such words of biting ferocity and sharpness have never before or since been uttered, as He revealed the hearts of those men before Him.

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. Hypocrites! Hypocrites! Fools and blind! Whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full ... of uncleanness! 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 ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth ... verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." What denunciation! But it is only by God's grace that He does not speak in that way of us. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5); man's heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9) -- only by the blood of the Lord Jesus are we saved from sin. May God use us to take this wonderful message to many souls who may thus be saved from the wrath of the Lamb.

Matt. 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who 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!" (Matt. 23:37). Then in tenderness our Lord looked upon His people, Israel, and His city. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem." How He would have delighted to take them to Himself, safe beneath the everlasting arms. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings -- and ye would not!" They rejected their Messiah; they were soon to crucify Him.

Matt. 23:38, 39

"Behold, your house is left desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:38, 39). They had cried that upon one occasion, but they did not mean it in their hearts. But He will come again to His city; then every eye shall see Him, they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and they shall shout with joy: "Hosanna, Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord."

CHAPTER XXIV

We have learned that Matthew's Gospel is dispensational in its teaching. In the study of the words of our Lord, in this Gospel, therefore, we must be particularly careful to determine of what age He was speaking. The only method which can be accurate is to compare Scripture with Scripture, not relying on our own judgment. If the interpretations of all parts of the Scripture which relate to the same things dove-tail, then we may be sure that our understanding is of the Holy Spirit. In the passage before us, dealing with utterances of our Lord about things which should come to pass, let us be careful to compare these statements with the Old Testament and other New Testament revelations, that the Spirit may fully reveal to us the marvellous truths and accuracy of the Word of God.

Before His previously recorded great discourse, the parables of the mystery of the Kingdom, the Word tells us, Matthew 13:1: "The same day Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the seaside," indicating His turning of His back on the old relationships of Israel, and a turning toward the Gentiles. In the present instance, again there is a "going out:" "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." He had answered the questions of His enemies, and now He was again turning His back on the relationships of Israel, but looking forward to another day when again He should deal with God's chosen people, before His return to earth in glory.

Matt. 24:1-3

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple. 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. 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 consummation of the age?" (Matt. 24:1-3).

"When shall these things be?" What things? Not only the destruction of the temple, mentioned in the preceding verse, but the judgment upon the Pharisees and other events of the then future which our Lord had predicted. The destruction of the temple prophesied here took place under the siege of Titus, 70 A.D., as did the woes pronounced upon the Pharisees. The answer about the temple is not found in Matthew, but in Luke 21:20-24 there is a full record of that which was to take place. The Lord also had spoken of it in a general way in the parable of the marriage feast, Matthew 22:7, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the age?"

Matt. 24:4-14

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My Name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: ... And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ... But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 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" (Matt. 24:4-14).

There are three view-points taken of the Scripture now under consideration: the post-millenarians believe that a great many of these predictions were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; the post-tribulationists believe that verses four to thirty-one have to do with the end of the Church "Age", that these exhortations are intended for Christians living at the end of the Age of Grace, which will come to its close after the Great Tribulation, through which the Church will remain on earth; the _pre-millennial _pre-tribulationists identify verses four to thirty-one not as a part of the Church Age, but as Jewish, belonging to Daniel's seventieth week, the seven years of Tribulation. (See Appendix G for _pre-millennial and Appendix F for _pre-tribulationists.)

There are expressions in the discourse which might apply accurately to any of the three view-points mentioned. But we believe, and prayerfully suggest, that there are definite statements which oppose the post-millenarian and post-tribulationist views. We shall mention them briefly, and then go on with the exposition.

First, regarding the post-millennial interpretation, that all these predictions were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the forty years preceding that event: verse fourteen tells us that the "Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The Gospel of the Kingdom was not preached in all the world between 30 A.D. and 70 A.D.; in fact, the Gospel of the Kingdom was not being preached at all, but the Gospel of Grace. Then, too, the Son of Man did not return in person at the destruction of Jerusalem, and finally, verse thirty-one tells us that at His return the elect (Israel) shall be gathered together from the four winds. In 70 A.D. Israel was dispersed, not gathered.

Secondly regarding the post-tribulationists' interpretation, that these predictions speak of the end of the Church Age and are warnings for Christians, the disciples knew nothing of the Church Age; they were living in a Jewish Age, and they asked: "What shall be the sign of Thy coming (in glory, for that was what they were looking for), and of the consummation of the age?" What age? The age in which they were living. Oh, but you say, that ended at Calvary. Yes, Law ended at Calvary, but Daniel's seventieth week, the end of the Jewish Age, is still unfulfilled. The Church Age, in which we are living, is a parenthesis, and before the Lord returns in glory, the last week of Daniel's prophecy will be fulfilled. Also, in the Church Age the Gospel of the Kingdom is not preached to all nations, but the Gospel of Grace is preached, as we said above. Verse thirteen says: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." We know that in this Age of Grace salvation is by no other means than belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. False prophets, false Christs, are to arise; that is Tribulation truth. Church teaching in the Epistles tells us that at the end of this age, Grace, false teachers shall arise (2 Peter 2:1). Verse fifteen tells us that the Lord Himself referred to Daniel's prophecy; Daniel's prophecy is Jewish and does not belong to the Gentiles.

Finally, while we believe that these prophecies have to do entirely with the Tribulation of Israel, let us remember that there will be tendencies towards these very things before the end of the age in which we are living, before the Rapture, and before the Tribulation sets in. Wars and rumours of wars ... nation shall rise against nation ... famines, pestilences, earthquakes ... false teaching... Are we not beset on all sides with such today? We believe that the Lord may come for His saints at any moment, for "all these are the beginning of sorrows;" surely, then, the Tribulation must be near. Christian, "see that ye be not troubled," for before then "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord, Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

The seventieth week of Daniel, as yet unfulfilled, will be divided into two parts, each of three and one-half years' duration (see Daniel 9). In "Matthew 24, verses four to fourteen" refer to the first half of that week, the beginning of the end; and verses fifteen to twenty-six relate to the latter half, the Great Tribulation, and then shall the end come. Throughout the Old Testament there are references to the time of tribulation, Jacob's trouble, that shall precede the Lord's coming to reign on earth. We mention two references: Jeremiah 30:4-9; Joel 2:1-17. In the New Testament also we shall see what awful things shall occur before our Lord shall come in glory, and we shall find in the Book of the Revelation that the predictions for the first part of the Tribulation agree with Matthew 24:4-14. In Revelation four, the removal of the Church to be with the Lord is indicated, and in the fourth and fifth chapters it (the Church) is seen symbolically in the presence of the Lord. The Lord opens the seven-sealed book, and what is revealed beginning in the brewing of the seals is the last week of Daniel's prophecy. (Refer to Revelation six to nineteen.) The first seal was opened revealing a man on a white horse, who had a bow, who went forth to conquer. The Lord Jesus shall come on a white horse, but this is not He, but a false Christ, who establishes a temporary peace. What is the first prediction of Matthew twenty-four. "Many shall come in My Name, saying, I am Christ" (vs. 5). The second seal was opened revealing a man on a red horse, who should take peace from the earth. The second prediction of Matthew twenty-four is found in verses six and seven: "Wars and rumours of wars ... nation shall rise against nation." The third seal was opened revealing a man on a black horse, who had balances in his hand; and "a voice in the midst of the four beasts" indicated famine. The third prediction of Matthew twenty-four is: "There shall be famines" (vs. 7). The fourth seal was opened revealing one on a pale horse, whose name was Death, and the fourth prophecy of Matthew twenty-four tells of pestilences and earthquakes. The fifth seal has to do with those who were slain for the Word of God, who, under the altar, cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" What is the fifth prophecy of Matthew twenty-four? "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you" (vs. 9).

We see, then, how the words of our Lord and the words of the Spirit through John in the Book of the Revelation are in accord. These predictions have to do with the Tribulation; they are Jewish, and these things shall surely come to pass before the Lord Jesus Christ comes with His saints. But as we see the world in its tendencies approaching those things which are the beginning of sorrow, we believe that the Bride is almost complete, and that soon we shall be with the Bridegroom.

The Gospel of the Kingdom will again be preached, when the 144,000 Jewish people shall proclaim the message of the coming King. Then, before He returns, it "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Matt. 24:15-22

"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:) Then let them who be in Judaea flee into the mountains. ... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. 24:15-22).

"The abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet." Let us look at Daniel's words. In speaking of the Beast, in Daniel 9:27, we read: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (seven years): and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." In Daniel 12:1, read of the Great Tribulation: "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." In the Book of the Revelation further light is thrown upon this last three and one-half years of Daniel's seventieth week. The Beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1) will break his covenant with the Jews at the beginning of the second three and one-half years, and will demand worship to himself as God, standing in the Holy place (Matt. 24:15). To go fully into these things here would require full studies of Daniel and Revelation. We suggest the careful reading of the Book of the Revelation, chapters eleven to eighteen, for better understanding of the awfulness of those things to come. Thank God, we believers shall not be a part of Jacob's trouble, for it is our blessed hope to look for our Lord's return to meet His saints in the air before that time.

What, then, did the Lord Jesus mean: "Then let them who be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him who is on the housetop not come down ... neither let him who is in the field return. ... And woe unto them who are with child. ... But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day"? The Lord was talking to the disciples, Jewish believers, a type of that part of the remnant of Israel still living at the end of the Jewish Age, the last week of Daniel's prophecy. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation. ... Then let them who be in Judaea ... neither on the Sabbath day." This is a message to Israel, not to the Church, as the italicized words above should clearly show us.

Matt. 24:23-26

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For then shall rise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew 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" (Matt. 24:23-26). Revelation thirteen tells us of the power which the antichrist and the false prophet shall have from Satan; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 also gives us a picture of these things.

Matt. 24:27-31

"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. ... 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: 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 the heavens 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 the heavens to the other" (Matt. 24:27-31).

Our Lord Himself tells us that His coming after the Tribulation will be in power and glory, and from other passages in the Word, we know that this will be a visible manifestation of Himself upon the earth. "Behold, every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. 1:7). Revelation 19:11-16 gives us a further picture of His return with His saints after Jacob's trouble. There are many prophecies of the Old Testament which tell us of the remarkable signs in the heavens when the day of the Lord cometh. See Ezekiel 32:7, 8, and Isaiah 13:9, 10. Not only will there be these unusual physical signs, but "then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens" (vs. 30). What will be the sign of the Son of Man? Scripture does not tell us, but Dr. A.C. Gaebelein has suggested, and we agree with him, that it will be the Shekinah cloud of Old Testament record. This was the cloud in which the presence of the Lord was enfolded, over His people Israel. A cloud covered the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when He appeared for a moment glorified: He ascended to Heaven in a cloud, and "in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven" He shall so come again (Acts 1:11).

There are some, post-tribulationists, who are convinced that the gathering together of the elect of verse thirty-one and the rapture of the Church, 1 Thessalonians 4, are identical. We do not believe this is the teaching of Scripture. In Matthew the Lord is speaking of a visible return to the earth. In Thessalonians the Word tells us of a meeting with the saints in the air; in the Gospels the "elect" means Israel, the chosen people; in the Epistles the "elect" means the Church, the body of believers; "the gathering together" of Matthew is predicted throughout the Old Testament as connected with the Lord's return to earth (Isa. 11:11, 12; Isa. 27:13; Jer. 16:4-

16); Revelation four and five signifies that the Church will be with the Lord during the Tribulation, and Revelation nineteen shows the Lord coming with His saints.

"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds." This is the regathering of the remnant of Israel, that portion which will be left after the end of the Great Tribulation. During the age of the Kingdom, the millennial reign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God will fulfil all His promises to Israel.

Matt. 24:32-36

"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. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:32-36).

The fig tree is always a type of Israel. Israel has been barren, but one day it will put forth leaves; then know that the Lord's return is near. Here again is prophecy concerning Tribulation. "The characteristic of the fig tree is that fruit and leaves are there together." Israel's blessing will be quickly realized when the time comes for it to seed, for God to deal with His people again. Yes, this is Tribulation teaching, but Christians, can we not see things today which point to a near accomplishment of these things? Israel is going back to its land, Israel is persecuted on all sides, Israel is once more being identified as a national unity. The summer is nigh -- soon, sooner than we think, we may go to be with our Lord.

The word generation in verse thirty-four has puzzled some, who because of this verse are led to believe that the Lord's return was spiritual and took place in 70 A.D. The word comes from *genea*, whose primary meaning is race or family; thus our Lord said, "This race (Israel) shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass." No man could so speak, but only God. And God the Father is the only One Who knows when the Son shall return. His time will be the right time; we need have no fear.

Matt. 24:37-44

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. ... 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. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. 24:37-44).

"As the days of Noah were." Noah lived in the closing days of the age, judgment came, the wicked were destroyed, and Noah was the first of a new age. "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." It will be the end of a Jewish Age, judgment will come, the wicked of Israel will be judged (Ezek. 20:33-44), and the believing remnant of Israel will be the first of a new age. Here again the Lord was speaking of the condition which shall be at the end of the Tribulation, but here again we may recognize tendencies, leading to those conditions, which tell us that the Lord may come any day for His saints. Let us wait for Him, in the wonderful hope that it will be soon.

Verses forty and forty-one, "two shall be in the field ... two women shall be grinding at the mill, and the one shall be taken, and the other left," are quite generally connected in thought with the Rapture (1 Thess. 4), indicating that when the Lord comes and we meet Him in the air, the believer shall be taken, and the unbeliever left. Such is true of the Rapture. But in this instance, since all that the Lord said had to do with Israel, Daniel's seventieth week, and the Lord's coming in glory, and since the immediate reference is to the days of Noah, when the wicked were taken (destroyed), and Noah, the righteous, and his family were left (on earth), He must have meant that when the Lord shall come in glory and shall judge Israel to determine who shall enter the land of Kingdom blessing, one shall be taken who is a rebel and shall be purged out from among Israel (Ezek. 20:38), and another shall be left, who will be accepted and shall be brought "into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up Mine hand to give it to your fathers" (Ezek. 20:42). Those who were "taken" by the flood were not taken into glory but into destruction; those who were left after the flood were left that God might bless the race in a new way. "Watch therefore ... therefore be ye ready."

Matt. 24:45-51

There follows a parable, which is applied by many to this age, but also should be interpreted as belonging to the Tribulation period. It indicates the attitude of some who think that the Lord delays His coming. Its application can be brought to Christians also. Those who hope in the Lord's soon return are those who are busiest in His service; those who have been deceived by one of Satan's agents to think that the Lord's coming is delayed, are usually careless in their Christian testimony; not always, but usually. In 1 John 3:2, 3, we are told: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is, and every man who hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." May the Lord Jesus soon take us to Himself.

Do not let the fact that these teachings are peculiarly Jewish rob you of your joy and hope in the Lord's soon coming. All the things which we see about us which look like the signs of the Lord Jesus' Olivet Discourse show us that the end of the age of Jacob's trouble is near. And if the end of that age is near, then the age in which we live must be seven years nearer. Let us look for Him in full peace and joy, comforting one another with these words.

CHAPTER XXV

Matthew's Gospel is a Jewish book, which relates to the fulfilments in the Lord Jesus of God's promises to Israel concerning Messiah, and which gives also a picture as to the way in which God, through Christ, will deal with Israel, the nation, in the future.

Israel is God's peculiar people, and there are many warnings and promises of blessing in the Word which are especially for the Jew. But we, as His Body, are also God's peculiar people; we, too, find warnings and promises of blessing for us. However, let us not take from Israel those things which are hers.

Matt. 25:1-13

"Then shall the Kingdom of the heavens be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ..."

Another of the "Kingdom parables" is before us for attention. No one can understand the Word of God in its fulness unless he has a thorough grounding in dispensational truth, yet we must recognize the danger of hyperdispensationalism, and the risk of becoming so bound up in cold theological facts as to lose sight of the warmth of God's love. Nevertheless, in our interpretations of the parables before us in this chapter, we take the view that the Lord was still speaking of events which were to take place at the end of the age about which the disciples had asked just previous to our Lord's Olivet Discourse, that is, the Tribulation period, in which again God shall deal with Israel as a nation. We have the deepest respect for the judgment and spiritual insight of some who take another view, namely, that the parable of the ten virgins, and the parable of the talents have to do with the Age of Grace, and we have come to the conclusion we have reached only after a great deal of prayerful study. We shall point out why we believe the teaching has to do quite definitely with the Tribulation, but we shall also attempt to show that there is a message in these allegorical stories for the Church today.

It is taught that the Kingdom of the heavens here means professing Christianity in the Church Age, that the five wise virgins are believers, that the five foolish virgins are professing Christians, and that the coming of the Bridegroom is the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints when the Rapture of the Church will take place. The chief arguments we find in favour of this interpretation are that the oil which the wise virgins took in their lamps is a symbol of the Holy Spirit Who will be taken away at the end of the Age of Grace, that the "Then" of verse one refers to the time of the "faithful householder" (Matt. 24:45-51), which time is assumed by those who so believe, to be the Church Age, and that the remnant of Jewish believers of the Tribulation will not slumber and sleep because the Bridegroom tarries, since they will know that He will come three and one-half years after the antichrist breaks covenant with Israel.

First, we cannot agree that the "Then" of verse one refers to anything other than the end of the Tribulation, for we cannot see that we have any right to assume that the parable of the faithful householder (Matt. 24:45) has to do with the Church Age. Before the Lord began His discourse to His disciples, they asked: "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the age?" We have shown that that which follows teaches of Tribulation truth, and we shall also see that Matthew 25:31-46 refers to the end of the Tribulation. Now those who teach that the three parables, the Faithful Householder, the Ten Virgins, the Talents, deal with the Church Age say that the Olivet Discourse follows a chronological order from Matthew 24:1 to Matthew 25:46, but that the parables are to be excepted. If the parables could not be understood to have to do with Israel in the Tribulation, we would agree with these good brethren. But the parables do have a definite teaching concerning the end of the Tribulation Age, and therefore we can assume that our Lord was speaking of the same period of time in the parables as He was in the early and last parts of His discourse.

Secondly, we believe that our Lord never spoke carelessly, and that in this parable, as in the one of the marriage feast, where there is a Bridegroom there must be a Bride, and that the ten virgins, or rather the five wise virgins, do not represent the Church, the true believers who as a body make up the Bride of Christ. It would be well to note in passing, that some of the oldest versions of the Gospel according to Matthew have three words in verse one which do not appear in the Authorized Version, so that the verse reads: "Then shall the Kingdom of the heavens be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride." These three words are found in the Vulgate and in the Syriac Versions, and while such is not final evidence, there is no reason to believe that this rendering is not genuine, and we may conclude that our interpretation of this parable is the true one.

Thirdly, though oil is a type of the Spirit of God, it is not necessarily a type of the Spirit as indwelling the believer in the Age of Grace. In Old Testament history the Spirit of God came upon certain of His servants, and surely the Holy Spirit will come upon the

believing remnant of Israel in the Tribulation, especially as they go forth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world for a witness to all nations" (Matt. 24:14).

The ten virgins represent the remnant of Israel after the Church has been taken. The five wise virgins are the believing remnant, the foolish virgins the unbelieving, who only profess to be looking for Messiah's coming in power. While the Bridegroom tarries (not in the sense of delay, for God the Father has appointed the time in His foreknowledge, and at that moment the Lord Jesus will come in power); while the Bridegroom abides, they all slumbered and slept. Yes, the remnant of Israel will possess human natures, just as do we, and even though they will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world, they will slumber as did the disciples in Gethsemane, and as the Church does today. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. 25:6). Is not this cry "the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens" (Matt. 24:30)? The narrative needs no further exposition. The wise virgins were ready and went with the Bridegroom to the marriage; and the door was shut. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

And do we not have a parallel in our day, the Church Age? As we have said, many interpret these words to refer to the Age of Grace. Surely, if the remnant shall slumber and sleep before the Lord's coming in power, the Church today sleeps while He abides. Let us watch therefore, and wait. We know not the day nor the hour when He shall come for His Bride. If we are ready, believing on Him, the door will not be shut, but to many who do not believe He will say: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Matt. 25:14-30

"For the Kingdom of the heavens is as a man travelling in a far country, who called his servants, and delivered unto them his goods. ..."

Again in the case of this parable there are the two interpretations: one, that it has to do with professing Christendom in the Age of Grace; the other, that it concerns Israel in the Tribulation. We believe the second viewpoint to be the right one, because the Lord was talking to His disciples about the sign of His coming in power, and of the consummation of the Jewish Age, Daniel's seventieth week. Were this parable speaking of the Age of Grace, how could we reconcile the teaching here with the rest of the Word of God? Assuming that all three servants were believers, the judgment would have to be of believers' works, for the believer could not possibly come under judgment for sin; and the unprofitable servant, regarded as a believer, would be cast into outer darkness, which is unscriptural. Or, assuming that the first two servants were believers but the third only a professing Christian, such an assumption would necessitate making one and the same the judgment of believers' works (which takes place after the Rapture) and the judgment at the Great White Throne of the wicked dead (which will occur after the thousand years), which cannot possibly be.

The man travelling in a far country represents the Lord Jesus Christ Who is absent from the earth. His servants have been called, and unto each is entrusted some gift. The servants we believe to be the remnant of Israel during the Tribulation. The narrative tells us of the use these servants made of the gifts given them. "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. 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. 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 sowed: 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 sowed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put My money to the exchangers and then at My coming I should have received Mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, but from every one 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" (Matt. 25:19-30).

We do not know what the talents are, but that they are a gift from the Lord. Each servant received some gift, and when the Lord returned He reckoned with them. When the Lord Jesus comes again in power, He will reckon with the remnant of Israel (Ezek. 20) to determine who shall receive the Kingdom blessing. The "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" is the entrance into the land for the Kingdom blessing (Ezek. 20:40-42), while the fate of the unprofitable servant who was cast into outer darkness is the "they shall not enter into the land of Israel" of Ezekiel 20:37, 38.

Is there a message for the Christian in this parable? Oh, yes -- to every born-again believer the Lord has given gifts (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) for which we shall be held accountable. At His coming we shall all be judged, and we shall all be saved, but some as by fire. If we love the Lord Jesus, it should be our hearts' desire to hear Him say one day: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2).

Matt. 25:31-46

"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 the one from the other. ..."

About to conclude His prophetic discourse on God's future dealings with Israel, our Lord gave to His disciples a picture of that for which Israel had been looking in His first coming, Himself sitting upon the throne of His glory. There is no doubt about the time or the place of this prophecy. It will be fulfilled when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, that is, immediately after the Great Tribulation, at the beginning of His millennial reign on earth. And there will be judgment! Who is to be judged? The passage tells us: "all nations."

Do not confuse this occasion with the judgment of the Great White Throne recorded in Revelation 20:11-15. The judgment of the Great White Throne is after the millennium (Rev. 20:7); this judgment is when the Lord returns in glory before the millennium. The Great White Throne is not on earth: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it from Whose face the earth and the heavens fled away;" the "throne of His glory" is on the earth, see Matthew 19:28. There will be the resurrection of the wicked dead before the judgment of the Great White Throne; there is no resurrection immediately before this judgment.

This is the judgment of all nations for their treatment of "these My brethren," Israel. The 144,000 of the believing remnant shall preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in the Tribulation in all the world unto all nations (Matt. 24:14). Some will receive the witness, and in receiving it will give meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and care for the Lord's witnesses. These nations are the sheep: "And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, ... 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. ... Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And the King shall answer, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25:33-40). Apart from the dispensational aspect, there is a lesson here for believers' daily acts of love and tenderness in forgetting self and remembering to minister to those who need spiritually and physically Christ's love and care. "Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:33-46).

The Lord's Word is true. What an awful thought -- everlasting fire! But it was never prepared for men, but for Satan and his angels (Rev. 20:10). "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

We see what terrible judgment shall come upon the nations who do not receive the Gospel of the Kingdom during the Tribulation. And we say: "Thank God, this is the judgment of nations and not the judgment of the Great White Throne." But, reader, see the judgment of the Great White Throne, and see the fate of the wicked dead: "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). You must be a "whosoever;" either whosoever that "believeth on Him," or the whosoever who is "not found written in the book of life." Which will it be? God is not willing that any should perish. The Lord Jesus Christ will come again. There will be judgment; -- it is your choice whether yours shall be eternal life or eternal punishment. May you be found to be among those "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love ... to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved."

CHAPTER XXVI

Whenever we touch upon the life of the Lord Jesus, we are on holy ground, but this is particularly true of the three chapters remaining of this Gospel. Here the determination of men and the foreknowledge of God meet; here the passions of men result in the Passion and seeming defeat of our Lord. But out of it all came God-planned victory; the Serpent bruised the Saviour's heel, but the Lord Jesus has bruised Satan's head as prophesied in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15). Now, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith in Him, we may have victory over Satan, for He has wrested from him power to touch any of His own.

Matthew twenty-six records nine important events of the last days of our Lord: His last prediction of His own death, and the counselling of the chief priests and scribes to kill Him (vs. 1-5); His anointing in the house of Simon of Bethany (vs. 6-13); Judas Iscariot sells the Lord (vs. 14-16); the eating of the Passover Feast and the institution of the Lord's Supper (vs. 17-29); the Lord Jesus foretells Peter's denial (vs. 30-35); our Lord's agony in Gethsemane (vs. 36-46); the betrayal by Judas and our Lord's arrest (vs. 47-56); the Lord's trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (vs. 57-68); Peter's denial of our Lord (vs. 69-75). We shall look at each event.

Matt. 26:1-5

"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." The Olivet Discourse, when our Lord had predicted to His disciples something of the future, especially of God's future dealing with Israel, had been finished, and now for the fourth and last time He told His disciples of His coming death. Never had they fully understood, and we can be sure that at this time, though perhaps they were nearer to believing than ever before, they still hoped that He would not be killed. Is it not wonderful that their hope was not realized? For the Lord Jesus came to die that you and I might be saved. His death was an awful thing, but He endured the Cross, despising the shame, in God's own will and wisdom; so it is a wonderful thing, and we praise God that He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

At the same time, the chief priests and scribes and the elders of the people were assembled together, "and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill Him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (vs. 3-5). The feast day was an holy day; the Lord Jesus was considered a prophet among the people, and these leaders feared that while the multitudes were gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover feast, it would be unwise for them to take the Lord. God overrules the determination of men. He causes the wrath of men to praise Him. Since before the foundation of the world, by "the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God," the appointed time for the Son to die was at the Passover feast, for He is the true Lamb of God, Whom the Passover lamb merely foreshadowed. "Not on the feast day," said the rulers. But we shall see that it was on the feast day that the Lord Jesus was crucified. The scribes and elders thought to put the Lord Jesus to death when none would see; God decreed that it should be publicly before the whole of Jerusalem. The scribes and elders thought to put the Lord Jesus to shame by crucifying Him; God made the crucifixion and the resurrection the greatest facts in the history of the human race, to the salvation of the souls of all who believe on Him. The scribes and elders thought by crucifying the Lord Jesus to silence forever the tongues of His disciples; God, by the power of the resurrection which followed our Lord's death, gave His disciples a text for eternity.

Matt. 26:6-13

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 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" (Matt. 26:6, 7).

In John's Gospel, we see that this woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Mary came aforehand to anoint the Lord's body for the burying (Mark 14:8); she seems to have been the only one who had understood what the Lord Jesus meant when He so often predicted His death. And she also seems to have been the only one who knew that He would rise again; for the other women, on the morning of the resurrection, came to the tomb with sweet spices to anoint the Lord. Mary, who loved Him so much, did not come; have we not every reason to believe that she alone knew He would not be there?

The critics point here to something which they consider to be error in the Gospels. In Matthew it is recorded that Mary anointed the Lord's head; in John, that His feet were anointed. There is no need for concern; the very distinction is further proof of inspiration. Matthew wrote of Jesus as the King; and John of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. It was the custom to anoint both the head and the feet, and undoubtedly that was just what Mary did. Matthew, in speaking of the King, related the anointing of the head as Samuel anointed the head of David. But John wrote of Jesus, the Son of God. The finite could not approach the Infinite other than as a subject at His feet, so John recorded the anointing of the Lord's feet alone.

"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" (Matt. 26:8, 9). The ointment was worth three hundred pence (about fifty dollars), according to Mark 14:5; and we see in John 12:4 that Judas was the spokesman, Judas, who valued the Lord Jesus so little that he sold Him for one-third of that amount. "To what purpose is this waste?" Is anything waste that we give to the Lord? No doubt the "alabaster box of very precious ointment" was the most valuable thing that Mary possessed. She had given the Lord her heart; now she was pouring out for His use her most precious possession. Our Lord delights in such gifts; first ourselves, then our dearest possessions. How did the Lord Jesus answer? He bestowed upon Mary words of praise and honour that have rarely been bestowed upon any. "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. ... Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached into the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:10-13). For a memorial of her! Monuments, statues, mausoleums to the heroes of past history, have been built and have decayed and crumbled away, but this memorial of Mary, established by the Lord Jesus, as the house in Bethany was filled with the odour of the costly ointment, has been a fragrant blessing to Christians through the centuries, and is as lasting as the words of the Lord Himself, Who said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). There is no loving service that we may do in His Name which He will not remember for a memorial of us.

Matt. 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 from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him." We will only mention here that the thirty pieces of silver (about seventeen dollars) was the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32), and that here was fulfilled what the prophets had spoken (Zech. 11:12, 13). Judas had complained of the waste of ointment. No wonder! To him the Lord Jesus Christ's value was that of a slave, thirty pieces of silver.

Matt. 26:17-19

"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare to eat the Passover?" (Matt. 26:17). The Lord Jesus, in His Deity, knew how it should be arranged, and told His disciples what to do. "And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover." The Passover was a symbol of Israel's deliverance from Egypt by the sign of the blood of a slain lamb (Ex. 12). It was a type of the death on the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was intended by God to point forward to that death. But now the Lord's death has been accomplished, the true Paschal Lamb has been slain; no longer is it necessary to keep the Passover (though the orthodox Jews still do), for we do not look forward to the Lord's death, but backward to Calvary. At the last Passover feast the Lord instituted the new memorial, the Lord's Supper, with the command: "This do in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24, 25).

Matt. 26:20-22

"Now when even was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat (the Passover feast), He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?" (Matt. 26:20-22). "One of you shall betray Me. ... And they ... began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?" Apparently Judas was not under any suspicion by the other disciples, as very apparently each one in himself saw the possibility of his being a traitor. What an admission! Yet how true! The heart of man is desperately wicked; there is no one who does not come under this indictment. It is only by God's grace that we, too, are not condemned as was Judas: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." "Lord, is it I?" Let us ask ourselves the same question. Are we betraying the Lord Jesus? Or have we received Him as our Saviour, and are our lives His for His purpose?

Matt. 26:23-25

"And He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him. ... Then Judas, who betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said" (Matt. 26:23-25). Notice that Judas did not call Him Lord, but Master. Judas did not recognize the Lord Jesus as His Saviour and Lord. In John 13:26, we read: "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot." Were you to dine with an Oriental today in the custom of his country, and did he wish to distinguish you as the guest of honour, he would tear a piece of bread, dip it in gravy, and hand it to you. This is the sop. How great is the love of God toward the sinner! How the Lord Jesus must have loved even Judas, for here, in a gesture of intimacy and friendship, He made a last touching and significant appeal to the man to turn back from the awful course which he had chosen. Judas did not turn back, and so treachery was another ingredient in the cup of bitterness of which our Lord partook for us.

Matt. 26:26-29

"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 (forgiveness) of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28).

Would that the Church as a whole would regard this sacrament, the Lord's Supper, in the simplicity in which it is recorded throughout the New Testament. As we study this portion of the Word, let us dismiss from our minds all matters of controversy, and view the memorial as it affects our personal edification and relationship to our Lord. Let controversy give way to communion, thoughts of criticism to thoughts of Christ -- let us dwell on Him Who died for our sins.

"Take, eat, this is My Body, which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). Not a bone of His body was broken at Calvary. The bread was broken and given to the disciples as a type of the body of Christ, bruised for us, a body spiritually broken for us that we might become members of His spiritual Body, the Church, of which He is the Head. We are to feed on the Lord Jesus; the blood sprinkled on the doorposts saved Israel on the night of the Passover, but it was the eating of the Paschal lamb which gave Israel strength to depart from Egypt. It is the Blood of Christ which brings salvation to all who believe on Him, but it is by feeding on Him that we have strength for our own pilgrimage, strength to withstand the fiery darts of the Evil One, for by the Lamb alone our souls are refreshed.

"This cup is the new testament in My Blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). The dividing line between the Old and New Testaments is not the blank page between Malachi and Matthew; the transition period occurred during the life of our Lord, reaching its climax here, and culminating at the words, "It is finished." "This is My Blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." At Calvary the price was paid; the Lord's Supper is a memorial to that occasion. His Blood was shed for us, as the cup is a type of

the Lord's death; He has said, "This do in remembrance of Me." "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11:27). The observance of the Lord's Supper does not save souls; only saved souls should partake. It is blasphemy for one to partake of this sacrament unless he has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

What should be our attitude as we partake of this memorial? The disciples had examined themselves: "Lord, is it I?" As we examine ourselves and see in our hearts sins of omission and commission, we should confess them fully. Then, having forgiveness by His shed blood, we may dedicate our lives anew at His table. It is there that we meet with the Father; God the Father delights in and feeds on the Son, and only as we also have our delight and food in Him can we have complete communion with the Father.

Matt. 26:30-35

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night. ... But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 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 said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matt. 26:30-35).

First, let us look at one sentence: "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." They were so slow to believe. See Mark 16:11, "And they (the disciples), when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not." He has said that He is coming again. Do you believe? Are you looking for Him?

The narrative of the prophecy about Peter is clear. After the Lord told him that he, Peter, would deny Him thrice on that night before the cock should crow, Peter in all confidence said: "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." And notice particularly this: "Likewise also said all the disciples." Yes, Peter denied the Lord, as we shall see. How well our Lord knows our weaknesses! Within twelve hours these eleven men had all forsaken Him and had fled. Our daily prayer should be: "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." That is the only way, for the very sins which we boast will never touch us are oftentimes the ones that cause our downfall and backsliding. There is only one remedy: to lose self-confidence and to depend wholly on the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit.

There is a word of comfort here. The Lord Jesus Christ, omniscient, knew that these eleven men would forsake Him at His crisis, yet in His foreknowledge He chose them. He is a merciful and gracious Lord; it is His joy and glory to pass over our transgressions and to cover our sins in His own precious blood.

Matt. 26:36-46

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John), and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. 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" (Matt. 26:36-39).

The narrative of the Gospel tells us clearly how the three disciples could not even watch one hour. We have space to consider our Lord alone, "He was exceeding sorrowful." That He must die? No, we believe not, for He came to earth that He might die. We cannot be dogmatic about what the cup of this portion means. Some believe that it refers to His suffering in the garden, that Satan was trying to kill Him there before the Cross, and that in sweating drops of blood He was so weakened that Satan might have taken His life. There was no sin in the Lord Jesus; He was not subject to death: Satan could not have taken His life. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17, 18). It would seem that the cup is the separation from His Father. "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done." The Lord Jesus came to die; it was not the physical suffering from which He was shrinking, but that His Father must turn away from His Son, for God cannot look at sin, and on the Cross the sin of the world was to rest upon our Lord. For the first and last time, from eternity to eternity, the perfect fellowship of the first and second Persons of the God-head was to be broken. That was the cup almost too great to bear. "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." It was not possible, and so, at Calvary, the Lord Jesus Christ suffered broken communion with the Father. God's face, upon which the Lord Jesus had ever gazed, was hid; the Father's face, which had ever smiled upon Him, was turned away; and Jesus, our Lord, the spotless Lamb of God, was made sin for us. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No wonder He cried, in triumph: "It is finished." Praise the Lord for His obedience. Though He were a Son, He learned perfect obedience by the things which He suffered, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save Him out of death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5:7). The Word does not say "to save Him from death," but "out of death." These words refer

to the Gethsemane scene; the prayer was heard, and by the resurrection our Lord was saved out of death into fellowship and perfect communion with the Father.

"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, Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand who doth betray Me."

Matt. 26:47-75

"And while He yet spake, ..."

So completely are the betrayal, and trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and Peter's denial recorded, that we shall only take a few paragraphs to suggest thoughts about these events.

The Betrayal. Judas came to the Lord Jesus in the garden and said, "Hail, Master; and kissed Him" (Matt .26:49). Mark those words. The literal meaning of the word translated "Hail" is "Oh, Joy!" "Master;" not "Lord," not "Messiah," but "Rabbi," that is, "Teacher." Judas had never received the Lord Jesus as Christ, the Son of God. "And kissed Him;" a kiss is the greeting of love. Is there a reader who is betraying the Lord Jesus as Judas did? Do you speak of Him with joy; do you pretend to love Him; but is He only a Teacher to you, not God the Son? It is well to take account of ourselves. If you have never received Him as your Saviour from sin, as the Lord of your life, why do you not do so now? Say, "Lord, I believe; my only hope for salvation is by Thy shed blood for me." Do it now. "Now is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation."

The Trial. There are some who say that the Lord Jesus never claimed to be God. Listen to this. "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. 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" (Matt. 26:63, 64). What stupendous claims! Could He be other than God if these things are true? Yes, He claimed to be God; He is God. What think ye of Christ? Is He God; then is He your Saviour and Lord? By God's grace you may be a joint-heir with Christ, because "He hath made us (who believe) accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

The Denial. "Now Peter sat without the palace." Twice he was asked if he was not one of the Lord's disciples, and he denied it. "And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them ... then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus. ... And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:73-75).

Christian, have you heard the cock crow? I have! Praise the Lord, He forgives. And later, after His resurrection, through the angel He sent this word: "Go tell His disciples, and Peter" (Mark 16:7), so His love reaches out to us today. We are so glad for the "and Peter," for that is the word to you, if you have ever denied the Lord, and to me, that His grace is sufficient for us. Peter went out and wept bitterly; when we sin against our Lord, when we deny Him, may the Spirit of God work upon our hearts in this way. This Peter was to be the great apostle who opened the Kingdom to the Jews at Pentecost, and to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. In human frailty and weakness he failed the Lord many times, but by the power of the Spirit he was used as a mighty voice; the Way that was open to Peter is open to us. May God use us by His Spirit to lead many souls to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of His grace, and of the Name that is above every Name.

CHAPTER XXVII

"And they crucified Him" -- that is all that is said in the Word of God relating to the pain and shame that our Lord endured for us. There are some details of His words as He hung on the Cross, but nothing of the agony He suffered when the nails were driven into His hands and His feet, when His flesh was torn as He was stretched there on the tree -- Nothing! And if the Holy Spirit has related none of this for us, then surely it is too awful for us to dwell upon. "And they crucified Him;" in these simple words is there described that toward which the Person of the God-head looked from eternity, to which the types of the Old Testament point, upon which we have gazed for the past nineteen hundred years; the focal point of the history of the human race. He hung on that Cross for you, and for me; our sins nailed Him there. Wherefore let us look unto the Lord Jesus, "the Author and Perfecter of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Matt. 27:1, 2

"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death: And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor." It had been in the early hours of the morning, when the cock crowed, that Peter had gone out in sorrow that he had denied his Lord. "And when morning was come, all the chief priests and elders ... took counsel against Jesus" -- little sleep for the prisoner that night, little sleep for His enemies. They had Him at last, and in spite of the fact that they had said, "Not on the feast day" (Matt. 26:4), God had appointed the feast

day, and the hour was drawing nigh. So the Lord Jesus, before Caiaphas condemned as guilty of death, was taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor; for the Jews had no authority to inflict the death penalty.

Matt. 27:3-10

"Then Judas, who 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, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matt. 27:3-5).

Here is the final picture of Judas, who had been the companion of our Lord along the pathway of His ministry. He who had been one of the inner circle, at least by profession, became the traitor who delivered the Lord Jesus into the power of His enemies. As we consider this heart-breaking fact, let us look to our own hearts. Are you a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ? Then pray for full yieldedness to the indwelling Holy Spirit, that your life and your every act may be a testimony to your Lord and Saviour. Or have you been merely a professing Christian? If there is any doubt in your heart, right now is the accepted time to receive Him. But though Judas betrayed the Lord into His enemies' hands, thank God it was in the power of God to use that act of heinous deceit to bring about that which bruised the head of Satan, and which has brought every believer into eternal life. "I have sinned -- I have betrayed innocent blood," said Judas. How little the chief priests and elders cared that this man saw his mistake. "What is that to us? See thou to that." What is our attitude toward one who has sinned, toward one who has profaned the love of God? God grant that we may never say, "What is that to us?" but that by His Spirit we may point out to such an one the way of life by the blood of the Cross. "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed and hanged himself."

The thirty pieces of silver were the price of blood! So even the chief priests refused to place them in the treasury and there "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" (see Jer. 18:1-4; also Zech. 11:12, 13). God's Word is true; not one minutest item which He has prophesied will fail to come to pass. "Prophetically this is a foreshadowing of what was to happen to Israel and Israel's land on account of the blood-guiltiness which they took upon themselves, Israel's land becoming a burying place for strangers, and Israel scattered among the nations" (A.C. Gaebelien).

Matt. 27:11-14

The fate of Judas is a parenthesis in the narrative. In verses one and two we learned that the chief priests and elders had taken counsel against our Lord to put Him to death, and that they had bound Him and led Him away to be delivered to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for the Jews did not have the power of inflicting the death penalty, under the Roman rule.

"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" (Matt. 27:11). Of what crime could the Jews have accused our Lord that the Roman governor should try Him? Of blasphemy -- claiming that He was God? No; for Rome would not have been interested in such an accusation. No, not of blasphemy, but of sedition, that is, that the Lord Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews, in open hostility to Rome. "Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." No denial came from our Lord's lips. This was the accusation, and it was true. He is yet the King of the Jews, and when He shall come again in power He shall sit upon the throne of His father David. "Thou sayest" -- yes, He was King.

"And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. 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" (Matt. 27:12-14).

That our Lord was the King was true, but the chief priests and elders accused Him falsely. See the account in Luke 23:2: "And they began to accuse Him, saying we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." When did they find the Lord "perverting the nation"? He came to seek and to save them that were lost, not to pervert His own people. When did He forbid "to give tribute to Caesar"? Did He not say: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's"? False testimony, and He answered not a word! "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7). It was of the Lord that the prophet wrote, and before Pilate his words were accomplished.

Matt. 27:15-26

"Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. ... Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified."

There was a special custom at the time of the Passover Feast, under which the Roman governor released to the Jews some condemned prisoner. Pilate saw no wrong in the Man Who had been brought to him for trial; no doubt, he sensed that the Lord

Jesus was being falsely accused. But in order to appease the multitude, he sought to have this Jesus released, thus saving His life. So Pilate asked the leaders of the people: "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas (a notable Jewish prisoner), or Jesus, Who is called Christ?" Pilate was interrupted by a messenger who brought a plea from his wife to have "nothing to do with that just Man." The bitter hatred of the chief priests is distinctly in evidence here, for in verse twenty we read: "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." The chief priests and elders! Those who should have been first to recognize that here was Messiah, their King, and to have acclaimed Him! Then Pilate continued: "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas." Barabbas, the guilty one, he was to be released. Barabbas, whose name means: son of the father. The true Son of the Eternal Father they wanted to destroy: this false and sinful man they would have released. We can picture Satan gloating over a supposed victory. But by that which he believed would be his winning stroke, Christ, and not Satan, is the victor. "Barabbas! Barabbas!"

"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, Who is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified" (Matt. 27:22). Every man and woman in this world must answer for himself or herself the question which Pilate asked. "What shall I do with Jesus, Who is called Christ?" What have you done? On your answer hangs your destiny for eternity. Receive Him as your Saviour and Lord, and yours shall be life everlasting. Reject Him, and you are lost. There is no other alternative. We quote from God's Word, as we have before: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "The wages of sin is death," but praise the Lord, "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

"They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified." Where were the voices of those who had shouted: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord"? Where were the disciples? Where was Peter? Very much alone our Lord Jesus faced the agony of the Cross and Calvary. Jew and Gentile rejected Him, and crucified Him; for your sins and my sins He was forsaken and suffered.

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing ... 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. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:23-25). No exposition is needed. They cried the more: "Let Him be crucified." Pilate washed his hands before the multitude. He saw no evil in the Lord, but he delivered Him to be crucified, saying: "See ye to it." What had the chief priests said to Judas? "See thou to that." The fate of a sinner was nothing to them. What did Pilate say to the multitude? "See ye to it." The fate of a sinless Man was little to him. Then all the people said: "His blood be on us, and on our children." The blood of the Holy Son of God! The history of Israel from that day to this is sufficient evidence that His blood is upon them. One cannot wash one's hands and be innocent of the blood of the Lord Jesus, "for all have sinned." Yet by God's grace every Jew, or Gentile, who will receive the Lord Jesus as his Saviour may have his sins washed clean in the blood of the Lamb of God.

"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and ... he delivered Jesus to be crucified."

Matt 27:27-44

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus ..." They stripped Him! They put a scarlet robe on Him! They plaited a crown of thorns upon Him! They spit upon Him! They smote Him on the head! Such were the indignities which preceded the agony of the Cross. It is the sin in man which makes him think of these hateful things; the result of Satan's grip upon the heart of the natural man. A crown of thorns upon the One Who should have been presented with a crown of purest gold. The thorn is the symbol of sin and of God's curse upon it; thus did the Lord Jesus, the Holy One, bear our sins for us.

"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha ... they crucified Him" (Matt. 27:33-35). The physical and spiritual ordeal had been such that our Lord had apparently weakened, and a man, Simon of Cyrene, was compelled to bear His Cross. As they come to Golgotha, the Lord was offered vinegar mixed with gall, to drink. But having tasted it, He refused to partake of it. Vinegar and gall is a mixture that sometimes was given to condemned men that to some extent the pain of crucifixion might be deadened. But our Lord wanted His full faculties as He died there for us. No word is said of His being nailed to the Cross, but how the soldiers must have marvelled at the Lord Jesus. We can picture others being nailed to the tree, but of Him we cannot even think. We can see these men lying on the cross which was placed first on the ground, writhing in agony, and screaming and cursing, as their hands and feet were pierced and torn by the driven spikes. No such actions or words came from the Lord Jesus Christ, but without complaint He suffered for us.

"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" (Matt. 27:35; see Psa. 22:18). "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet;" this recurring phrase is found throughout Matthew's Gospel as the Holy Spirit teaches therein of Jesus the Messiah. He is the One of Whom the prophets spoke. How can any Jew who reads the Gospel with an open mind doubt that this Man is His King, the Messiah?

"And set up over His head His accusation was written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matt. 27:37). Over the head

of every man who was crucified there was written his accusation. In the case of our Lord, the words were intended as a mockery. Mockery? No, not mockery, for This was Jesus the King of the Jews. He it was Who hung there. Praise the Lord, He did not die in vain, for by that death we who believe have life.

In Matthew's account the two thieves are mentioned without further detail. Let us look at those who stood before the Cross, the chief priests and scribes and elders. Gloatingly, they mocked Him. Victory was theirs, they thought! "He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (vs. 42). Their words were truer than they knew. If our Lord had accepted the challenge of His enemies, all those who through the centuries have believed God's Word about the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ would be in Hell, and you and I would go to Hell, too, for there is no salvation but by the finished work which He accomplished at Golgotha. He came to earth to die on that Cross. He could not save Himself, for He could not break His Word.

They railed on Him; they spit upon Him; they bowed the knee in mockery. There will come a day when they shall bow the knee in truth. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name; that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Matt. 27:45-50

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ... My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:45, 46).

The darkness was supernatural. Skeptics have claimed that there was an eclipse of the sun at the time, but this could not be so, for the Passover Feast was always held at the Paschal full moon, and there can be no eclipse at full moon. Moreover, an eclipse lasts but a few minutes, not three hours. The darkness was of God, while His Face was turned from His Son because He cannot look at sin, which could nail to the Cross our great Saviour and Lord, Jesus, Messiah. Yet though on earth there was darkness and desolation, in Heaven we can imagine a great gathering of the angels with shouts of joy such as never before rang forth.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This was the bitterest portion of the cup. We can imagine, to some small extent, the horrible, painful, distressing agony of our Lord's physical suffering, but we cannot ever conceive the awful loneliness and heart-suffering of separation from His Father. This was His deepest pain, when the Father's countenance was turned away from Him Who had dwelt in full and perfect communion with Him from eternity. Taking our sins upon Him, the Lord Jesus was receiving sin's reward. He was obedient unto death, and in this obedience He suffered separation. The love of Christ passeth knowledge, but in our limited understanding we should have a deep sense of the enormous debt which we owe Him. Everything that we have, or are, or hope for, in Christ, can be attributed to that death at Golgotha. Through His condemnation we who believe on Him are acquitted, through His sufferings peace is ours, and through His shame we shall have glory.

Some of those who heard our Lord cry with a loud voice: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," said: "He calleth for Elias." Could these have been the chief priests and elders, and did they not understand their own tongue? Perhaps not! Perhaps these were Roman soldiers, for "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." We cannot imagine the chief priests having even that much sympathy for their dying Messiah! When our Lord took the vinegar, for His work was finished now, there was again in Him fulfilled one of the Old Testament prophecies: "They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Psa. 69:21).

"Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost" (Matt. 27:50). This was no ordinary death. Twice we read, verses forty-six and fifty, that "He cried with a loud voice." A dying man does not cry with a loud voice. There was no power on earth that could kill the Son of God. In John 19:30 are His words: "It is finished." That which He had come to do was accomplished, the shedding of His blood for the sins of the world. And so, having wrought redemption for us, He said: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit" (Luke 23:46). His work was done, He gave His life for you and me. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John 10:17, 18). "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Matt. 27:51-56

"And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." In a flash, by the hand of God (for the veil was rent from top to bottom) we were made nigh to God by the blood of Christ, and a new dispensation was ushered in. All barriers between God and man have been cast aside, and the way unto the Highest is now open through the Lord Jesus, the One High Priest. Read Hebrews 9.

Verses fifty-two and fifty-three have confused some. The graves were opened, but since our Lord is the Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20), these could not have risen until after He arose, and this is clearly indicated. "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the

saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection."

Matt. 27:57-66

"And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death" (Isa. 53:9). The record of verses fifty-seven to sixty-one reveals once more that the Lord Jesus was He of Whom the prophets spoke.

"Now the next day ... 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. ... Pilate said, ... make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matt. 27:62-66). Before Pilate they called our Lord a deceiver, but they were afraid! The Lord had said that He would rise again, and they feared that He would prove Himself true. So they made every effort to make the tomb sure. Satan and his instruments cannot defeat God's purposes and plans. God turned Satan's greatest attack to the praise of His Name. The very precaution that these men took to keep the Lord Jesus in the tomb resulted in indisputable proof that He is risen, and therefore that He is God. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2:22-24).

"Truly this was the Son of God."

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CHAPTER XXVIII

"This Jesus hath God raised up!" We have not a Saviour Who is dead, but a living Saviour, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24).

The King came and was rejected, Messiah offered Himself and was crucified; but -- He was raised again. "It is finished," He cried on the Cross. The work which He came to do was accomplished, and by faith in His shed blood we who believe on Him and receive Him are saved. His earthly ministry was finished, but the Father's work was not, Who raised Him up and set Him at His own right hand. There He sits today; it is another work which He is doing there, interceding in His high priestly office for you and for me. Do we fully comprehend the part which we believers have in our Lord's program? He died for us, He lives in us, He intercedes for us, it is we whom He shall meet in the air, He will return in power and glory with us, we shall reign with Him for a thousand years, and when the new heaven and the new earth shall be prepared, God's dwelling place will be with us, and He Himself shall be with us and be our God. Beloved, the believer is not an incident in the plan of God, but is the object of His love and of our Lord's ministry! Since before the foundation of the world it has been God's purpose that we shall be "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Think of it, Christian! No wonder Paul wrote by the Holy Spirit: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2).

We come into the closing paragraphs of Matthew's record of Jesus, Messiah and King. It is not a hopeless, despondent note that we find here, because the Christ has been slain, but a message of joy: "He is not here: for He is risen;" and of peace: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age." Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Jewish Messiah -- He is the fulfilment of all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, in His coming in humility, and in His death; and though "His own received Him not" as their King, He shall yet sit upon the throne of His father David and shall govern in a reign of righteousness and of peace, to which there shall be no end. Meanwhile, to as many as receive Him, He has given authority to become the Sons of God, even to them who believe on His Name (John 1:12).

Matt. 28:1-10

"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, 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. ... And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, Who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:1, 2, 5, 6).

The other accounts of the events of the first Easter morning are found in Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20, some of which are more detailed than Matthew 28. They do not contradict each other, but record the things which happened from the view-points of the different human authors whom the Holy Spirit used. The order of the events seems to have been as follows: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, started for the tomb bearing spices, and they were followed by other women. The first three

found the stone rolled away (Mark 16:4), and Mary Magdalene went to tell the disciples (John 20:1, 2). Meanwhile, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, in all probability went back to meet the other women. During this time Mary Magdalene found Peter and John; who came running to the sepulchre, looked in, and went away (John 20:3-10). Then Mary Magdalene returned weeping; the risen Lord Jesus spoke to her (John 20:11-18), and then she went to tell the disciples, as He bade her. The other Mary, and the rest of the women then arrived, and when they also had left to tell the disciples, they saw the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:5-10).

"As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week ... came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Thank God for the love of the women, the last to leave the Cross, the first to come to the tomb. Perhaps they did not fully believe or understand the Lord Jesus, for He said He would rise again, ... but they loved Him. Where were the disciples? Afar off, discouraged and disheartened. We know they did not believe Him when He told them He would be raised and would go before them into Galilee, for in verse seventeen we read, "Some doubted;" and in Mark 16:11: "And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her (Mary Magdalene), believed not." How slow we are to believe the truth, and how quick to believe a lie." Praise the Lord, it is by grace through faith that we are saved; only God's grace could bring us into everlasting life.

But one believed our Lord. No one loved Him more than Mary of Bethany, we think, yet we do not read of her coming to the tomb. Why? She had believed Him when He had said He would die, and so she anointed Him for His burial (Matt. 26:6-13); and she no doubt also believed Him when He promised that He would be raised again. May more of us have faith to believe all God's promises, as Mary of Bethany did.

"... a great earthquake . . . the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven ... His countenance was like lightning ... for fear of Him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men!" The power and majesty of God the Father is manifest in the resurrection of the Son. No longer was the Father's Face turned away from His Son, for the payment for sin was complete, and in the resurrection the Father has given us His receipt. The angel "rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." Note that the stone was rolled away after the Lord Jesus raised, rolled away that the disciples might see in, not that the Lord might come out, for He had already risen, in a body of glory which was not subject to the laws of the earthly body. "And for fear of the angel the keepers did shake, and become as dead men" -- this, then, was no imagining. One does not shake, and fall as dead, without due cause, especially those so used to danger as Roman soldiers were. It was "the angel of the Lord" whom they saw, whose "countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow."

"Fear not ... He is not here ... He is risen." Marvellous truth! If the Lord had come down from the Cross, as His enemies defied Him to do, He would have shown the power of God to save Himself. But crucified and raised again, He shows "the power of God unto salvation" of others. "He is risen;" He is a living Saviour! Some day "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

"And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid ..." (Matt. 28:9, 10). A better translation of All hail is O Joy. "O Joy, be not afraid." This is a wonderful message for us if we are trusting in Him. O Joy! He is risen! His death atoned for your sins and mine, and God has placed upon His finished work the seal of His approval. Be not afraid, for you are safe in His keeping, and no man is able to pluck you out of His hand (John 10:29).

Matt. 28:11-15

Before us is further record of the deceitfulness and trickery of the chief priests and elders who caused the death of Messiah, who feared His resurrection and plotted that the sepulchre should be made sure, and who finally bribed the soldiers who were on watch on the resurrection morning to falsify their testimony.

The chief priests and elders "gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept ... and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt. 28:12-15). Yes, and it is commonly reported among the Jews until this our day, too. How can they believe such a tale? In the first place, the punishment for a Roman soldier who fell asleep while on watch was death. It is conceivable that one might have fallen a prey to sleep, but not all of the soldiers. Secondly, how can the testimony of one who slept while the action was taking place be accepted? If the soldiers slept, how could they know that the disciples had stolen the body? These are lies of Satan. Foiled in his attempt to lock the Lord Jesus in the sepulchre which he made sure, Satan has attempted to discredit the resurrection by these false reports. "He is risen" -- Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Matt. 28:16-20

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee. ... And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke unto them ... saying, All power is given unto Me in the heavens and in earth." "All power is given unto Me." "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). Yes, at His Name every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (vs. 19). The Lord Jesus is risen from the dead, His promises are sure, His word is true -- therefore, go ye, and teach all nations. Is not that a message for us all today? How can we sit idly by while thousands upon hundreds of thousands are perishing without Christ? Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. As we believe we see the signs of His near return, may God grant that in the Body, of Christ there may arise a new vision of the starving souls of the heathen, the Christ-less men and women of our own country as well as foreign lands, and may the message reach some reader here today: "Go ye, therefore."

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age." Such a promise gives us rest and peace. "Amen" -- so let it be; it is a fitting phrase with which to end the Gospel of Jesus, Messiah and King.

"This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we are all witnesses," said Peter. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:32-36).

And now, "Unto Him Who loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

APPENDICES

Author's Note: The definitions published in this appendage have been arrived at by the author and those whom he has quoted only after prayerful study of God's Word. They concern matters about which volumes have been written, and more may yet be added, and it is quite evidently impossible to give much detail in the space allotted. Scripture references have therefore been furnished indicating the chief Biblical sources of our conclusions, which the reader is urged to verify and study.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

APPENDIX A

Dispensation. A period of time, or an age, conditioning human life in the present earth, during which God tests man, by means of some specific standard of conduct, in respect to man's obedience to the will of God. There are seven dispensations recorded in God's Word, and under each one man fails and God brings judgment. The seven dispensations are:

- (1) The Age of Innocence, beginning at Gen. 1:23, and ending at Gen. 3:23, 24;
- (2) The Age of Conscience, beginning at Gen. 4:1, and ending at Gen. 7;
- (3) The Age of Human Government, beginning at Gen. 8:20, and ending at Gen. 11:8;
- (4) The Age of Promise, beginning at Gen. 12:1, and ending at Ex. 19:8;
- (5) The Age of Law, beginning at Ex. 19:8, and ending- at the Cross;
- (6) The Age of Grace, beginning at Calvary, and ending at the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Tribulation being a time of judgment between the Rapture and the Lord's return in glory (1 Thess. 4:13, 17; Rev. 19:11-16);
- (7) The Age of the Kingdom, beginning at the Lord's Return in Power to the Earth, and ending after the completion of the one thousand years, and the doom of Satan and the judgment of the Great White Throne, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom to God (1 Cor. 15:24) and there will be the New Heaven and a New Earth (Rev. 20:1).

APPENDIX B

The Age of Law. The fifth Dispensation (see Appendix A), extended from the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai until the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the Age of Grace began. In answer to the question of Exodus 19:1, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" Dr. C. I. Scofield has written: "The answer is sixfold:

- (1) The law was added because of transgressions, i.e., to give to sin the character of transgression, (a) Men had been sinning before Moses, but in the absence of law their sins were not put to their account (Rom. 5:12); the law gave to sin the character of 'transgression,' i.e., of personal guilt. (b) Also, since men not only continued to transgress after the law was given, but were provoked to transgress by the very law which forbade it (Rom. 7:8), the law conclusively proved the inveterate sinfulness of man's nature (Rom. 7:11-13).
- (2) The law, therefore, 'concluded all under sin' (cf Rom. 3:19, 20, 23).

(3) The law was an ad interim dealing, 'till the seed should come' (v. 19).

(4) The law shut sinful man up to faith as the only avenue of escape (v. 23).

(5) The law was to the Jews what the pedagogue was in a Greek household, a ruler of children in their minority, and it had this character 'unto' (i.e., until) Christ (v. 24).

(6) Christ having come, the believer is no longer under the pedagogue (v. 25)."

APPENDIX C

The Age of Grace. The sixth Dispensation (see Appendix A), extends from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ to His return, the latter being in two stages, the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-17), and His return in Power (Rev. 19:11-16). The Tribulation, the last of Daniel's seventy weeks (Dan. 9:20-27), is the time of God's judgment ending the Age of Grace, and may be considered a transition period, just as there were transition periods between Conscience and Human Government, and between Law and Grace. During the Age of Grace the point of man's destiny is no longer obedience to the law as a condition of salvation, but the receiving or rejecting of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is the gift of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But salvation in any age, is "by grace ... through faith." For example, under Law man was tested by his obedience to the law. But "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and only by the grace of God, through faith in the blood, a type of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, could there be salvation.

APPENDIX D

The Lord's Return. There are two phases of the Lord's Return described in the Word of God:

(1) The Rapture. The Lord's coming, before the Tribulation, for His own, when we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52).

(2) The Lord's Return in Glory. His return after the Tribulation, with His own to reign on the earth upon the Throne of His father David (Rev. 19:11-16).

APPENDIX E

Type. That which is "a divinely purposed illustration of some truth. It may be:

(1) a person (Rom. 5:14);

(2) an event (1 Cor. 10:11);

(3) a thing (Heb. 10:20);

(4) an institution (Heb. 9:11);

(5) a ceremonial (1 Cor. 5:7)" (C.I. Scofield, D.D.). For example, in Eden, when Adam and Eve had sinned, the Lord God made "coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:4). The shedding of blood here was a type of forgiveness through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coats of skins a type of the believer being clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Anti-Type. That which is "the fulfilment of the Type, It is found, usually, in the New Testament" (C.I. Scofield, D.D.).

APPENDIX F

The Tribulation. A period of seven years duration, Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9), between the Rapture (see Appendix D.1) and the return of the Lord! Jesus in glory and power to reign on the earth (Appendix D.2). During the first half of the Tribulation, 3-1/2 years, Anti-Christ will be revealed (Dan, 9:26, 27), and he will make a covenant with Israel.

The Great Tribulation. The last half of Daniel's 70th week, 3-1/2 years duration, specifically the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), though it will involve the whole world (Rev. 3:10). The Great Tribulation is fully described in Revelation 11 to 18 (see Matt. 24:15-26). "The elements of the Great Tribulation are: (1) The cruel reign of the 'beast out of the sea' (Rev. 13:1), who, at the beginning of the three and a half years, will break his covenant with the Jews (by virtue of which they will have re-established the temple worship, Dan. 9:27), and show himself in the temple, demanding that he be worshipped as God (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4). (2) The active interposition of Satan 'having great wrath' (Rev. 12:12), who gives his power to the Beast (Rev. 13:4, 5). (3) The unprecedented activity of demons (Rev. 9:2, 11); and (4) the terrible 'bowl' judgments of Rev. 16" (C.I. Scofield, D.D.).

(1) Pre-Tribulation. Referring to that which will occur before the Great Tribulation begins; e.g., the resurrection of the believers who have died, the return of Christ for His Church, the Rapture of the saints, etc., etc. A Pre-Tribulationist believes that the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13-17) will take place before the Tribulation, a wholly distinct event from the Lord's coming in glory (Rev. 19). He bases his belief on the fact that the Holy Spirit, Who indwells believers, will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation when Anti-Christ shall be revealed (2 Thess. 2:7, 8), and consequently the believer cannot be on earth at that time; on the fact that the elders of Revelation 4 are the redeemed; and on the fact that in the Lord's coming in glory, He will come with His Church (Rev. 19:14).

(2) Post-Tribulation. That which will occur after the Tribulation Period, e.g., the return of the Lord in glory, the judgment of the Great White Throne, the casting of Satan into the bottomless pit, the Millennium, etc.

A Post-Tribulationist is one who believes that the Church will go through the Tribulation, and does not distinguish distinctly between the event of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-17) and the coming of the Lord Jesus in glory (Rev. 19:11-16).

APPENDIX G

The Millennium. A period of 1000 years (Latin: Mille, thousand; annus--year) during which the Lord Jesus Christ will reign on earth with His saints (Rev. 20:4, 6) on the Throne of His father David (Isa. 9:7). This will be the Kingdom Age, which will follow directly after the Great Tribulation, Armageddon, the casting of the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire, and the binding of Satan (Rev. 19 and 20). Following the Kingdom Age, Satan will be loosed for a season, but he will be finally cast into the lake of fire forever, as will the unbelieving dead after the judgment of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20). After these things will come the New Heaven and the New Earth (Rev. 21).

(1) Pre-Millennial. "That which occurs before the millennium. When we speak of 'the pre-millennial return of Christ' we mean that He will return before the Millennium begins, and that it is His return that makes such a Millennium possible. If Christ's return is pre-millennial it may occur at any time. All men who believe that Christ may return at any time, even today, or tomorrow, are, whether they admit it or not, pre-millennial in their conviction. One who believes thus is spoken of as a pre-millennialist. A remarkable list of some of the great Biblical scholars of all ages who have held this view may be found in *The Coming and Kingdom of Christ*, Chicago, 1914, pp. 241-249" (Wilbur M. Smith, D.D.)

(2) Post-Millennial. "That which occurs after the Millennium. When it is used in reference to the Second Advent of Christ it carries the idea that Christ will not return until after the Millennium has occurred. Strictly speaking, one who takes the post-millennial view of Christ's Second Advent believes that the world will gradually grow better and better until a veritable millennium of peace, and righteousness, and godliness will be prevailing over the earth; and, that Christ cannot possibly return for at least one thousand years -- unless the Millennium has already commenced, as some expositors have claimed. If anything we now know to exist upon the earth is identified with the Millennium, it is certainly not the glorious Millennium promised in the Holy Scriptures" (Wilbur M. Smith, D.D.).

(3) A-Millennial. "A term the meaning of which the A- prefix easily reveals -- without a Millennium. Those who take the A-Millennial view believe that the Lord's return cannot be located specifically either before or after the Millennium, but that it must be wholly separated from any connection with the idea of a Millennium, repudiating the reality of any such a period of time. An A-Millennialist might still believe in the imminent return of our Lord" (Wilbur M. Smith, D.D.).