

UNDERSTANDING  
— T • H • E —  
**GOSPELS**

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

**Charles F. Baker**

# **UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPELS**

**A Different Approach**

by  
**Charles F. Baker**

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## **UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPELS A DIFFERENT APPROACH**

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To my wife, Teresa, apart from whose faithful spiritual and physical help and encouragement, the completion of this book would have been, humanly speaking, an impossibility.

# Foreword

This volume is the fruit of many years of study. Mr. Baker is a diligent Bible scholar and author. Following his outstanding work, *A Dispensational Theology*, he found for himself another worthwhile assignment. A dispensational commentary on the gospels was an urgent need, and Mr. Baker spent three years writing and refining this book.

The need for such a book is apparent. Many of the commentaries on the gospels are not interpretive but merely devotional. Others which are interpretive fail to distinguish between Israel and the Church which is the Body of Christ.

There are two extremes in interpreting the gospels. The one extreme accepts the gospels as written primarily and exclusively for members of the Body of Christ. The other holds that none of the truth in the gospels applies to us today as members of the Body of Christ, since these books relate to the Jewish nation of a former dispensation. Mr. Baker wisely avoids both extremes. He recognizes both the historical place of the gospels, and also the universal theological principles contained in them that apply to God's people in all dispensations.

But the book is not only interpretive, it is also devotional. The reader will be able to apply much to himself which will be helpful to his own personal life. At the same time, the author does not claim this work to be exhaustive, but rather it serves as a stimulus toward further study.

Solomon said three thousand years ago that of making many books there is no end. If that were true 1000 B.C., how much more is it true 2000 A.D. Obviously, it is impossible to read all books (even all books on the Bible). We must be selective. This is one book I would recommend for selection.

Jack T. Dean, Ph.D.  
President  
Grace Bible College

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A need has been expressed for a commentary on the four Gospels which would have as its primary objective to show the relationship between the earthly teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and those of the Old Testament prophets, the Book of Acts, the Pauline epistles, and the future development of the Kingdom of God. After much study and prayer, and hopefully with the guidance of the Spirit of God, the author has attempted, in part at least, to accomplish this task.

It should be pointed out that many of the books written on the Gospels are purely devotional in nature, simply making applications of spiritual principles, and not dealing with the primary interpretation of our Lord's teachings. Such works have their value and their place, but it is deemed to be of greater importance to grasp the primary meaning of these teachings as they were intended to be understood by those who were actually addressed. Other valuable commentaries have been written which are mainly exegetical, dealing with grammatical technicalities of the original language.

Most of the commentaries on the Gospels deal with each of the books separately. A number of *harmonies* of the Gospels have been produced in an effort to combine the four accounts into one chronological record. Since there is so much in common between the four Gospels, especially between the first three, the author felt that it best suited his purpose to deal with the four collectively, instead of individually, thus following the form of a harmony. Thus, instead of dealing four times with the same event which is recorded by all four Gospel writers, such as the feeding of the five thousand, only one exposition need be given.

The King James Version, or as it is sometimes called, the Authorized Version, has been used as the basic text in this study, for at least two reasons. Although there are a number of new English versions in circulation, it is believed that the King James is still the most universally used version. Also, our most used English Bible concordances are based upon the text of the King James. Therefore, if this most important tool of Bible study is to be used, the student is forced to go back to the wording of the Authorized Version (A.V.), in spite of the fact that he might prefer the use of a more modern version.

It is not possible to arrange the events in the life of our Lord in an exact chronological order, and that for several reasons. The Gospel writers do not relate events in the same chronological order. Many events are recorded in only one of the Gospels, often making it difficult to place them in the correct order. Many events as recorded by each of the writers might appear to be identical, but may be only similar, having taken place on different occasions. But in a work of this kind some order must be decided upon, and the decision has been made to

follow very closely the order as found in the gospel of Mark. Our reason for this choice is based upon the facts in the following quotation:

It is true that in the pursuance of their several plans, Lk. sometimes, Mt. frequently, deserts the order of Mk., but it is noteworthy that they never do so together. As Professor Burkitt says, "Mt. and Lk. never agree against Mk. in transposing a narrative. Lk. sometimes deserts the order of Mk., and Mt. often does so; but in these cases Mk. is always supported by the remaining Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

In order to locate a particular passage in one of the Gospels, an Index to Gospel Sections has been provided. Four other useful indexes have also been provided, one giving Scripture References referred to in the text, exclusive of references in the four Gospels, one on Quotations from the Old Testament, one on the Major Parables, and another on the Major Miracles.

The author suggests that the student first of all read all of the Scriptural references given under each heading, before reading the author's comments. It might be well to read the references in more than one version. In this way the student will receive his first impressions from the Scripture itself, and thereby be in a better position to judge the correctness of the author's exposition.

The author has several theological commitments. He believes in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures in their original writings. He adopts a literal type of interpretation of the Scriptures, as opposed to a spiritualizing principle. He accepts the principle enunciated by the Apostle Paul that the present divine economy was not made known to the sons of men in other ages and generations. He advocates the Pre-millennial view of the Second Coming of Christ and the Pre-tribulation view of the Rapture of the Church. In keeping with the views of most Pre-millennialists, he is committed to the dispensational principle of interpretation of Scripture. The dispensational principle is the recognition of the fact that God has from time to time, made certain administrative changes in His dealings with His people, an example of which is stated in Heb. 7:12: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Dispensational hermeneutics seeks to discover such changes and to interpret the Scriptures accordingly.

Dispensationalists teach that the blood of Christ is the basis for man's salvation in every dispensation (Rom. 3:25), and that faith in God and in His Word has been the human requirement for salvation in every dispensation (Heb. 11:6). However, the content of God's revelation to man has varied from one dispensation to another. It was not possible that the Old Testament saints could have had as the conscious object of their faith the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as we have today. Their faith in God was manifested in other

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<sup>1</sup> James Iverach, *The International Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), Vol. II, p. 1284. Used by permission.

ways, as is clearly taught in the catalog of men of faith in Hebrews 11, beginning with Abel down to the last of the prophets. Faith always believes God; whether He says to bring a sacrifice, or believe in the once for all sacrifice of Christ.

While it is very important to understand to whom God is speaking in the various parts of the Bible, and thus keep the dispensations distinct, it is equally important to understand the purpose of the Bible, whatever dispensation is involved. The purpose of the Bible is stated very succinctly in 2 Tim. 3:16,17: "All scripture is God-breathed, 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." Jesus came to save us from sin: not simply from the penalty of sin and to get us to heaven at last, important as that is; but to save us from sin itself. Unless our study of the Bible has a sanctifying influence upon our manner of life, unless it cleanses our lives from sinful acts and habits, unless it promotes the fear of God, unless it increases our love for Jesus Christ, unless it produces fruitful service for God, it is all in vain. We must know the Word of God in order for it to produce these results, but it is possible to know the facts of the Word without having our lives changed and conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29).

It is therefore the hope and prayer of the author that all who read these pages will not only be provoked to prayerful consideration of the views presented, to the end that they might become more firmly established in their understanding of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ which the Father gave Him to deliver to His covenant people while He was here in the flesh, but that they might also find instruction in righteous living and thus become furnished unto all good works.

# Introductory Materials

## SECTION I.

### The Old Testament and the Gospels

It is doubtless true that the majority of Christians never read or study the Old Testament, with the exception, perhaps, of the Book of Psalms. And it is also true that many read only from the Gospels in the New Testament. There are several reasons for this phenomenon. It is supposed that the Old Testament is simply a book of Jewish folklore which has little, if any, relationship to the New Testament. The proliferation of new, modern speech translations of the New Testament leaves many Christians in a vacuum as far as the Old Testament is concerned. Red letter editions of the Bible give the impression that the words which Jesus spoke here on earth are more true and important than other parts of the Bible.

To start reading or studying the Bible with the first book of the New Testament is like starting to read a novel in the middle of the book. How could one understand the plot or the characters or what was going on with such a procedure? It is commonly supposed that Jesus came to found a new religion, but nothing could be further from the truth. The New Testament states that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision (the Jewish nation) for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (in the Old Testament), (Rom. 15:8). In reading the Gospels one is struck by the number of times it is recorded that Jesus did this or said that, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by this or that Old Testament prophet." Jesus Himself said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets (i.e., the Old Testament): I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Therefore an understanding of the Old Testament is essential for an understanding of what Jesus was saying and doing in the four Gospels.

Peter sums up the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures under a two-fold theme: "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1:11). The first theme is redemptive; the second is dispensational. The first was accomplished at His first coming; the second will be accomplished at His second coming. The glory that should follow refers to the Messianic, millennial Kingdom, which both John the Baptist and Jesus announced as being near at hand. The theme of the Gospels is the King and His Kingdom. These two words appear some 178 times in the Gospels.

The Kingdom is usually designated as *the Kingdom of the Heavens* in Matthew, and in the parallel passages in Mark and Luke as *the Kingdom of God*.

This Kingdom is not to be understood simply as a spiritual condition of the hearts, or as the general sovereignty of God over the universe. God's Kingdom in this sense has always existed, but the Kingdom referred to in the Gospels had not yet come into existence. It was near at hand when the King came to earth, and the King taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This Kingdom is the Davidic, Messianic Kingdom, which is the subject of Old Testament prophecy and which is to be established upon the earth with the renewed nation of Israel, over which Jesus Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

But before that Kingdom could be established an important prophecy had to be fulfilled. Jesus must first suffer and die for the sins of the world, even as Peter had said, before the glory of the Kingdom could be realized. Therefore, it was not until after His death that the Kingdom could be offered to Israel in the sense that now nothing stood in the way of its establishment but the condition that the nation of Israel repent and be converted (Acts 3:17-26). Thus we do not believe, as some teach, that Israel was cast aside at Pentecost and the new and unprophesied dispensation began in the formation of the Church which is Christ's Body. In speaking to the leaders of Israel in Acts 3:26 Peter states: "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you." The message in easy Acts was still to Israel only. Israel rejected this offer of the Kingdom with the result that God temporarily suspended His purpose to establish Israel's Kingdom on earth, and instead revealed an entirely new purpose which He had ordained before the beginning of time. This purpose concerned the outcalling of the Body of Christ, a truth never before made known to mankind and therefore designated as the Mystery or secret. This truth was revealed to the new Apostle Paul and is recorded in his epistles. While Israel and the Body of Christ are separate and distinct groups of the redeemed, both share equally in the redemptive work of Christ.

## **SECTION II.**

### **The Writers of the Gospels**

The Author of the Gospels is the Holy Spirit: the human writers were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. While each of the writers wrote in his own style, from his own point of view, selecting certain incidents and omitting others, the Holy Spirit so superintended their writing that the end product was exactly what God wanted, and was thus inerrant as the Word of God.

Only two of the writers were apostles, Matthew and John. Matthew had been a publican, or tax collector for the Roman government. He is referred to as Matthew in Matt. 9:9, 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13; and as Levi, the son of Alphaeus in Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27,29.

John was not only the writer of the fourth Gospel, but of three epistles and the book of Revelation. John and his brother James were sons of Zebedee, and were called by Jesus as they were in a boat mending their nets (Matt. 4:21,22; Mk. 1:19), although there seems to have been an earlier call as recorded in John 1:35. Peter, James, and John formed an inner circle of the disciples. James and John were named *Boanerges* by Christ, which means "sons of thunder," a name which no doubt reveals much about their character. They wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village which had refused them hospitality (Lk. 9:54). This violent characteristic seems to be in sharp contrast to the other picture of John as the apostle of love. It was no doubt the regenerating work of the Spirit of God which transformed this son of thunder into a son of love.

John refers to himself in his Gospel as "that other disciple" and "the disciple that Jesus loved," (John 18:16; 19:26; 20:2,3,4,8; 21:7,20,23,24). John is mentioned by Paul in Gal. 2:9 as one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. Tradition has it that John became a pastor at Ephesus and that he was later exiled to the Isle of Patmos off the W. coast of Asia Minor, where he wrote the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:9). It is believed that his Gospel was written at a very late date, possibly around 90 A.D. He thus lived well into the new dispensation which was introduced by Paul, and this fact no doubt explains, in part at least, why John's Gospel differs so widely from the other three.

It is believed that John Mark identified himself in his Gospel as the young man at the arrest of Jesus in the garden who had a linen cloth cast about his naked body, who, when attacked by young men in the mob, fled from them naked, leaving the linen cloth in their hands, (Mk. 14:51,52). Mark's mother owned a home in Jerusalem where the disciples often met for prayer (Acts 12:12). He was a nephew of Barnabas, and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5,13). When the going got rough Mark deserted and went back home to Jerusalem. Paul's refusal to take him on their next trip caused a rupture in the fellowship of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). However, Paul later writes that Mark had proved himself faithful and that he had become profitable to Paul's ministry (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). Mark also had very close ties with Peter, who refers to him as "my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). It is believed by some that Peter related the facts to Mark, which he wrote down and which became the Gospel according to Mark. Many believe this was the first of the Gospels to be written.

Luke was not an apostle; in fact, as far as is known he had no connection with the Christian movement until he met the Apostle Paul. Many expositors believe he was a Gentile, and if so, he was the only Gentile writer of the Scripture. Others think he was a Jew of the dispersion, perhaps from Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas ministered. His name appears only four times in the N.T., (2 Cor., subscript; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phile. 24). Luke first appears on the scene in the book of Acts where the narrative changes from the third person to the first person plural, when Luke apparently joined Paul's party (Acts 16:10). From this

point on Luke was one of Paul's most faithful companions. Paul calls him "the beloved physician." He was a medical doctor, as attested by the fact that his writings contain many medical terms. He tells us that he got his information about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ from those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word.

The Apostle Paul seems to have had a marked influence upon Luke's account. Vincent comments on this influence:

His connection with Paul gave rise in the church, at a very early period, to the opinion that he wrote his Gospel under the superintendence of that apostle. While his preface says nothing about the Pauline sanction of his Gospel, the work, nevertheless, presents remarkable coincidences with Paul's epistles, both in language, ideas, and spirit. The Gospel itself sets forth that conception of Christ's life and work which was the basis of Paul's teaching. He represents the views of Paul, as Mark does of Peter... Some two hundred expressions or phrases may be found which are common to Luke and Paul, and more or less foreign to other New Testament writers.<sup>2</sup>

An example of this influence may be seen in the use of the word translated *grace*. This is one of the predominant words in Paul's vocabulary, occurring 100 times in his epistles (not counting Hebrews, where it occurs eight times). The word does not occur even once in Matthew or Mark, but Luke uses it eight times in his Gospel and sixteen times in Acts.

### SECTION III.

#### The Design of the Gospels

Why do we have four separate records of the life of Christ instead of just one? Would it not have been better to have one complete record instead of four incomplete ones? The answer is sometimes given that the four records were written for four classes of people: Matthew for the Jews, Mark for the Romans, Luke for the Greeks, and John for the whole world. There may be an element of truth in this answer, but there is a much greater and more scriptural evidence of design. The Old Testament sets forth the character of the promised Messiah in a four-fold fashion. One of the Old Testament titles for the Messiah is "the Branch," meaning that which sprouts or springs forth. In Jer. 23:5 the Messiah is called, "the Branch of David." David was the King of Israel with whom God had made a covenant concerning an everlasting King and Kingdom. Matthew introduces Jesus as the Son of David in his opening sentence, and emphasizes the truth concerning the Messianic Kingdom. The Messiah is called "Jehovah's Servant the Branch," in Zech. 3:8. Mark presents Jesus especially in this character. Unlike Matthew; who traces the genealogy of Jesus in the kingly line back to

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<sup>2</sup> Marvin E. Vincent, *Word Studies of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), Vol. I, p. 40. Used by permission.

David and Abraham, Mark says nothing about His line of descent, which is of little importance for a servant. He does introduce Jesus in the first verse as the Son of God, but nothing is said about the origin of His humanity. The activity of Jesus is swift and moving in Mark. Over and over Mark used the word translated, "immediately," "straightway," giving the impression that Jesus was constantly serving God. Jesus was the ideal servant of God, always doing the Father's will, and is thus an example for all servants of God in all ages, as far as devotion and dedication are concerned. Since He was living under the Mosaic Law dispensation and was introducing the Messianic Kingdom, the type of His ministry varies in many respects from that which God has ordained for today. The Messiah is also set forth as "the Man whose name is the Branch," (Zech. 6: 12). The emphasis in Luke's Gospel is on Jesus as the Son of man. Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam, the first man. He gives many details about the birth and childhood of Jesus which are omitted by the other writers. The favorite title of Jesus for Himself was "the Son of man." It is not recorded that anyone else called Him by this name. Finally, Isa. 4:2 speaks of the Messiah as "the Branch of Jehovah." John was written to exalt Jesus especially as the Son of God. He states the purpose of his Gospel to be "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name," (John 20:31). He establishes the Deity of Jesus Christ in the very first verse of his record.

John makes it evident that the Gospels contain only a partial record of all that Jesus said and did, for he states: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world could not contain the books that should be written," (John 21:25). Each of the Gospel writers chose only those words and events which contributed to the design of his Gospel. It is as though four men were stationed on four sides of a building and each asked to write a description of the building. They would all be writing about the same building, but each would see features not apparent to the others, and in places their descriptions might vary to the extent that they were describing entirely different buildings. Thus there are differences between the four Gospels, but the differences are not contradictions or errors on the part of the writers, but rather are evidences of design.

## **SECTION IV.**

### **The Synoptic Problem**

The word "synoptic" means "seen together." It is applied to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, because these three Gospels are very similar in content and order. The problem is, why do we have three separate records of the life of Jesus which are so similar and yet have distinct differences? What is the reason for these differences? The question has been answered in part by our comments on the design of the Gospels. But the Synoptic problem is concerned primarily with the sources from which the writers got their information. Which Gospel was the first

to be written? Did the other two writers use the original one as the basis for their accounts? Or did the writers work independently of each other, and if so, why is there so much similarity? Did the Gospel story originate as an oral tradition, and were there perhaps several such traditions which were later written down, thus explaining the differences between them? These are some of the questions with which Bible critics have wrestled.

Part of the Synoptic problem stems from defective views of inspiration. All Scripture is God-breathed and therefore inerrant. If this claim of Scripture for itself is denied or compromised, then some of the above questions are valid. Inspiration does not exclude the use of human sources; in fact, Luke tells us that he received his information from those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses. Inspiration would not rule out the theory commonly held that one writer used an earlier written Gospel as a model. Inspiration demands that the Holy Spirit superintended what these men wrote. They were led to sources and selected such materials which would fulfill God's purpose in having each of the four Gospels written. Not only so, but they must have been a certain amount of direct revelation of facts to them of things they could not have known otherwise. How could they have known what words were spoken between Christ and Satan in the temptation when no one else was present; or how could they have known what Christ prayed in the garden while they were asleep? Actually Matthew and John were apostles and were personal witnesses of practically all that Jesus said and did, so that they would have had little need for outside sources of information.

There are differences in wording and in the chronological arrangement of parallel passages in the Synoptics which need to be explained. Henry Alford for example, takes the position that the writers were inspired but that these differences are proof of the falsity of the doctrine of verbal inspiration.<sup>3</sup> He takes the position that inspiration referred to the writers, whereas Paul states that all Scripture (writing) is God-breathed.

E.W. Bullinger argues that each of the Synoptics give exactly the same chronological order and that what appears to be parallel passages in the three Gospels are only similar and not identical events. He states: "From the outline given below it will be easy to see how the several accounts of similar events and discourses are distributed in the several Gospels, without violently altering the sequence of verses and chapters, as is done in most so-called 'Harmonies.'<sup>4</sup> He claims, for example, that instead of there having been three temptations of the Lord as commonly believed, there were six: Matthew mentions three and Luke the other three. Instead of there having been two others crucified with Jesus, there were four: two thieves and two malefactors. While it is evident that there are cases of similar sayings and events which are not identical in the Synoptics, it appears unreasonable to explain every difference on this basis.

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament* (Cambridge; Deighton, Bell and Co., 1874) Vol. I, p. 20, 21.

<sup>4</sup> *The Companion Bible* (London; Oxford University Press, N.D.) Appendix 97, p. 140.

It is the author's position that none of the Gospel writers made mistakes, and that any differences in their accounts could be reconciled if all of the facts were known. A great deal of textual criticism has proceeded on the basis that the differences are due to erroneous information the writers received from their various sources, but this approach is purely naturalistic and is opposed to Divine inspiration. Others hold the inconsistent view that the important spiritual truths are inspired but the less important historical parts are not inspired and therefore open to mistakes.

There are numerous factors which may explain the differences between the Gospels. Christ no doubt spoke to His people in Hebrew or Aramaic. We know that Paul spoke to the Jews in Hebrew (Acts 22:2), so it is reasonable to suppose that Christ did likewise. The Gospels were written in Greek. Translating from Hebrew into Greek could explain the difference in words or order of words. Pilate wrote the inscription over the Cross in three languages: Hebrew, the national language, Latin, the official language, and Greek, the common language (John 19:20). It is possible that the differences in the wording of this inscription in the four Gospels is due to translation from the Hebrew or the Latin. It is evident also that Jesus often repeated parables and other sayings, so that what may appear to be a part of the Sermon on the Mount misplaced in Mark or Luke, may in fact have been part of another discourse. An evident example of this may be seen in the parable of the candle. In Lk. 8:16 we read: "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they that enter in may see the light." Then in the same Gospel of Luke (11:33), we read: "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light." Here in the same Gospel we find a parable repeated in slightly different words and on an entirely different occasion, with a different application. Had one of these parables been found in Matthew and the other in Luke we might have been tempted to conclude that one or the other of the writers was mistaken in his chronological arrangement of the parable, and that there was a mix-up on whether the Lord spoke of putting the candle under a vessel or a bushel, or in a secret place or under a bed. No doubt if we knew all of the circumstances surrounding the writing of these Gospel accounts we would have no need for harmonizing them; rather we would discover that them is perfect harmony in the way God has given them to us.

The author is inclined to agree with the following statement of William Kelly:

It is evident also that the apparent discrepancies in the concurrent accounts of the synoptic Gospels must spring either from the infirmity of the human instruments or from the far reaching wisdom of the Spirit who impressed on each a special design, and so inserted, suppressed, or variously presented, the same substantial fact or truth in pursuance of that design, never giving anything but the truth, yet only thus giving the whole

truth.. .It is to me certain that Matthew and Luke were led to follow an exact order, one dispensational, the other moral; that they are more profoundly instructive than if one or the other, or both, had adhered to the very elementary manner of an annalist; and that it is a mere blunder therefore to characterize any resulting difference of arrangement (such as Matt. 8:28, etc., compared with Mk. 5:1, etc., and Luke 8:26, etc.) as a real discrepancy.<sup>5</sup>

## SECTION V.

### The Relation of the Gospels to the Church

To set forth the relation of the Gospels to the Church we must first define what is meant by the Church. The Greek word translated *church* occurs 116 times in the N.T., and some 70 times in the Greek translation of the O.T. Some theologians believe God has had but one church from the beginning of time, which is composed of all of the redeemed of all ages - past, present, and future. Under this view the Gospels would be completely related to the Church. Other theologians do not recognize the existence of a church in the O.T., believing that John the Baptist and Jesus founded the Church, and therefore accordingly this view relates the Gospels completely to the Church. Another group of theologians teach that there was no church until the Day of Pentecost after the close of the Gospel records. This view makes at least part of the Gospels apply to Israel's Kingdom teaching, and other parts to anticipate the formation of the Church. The view adopted by the author recognizes the existence of an O.T. Israelitish Church (Acts 7:38), the existence of a church of believers on the day of Pentecost, and the prediction of a Church in the Millennial Kingdom (Heb. 2:12 cf. Ps. 22:22). He further believes that God suspended His dealings with this Kingdom Church when the nation of Israel rejected the Kingdom Gospel which was preached in the early chapters of the Acts, and that God began a new Church with the outcalling of the Apostle Paul, which is designated "the Church which is His (Christ's) Body" (Eph. 1:22,23). This Church and its administration is said to have been a secret never before made known to the sons of men in other ages and generations until it was revealed to Paul (Eph. 3:1-9; Col. 1:24-26). According to this view the primary interpretation of the Gospels relates entirely to the nation of Israel and its Messianic Kingdom expectations. However, this does not mean that there is nothing in the Gospels for members of the Body of Christ, for there are many moral and spiritual truths which apply equally to Israel and the Body of Christ. Paul states that the Gentiles in this present Church age have been made partakers of Israel's spiritual things (Rom. 15:27). Therefore as we study the Gospels we must carefully distinguish those truths which apply only to the people of Israel and the teaching which may apply equally to us today. It is necessary to recognize the fact that the Lord Jesus was born under and lived under the O.T. (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 4:4), and that the N.T., which was made with the

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<sup>5</sup> William Kelly, *Lectures on Matthew* (New York; Loizeaux Brothers, Publishers, new edition revised, N.D.), p. 6, 7.

house of Israel (Heb. 8:8), did not actually begin until the death of Christ at the very end of the Gospels (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:15-17).

The historic truth contained in the Gospels is foundational to the whole scheme of redemption as found in the Pauline epistles. Apart from this truth there could be no basis for the existence of the Body of Christ and of the present dispensation of the grace of God. Regardless of the reader's understanding of the meaning of the Church, it is the author's hope that the following exposition of the Gospel records will prove to be of great spiritual and doctrinal help.

## CHAPTER I

# The Preparatory Period

## RESUME

What we have called the Preparatory Period includes the Introductions to the Gospel accounts, the Genealogies of Jesus, the Annunciation and Birth of both John the Baptist and of Jesus, the Infancy of Jesus, His childhood until the age of twelve when He visited Jerusalem with His parents, and the silent years at Nazareth until the age of thirty.

## EXPOSITION

### 1. Introductory Statements

**References:** Matt. 1:1-17; Mk. 1:1;  
Lk. 1:1-4; 3:23-38; John 1:1-13

Each of the Gospels presents certain introductory materials. Matthew begins by tracing the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham through David down to Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. The genealogy is given in three sections of fourteen generations each: from Abraham to David, from David to Josiah, and from Josiah to Jesus. Actually there are more than fourteen generations in each, according to the O.T., but for purposes of design, some of the generations were dropped by Matthew. It should be noted that in every case from Abraham to Joseph the expression "begat" is used, but it is not said' that Joseph begat Jesus, for Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit before Joseph and Mary came together. Joseph is said to have been the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.

Mark begins very bluntly without any introduction: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Servant is the Son of God.

Luke begins by informing us of the source of his information about Jesus. He addresses his Gospel to Theophilus. The name may refer to an individual, or the address may be to any lover of God, for that is the meaning of the name. We learn from Luke that many men had attempted to set in order a narrative of Christ's life. He was not speaking of either Matthew's or Mark's Gospel, but of uninspired, pseudo-gospels. Luke was a man of science and he collected his information in a scientific manner. He interviewed those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning of the life of Jesus. He claims to have had perfect understanding of all things from the very first. The expression "from the very first" is the Greek word *another*, which is translated elsewhere "from above," five times, and "the top," three times. If this more usual meaning is applied to this passage, it makes Luke say that he had received perfect knowledge of these things from above, that is, by Divine revelation. This view is adopted in the Scofield Reference Bible.<sup>6</sup>

Luke also gives a genealogy, but it is placed later at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, (3:23-38). It begins with Jesus and traces His line all the way back to Adam, the first man. It is instructive to note that Paul goes back to Adam when teaching the subject of reconciliation. Paul comprehends the whole human race under the headship of one or the other of just two men: the first man Adam, and the second man, the Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Cor. 15:22,45-47; Rom. 5:12-19). Matthew traces Christ's genealogy through David's son, Solomon; whereas Luke carries it through another son of David, Nathan. Matthew states that Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary; whereas Luke states that Joseph was the son of Heli. Heli was apparently the father of Mary and Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli. Thus, the genealogy is Mary's line of descent. Thus both Joseph and Mary were descendants of King David. It should be noted that in Joseph's genealogy there is a king by the name of Jeconiah, or Coniah, as he is called in Jer. 22:28-30, who was the last of the Davidic line to reign over Judah. In the Jeremiah passage it is stated: "Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah." Had Joseph been the actual father of Jesus (he was His legal father), this curse would have fallen upon Jesus. But the mother of Jesus was also descended from David through a line that is free from this curse. Thus it was not an arbitrary choice which God made for the human mother of His Son. She was the only one, married to Joseph, who would have overcome this curse.

John introduces Jesus as the Word or Logos, as having eternally existed with God. The term "Logos" was used by the philosophers of the day to signify impersonal Reason which operated between God and the material creation as the mediating principle. But John shows the true Logos to be personal, the eternal Son of God who communicates God to man. Logos does not signify merely the name of a thing in a grammatical sense. It is that which embodies a

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<sup>6</sup> *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York; Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1070.

conception or idea, a saying. The Ten Commandments are called in Greek, "hoi deka logoi," the decalogue, the ten words. Just as words are the means of communicating one's thoughts to another, so Christ as the Word is the Revealer of God to man.

When John says that the Word "was" in the beginning, the verb used means "existed," without any thought of coming into being. This is in contrast to the word used in 1:14, where the Word "was made" or "became" flesh. The Word as a Person always existed, but as a Man He became or came into being. Those who deny the Deity of Christ argue that because there is no definite article before God in the last clause of vs. 1, the translation should read, "and the Word was a god." But since the Word is the Son of God, to place a definite article before God would be equivalent to saying, "the Son is the Father." On the grammatical rule involved, Vincent remarks: "The word *God*, used attributively, maintains the personal distinction between God and the Word, but makes the unity of essence and nature to follow the distinction of person, and ascribes to the Word all the attributes of the divine essence."<sup>7</sup> That the Word is co-existent with God is also seen in the fact that He made everything that has ever been made, which must exclude the Maker from having been made, and in the further fact "that in him was life." He was not merely alive: He is life, the originator and giver of life. Translate vs. 9: "That was the true Light coming into the world, which enlightens every man (every man without distinction of race, not every man without exception)." Compare ch. 12:32 where the same idea is involved: Christ draws all men, Greeks as well as Jews: all without racial distinction, not all without exception.

It should be noted that John begins where the other Evangelists leave off, for in the very first chapter he announces Israel's rejection: "He came unto his own and his own received him not, but as many as received him, to them he gave the authority to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John wrote his Gospel near the end of the first century, well into the present Church Age. For that reason it seems to be a sort of bridge from the earthly, life of Christ to the present Divine order. John places special emphasis upon the death of Christ and upon belief or faith as the basis of salvation, truths which are especially emphasized by Paul in the gospel of the grace of God.

Thus we can see that John's Gospel has a much closer relationship and application to believers in this present Pauline dispensation of the grace of God than do the Synoptics. John wrote to people who were living almost thirty years after the death of the Apostle Paul, which was many years after the new revelation was given through. Paul for members of the Body of Christ. It is our belief that John was guided by the Holy Spirit to select those truths from the earthly teachings of Jesus Christ which coincided most closely with truth for the Body of Christ. John does not reveal Body truth, as such, but, as stated earlier, he begins where the Synoptics end, and places special emphasis upon believing,

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<sup>7</sup> Vincent, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 34, 35.

upon the Deity of Jesus Christ, upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit, upon the oneness of believers in Christ, upon the universality of the Gospel. It is for these and similar reasons that the Gospel of John has been distributed so widely as a separate Scripture portion in evangelistic efforts. And it is for this reason we have expressed the belief that John's Gospel provides a bridge between the former and the present dispensations.

## **2. Annunciation and Birth of John the Baptist**

**Reference: Lk. 1:5-25; 57-80**

Luke alone gives an account of the birth of John. His father, Zacharias, belonged to the priestly tribe of Levi, as did his mother, Elizabeth. They were advanced in years and Elizabeth had never been able to have children. Back in the days of King David the priesthood had been divided into twenty-four courses, each course serving in the temple for one week, twice a year (1 Chron. 24:10). Zacharias belonged to the course of Abia or Abijah, the eighth course. It was his turn to burn incense. While in the holy place an angel appeared unto him and announced that Elizabeth would bear a son who would have the spirit and power of Elijah and was to be named John. Zacharias just could not believe such a thing could happen, and for that reason he was stricken dumb until the prophecy should be fulfilled.

Zacharias went home to his wife after his service in the temple, and she conceived and in due time the child was born. On the eighth day the relatives and neighbors gathered for the circumcision ceremony and they all called his name Zacharias after his father, but Elizabeth said, "Not so, but he shall be called John." They remonstrated with her that none of her kinfolk bore that name, and then asked Zacharias what name he wanted the child to have. He called for a writing pad and wrote, "His name is John," and immediately his speech was restored. The people marvelled and fear came upon them and all wondered what manner of child this would be, as the story spread throughout the hill country of Judea.

Then Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and he began to prophesy. His prophecy concerned the Messiah who was not yet born and his own son John. Even though Jesus would not be born for another six months, Zacharias praised God for rising up a Horn of salvation for Israel in the house of His servant David. It is most important to note that Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, brings the same message as did the O.T. prophets concerning God's promise to the nation of Israel for a physical, earthly kingdom. Theologians of the Post-millennial and Amillennial schools claim that the Jews were greatly mistaken in supposing that God intended to establish them in a literal, material kingdom. They claim that all of these promises which the Jews took literally must be spiritualized. Thus they teach that Jesus came only to establish a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. But what did the Spirit-filled Zacharias in the N.T. say?

"As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Lk. 1:70-75).

Although the actual word "kingdom" does not occur in this passage, it is plainly intimated by the reference to this Deliverer who is raised up in the house of David, and by the twice repeated reference to salvation, not only from sin, but from Israel's enemies. But it is argued that these could not be physical enemies, such as the Romans, because the Jews were never delivered from them. What proponents of this objection fail to understand is that this deliverance was conditioned upon Israel's repentance and acceptance of the Messiah. These conditions become evident later on in the preaching of Jesus and of the apostles, (cf. Lk. 19:41-44; Acts 3:18-26). The fact that the generation of Israel rejected the Messiah does not mean that these national promises of the kingdom will never be fulfilled. God swore with an oath to Abraham and He promised David that even though Israel failed He would finally restore His kingdom, (2 Sam, 7:5-17). Therefore this Davidic covenant must yet be fulfilled.

Zacharias also prophesied that John would be called the prophet of the Highest, to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, and to give the knowledge of salvation unto Israel by the remission of their sins. All that we are told of his childhood is that he grew and became strong in spirit and lived in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

### **3. Annunciation and Birth of Jesus**

**References:** Matt. 1:18-25;  
Lk. 1:26-56; 2:1-20; John 1:14

Luke also tells of the annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel. It took place six months after Elizabeth had conceived John. This is the first "hail Mary." Roman Catholics have repeated it millions of times since then. A Roman Catholic book states:

There is a prayer which Catholics recite more often than any other. It is the most familiar of all the prayers used by the Church to honor the blessed Virgin. It forms the greater part of the Rosary... . It consists of three parts. The first is the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel, into which the Church has inserted her name, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." The second part is composed of the words of Elizabeth to our Lady: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb," to which is annexed the Sacred name of Jesus. And the third part is a beautiful petition added by the Church of God, giving expression to the feeling with which we Catholics

regard the Mother of God, and declaring our confidence in her intercession: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."<sup>8</sup>

Truly, Mary was highly honored to be chosen to be the mother of the humanity of God's Son, but the high honor bestowed upon her, exalting her as immaculately conceived and higher than Christ himself, substituting her as the intercessor between God and man, when Scripture states there is only one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5), is an invention of the Roman Church. The book from which we have just quoted admits "it is a historical fact that the Hail Mary did not exist at all until the eleventh century, and even then only a part of it was used as a prayer."<sup>9</sup> And the last part was not added until about 1500.

When the angels said, "Thou hast found favor with God," he used the word which is almost always translated "grace." This is the first time grace is mentioned in the N.T. and one of the eight times it is used in Luke, which may indicate the influence of the Apostle of Grace upon Luke. Mary needed the grace of God just like any other human. If Mary had been sinlessly conceived as Romanists aver, she would not have needed a Savior; but in the Magnificat she exclaims: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (vs. 47).

Matthew says nothing about the annunciation to Mary but he does tell us that Mary was espoused to Joseph and that she was found to be with child before they had come together. According to the law Joseph could have called for her death (Deut. 22:20-24), but because he was a just man he decided to follow Deut. 24:1 and put her away quietly. But an angel appeared unto him in a dream and told him not to fear to take Mary to himself, because the conception had been by the power of the Holy Spirit and the child should be named Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. Upon awaking, Joseph took Mary as his wife, but had no sex relations with her until she had brought forth her firstborn. Catholic doctrine refuses to accept this plain statement of Matt. 1:25. Mary had other children after Jesus was born. Ch. 13:55,56 names four brothers of Jesus as well as sisters.

Matt. 1:22 is the first of the many "that it might be fulfilled" statements in Matthew. Here the fulfillment is the Virgin Birth as predicted in Isa. 7:14. There has been a great deal of disputing whether the Hebrew word in Isaiah means a virgin or merely a young woman, but there can be no doubt about the meaning of the Greek word in Matthew. *Parthenon* describes a woman who has kept her chastity. The Parthenon in Athens was dedicated to the goddess Athena, one of the Greek goddesses who was a virgin. Biologists use the term parthenogenesis

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<sup>8</sup> Rev. John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church* (New York; P.J. Kenedy & Sons, New York, 1918), p. 266,267.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

to describe reproduction without the fertilization of eggs, as in the production of male bees.

Returning to Luke's account in ch. 1:32,33 God makes it abundantly clear that the N.T. and the O.T. are in perfect agreement on the subject of Israel's promised kingdom. God is going to give to Jesus the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Some theologians claim we today are spiritual Israelites but we have never heard any claim to be spiritual Jacobites. Jacob was his natural name: Israel his divinely given name. Christ is going to reign over the house of Jacob. Notice too that the Kingdom will have no end. The Millennial form of the Kingdom will have an end, but the Kingdom will continue after that in the new earth without end. After the last enemy is subjugated under the feet of Jesus, there will be no further need of Jesus to reign with a rod of iron, as in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15, cf. 1 Cor. 15:26-28).

Luke gives a very detailed account of the actual birth of Jesus, which might be expected from a medical doctor. His mention of the taxation which was made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria helps to tie in the birth of Christ with secular history and it provides another example of the Providence of God: how He works through seemingly unrelated events to bring about His ends. It was because of the taxation that Joseph and Mary had to take the journey down to Bethlehem to enroll and while there Mary's time to be delivered came. Thus Jesus was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth and a prophecy uttered 700 years earlier was fulfilled (Mic. 5:2). One would have thought that God would see to it that His Son was born in the most pleasant and commodious surroundings, perhaps in the palace of the king, but this was the first step in His humiliation. There was no room in the inn, so He was born in a stable (cf. Phil. 2:5-8).

Luke also is the one who has given us the beautiful store of the shepherds which we hear repeated in children's exercises every Christmas. It was a joyous announcement: "Peace on earth, good will toward men." But before the ministry of Christ had ended He was being rejected by Israel, so that He had to change all of that joyous message and instead ask: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Lk. 12:51). It has been said that there can be no lasting peace on earth until Israel is established in her land, until Christ is in His rightful place on the throne of David, and until Satan is in his appointed place, the lake of fire.

We can well imagine the wonderment which spread through the countryside because of these momentous events, but especially that of Mary, who kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

There has been much controversy over the date of Christ's birth. As mentioned earlier, Luke states that Zacharias belonged to the course of Abia. If we could be sure of the dates this course served in the temple we could know the

approximate date of Christ's birth. We know that Zacharias went home to his wife immediately after serving in the temple and that John was born nine months later. We know also that Elizabeth was in her sixth month when Mary conceived Jesus, so that Jesus was born six months after John.

The Companion Bible claims that Zacharias served from July 13-19. This would place the conception of John about June 24, allowing a few days for Zacharias to get home. Six months later, about December 25, Jesus would be conceived. His birth then would have been about September 29. The Church from ancient times has celebrated Sept. 29 as Michaelmas, or the feast of Michael and All Angels. Sept. 29 was also the first day of the feast of Tabernacles. Thus it is claimed that the Word was made flesh, was conceived, on December 25, and tabernacled among us, was born, on September 29, at the Feast of Tabernacles, in fulfillment of the O.T. type. It is further claimed that after Constantine legalized Christianity many pagan festivals became amalgamated with Christianity, one of which was the substitution of Dec. 25, the birthday of the Egyptian Horus (Osiris), for the birthday of Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, Edersheim claims it is impossible to be sure of the date of the course of Abia, but he feels he has good evidence it was from October 2-9, which would place the birth of Jesus on the traditional date of December 25.<sup>11</sup> Although we cannot know for certain the exact date of Jesus' birth, we do know that the great miracle of the Word becoming flesh (His conception) and tabernacling (His birth) among us is an eternal reality.

There are several logical arguments against the traditional date of Dec. 25 for the birth of Christ. It is argued that the shepherds would not be *abiding* in the open fields with their flocks in the dead of winter, not only because of the cold nights (it does snow in Jerusalem), but because there would be no pasturage at that season. It is also argued that the Roman government would not choose a time for the enrollment when it would be most difficult for the people to travel back to their own cities. Rome had plenty of trouble keeping the Jews subjected without adding cause for further rebellion. And then the improbability of Mary in her condition taking this trip on donkey-back of some seventy miles in the winter is pointed out. From May through October there is no rain in Israel, but in December the almost continuous winter rains set in which continue through February. The hill country through which they travelled had an average elevation of 3000 feet. Such a journey through cold rains and even snow would surely have been a most difficult trip for a woman ready to give birth to a child.

It may at first seem strange that Mary who belonged to the tribe of Judah had a cousin, Elizabeth, who belonged to the priestly tribe of Levi. Edersheim, an authority on Jewish matters, states:

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<sup>10</sup> *The Companion Bible*, op. cit., Appendix 179, p. 197-200.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids; Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), Vol. II, p. 704. Used by permission.

There can be no question, that both Joseph and Mary were of the royal lineage of David. Most probably the two were nearly related, while Mary could also claim kinship with the Priesthood, being, no doubt, on her mother's side, a blood relative of Elizabeth, the Priest-wife of Zacharias. Even this seems to imply that Mary's family must shortly before have held higher rank, for only with such did custom sanction any alliance on the part of Priests.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Infancy of Jesus

References: Matt. 2:1-23; Lk. 2:21-39

Let us first piece together the narrative from these two Gospels. Luke tells of the circumcision of Jesus when He was eight days old, and of the prophesying of Simeon along with the words of Anna on that occasion. After vs. 38 we must turn back to Matthew where we learn of the visit of the Magi, which occurred somewhat later, and then of Herod's plot to kill the infant Jesus, of God's warning to Joseph to flee into Egypt with the child, and of their stay there until Herod's death. Luke takes up the story again at this point and simply states that they returned to Galilee to their own city of Nazareth. However, Matthew fills in details, how they feared to return to Judea when they heard that Herod's son had become king, so they turned aside into Galilee and settled down in Nazareth.

**A. The Circumcision of Jesus.** It is evident that Jesus was born and lived under the dispensation of the Law. On the eighth day His parents brought Him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem for His circumcision and for offering the sacrifice demanded by the law. Paul states this truth in Gal. 4:4: "In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." It is most important to remember that we today live in an entirely different divine dispensation from that under which Jesus lived and ministered.

**B. The Prophecy of Simeon.** The important dispensational part of Simeon's prophecy is, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, and a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." The A.V. translation is faulty, as Vincent points out: "The A.V. predicates the failing and rising of the same persons: *the fall and rising again of many*. The American Revisers give it correctly: *the falling and the rising*."<sup>13</sup> The many of that generation fell; the many of a future generation of Israel will rise again.

Paul is the Apostle who announces the fall of Israel and the future rising or fulness of Israel in Rom. 11:11-32. It is of utmost importance to know when the fall of Israel took place and its effect. Many dispensationalists, as well as most non-dispensationalists, suppose that the fall of Israel occurred at the Cross. They

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Vincent, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 275.

therefore begin the new Christian dispensation on the day of Pentecost. But what are the scriptural facts? Christ prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him; Peter stated that they had done this in ignorance and that God would restore the Kingdom to them if they would repent; and it is plainly stated in Acts 3:26 that it was to Israel first after God had raised up His Son that God had sent Him to bless them. The fall of Israel came after Pentecost and after the Apostolic testimony of the resurrection of Christ. It was because of Israel's fall that God raised up a new apostle to announce that fall and the beginning of a new dispensation. Paul's statement is very clear: "through their (Israel's) fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:11). The first Gentile to be saved was in Acts 10 and the door of faith for the Gentiles was not opened until Acts 13 (cf. 14:27). Pentecostalism is the logical outcome of beginning the new dispensation at Pentecost. Scripture plainly indicates it began with Paul at the fall of Israel.

But Christ was also set for the rising of many in Israel. And Paul tells of this also. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:12,15). And he goes on to show that the whole nation of Israel is going to be saved after this gentile dispensation is ended.

**C. The Visit of the Magi.** It is commonly supposed that the Magi came to Jesus on the night He was born in the manger. The shepherds did come on that glad night. However, it appears that the Magi arrived somewhat later. Jesus was not in a manger when they arrived, but in the house (Matt. 2:11). When Herod plotted to take the life of the infant Jesus, he inquired diligently of the Magi when the star first appeared to them, and then he issued his decree that all children under two years of age in that region should be killed (Matt. 2:16). Why "under two years" if Jesus was but a few days old? Jesus might have been over a year old when Herod acted.

**D. Dreams.** God dealt with Israel through dreams, visions, and signs. Note that it was in a dream that God told Joseph that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit; it was by a dream that he warned Joseph to flee into Egypt; it was by a dream that he informed Joseph to return to Israel now that Herod was dead (cf. Hos. 11:1); and it was in a dream that he warned Joseph not to go into Judea but return to Galilee. Note God's promise to Israel: "your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts. 2:17). God has finished His revelation to man in the completed Bible. He no longer speaks in this way, but Christians who are ignorant of this fact try to interpret their dreams as messages from God and end up in confusion and fanaticism.

**E. The King of the Jews.** It is significant that the Magi spoke of Jesus as King of the Jews. And, of course, it is significant that these astrologers from an eastern country, perhaps Persia, should have known about the Jewish Messiah. It must be remembered that the Jews were taken captive by the Babylonians and

that prophets like Daniel became high government officials in Babylon and Persia. The Jews who returned under Ezra and Nehemiah must have left behind a great deal of knowledge of these prophetic events and apparently the wise men of that area were more diligent than the Jews in studying the prophecies. Much speculation has been made about the star they saw: was it a nova, a conjunction of two or more planets, or something miraculous. We believe it was not a natural phenomenon, for it is difficult to understand how such a heavenly body which rises and sets every night, tracing the same course across the heavens, could have been a means of guiding the Magi, and especially of pinpointing the very house in which the child lay. It seems more likely that it was a manifestation of the Shekinah glory of God which appeared as a point of light similar to that of a very bright star but which must have been at a much lower elevation, so that it would stand over the very house where Jesus was. The miraculous Light had appeared before, as the glory cloud to give light to Israel when they came out of Egypt, in the most holy place of the tabernacle and temple, from which it departed in the days of Ezekiel (Ezek. 10:4-19). Now the One had come who was the embodiment of the Shekinah glory (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4-6).

## 5. The Childhood of Jesus

**References:** Matt. 2:23; Lk. 2:40-52

This period covers approximately ten to twelve years in the life of Jesus which is passed over in silence except for one event when Jesus was twelve years of age. It is recorded by Luke that Joseph and Mary journeyed from Nazareth to Jerusalem every year to attend the feast of Passover, but there is no record that Jesus went with them except on the occasion when He was twelve years old. After the feast when the family started their journey home, they didn't notice that Jesus was not in the company until the end of the first day. Discovering His absence, they retraced their steps and searched everywhere in Jerusalem without success, everywhere except in the Temple. They surely wouldn't expect to find a twelve year old boy in the Temple. It was the last place they looked after three days of frantic searching, and to their amazement there He was answering and questioning the great theologians of the day. Even the doctors of the Law were astonished at His knowledge. His mother remonstrated with Him, "Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But He answered them: "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what He meant. After that Jesus submitted Himself to His earthly parents, went home with them, and was subject to them until the time that He should be revealed to Israel.

**A. The Humanity of Jesus Christ.** Luke's gospel emphasizes the humanity of Christ. Christians are sometimes afraid to speak of the humanity of Christ, for fear they will be accused of denying His Deity. But He was the God-man and we must give equal emphasis to His humanity and His Deity. The fact of the Incarnation is stated in Scripture, but *the how* of it is not. How the eternal Son of God could become a human body, helpless in His mother's arms, how the One

who existed in the form of God from all eternity could grow, and wax strong in spirit (vs. 40), how He could increase in wisdom and stature is a mystery we can never fathom. His conception by the Holy Spirit was miraculous, but from there on as far as His humanity was concerned, everything was natural. The nine month period of gestation was normal, as with any pregnancy. His birth was normal and natural. There was no halo about His head as He lay in the manger. He looked like any other Jewish child of His day. He no doubt had to learn to walk and to talk like any other child. His body grew and became larger and stronger. His human mind increased in wisdom and knowledge. But, we ask, how could this be if He was the eternal Son of God? We cannot explain the how, but we can understand from the Word the necessity of His taking upon Himself a true human nature and a body of flesh and blood, so that as a Man He might die for our sins and shed His human blood, and so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and become the One Mediator between God and man.

Very early in the Christian era heresies arose over the Person of Christ. There were those who taught that Jesus was just a man but that the Christ spirit came upon Him at His baptism and then left Him at His death. Others taught that Jesus was not a true human being, but that He was a sort of apparition, appearing as a man but without an actual human body. Still others thought that Jesus was a kind of mixture of human and divine, half God and half man. Yet others held that the Divine Spirit took the place of the human spirit in Jesus. These controversies raged for four hundred years until finally in 451 A.D. at the Church Council of Chalcedon the orthodox statement was formulated from Scripture, holding that in the one Person of Jesus Christ there are two natures, a human nature and a divine nature, each in its completeness and integrity, and that these two natures are organically and indissolubly united, yet so that no third nature is formed thereby. We must not divide His Person or confound His Natures. Jesus Christ is unique. There is no other person with whom to compare Him. We must simply believe what God has told us about Him in His infallible Word. To rationalize and try to explain Him is futile. We might as well try to put the whole ocean in a bucket. If we could explain Jesus Christ He would be but a finite being unworthy of our adoration and worship.

**B. Jesus Called a Nazarene.** Matthew simply tells us that Jesus came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. Strangely enough, there is no recorded statement in the prophets that the Messiah was to be called a Nazarene. Matthew does not say it was written in the prophets, but spoken by the prophets, so it may be that the prophets had announced this orally but had never written it. Others take it to mean that Nazareth was despised by most Jews, on the basis of John 1:46, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?", and therefore a Nazarene means a despised one, and the prophets predicted Messiah would be despised and rejected of men. Scofield thinks Matthew may have been referring to Isa. 11:1, where in the Hebrew Christ is spoken of as a "netzer," or rod out of

the stem of Jesse.<sup>14</sup> See Vincent for further elucidation of this idea.<sup>15</sup> The figure of the "Netzer" or sprout is based upon a tree. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease, for though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant" (Job 14:7-9). Jesus did not come as a lofty branch of a giant cedar of Lebanon, but as an insignificant sprout from the root of Jesse, a tree which had been cut down some four hundred years earlier. Vincent says the fact that Jesus grew up at Nazareth is sufficient reason for his being despised. It should be noted that Nazareth and Nazarene are entirely different and unrelated words from Nazarite, which means separated, and refers to a certain vow which Jews sometimes took.

## 6. The Eighteen Silent Years at Nazareth Until the Age of 30

Reference: Lk. 2:51; 3:23

The Gospels are completely silent concerning this period in the life of Jesus from the age of 12 to 30 years. We know that Joseph was a carpenter by trade, for the people asked: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:55). And it is evident that Jesus Himself worked in the carpenter's shop, for in Mk. 6:3 the question is asked: "Is not this the carpenter?" referring to Jesus. If the Gospels were mere human productions they would no doubt contain much about the youthful life of Jesus. God's design, however, was not to tell of the work His earthly (legal) father gave Him to do, but the work His heavenly Father sent Him to do. Hence His years up to the age of 30 are passed over in silence, except for the visit to the temple at the age of twelve.

## CHAPTER II

# The Inaugural Period

## RESUME

The Inaugural Period begins with the ministry of John the Baptist in calling the people of Israel to repentance, and includes the Baptism of Jesus by John, the Temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness, John's Testimony concerning Jesus, the Calling of the first disciples, and the first Miracle of Jesus at Cana in Galilee.

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<sup>14</sup> *Scofield Reference Bible*, op. cit., p. 996.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 22.

Next to Jesus Christ, and perhaps to Peter, John the Baptist is the most important person in the Gospels. While the name of Jesus appears some 615 times in the Gospels, Peter occurs about 94 times, and John 85 times. But since John was beheaded early in the Gospel records, and Peter is found throughout, John actually has the numerical superiority. Numbers are not necessarily a criterion of importance, but at least Christ spoke very highly of John's importance: "But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, and I say unto you much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Lk. 7: 26-28).

Jesus left Nazareth and went to Bethabara to be baptized by John. This was His inauguration into His public ministry. Immediately after this He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by the Devil for forty days, Matthew has Him going immediately to Galilee to Nazareth and Capernaum, as does Mark. Luke has Him going to Galilee and preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth. John does not mention either the Baptism of Jesus or the Temptation, but he has Him in Galilee finding some of His first disciples, performing the first of His miracles at the wedding in Cana, and then going for a brief stay in Capernaum with His mother and brothers.

## EXPOSITION

### 1. The Ministry of John the Baptist Including the Baptism of Jesus References: Matt. 3:1-17; Mk. 1:1-11; Lk. 3:1-23

**A. The Person of John.** We have seen who John was from his birth and parentage. What further does Scripture say about him? The angel told Zacharias he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah. When the disciples came down from the mount of transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, the disciples asked why the scribes say that Elijah must first come and restore all things. Jesus replied, "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, the Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:10-13). Also in Matt. 11:14 Jesus said of John: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come." Thus if Israel had received John the Baptist he would have been the Elijah who was to come. But they did not receive him or Christ, and it appears that there must be one in the future who will fulfill this office to Israel. Many suppose that one of the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3 will be Elijah, although neither of these witnesses is received by Israel, nor do they restore all things.

**B. The Baptism of John.** John came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Some suppose, because the word baptism first occurs in

our English Bibles in connection with John, that John was the first to practice baptism. However, Heb. 9:10 informs us that Judaism had its standing in meats, and drinks, and divers or various baptisms. The Mosaic ceremonial had many baptism rites which had been practiced for 1500 years before John came on the scene. The people did not ask John what baptism meant, but why he was baptizing if he wasn't the Messiah. But John was a priest and the priests were the ones empowered to practice baptism.

John's baptism was for the remission or forgiveness of sins. A great deal of confusion arises when water baptism or even the forgiveness of sins is equated with personal salvation. What most students fail to recognize is that Israel as a nation was in covenant relationship with God, a relationship shared by no other nation in history. The covenant made them near to God, whereas the Gentiles were far off. This fact is clearly stated by Paul in Eph. 2:17. Now that Israel has fallen and has been set aside for the duration of this dispensation, there are no people who can claim a nearness to God by nature. All are far off and can only be brought near through the merits of the blood of Christ. But when John came preaching the baptism of repentance Christ had not yet shed His blood and there was a nation that could claim nearness to God. This covenant people had transgressed the covenant and John came to call them back to a place of fellowship with God within the covenant. Today when we preach the Gospel of salvation, we do not ask people to become readjusted to the covenant by baptism and repentance. We tell people that they are lost, without hope, and without God, and that God has provided a way through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to justify them before God and give them eternal life. This salvation is given as a gift of grace and received through faith apart from our own good works. After we accept this message of salvation our personal lives may fall short of the standard God has set for us and there is then need for us to repent or to change our mind about our life and to confess our sins to God and receive forgiveness from our Father. This is not an experience of getting saved all over again, but simply a renewal of one who is already saved. Thus there is a vast difference between an unregenerate sinner coming to God by faith and receiving remission of the eternal penalty of sin, and the coming of one who is already saved and keeping his manner of life adjusted to the will of God by admitting his shortcomings and being restored to a place of fellowship and blessing. John's message of repentance to Israel was in many ways similar to the latter experience. He was not making them God's people: they were already that by the covenant, but was calling them back to fellowship and blessing.

**C. The Mode of John's Baptism.** Nothing is said of the actual mode, which could have been sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. That was not the important thing. The important thing is that baptism was for cleansing. All of the many baptisms of the Old Testament were for cleansing. When John was baptizing at Aenon we read that a question arose about purifying or cleansing (John 3:25). Why a question about purifying? Simply because that was the purpose of baptism, to cleanse. What did the Lord tell Saul to do when he was converted?

"Arise, and be baptized, washing away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). What were the Jews supposedly doing when they baptized their couches, their pots and pans (Mk. 7:4)? The meaning is so evident that the translators used the word "wash" to translate baptism. There is a mistaken idea, based on Rom. 6:3,4 that baptism represents a burial. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In Romans Paul is talking about the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit that identifies the believer with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The ceremony of baptism is always in Scripture a washing or cleansing ceremony. The mode of bathing is not important: the cleansing is.

**D. The Baptism of Jesus.** The question John asked, and the question anyone would ask is, "If baptism represents a cleansing from sin, why would Jesus present Himself as a candidate for baptism?" Matthew alone voices tiffs objection by John. John recognized that he was a sinner and needed rather to be baptized by Christ. But Jesus answered him: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." What does this mean? Jesus was here being inducted into His office of Prophet, Priest, and King. Under the law when a priest was inducted into office he was first washed with water and then anointed (Ex. 29:4-7). Here Jesus submits to John's washing and that was followed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon Him as a dove, with the accompanying voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The name "Christ" means the anointed One. Christ thus identified Himself with His sinful people in view of that final identification upon the cross, where He took the sinner's place and thus righteously satisfied the penalty of the law. He was reckoned among the transgressors. He was made sin for us, although He was sinless, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus Christ is the only person who could have thus fulfilled all righteousness. When people say they are following Jesus in baptism, they may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. They might as well speak of following Christ in His death on the Cross. Only He could do this work.

**E. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit and Fire.** John predicted that the Messiah, who would take up where he left off, would baptize the people, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit and fire. We know that Christ did baptize His Jewish believers with the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost in the Book of Acts. Luke calls this baptism an "enduement with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49). This baptism was manifested by outward signs, tongues of fire, speaking with other tongues, the sound as of a mighty rushing wind. We believe that this baptism which Christ performed at Pentecost is an entirely different work from that described by Paul in 1 Cor. 12:13, where the Holy Spirit is said to baptize the believer into the one Body of Christ.

The baptism with fire has not yet taken place. Notice that immediately following the statement about baptizing with fire, John says: "but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Lk. 3:16,17). Therefore we believe the baptism with fire will occur at the second coming of Christ, when He comes in flaming fire,

taking vengeance upon them that know not God (2 Th. 1:8). Some believe that the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire is just one baptism and that the fire refers to the tongues of fire that appeared at Pentecost.

**F. John's Preaching** John insisted that the people produce works which proved they had repented. Being naturally descended from Abraham was not enough. See Rom. 9:6-13 for Paul's discussion of relationship to Abraham. Luke gives us some of the answers John gave to different classes who asked what they should do to prove their repentance. The people were not saved by their works. Their works were the result of their repentance. Believers today are not saved by works, but they are saved unto good works (Eph. 2: 10; Tit. 3:8,14).

## 2. The Temptation of Jesus

References: Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12,13; Lk. 4:1-13

**A. The Temptation Spirit Directed.** All three Evangelists emphasize this fact. Matthew states He was led of the Spirit; Mark that the Spirit driveth Him forth; and Luke, He, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit. This may at first seem very strange that the Holy Spirit, who is one of the Persons of the Godhead, should fill and lead the Son, another Person of the Godhead. However, we must not lose sight of the humanity of Christ in considering this problem. Christ as a man, grew in wisdom and knowledge; as a man He hungered and thirsted. And it was as a Man He was filled with the Spirit and was led by the Spirit.

**B. Circumstances Surrounding the Temptation.** He was led into the wilderness of Judea. His baptism had taken place at the Jordan River somewhere between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. John 1:28 states that these things were done at Bethabara, east of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The location of Bethabara is uncertain. Some place it near the Dead Sea and others a few miles south of the Sea of Galilee. The region around the Dead Sea is a wilderness indeed, as any one can testify who has visited the region. Mark adds the detail that He was with the wild beasts and the angels ministered unto Him. The first Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden filled with food: Jesus in a barren wilderness without food.

**C. The Length of the Temptation.** We know He was in the wilderness for forty days and that He ate nothing during that time. It is not clear whether Satan came with his temptations during the forty days, or at the end of the period. It would appear that the temptation came at the end of the forty days when Jesus hungered. Humanly speaking, a fast of more than forty days would probably prove fatal. When Mark tells us that angels came and ministered to Him, this was probably after Satan's temptation, since Mark does not give any details of the temptations.

**D. The Order of the Temptations.** Matthew gives the following order of the temptations: 1. Command the stones to become bread. 2. Jump from the

pinnacle of the Temple. 3. Worship Satan and receive all the kingdoms of the earth. Luke, on the other hand, gives this order: 1. Command the stones to become bread. 2. Worship Satan and receive all the kingdoms of the earth. 3. Jump from the pinnacle of the Temple. This difference in order might not even be noticed by the average reader, but for some it presents a real problem. Some would say that either Matthew or Luke was mistaken and therefore there is an error in the Bible. Others believe there was a divine design in changing the order. Williams, for example, states:

The order of the temptations here (in Matthew) is historical; in Luke it is dispensational. There is therefore an inner harmony, for Matthew presents Him as the Messiah coming to His temple, and then as the Son of man reigning over the earth. But the Spirit in Luke places His relation to the earth in the foreground, and His connection with Israel in the background.<sup>16</sup>

Bullinger in the Companion Bible presents this explanation:

An examination of the combined accounts, giving due weight to the words and expressions used, will explain all the differences, and show that both Gospels are absolutely correct, while the differences are caused by the three temptations being repeated by the devil in a different order, thus making six instead of three.<sup>17</sup>

We may not be able to explain to the satisfaction of all the difference in the order, but we believe if all of the surrounding facts were known there would be no contradiction or mistake. If Matthew or Luke could be in error here, every writer of the Bible could be in error any place and we could have no assurance that anything in the Bible is true.

**E. The Nature of the Temptation.** The question arises, was the purpose of the temptation to see if Jesus would sin, or to prove that He could not sin? To say yes to the first proposition is to say that Jesus was capable of sinning. Those who hold this view claim that the temptation would have been a farce if Jesus was incapable of sinning. We have spoken before of the many mysteries surrounding the nature of the God-man, or more correctly of the two natures of the one Person. Jesus Christ is not two persons. He was a person before His incarnation and He was one and the same person after His incarnation. To say that it was possible for Jesus to sin is to say it was possible for the Son of God to sin. But it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). Therefore we conclude that the purpose of the temptation was to prove that Jesus Christ was sinless and therefore able to become the Savior of sinners. When a manufacturer puts his product to a public test, he does not do so to see if it will break down, but to prove that it will not. As noted earlier, the first man was tested in innocency. His

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<sup>16</sup> George Williams, *Student's Commentary of the Holy Scriptures* (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1949), p. 699.

<sup>17</sup> *The Companion Bible*, op. cit., Appendix 116.

test was in a beautiful garden where God had provided for his every need. There was just one restriction. Surely no more ideal a situation could be conceived to make it easy for man to pass the test. But Jesus was placed in a desert wilderness where there was no food, surrounded by wild beasts. After forty days His body was weakened, His body craved food. He had the power to create food to satisfy His appetite. Under other circumstances there would have been nothing wrong in turning the stones into bread, even as on two occasions He multiplied the loaves and fishes. But in this circumstance He would have violated God's will in yielding to Satan's temptation to satisfy His own appetite. If Jesus could pass the test under such adverse conditions, surely He proved His absolute holiness.

If Jesus could not sin, can we really call this a temptation? The word *peirazo*, according to Thayer's Lexicon means: "to try whether a thing can be done, to try, make trial of, 'test, to test one maliciously, to try or test one's faith."<sup>18</sup> If students are given a test and one student knows perfectly all of the answers, it is still a test. Jesus was tested in all points like as we are, yet apart from sin (Heb. 4:15).

The practical result of His temptation, aside from proving Him fit for the office of Savior, was to fit Him to become a faithful and merciful High priest who could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Since He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

The Scripture is the best shield from temptation. On all three occasions Christ responded, "It is written." Someone has said of the Bible: "This book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this book."

Note that the first temptation was quite subtle: you are hungry. You may even die. You have the power, why don't you turn the stones into bread and save yourself?. But Christ had come to minister to others, not to minister to Himself. He never used His divine power for selfish purposes. He could have called for twelve legions of angels when He hung on the cross, but He didn't. To cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple and then call upon the angels to catch Him was not quite so subtle. It would have involved a public display and would have brought the angels in subjection to Satan's will. The third temptation abandoned all disguise and called for Jesus to fall down and worship Satan. Satan claimed to own all the kingdoms of the world, and Christ did not dispute this fact. Would it not be much easier to become King over all these nations simply by giving allegiance to Satan, rather than follow the Father's will which involved the suffering of the Cross? How many a man has succumbed to Satan's temptation for worldly power and fame and has ended up in his trap. Thank God, the Lord Jesus proved Himself true to the Father's will and went all the way to the Cross and will some day return to take His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords.

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (American Book Co., New York, corrected edition), p. 498.

Many Christians either do not know or do not believe that Jesus Christ will actually come back to earth to reign as King over the nations of the earth, but Satan knew it. There would have been no basis for a temptation had it not been in the purpose of God for Christ to so reign.

### **3. John's Testimony of Jesus**

**References:** Matt. 3:11,12; Mk. 1:7,8;  
Lk. 3: 16,17; John 1:15-34

**A. John's Witness to Christ's Pre-existence.** "John bare witness of him, and cried saying, This was he of whom I spake, he that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me" (John 1: 15). John was born six months before Jesus was, but Jesus was before John. John must have known of the Incarnation and that Jesus did not come into being at His birth, but existed as a person before His birth.

**B. John's Witness to Christ's Pre-eminence.** "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matt. 3:11). John was the greatest of the prophets, but Jesus was far more worthy. John lowers himself as far as possible by saying that, lower than the most menial servant in comparison, he was not even worthy to carry Jesus' shoes or to fasten them on His feet.

**C. The Apostle John's Witness.** The Apostle John often interrupts the words of Jesus by his own comments, and it is sometimes difficult to know whether it is John's words or the words in this case of John the Baptist. We believe John the Apostle is speaking in John 1:16-18. John wrote these words some 25 years after Paul's death. He tells us that we have received of His fulness, and grace for grace, or grace upon grace (cf. the manifold grace of God, 1 Pet. 4:10). The law was given by Moses and Christ lived under the law, but He brought the law to an end in His death, so now we read, "But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." These words must have been said after Jesus' death.

**D. John the Baptist's Witness About Himself.** The Jews sent priests and Levites to John to ask: "Who art thou?" He answered: "I am not the Messiah." They asked him further, "Art thou Elias? Art thou that prophet?" and he answered, "No, I am not." Again they asked, "Who art thou, that we may give answer to those who sent us?" He then answered: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (cf. Isa. 40:3). It may seem strange that John would deny being Elijah, since Christ said that he would have been Elijah had Israel received Him. God had promised in Mal. 4:5, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." John did come in the spirit of Elijah as we have seen. The Jews apparently were looking for Elijah to come back down from heaven, even as he had been taken up into heaven in a whirlwind many years before from almost the same area of the wilderness (2 Kings 2:1-11). We read that John was in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel (Lk.

1:80). He was thus isolated from society and was a stranger to the religious leaders. When these leaders began to hear reports about John and how his ministry was similar to that of Elijah, they sent messengers to find out who he was. His sudden appearance made it seem that he had come down from heaven. Could this be the very same Elijah who had been taken to heaven without dying? If this was their question, we can understand why John answered, "No, I am not."

**E. John's Recognition of Jesus as the Lamb of God.** The next day after the Jews had questioned him John saw Jesus coming unto him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water" (John 1:29-31). Twice in this context John says that he did not know Jesus before this incident took place. This could surely not mean that he had never met Jesus, for he was a close relative and no doubt he had learned as a child the strange events which surrounded both his birth and that of Jesus. Since John had lived all his adult life in the desert it is possible that he did not recognize Jesus when he first saw Him. Or as some think, he did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until after His baptism when he saw the Spirit of God descending upon Him. It is evident that John must have had communion with God and that God had spoken directly to him, for in vs. 33 he says: "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 which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Thus John could have been acquainted with Jesus but he did not know Him as the Messiah until God revealed it to him.

The name Jesus means Savior, and the fact that He would save His people from their sins had been made known even before His birth. Just how Jesus would save His people from their sins had not been dearly revealed, but John here introduces Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Although not clearly stated, the Lamb suggests sacrifice.. It is not until we come into the Pauline epistles that we find the full exposition of the meaning of the sacrificial death. We no doubt have an intimation of it here, however.

In this passage John also gives us another reason for his practice of water baptism. It was not only a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, but it was for the purpose of introducing Jesus to Israel as their Messiah. In practicing water baptism Christians should ask whether or not they are carrying out this two-fold purpose: receiving remission of sins and introducing Jesus to Israel as Messiah.

John concludes his witness to Jesus in this section: "And I saw, bare record that this is the Son of God ." Thus John witnesses to fact that Jesus Pre-existed, that He is Preeminent, that He is the Lamb of God, that He is the Son of God. And whether it was the Apostle or the Baptist who said it, Grace and truth, in contrast to the came by this Jesus Christ.

#### **4. The First Disciples**

**Reference:** John 1:35-51

**A. John Loses Two Disciples.** The next day after the baptism of Jesus, John was standing with two of his disciples and saw Jesus walk by, and John said to them, "Behold the Lamb of God." Immediately the two disciples left John and followed after Jesus. John had a very large following at first, but gradually his followers began to follow Jesus. A little later some of the people came to John with apparent concern that John was losing his followers: "And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him" (John 3:26). John's reply was: "He must increase, but I must decrease." There is here a lesson for every servant of Christ. Preachers usually attract certain people. They like the preacher's appearance, his manner of speech, his intelligence, his ability to expound the Scripture. They become his followers. There is always the danger that the preacher will forget John's example here, that it is his business to decrease and cause Christ to increase. We are not to make disciples unto ourselves but unto Christ.

**B. First Recorded Words of His Public Ministry.** When Jesus saw these two disciples of John, He turned and asked them, "What seek ye?" His next recorded words were, "Come and see." We are doubtless familiar with His last words, spoken from the Cross, and the last words He spoke before His ascension, but what is perhaps the most important for us is His word spoken to us from heaven through the Apostle Paul. We should be familiar with all the words He spoke, but especially with those He directed to us as members of His body.

**C. The Names of the First Disciples.** One of the first two to follow Jesus was Andrew, brother of Simon Peter. The name of the other disciple is not given, but it was apparently John, the writer of this Gospel. They came with Jesus to the place he was staying and it was about four in the afternoon (the tenth hour). (The first hour was sunrise, or six A.M. Ten hours later would be four P.M.) The very first thing Andrew did was to find his brother and tell him, "We have found the Messiah"(Hebrew word for "the Anointed One," same as the Greek word "Christ"). And he brought him to Jesus. The lesson for us is obvious. Jesus not only knew Simon's name, He knew his nature and renamed him Cephas, or Peter, meaning "a stone." (Cephas is Aramaic and Peter is Greek for "rock.")

The next day Jesus started on His way and found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Here we learn that Philip, Andrew, Peter, and Nathaniel were all from **Bethsaida**, a town located at the northeastern end of the Sea of Galilee, just a short distance east of Capernaum, and between 80 and 90 miles north of Jerusalem. Philip finds Nathaniel and excitedly tells him, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." We have spoken earlier about the reputation of Nazareth, so it is no

wonder that Nathaniel replies: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip didn't argue with him, he just replied, "Come and see for yourself." The more we can get people into personal touch with the Lord Jesus, the more likely we are to win them; surely more likely than arguing with them. As Nathaniel approached Jesus, Jesus said: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." This amazed Nathaniel and he asked, "How did you know me?" Then Jesus told him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you standing under the fig tree." Apparently the fig tree was too far away for Jesus to have seen him with His physical sight, for this so impressed Nathaniel as Divine power that he cried out: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, the King of Israel." There are many such ascriptions to the Deity of Jesus Christ in the Gospels and in none of them does Jesus deny the fact. Either Jesus was or He was not the Son of God. There is no middle ground. If He was not then He was indeed a blasphemer, a mere man making Himself equal with God.

**D. Greater Things to Come.** Jesus asked Nathaniel, "Did you believe on me because I said I saw you under the fig tree? You are going to see something greater than that. Verily, verily, I tell you all, hereafter you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." These words remind us of Jacob's dream, back in Gen. 28:12: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." In Jacob's dream the angels were ascending and descending upon a ladder. In Christ's words the angels are going to ascend and descend upon Himself. Christ is, therefore, the Ladder between earth and heaven. He is the way and the only way that man can reach heaven. The reference to the angels points to the future Kingdom when there will be visible communication between heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1-3).

This brief section has told us how disciples are made and how Christ is able to reveal Himself to others when we simply bring them to Him and let them taste for themselves.

## 5. The First Sign - Water Turned to Wine

Reference: John 2:1-12

**A. Signs in John's Gospel.** The Bible uses a number of words to describe what we usually mean by the miraculous. There is the word "dunamis," translated *wonderful works, mighty works, miracles*, the meaning of which is a display of great power .Then there is the word "teras," translated *wonders*, something strange which causes the beholder to marvel. Another word is "thambos," translated *wonder and amazement*, describing the effect of a miracle upon the beholder. Finally there is the word "semeion," meaning a sign, mark or token. It is used 17 times in John to describe the mighty works of Jesus, being translated *miracle* 13 times and *sign* 4 times. A sign signifies or points out something, even as a sign on a place of business indicates what kind of establishment it is.

There are eight great signs in John's Gospel. They point out, first of all, the power and glory and Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, as we shall see, they also point out certain truths concerning the nation of Israel. And further, there seems to be a correspondence between the first and the eighth, between the second and the seventh, between the third and the sixth, and between the fourth and the fifth.

It might be well at this point to remember that the Jews require a sign (1Cor.1:22). From the very beginning of the national life of Israel God has dealt with that nation through signs. Nineteen times in the Pentateuch alone God speaks of the signs He wrought when He delivered Israel out of Egypt. Signs are mentioned 75 times in the O.T. Isaiah and Ezekiel are full of signs. The Kingdom Gospel which Jesus gave to the Twelve Apostles to preach had signs which accompanied it (Mk.16:17,18). Paul shows us in 1 Cor.13:8-13 that these sign gifts were to pass away and become inoperative in this dispensation for the Church. However, we are engaged in the study of a dispensation when signs were a part of God's program, because He was dealing with the nation of Israel.

**B. This is Jesus' First Miracle.** This fact is stated in vs. 11: "this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee." We mention this fact merely to silence all of the myths which sprang up about miracles which Jesus did even as a baby. A number of pseudo-gospels have come down to us which are filled with ridiculous stories, such as miraculous healings done with the bath-water of the infant Jesus, the boy Jesus making mud pigeons and then making them fly, Jesus cursing his playmates and striking them dead, Mary placing the infant Jesus upon the back of a mule, turning the mule into human form, etc. These so-called gospels have been published under the title, *The Lost Books of the Bible*.<sup>19</sup> Actually the books were never lost and they were never a part of the Bible. These books are called by scholars, the *pseudepigraphia* (false writings), and were composed long after apostolic times.

**C. The Narrative.** There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. This indicates that she was probably one of the relatives, for she is not said to have been invited, as Jesus and His disciples were. It should be observed that Jesus often entered into social times with the people. The Pharisees murmured at Him because He received sinners and ate with them (Lk. 15:2). In Lk. 7:33,34 the Lord said: "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

**D. The Miracle.** Mary discovered they had used up all the wine and so she came to Jesus and told Him, "They have no wine." Catholics use this passage to bolster the doctrine that Mary is the Intercessor so that whatever we ask of Mary, she will intercede with Jesus to do. However, notice Jesus' reply: "Woman, what

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<sup>19</sup> *The Lost Books of the Bible* (New York, The World Publishing Co., 1948).

have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." This was a reprimand. He did not even call her Mother, but Woman. Up until now He had recognized His relation to His mother and family in the flesh, but now that He has begun His public ministry He is no longer merely Mary's Son, but Mary's Lord. He is now taking orders, not from His mother but from His Father in heaven. Mary apparently recognized her mistake and bowed out of the picture, saying to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

There were six stone waterpots there containing twenty or thirty gallons, which were used in purification ceremonies. Jesus told the servants to fill them with water and then draw some out and take to the master of ceremonies. This they did and when the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and not being aware from where it came, although the servants knew, he said to the bridegroom, "Every one puts out the good wine at the beginning of the feast and later on that which is worse, but you have kept the good wine until the last."

After the wedding feast Jesus, accompanied by His mother, brethren and His first five disciples went down to Capernaum, about 16 miles to the northeast, and remained there a few days.

**E. The Sign.** It is obvious that this miracle was a sign of the Deity of Christ, for He created wine out of plain water. Christ as the Word was introduced by John in chapter one as the One by whom all things were made that were made, and that without Him not anything was made that was made. Paul in Col. 1:16 says, "For by him were all things created that are in heaven and earth." And John tells us in connection with this first sign, "Jesus manifested forth his glory and his disciples believed on him."

But we believe there was more to the sign than that. The circumstances surrounding the wedding present a picture of the condition of the nation of Israel when Christ came. They had no wine. Wine is a symbol of joy. It makes glad the heart of God and man (Ps. 104:15), but Israel was completely destitute of this spiritual commodity. With the coming of Messiah the water is turned into wine in great abundance, even the best wine. We believe that this miracle is a sign of the day when Christ's glory will be manifested, not in a little village in Galilee, but in the whole universe, when He comes again as King of kings and Lord of lords. Isa: 62:4, 5 predicts a great wedding in the future when Israel is married unto Jehovah, and Rev. 19:7-9 speaks about the future Marriage of the Lamb. Both of these prophecies point to Millennial times, when Israel is restored and the glory of Christ is manifested throughout the whole earth.

**F. The Counterpart Sign.** We believe it will be helpful to include at this point the eighth sign which corresponds to the first. The sign is recorded in John 21:1-14. This incident took place after the resurrection of Christ at the Sea of Tiberias, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Seven of the disciples were together, probably not knowing what to do with themselves after the events of the

past few days, when Peter said, "I'm going fishing," which was his old trade. The others said, "We will go with you." They fished all night but caught nothing. When morning came Jesus stood on the shore but they didn't recognize Him. Then Jesus asked them, "Do you have any fish?" They answered, "No." Then He shouted, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you will find." Upon casting their net it was filled with fish, so many they could not draw it in. The disciple whom Jesus loved, that is John, said, "It is the Lord." When Peter heard that he put on the fisher's coat (for he was naked) and jumped into the water and swam ashore. The others came in a dinghy dragging the net behind them. On shore they found a fire of coals with fish cooking and bread. Jesus told them to bring the fish they had caught, and they counted 153 great fish but the net was still intact. Then Jesus said, "Come and dine," and He gave them to eat. This was the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection.

Notice now the correspondence between the marriage at Galilee and the miraculous catch of fish. At one they had no wine, at the other they had no fish. The first happened on the third day; the other was the third time Jesus has manifested Himself to His disciples. In both cases it is stated that Jesus manifested Himself (2:11 cf. 21:14). In both cases there are numbered objects: 6 waterpots and 153 fish. In both cases Jesus commanded something to be done: "fill the waterpots with water," "cast the net on the right side of the boat." In both cases the same verb is used: "eneko," translated "bare" in 2:8 and "bring" in 21:10.

Thus both of these signs depict the spiritual lack and poverty of Israel and the ability of Christ to fill Israel's joy "up to the brim" (2:7), and to supply sustenance far in excess of their needs: about 150 gallons of wine and 153 great fish. While the primary interpretation of these signs concern Israel in the Kingdom dispensation, they also show forth, secondarily, the riches of God's grace in this dispensation. One is reminded of Paul's statement: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20,21). The blessing in these signs, will come upon Israel in the Kingdom age. The spiritual blessings of Paul's epistles are for us today.

### CHAPTER III

## The Early Judean Ministry

### RESUME

John alone gives us the record of this period of our Lord's ministry. After His brief stay in Capernaum Jesus went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. When He entered the Temple He found stalls set up for selling sheep and oxen and doves and money changers doing business. Making a whip out of rope, He drove them all out of the temple, the animals as well as the dealers, and overturned the tables of the money changers along with their coins, and cried out to them: "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." Whereupon the Jews asked Jesus for a sign which would give Him authority to do such things. The sign He gave was: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews reasoned that it had taken 46 years to build the temple: how then could He raise it up in three days. After the death and resurrection of Jesus the disciples remembered this saying of Jesus and understood that He was talking about the raising up of His body from the dead: not the temple of Herod.

Beholding the signs which Jesus did, many in Jerusalem believed on His name, but He did not trust Himself unto them, for He knew all men and what was in man. There was a particular man by the name of Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews who came to Jesus by night, confessing that Jesus was a teacher come from God, since no man could do the signs that Jesus did except God be with Him. Jesus immediately got down to basics and told him he had to be born again of the Spirit of God in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus seemed incapable of understanding spiritual truths. He replied: "How can these things be?" The discourse ended with a reference to the brazen serpent which Moses set up, and the familiar John 3:16, "God so loved the world," and the conflict between light and darkness.

After this Jesus left Jerusalem and went to the northern area of Judea with His disciples, where John was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim. A discussion arose about baptism, during which a man came with a report that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John, which gave John the opportunity to give another witness about Jesus.

When Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard that He was making more disciples than John He left Judea and headed north for Galilee. To get to Galilee He had to go through Samaria and there He encountered the woman at the well. Through her conversion the whole city of **Sychar** turned out and many believed on His name, not because of the woman's words, but because they heard Him personally and were persuaded that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

## **EXPOSITION**

### **1.The First Passover and Cleansing of the Temple**

**Reference: John 2:13-23**

**A. *The First Passover of His Ministry.*** As far as the Biblical record goes, this is the first Passover Jesus attended since He was 12 years old. We are certain that He must have attended others, since Joseph and Mary are said to have gone to Jerusalem every year for the Passover. All Jews everywhere tried to get back to Jerusalem for this important feast. Jesus, however, did not assert His authority until He became of age and began His public ministry. The Passover is mentioned 9 times in John (2:13,23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28,39; 19:14). Thus Jesus observed three Passovers during His ministry: this one, one in the middle; and one at the very end of His ministry. It is significant that He began and ended with the Passover, for He was to fulfill the Passover type, and thus become our Passover (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7). We must distinguish between redemptive and dispensational truth. The Passover is redemptive. His death applies to all dispensations. Pentecost is dispensational, applying only to Israel.

**B. *Cleansing the Temple.*** In spite of the fact that the Jews had made the Temple a den of thieves, Jesus still recognized it as His Father's house. The original temple built by Solomon had been utterly destroyed by the Babylonians. It was rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah, but with much less grandeur (Hag. 2:3). This temple underwent many vicissitudes, having been desecrated by Antiochus, as recorded in Josephus and 1 Maccabees, captured by Pompey in 66 B.C., followed by Crassus some years later who carried away everything of value he could find. Finally Herod became King in Jerusalem in 37 B.C. He decided to rebuild the temple, and first collected all of the materials before dismantling the old one. The new building was started 20 - 19 B.C. It was built of white marble, covered in front by heavy plates of gold and was a conspicuous and dazzling object from every side. The disciples later on must have been impressed by the grandeur of the temple, for they undertook to show off the buildings of the temple to Jesus (Matt. 24:1,2), but He foretold how this beautiful structure would also be destroyed and left desolate because Jerusalem did not know the time of her visitation.

This action of Jesus of driving out the merchants and money changers and overturning their tables seems out of character for those who think only of Jesus as "meek and mild." What will they think when they see Him coming in flaming fire to take vengeance upon those that know not God and obey not the Gospel? God's attributes of love and mercy are balanced against His attributes of holiness and justice.

When the disciples meditated upon this action of Jesus they remembered Ps. 69:9: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This Psalm is quoted a number of times in the N.T., applying it to Jesus Christ. It is one of the distinctly Messianic Psalms. The Psalms have been called the prayer book of our Lord. They reveal the deepest emotional and spiritual experiences of Christ. Jesus Himself declared that the Psalms spoke concerning Him (Lk. 24:44).

**C. The Sign of His Resurrection.** When the Jews asked for a sign of His authority He replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." There were many things which Jesus said which the disciples did not at the time understand, but later, after they had received the Holy Spirit they remembered the sayings and understood. Here they understood He was speaking of His human body. The Jews remembered this saying too and perverted it and tried to use it against Him at His trial (Matt. 26:61). The disciples remembered it and were profited by it: they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

**D. Incomplete Faith.** The people believed in His name when they saw the miracles He did. This kind of belief is inadequate and does not result in salvation. The word "believe" has in it the idea of commitment. The statement in vs. 24, "Jesus did not commit himself unto these believers," contains the same Greek word used in vs. 23 and translated "believed" but here translated "commit." Scriptural belief involves the element of committal, entrusting one's self to God. To see a miracle worker and believe he has divine powers involved no sense of sin or no element of committal. This fact is born out in the next section which deals with one of these men who had seen Jesus' miracles and believed because of the miracles. Belief even caused him to seek out Jesus by night, apparently to avoid detection by other Jews, but Nicodemus was not saved by this kind of believing.

## 2. Discourse With Nicodemus

Reference: John 2:23-3:21

**A. What Was in Man.** Jesus knew what was in man. We can tell that from the way He dealt with Nicodemus. We don't know why Nicodemus came to Jesus that night. As a ruler of the Jews he was surely interested in any religious developments. Perhaps he just wanted to check up on Jesus. Perhaps he had some questions. Perhaps he wanted to know how Jesus performed His miracles. Or perhaps it was just plain curiosity. It does not seem he was driven to Jesus by a sense of lostness, or by a desire to improve his relation with God. As a Pharisee he would boast of being better than other men, of keeping the law in a blameless fashion. He was probably much like Saul of Tarsus, as Paul describes his situation before he met Christ (cf. Phil. 3:4-6). But Jesus knew what was in Nicodemus. Later on in some of His teaching He tells us what is in man. He knew that within every man is a nature of sin. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things that defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matt. 15:19,20). Nicodemus got something that night he was not looking for.

**B. What Christ Came to Put In Man.** Jesus knew that Nicodemus needed not more religion but a new birth, which would give him a new nature. He needed to be born again. This was something that he couldn't understand, for this was

foreign to his way of thinking. What ridiculous ideas this Jesus had. How could a man enter into his mother's womb and be born again? Jesus has to explain the most elementary truths to this one who was a notable teacher in Israel. The flesh and the Spirit are two separate realms. That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is Spirit. The flesh cannot evolve into spirit any more than a rock can evolve into an animal. A man must have spiritual life to enter God's kingdom; therefore, Nicodemus, you must be born of the Spirit. But Nicodemus wants to know how can these things be? Jesus used an illustration from the wind. The word wind and the word spirit are identical. When the wind blows, you can hear the sound it makes but you can't tell where it came from and where it is going because it is invisible. So also is the Spirit. You can't see how the Spirit operates any more than you can see how the wind blows. But you can see the effects of both the wind and the Spirit. The Spirit imparts new life and brings forth fruit of God. The song writer probably had this passage in mind when he wrote: "I know not how the Spirit moves, convincing men of sin, revealing Jesus through the Word, creating faith in Him; but I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day."

Three times Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again, but the second time He added something. He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit . . ." What does He mean by being born of water? Is this something different from just being born of the Spirit? Sacramentarians argue from this verse baptismal regeneration. Inserting such an argument in this context seems strange indeed, for if Jesus is saying anything at all He is saying that the physical, material world cannot in any way produce this new birth. How then could material water which can be seen, felt, and analyzed produce spiritual life? Others take the water to be the water in which the fetus lives in its mother's womb and therefore being born of water refers to our natural birth. *The Living New Testament* gives this as an alternate reading: "Physical birth is not enough. You must also be born spiritually." We seriously doubt that Scripture ever uses water with this meaning. But the Scripture, and especially the Gospel of John, does often use water in a figurative sense. What did Christ mean when He told the woman at the well He would give her living water (John 4:10-14)? Or what did He mean by the rivers of living water which would flow out of man (ch. 7:38)? In the very next verse John plainly states what He meant by water: "But this he spake of the Spirit." Water and Spirit are both without the definite article and are connected by the conjunction "kai" (and). Some believe Jesus was here using a figure of speech called "hendiadys" which the dictionary defines as "the use of two words connected by a conjunction to express the same idea as a single word with a qualifier: as with *might* and *main* = by main strength." If this figure is used here the sense would be: Except a man be born of water, even spiritual water. Water is also used to represent the operation of the Word of God, as in Eph. 5:26: "cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." And Peter speaks of being born again, not of corruptible seed, but by the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Therefore we prefer to believe this is the correct meaning of this passage. It is

true that water baptism was being preached and practiced both by John and Jesus, and that baptism was required, just as animal sacrifices were, but water is never presented as a procuring cause of regeneration in Scripture. If the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin and make one a member of God's family, surely water could not do so.

Nicodemus started out by telling Jesus what he knew, and Jesus ended up telling Nicodemus he was ignorant: "Are you a master teacher in Israel and knowest not these things?" If Nicodemus didn't believe the earthly things Jesus told him, how could he believe the heavenly things? Jesus knew whereof He spoke, for He had come down from heaven. (Some ancient Greek texts omit the last clause of vs. 13, "which is in heaven .") Jesus at that time as the Son of man was not in heaven but on earth. As God, of course, He is omnipresent.

Not only was it necessary for Nicodemus to be born again, it was necessary for the Son of man to be lifted up on the Cross to make it possible for man to be born again. The Lord had sent fiery serpents into the camp of Israel because of their murmurings and many died from being bitten (Num. 21:6-9). Moses was commanded to make a serpent of brass and place it upon a pole. Every one that looked upon it was healed of his bite. In like manner Jesus had to be lifted up on the Cross, to be made the condemned serpent in our stead, that condemned sinners might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

From the illustration of the brazen serpent it is certain that the expression in the next verse, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," refers to giving Him in the sense of the Cross, and not merely in incarnation as a Teacher. Because the verb here is in the past tense, indicating a finished past action, it appears that the discourse with Nicodemus ends with vs. 15, if not sooner. Not only are "loved" and "gave" in the past tense, but there are a couple of phrases in vs. 16 that are never used by Christ Himself, "only begotten Son," and "believe on the name of." John has a way of injecting explanatory words of his own, so that it is sometimes difficult to know where a break should be made. For example, see ch. 1:16-18 and 12:37-41.

The words "condemn" and "condemned" in vs. 17 and 18, and "condemnation" in vs. 19, should be rendered "judge, judged, and judgment." The unbeliever has been judged already: judged by virtue of his unbelief. Their judgment resides in the fact that light has come into the world, and men as a class loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were (imperfect tense) habitually evil.

We are beginning to see several of the most important and most often used words' in John: "believe" - 99 times, "world" - 79 times, "Father" - 156 times, "know" - 107 times, "abide" - 41 times.

### **3. John's Testimony to Jesus at Aenon**

**Reference: John 3:22-36**

By way of review it will be remembered that Jesus went from Nazareth to the Jordan River, possibly near Bethabara to be baptized by John, then spent forty days in the wilderness of Judea in His temptation by the Devil. After that He returned to Galilee and called several disciples from the area of Bethsaida and then went to Cana where He attended the wedding and performed His first miracle. From Cana He went to Capernaum and then went to Jerusalem at the feast of Passover. There He cleansed the temple and had the discourse with Nicodemus. Then He left Jerusalem and went a little to the north in Judea with His disciples and was engaged in baptizing disciples. John the Baptist was also in this vicinity baptizing at Aenon near Salim. The first part of this section deals with the question of baptism and the latter with John's testimony about Jesus.

**A. The Question About Baptism.** We read first of all that John was baptizing at Aenon because there was much water there. Those who claim that baptism means a complete submergence of the body often quote this text as proof of their teachings. However, the "much water" does not mean a lake or other large body of water. Aenon means "springs!" There were many springs there. Jewish washing ceremonies required either a large body of water, or living, running water, in order that the water would not become polluted. (Cf. Lev. 11:36. Also see Lev. 14:5,6,50,51,52; 15:13). The fact that John baptized where there were many springs in no way proves any particular mode of baptism.

We read that a question arose between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying. We are not told what the question was, but it was probably brought about by the fact that both John and Jesus were baptizing and Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John; in fact it is stated that "all were coming to Jesus." The question may have been about why both John and Jesus were baptizing, or whether one baptism was more efficacious than the other, or perhaps even why John was continuing to baptize after Jesus began His public ministry. All we are told is that the question was about purification. This establishes the fact that baptism was understood to effect a cleansing, or washing, or purification. This is a very important point to remember when studying the subject of water baptism. There are those who contend that baptism represents death, burial and resurrection. They get this idea from a misreading of Rom. 6:3,4. The baptism there is not a ceremony but the work of the Spirit of God in identifying the believer with Christ, so that the believer shares in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

**B. John's Testimony About Jesus.** We have commented earlier on John's witness: "He must increase, but I must decrease." John made it very plain that he never claimed to be the Messiah, but that he had been sent before the Messiah to prepare the way for Him. He then illustrated his relation to Christ as that of the

best man (friend of the bridegroom) to the bridegroom, an illustration which is just as meaningful today as it was then. The best man is usually the best friend of the groom. It is not his business to glorify himself, but to do everything possible to help the groom and give him his rightful place of honor. His joy is fulfilled in seeing the happiness of the groom. The bride and groom relationship is used in the O.T., in the Gospels, in Paul's epistles with the Church, and in the future Kingdom with Israel (cf. Isa. 62:4,5; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31,32; Rev. 21:9; 19:7-10).

Vincent remarks that the change in style between vs. 30 and 31 indicates that John the Baptist's words end with vs. 31, and the Evangelist John's words begin in vs. 32. The contrast between the heavenly and the earthly in vs. 31 is similar to that in 1 Cor. 15:45-49.

The expression in vs. 33: "hath set to his seal" is old English legal terminology. It means that he has solemnly attested and confirmed the statement that God is true, or that he has affixed his seal to the document.

It will be noticed in vs. 34 "unto him" is in italics, which means it is not in the Greek text. The question arises, does God give the Spirit without measure to Christ, or does Christ give the Spirit to His disciples? We know of course that the Spirit was not given to the disciples until Christ ascended, but we believe these words were written by John many years after Pentecost. It seems evident that the Spirit was given in His fulness to Christ at His baptism, but here it is stated in vs. 35 that the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand. Giving things into His hand means not only possession, but authority or disposal (cf. Heb. 10:31). Therefore it would seem that John means that Jesus gives the Spirit to His disciples without measure.

In vs. 36 the A.V. fails to distinguish between two verbs: "The one believing on the Son has eternal life; the one not believing (not trusting or obeying) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him." The second verb is *peitho*, which is variously translated: obey, trust, persuade, yield, have confidence. The usual word for believe, *pisteuo*, which occurs in the first part of the verse is derived from *peitho*. Actually the second verb has the alpha privative, which gives it a negative meaning, disobey, untrusting, unbelieving. This is the only time the word is used in John. The word shows that faith is more than mental assent to a fact. It involved committal, trust, obedience, or a lack of these qualities in the negative. John 3:36 is one of the favorite texts on assurance of salvation.

#### 4. The Two Day Ministry in Samaria Reference: John 4:1-42

A. **The Reason Jesus Left Judea**, 1-3. The reason given is that Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard that He made and baptized more disciples than

John. But why would this be a reason for Him to leave? Probably because of the hatred which had been generated by His action in cleansing the temple. The Pharisees could not tolerate another religious group which threatened their power in Israel. John was a big enough cause of trouble for the Pharisees, but if Jesus was becoming more popular than John, then they would have to do something drastic to get rid of Jesus. Jesus was not fleeing from trouble because of fear, but He had to finish His ministry in other regions and it would be soon enough when He would come back to Jerusalem to endure the wrath of the Pharisees. He had taught His disciples, "when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another" (Matt. 10:23).

A very interesting sidelight is given us here that when we read about Jesus baptizing disciples, it does not mean that Jesus Himself performed the actual baptizing, but that His disciples did this work. There may have been several reasons for this. In contrast to John or others who were baptizing with water, Jesus was to be set apart as the One who baptized with the Holy Spirit. Possibly if the same trouble developed as did at Corinth over baptism (cf. 1 Cor. 1:11-17), those who had been baptized by Jesus personally, if Jesus had done it Himself, would have thought themselves far superior to those who had been baptized by mere disciples. It would seem also from this usage that when Paul said he had baptized so few at Corinth it did not mean that he personally had baptized so few, leaving that work to his fellow-workers, but that under his preaching of the gospel he and his fellow-workers as a group baptized very few of the converted, simply because Christ had not sent him to baptize, as He had the Twelve, but to preach the Gospel.

Notice that John refers to Jesus in vs. 1 as "the Lord." John recognized Jesus as Jehovah, the name most often translated LORD in the O.T. There is no doubt about the Deity of Christ in John's Gospel.

**B. He Must Needs Go Through Samaria, vs. 4.** The most obvious reason He had to go through Samaria was that Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee, although Jews could go to the east of Jordan through Perea to avoid Samaria. However, there was another reason: to have this unusual ministry with the Samaritans. His action here may seem strange, since He forbade His disciples to minister to any city of the Samaritans or to the Gentiles (Matt. 10:5). Samaria was a splitoff from the nation of Israel, when the northern ten tribes rebelled and established their idolatrous nation under Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 12, 13). In the days of Christ it had a mixture of nationalities, since the king of Assyria had carried away many captives and had transplanted foreigners in their place.

It seems that God in His sovereignty often makes exceptions to His rules. Jesus not only ministered to these Samaritans but also to a Syrophenician woman and to a Roman centurion, but all of these were unusual circumstances. In accordance with prophecy, Israel had to be established and blessed before any blessing could go to the Gentiles. For that reason Jesus limited His earthly

ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In time Samaria was to hear the Gospel of the Kingdom as well as the Gentiles (Acts. 1:8).

The Samaritans had their own copy of the five books of Moses, but apparently did not recognize any of the prophetic books. There still exists today a small community of Samaritans at Nablus and they still have their Samaritan Pentateuch.

**C. The Woman At the Well, vs. 5-26.** Jesus and His disciples stopped at noon at Jacob's well, just outside the town of Sychar, where He rested while the disciples went into town to buy food. **Sychar** is mentioned only this once in the Bible. It is identified by some as the same as Shechem. Joseph's tomb was in the area, and near by were the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, from which were pronounced the blessings and the cursings of the Law (Deut. 11:29; 27:12,13; Josh. 8: 33).

In a sense Jesus did not go to the Samaritans. He had to pass through Samaria and this woman actually came to Him. She was surprised when Jesus asked her for a drink of water, for she said the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. We get an example of the regard the Jews had for the Samaritans in John 8:48, when the Jews expressed their utter disrespect for Jesus by saying: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

Although we see the true humanity of Jesus in the fact that His body was weary from the long journey and he was thirsty, yet we see also His Deity both in His claims of being able to give living water resulting in everlasting life, and in His knowledge about this woman, so that she had to say to the people of the city: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

There is a parallel between this woman and Nicodemus. Both show the inability of the natural mind to understand spiritual truth. Nicodemus asked, "How can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born again?" The woman asked: "Give me this living water so I won't have to come in the heat of the day to draw water out of this deep well and carry it back to the village."

When a person gets under conviction it is natural for him to change the subject. After Jesus had revealed her true character by telling her about her many husbands and her adultery, she changes the subject to where is the right place to worship God. Jesus did not exactly answer her question, but pointed out that true worship of God was not so much a matter of place but of heart. God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth. Jerusalem at the time was God's appointed place: salvation is of the Jews. The Samaritans had departed so far from true worship that they didn't really know what they were worshipping. Jesus said, "We know what we worship."

The woman did possess a vital bit of knowledge. She said she knew that when Messiah comes, who is called the Christ, He will tell us all things. Whereupon Jesus confessed: "I that speak unto thee am he." She must have believed at this point, for she left her waterpots and rushed back into town to tell everyone the good news.

**D. *The Reaction of the Disciples, vs. 27-38.*** The disciples were amazed to find Jesus talking to a woman, and a Samaritan at that, but they were afraid to ask Him why He was talking to her. So they set out the food they had bought and said, "Let's eat." But Jesus said, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." Again we see the insensibility on the part of the disciples to spiritual truth. Their minds were always on the level of the material. "Did someone bring Him food while we were gone to buy food?" Jesus then explained that His meat was to do the will of the Father and to finish the work He had given Him to do.

Jesus, as so often He did, pointed to something in nature at hand to illustrate His point. Looking over the green fields of grain, He said, "You will say, in four months it will be harvest time." (This statement dates the season at which this event occurred.) And no doubt just about this time there could be seen streaming down the road the crowd of Samaritans coming to see this Man who had told the woman everything she ever did, who she said was the Christ. Jesus told the disciples to lift up their eyes and behold the fields which were already ripe for the harvest. But fields are not ripe for harvest unless the seed has been sown. Vs. 37 is a truth every servant of the Lord should remember: "One soweth and another reapeth." When souls are won to Christ it is because someone first sowed the seed. We may take credit for winning so many to Christ, but our efforts would have been in vain had not someone witnessed before. God often sends us to reap that whereon we bestowed no labor: others labored and we entered into their labors. These principles of seed sowing are inter-dispensational in nature. Whether it is the Gospel of the Kingdom or the Gospel of the Grace of God: one sows and another reaps (1 Cor. 3:6-8).

**E. *The Samaritans Come to Jesus, vs. 39-42.*** The Samaritan woman was probably the first woman preacher, and an unordained one at that. She got the whole city to turn out to hear Jesus. Many believed in Jesus because of her testimony and others said, "Now we believe, not because of your testimony; for we have heard him ourselves, and know this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." This story should be compared with Acts 8:5-25, where Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached. This, of course, was after the death and resurrection of Christ, while the Kingdom Gospel was still being preached. The unusual thing about this experience is that many of the Samaritans believed and were baptized but did not receive the Spirit until Apostles came down from Jerusalem and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. At this point we need to turn back to Ezek. 37:15-28, to the sign of the two sticks. Samaria, or Ephraim as it was called in the O.T., had seceded from Judah and the true religion at Jerusalem in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam and from

that time to the then present the nation was divided into two parts, represented by the two sticks. God had the prophet bind the two sticks together to make one stick, showing that God would some day bring the twelve tribes back into one nation. Doubtless, if Israel had been obedient and acknowledged Jesus as their Messiah and King, this union would have taken place. In Acts 8 Samaria is reached with the Kingdom Gospel, but it required the presence and authority of the Apostles to seal this ministry, and make the reception of the Samaritans official.

## CHAPTER IV

# The Early Galilean Ministry

## RESUME

It is very difficult to correlate chronologically all of the events in the Galilean ministry. One special problem is the location of the Sermon on the Mount in the narrative. Matthew places it almost at the beginning of the ministry in Galilee right after Christ had called His first four disciples. The parallel passages in Luke place it at the beginning of the Second Galilean Period right after the choosing of the Twelve Apostles. There seems to be no mention of it in Mark. There is no doubt a dispensational design in this arrangement. Since the Sermon sets forth the "Magna Carta" of the Kingdom, and since Matthew is especially concerned with the Kingdom it is logical that he should place the Sermon at the very beginning of the King's ministry. This Sermon was addressed to His disciples, and it seems unlikely He would have delivered it when He had called only four disciples. It is more logical to suppose that He first ordained His Twelve Apostles, and then delivered the Sermon to them, as the order is given in Luke. We will consider the Sermon in the latter position in the narrative.

This period extends from Jesus' departure from Judea through Samaria to Galilee to His ordaining of the Twelve Apostles. It is thought to have covered about a four-month period.

## EXPOSITION

### 1. The Beginning of This Ministry

References: Matt. 4:12,17; Mk. 1:14,15;  
Lk. 4: 14,15; John 4:43-45

Both Matthew and Mark state that it was after John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod that Jesus left Judea and departed into Galilee. Many of the Galileans had been at the feast in Jerusalem and had witnessed all that Jesus did there, and they received Him. Mark states that He came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, saying that the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe the gospel. The Revised text reads "the Gospel of God," omitting "of the Kingdom." However it is evident from what follows that it was the good news about the Kingdom. The Kingdom is mentioned 55 times in Matthew, 20 times in Mark, 45 times in Luke, and only 5 times in John. These figures show one of the great differences between the Synoptics and John.

## **2. The Second Sign - Healing of Nobleman's Son**

**Reference: John 4:46-54**

This is Jesus' second visit to Cana where He turned the water into wine. The nobleman lived at Capernaum. He had to travel about 15 miles to Cana to present his request to Jesus for the healing of his son who was at the point of death. The Lord had seen so many people who had professed to believe on Him because they had seen His miracles that He said to the man: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe." But the man persisted: "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus then told him, "Go your way, your son will live." The man believed without seeing a miracle and started for home. The next day his servants met him before he reached home with the news that his son had recovered. He asked the time when the fever left him and was informed it was 1:00 P.M., and that was the very hour that Jesus had told him that his son would live. As a result his whole family became believers. This is the second sign which Jesus did.

We suggested earlier that there is a correspondence between the eight signs which Jesus did as recorded by John. We saw that the first corresponded to the eighth, and now we shall see that the second corresponds with the seventh, which is the Raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44). The most evident similarity between these two signs is that the Ruler's son was "at the point of death," and the brother of Martha and Mary was actually dead and buried. There are other similarities: It was "after two days" the son was healed (cf. 4:43), and Jesus "abode two days" before going to raise Lazarus (11:6); in the one case it was a son, in the other a brother; in the one Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," (4:48), in the other, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe," (11: 15). The same verb is used for "the fever left him" and "loose him and let him go."

When Christ began His ministry to Israel the nation was in the condition spiritually of the Ruler's son: they were at the point of death. It should be remembered that Israel was in covenant relation with God, and they were still alive in the covenant. Christ could have brought them back to full spiritual health, but they rejected Him. After renewed mercy at Pentecost Israel had another

opportunity to repent and enter into their promised Kingdom, based upon Christ's prayer for their forgiveness and because they crucified Him in ignorance. But because of their further sin against the Holy Spirit in rejecting Him, they were cast off and reckoned no better than the Gentiles: dead in trespasses and sins, even as Lazarus was dead and buried for four days. One cannot imagine a more loathsome picture of the sinful state of humanity than of a body which had been dead for four days in the state described by Martha: "By this time he stinketh." And yet, He who is the Resurrection and the Life is able to restore such a one, and this is exactly what Christ will do for Israel as a nation. One is reminded of the valley of dry bones in Ezek. 37: "Son of man these bones are the whole house of Israel... Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come tip out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel . . . And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord" (11-14).

In the first and eighth signs Israel is pictured as destitute of all of those things that make for an abundant life; in the second and seventh Israel is destitute of life itself. But in both, the glory and power of Christ is revealed as the Giver of life and every good and perfect gift in life.

While the application of these signs *apphes* primarily to that people and nation who require signs, they may be applied to individuals today who are dead in trespasses and sins, for Paul says: "And you hath He quickened or made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . for by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:1,8).

### **3. Jesus Rejected at His Home Town of Nazareth**

**Reference: Lk. 4:16-30**

Luke alone records this incident, although there are passages in Matt. 13:54-58 and Mk. 6:1-6 that deal with a later visit to the area of Nazareth. There the people were offended or caused to stumble concerning Jesus, for they said, "Isn't this the carpenter's son and are not his brothers and sisters with us? He's no better than the rest of us. He could not do any mighty works there because of their unbelief. In fact, He marvelled at their unbelief. Williams (Student's Commentary of Holy Scriptures) in commenting on the Matthew passage thinks Jesus made only this one visit to Nazareth. It is difficult to fit these two passages into the narrative later on, and one wonders if the people tried to kill Him the first time why they would let Him back in the synagogue at Nazareth.

Jesus went to the synagogue as His custom was on the Sabbath day and was handed the scroll of Isaiah. He found the place in ch. 61:1 where it was written: "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 broken hearted, 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 and sat down. He then told them that this Scripture had been fulfilled in their ears, that is, that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. The audience could not help but wonder at the wonderful words of grace which Jesus spoke, but on the other hand they were saying in their hearts, "Isn't this Joseph's son who grew up in this town? What right does he have to claim such things for himself?" He knew their thoughts and quoted the parable: "Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country." In other words they were saying, "We've heard about all your wonderful works over at Capernaum, now let's see you do some here." But Jesus quotes two cases from the Scriptures where two of the greatest prophets did not act in accordance with this proverb. Although there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah during the great famine, he was sent to none of them but: to Zarephath in Sidon, a Gentile widow. Likewise there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, but none were cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian. They not only stumbled over Him (cf. Rom. 9:33, I Pet. 2:8) and were jealous of Him, but when He insinuated that Gentiles were better than they, they were enraged and expelled Him from the synagogue and tried to throw Him over the cliff upon which the city was built.

There is a striking likeness of this scene to that in Acts 22:21-24, where Paul in giving his defense before the Jews in Jerusalem stated that God had said unto him: "Depart (from Jerusalem), for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles. And they gave him audience unto this word, and they lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," and as you know they would have killed Paul had not the Roman captain rescued him. What bitter enmity and jealousy there was between Jews and Gentiles, but Christ has through His death broken down that middle wall of partition; He has abolished that enmity; He has made peace between the Jew and the Gentile, and now in this present dispensation He is making out of both, Jews and Gentiles, One New Man, the Church which is His Body.

By comparing Jesus' quotation from Isa. 61:1 with Isaiah you will note that Jesus ended the quotation in the middle of a sentence, and did not quote the part about the day of vengeance of our God. This fact shows that Jesus Himself divided, yes, rightly divided the Scriptures. He quoted only that part that referred to His first coming, and omitted the part that refers to His second coming.

It was not possible that the Jews could have killed Jesus before His time had come, so we read that "he passing through the midst of them went his way and came down to Capernaum." It is interesting to note the ups and downs in Scripture. We usually speak of going up north and down south, back east and out west, based upon the geographical location on the globe. In Scripture we go up to Jerusalem because we go up hill, and we go down to Jericho or the Sea of Galilee or the Jordan or the Dead Sea because they are all in a deep valley hundreds of feet below sea level.

#### **4. Jesus Moves to Capernaum**

**References:** Matt. 4:13-16; Lk. 4:31

Luke merely states the fact that Jesus came down from Nazareth to Capernaum, a city in Galilee. But Matthew states that Jesus went into this region to fulfill a prophecy uttered by Isaiah 700 years earlier. This region bordered the allotments of land that were originally given to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali (cf. Josh. 19:10-16 and 32-39). The prophecy quoted is from Isa. 9:1,2, just four verses before the well known prophecy of the child born and the son given whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Father of the Ages, The Prince of Peace.

In order to understand this prophecy about Zebulon and Naphtali one must acquaint himself with the past history of this area, how it suffered the most from the invading Assyrians. It was a region that had been overrun perhaps more than any other by invading foreigners, so that it came to be known as the region and shadow of death. The place where Jesus decided to make His headquarters, Capernaum, was in the most despised region of Israel's land, known as Galilee of the Gentiles. The sea in this passage is the Sea of Galilee. Isaiah of old saw the Messiah, the One born of a virgin (7:14) now come to sit upon the throne of David (9:7) and He comes to the darkest spot in Israel and there enlightens the people. This prophecy does not mean that Jesus went to this region to preach to the Gentiles, for He made it very plain that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He went to this region which was called Galilee of the Gentiles. The people there saw a great light and how wonderful it would have been for them had they heeded Jesus' message: "Repent and let the light in, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." But we know now they did not. In Mt. 11:20, Jesus began to upbraid the cities where He had done most of His mighty works: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. He said if the mighty works which had been done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom it would have remained to this day. It will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for these cities which saw such great Light and rejected it.

There seems to be a natural division of Matthew marked by the expression: "from that time." The first "from that time" is right at the beginning of His ministry in 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." During the first half of Matthew Jesus was presenting Himself to Israel as their Messiah. But when it becomes evident the leaders have rejected Him the ministry changes. After Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Jesus charged His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Messiah. "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" (16:20,21). It is as though a bright light had been shining in the first half of His ministry but Israel closed her eyes to the light. In the

second half it is as though a judicial blindness comes upon Israel, confirming their own self-imposed blindness. "From now on don't tell any one I am Jesus the Christ."

## **5. The Call of Simon and Andrew, James and John**

**References:** Matt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11

The accounts of Matthew and Mark are almost identical, but Luke gives added details of circumstances surrounding the calling of these four men. In fact, Luke's account differs in so many respects that it is possible Luke tells us of a subsequent event very similar to the one described by the other two Evangelists. In Matthew and Mark Jesus was walking by the sea and saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, casting their nets into the sea, and He said to them, "Come along with me and I will make you fishers of men," and they followed Him. Going further He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John, in the boat with their father, mending their nets, and He called them and they immediately followed Him. In Luke, on the other hand, there were multitudes listening to Him at the shore of the sea, and He saw two empty boats and He got into one which was Simon's and asked him to push out from shore and He sat down in the boat and taught the people. When He had finished teaching He told Peter to go out into deeper water and cast his nets for a catch. Peter said they had fished all night and had caught nothing, but he would do as Jesus had said. Whereupon he enclosed a great multitude of fish so that his net was breaking, and he called for his partners, James and John to come to help him. After they got the fish safely to shore Jesus said to Simon, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men," and they left all and followed him.

If the event in Luke is distinct from that in Matthew and Mark, then this is the third account of these men being called. The first was in John 1:35; the second in Matt. 4:18, and the third in Lk. 5:10,11. Human nature is such that it is very difficult to make a complete break all at once and follow the Lord. Most often, as with these apostles, there is a series of experiences before there is a complete surrender. This last one in Luke seems to have sealed it for Simon, for when he saw their boats almost sinking with the great catch of fish, caught at a time fish are not normally caught, and caught after they had labored all night without success, he recognized Jesus truly as the Lord, and fell down before Jesus, saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is not until we see ourselves as sinful and experience that sense of unworthiness that we truly recognize Him as Lord. This has ever been the experience of true conversion (cf. Isa. 6:1-8; Acts. 9:4-6).

We are not told how much money these men made from the great catch of fish, but this may have been the Lord's way of supplying their material needs, now that they were leaving the business world behind and giving full time to the ministry of the Word. G. Campbell Morgan, in his book on Matthew, has this to say:

The principle here is not that Jesus is going to make us all fishers of men. He is going to make us all workers, and turn any capacity we have into account. Jesus found me at my desk with boys about me, teaching them, and He passed me one day and said, Come with me and I will make you a teacher of men. He took hold of that which I could do and said, Do it for me. If he had said 'fishers' He would never have won me. He took fisherman and said, Fish. He will take the teacher and say to him, Teach for me. What He wants is men who will give Him the capacity they have, and let Him lift it into a higher realm, and He will use it, never mind what it is. He said to these men, Come with me and I will make you fishers of men; I will take the training you have, and use it on higher levels.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. A Full Day of Miracles at Capernaum

**References:** Matt. 8:14-17; Mk. 1:21-34;  
Lk. 4:31-41

It will be noted that we have skipped over the three chapters in Matthew on the Sermon on the Mount, which seems to have been given later after Jesus had ordained His Twelve Apostles.

In comparing these three accounts it will be seen that Mark and Luke are almost identical. Matthew omits completely the preaching in the synagogue and the casting out of the unclean demon, but he does give substantially the same stow as Mark and Luke on the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and of the miraculous events at the end of the day.

Regarding the synagogue at Capernaum it is interesting to note that the ruins of this synagogue may be seen today and the inscription on the middle wall forbidding Gentiles to cross over on pain of death has been unearthed. It was here that Jesus taught on that Sabbath day when a man with an unclean spirit cried out: "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art: the Holy One of God." Luke says the man had a spirit of an unclean demon. This is the only occurrence of this expression. Mark speaks of unclean spirits eleven times, Luke six times and Matthew twice. Neither Matthew nor Mark speak of unclean demons. Spirits are called evil and dumb, as well as unclean, and once one is spoken of as a spirit of infirmity. There are 76 references to demons in the N.T., always rendered "devil" or "devils" in the Authorized Version. Demon possession was especially prevalent at the time of Christ and will be again at the end of the age. We know very little about the nature of demons, only that they are evil spirits which apparently seek embodiment in human beings. The Bible reveals some of the effects of demon possession, although some of these effects may be simply physical or psychosomatic diseases. Demons may cause Dumbness (Matt.

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<sup>20</sup> G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (New York; Fleming H. Revell Co., 1924), p. 36.

9:32,33); Blindness (Matt. 12:22); Lunacy (Matt. 17:15); Super-human strength (Mk. 5:1-4); Sickness (Lk. 13:12,16); Divination (Acts 16:16); Immorality or uncleanness (Matt. 10:1 ); Nudity (Luke 8:27); Free-love (1 Tim. 4:3); Maniac behavior (Mk. 5:2-5).

Whereas demons almost always produce degrading behavior and are under the control of the Devil, Satan himself and his ministers transform themselves into angels of light and ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15), working lying signs and wonders, deceiving the very elect if that were possible (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 12:9; 13:14). In apostolic times a special gift of discerning of spirits was given which made it possible to recognize demon possession, but we do not believe that gift is given to men today. Without such divine enlightenment it is a dangerous thing to make judgments about demon possession. Demons still exist and doubtless there are cases of demon possession, and Christ and His gospel are powerful enough to overcome any demon or Satanic powers.

The demons recognized Jesus as the Holy Son of God and they trembled in His presence, even if mankind did not. They knew they were under condemnation and someday would be judged. When Jesus commanded the unclean demon spirit to come out of the man, and it obeyed, convulsing him as it did, the people were amazed at the authority of Jesus and His fame spread throughout the region.

Leaving the synagogue He entered the house of Simon and Andrew where He found Simon's mother-in-law sick with a fever. He rebuked the fever and it left her and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

The news had spread and in the evening a great multitude came bringing all of the diseased and demon possessed and He laid hands upon everyone and healed them all. This healing was vastly different from that of so-called faith healers today, where some claim to be healed and the majority go away disillusioned. It is Matthew again who links up this healing ministry with prophecy, for he says that Jesus healed them "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Isa. 53:4). This passage deserves very careful exposition, since there are many today who are claiming divine healing on the basis that Christ bore our sicknesses just the same as He bore our sins, and we have just as much right to claim healing of the body as we do salvation of the soul. We believe there are at least six answers to this.

1. It is plainly stated that Christ fulfilled this prophecy in bearing sicknesses two years before He died on the Cross where He made atonement for sin. Therefore the healing was not in the atonement.
2. The verbs for bearing sin and bearing sickness are entirely different. The word for bearing sin is "anaphero," and is used in such passages as I Pet. 2:24;

Heb. 9:28; and Isa. 53:12 (LXX). The word for bearing sickness is "bastazo" and is used in such passages as Matt. 3:11, "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;" Gal. 6:2, "bear ye one another's burdens;" Rom. 15:1, "bear the infirmities (same word as sicknesses in Matt. 8:17) of the weak;" Isa. 53:4, "surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Thus Christ bore sins in an altogether different way from bearing sicknesses.

3. If healing is in the Atonement as is claimed to the same extent as salvation, then one possesses salvation only to the extent he has perfect health. But since all saints in the past have died, most from disease, this would prove that all had lost their salvation, for they surely lost their health.

4. The Apostle Paul gloried in his infirmities (the same word as used in Matt. 8:17). See 2 Cor. 11:30; 12:9,10. If having sickness is necessarily out of the will of God then Paul gloried in being out of the will of God, and it was God's grace that taught him to do it.

5. Healing in the Atonement denies such Scriptures as Rom. 8:23: "but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Our final salvation includes a redeemed body, but not in this world, where Paul tells us we have a body of humiliation.

6. Finally it should be noted that God has promised health to Israel, along with all other physical and material blessings. See Deut. 28:1-14. God revealed Himself to Israel as "Jehovah-Ropheca," the Lord that healeth thee (Ex. 15:26). This is the reason we find that physical healing was the prominent part of Christ's earthly ministry to Israel. Healing was one of the credentials of the Messiah, by which Israel could recognize Him when He came on the scene.

## **7. Jesus Prays and Goes On a Mission Throughout All Galilee**

**References:** Matt. 4: 23-25; 8:1-4; Mk. 1:35-45;  
Lk. 4:42-44; 5:12-16

Mark alone tells us that Jesus arose long before daybreak and went out into a desert place to pray. It is very difficult for us to understand the prayer life of our Lord, how or why it was necessary for the very Son of God to pray to the Father. He was God Himself and why should God have to pray? But He was also Man, and as such He humbled Himself and submitted Himself to the will of the Father. There is much of the prayer life of our Lord in the Gospels. Here, before starting out on a preaching tour throughout Galilee, He communes with the Father and doubtless asks the Father's blessing upon this undertaking.

The disciples arose later and went out looking for Him and when they found Him they told Him how the multitudes were waiting for Him. Many others who followed the disciples also begged Him to continue His ministry with them, but

Jesus told them He must move on and preach in all of the other towns because He was sent for this purpose. And so we read that Jesus went throughout all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and sickness. Physical healing of the Body is an integral part of the gospel of the Kingdom. It is not at all a part of the gospel of the Grace of God. It is our business in this dispensation to teach about the gospel of the Kingdom, but not to preach it. We should preach only that which is a part of God's will and Word for our dispensation. It is because so many have been preaching the gospel of the Kingdom in our day that people are taken in by the charismatic movement in attempting to duplicate the healing miracles which Jesus performed.

One particular healing miracle is singled out in this section, that of a leper. Leprosy was considered an incurable disease and any healing of it to be a working of the power of God. The loathsomeness of this disease and its hopelessness is doubtless a picture of the nature of sin. Leprosy separated its victim from the remainder of society (Lev. 13:44-46), just as sin separates from fellowship with God.

Matthew also records the cleansing of this leper, but he places it right after Jesus comes down from delivering the sermon on the mount, (ch. 8:1-4). Luke states it was while He was in one of the cities the event took place. The leper kneeled before Jesus, worshipping Him (an expression of Christ's Deity), and saying: "Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus stretched forth His hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be thou made clean." Jesus had to come in contact with the leprosy of sin, a contact which would have made a clean person unclean; He had to take upon Himself man's sin in order to cleanse man from his defilement. After cleansing the leper Jesus charged him to say nothing to any man about the healing but to go and show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices Moses commanded for a testimony unto them (Lev. 14). Although the priesthood in Israel was corrupt and would finally condemn Jesus to death, He recognized that He was still under the divinely established dispensation of Law, and was always obedient to it and instructed His disciples to do whatsoever Mosaic leaders commanded (cf. Matt. 23:1-3).

In what way would this leper give a testimony to the priest? The priest was the one who had pronounced him to be a leper. The priest knew that only God could cure leprosy. This fact is clearly seen in the story of 2 Kings 5 when the king of Syria sent a message to the king of Israel saying his army general had leprosy and he was sending him to the king with gifts for the king to heal him of his leprosy. When the king read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of leprosy?" Of course, there was in Israel at that time a prophet of God who performed the miracle on Naaman. Therefore the priest in our present case would have to admit that Jesus was God, or at least was doing the works of God. Thus, by going to the priest the man's healing was authenticated. Had the man

not gone to the priest for an official bill of health others might have said, "We don't believe you ever had leprosy." We think this is the reason Jesus told the man to say nothing to others but go straight to the priest. He was not saying, "I do not want you ever to tell anyone about your healing, "but rather," don't tell others until you have gone to the priest." The fact is, that after he had gone to the priest he told so many people about Jesus that Jesus could no longer openly enter into the city because of the crowds, but had to retire to a desert place and minister to those who came to Him.

Modern drugs have been found which will arrest the disease of leprosy, but these drugs have no ability to cure the patient of the effects of the disease. If fingers or toes or other parts of the body have been sloughed off, the drug cannot restore these members. The victim is still a pitiable creature. When Jesus healed the leper he was completely restored. It is stated in the case of Naaman, "and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5: 14). The same principle works in God's salvation. When He saves a person He does not merely patch up the old man with all of his deformities and scars: He creates a new man (cf. Col. 3:9,10).

## **8. Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof**

**References:** Matt. 9:2-8; Mk. 2:1-12;  
Lk. 5:17-26

We learn from Matthew that Jesus entered a boat and crossed the lake of Galilee and came to "his own city." Mark tells us that this city was Capernaum. This is where Jesus made His headquarters in Galilee. Matthew omits the part about removing the tiles from the flat-topped roof so they could lower the paralytic man in the presence of Jesus, but Mark and Luke both give this detail. Mark gives the further detail that the paralyzed man was carried by four other men. Luke tells us that on this occasion Pharisees and doctors of the law from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem had gathered to observe Jesus and that the Power of the Lord was with Jesus to perform healing.

If leprosy with its defilement speaks of sin, then palsy or paralysis represents powerlessness or inability of the sin nature toward God. Paul brings out this aspect of our nature in Rom. 5:6: "For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The sinner must come to the place where he sees himself as morally and spiritually paralyzed, unable to move himself and therefore dependent one hundred percent on the grace of God for salvation. The leper and the paralytic both illustrate Israel's spiritual condition, and their healings illustrate the regeneration which will take place when Christ returns as Israel's Savior and King.

The four men represent the soul-winner: we cannot save souls; all we can do is to bring men to Christ. And these four personal workers manifested great industry, if they couldn't get the man to Christ by the usual means of going

through the door, they used a very unusual means of tearing a hole in the ceiling and lowering him through the hole. We need to use every means at our disposal to reach men for Christ.

The man in the story had two diseases. The Lord healed the most important one first. Seeing the man's faith He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." This immediately stirred up the Jewish religious leaders present, for they said, "Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Only God could cleanse the leper and restore his flesh like new, and only God can forgive sins, but Jesus did both, which proves that Jesus was God. Then Jesus asked, "Which is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" But to prove He had power to forgive sins He said to the paralyzed man, "Arise and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house."

The spectators were amazed when the cripple got up, picked up his pad and started home glorifying God. All they could say was, "We have seen strange things today," and others said, "We never saw it on this fashion." Is it not strange, almost unbelievable, that the sinful hearts of these unconverted religionists could witness such evidences of the Deity of Christ, and still rebel in their minds and seek some means of putting Jesus to death? It is no wonder Paul says that the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:6-8).

## **9. The Call of Matthew**

**References:** Matt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:13-17; Lk. 5:27-32

Mark and Luke call Matthew, Levi, and Mark adds that he was the son of Alphens. He was a publican or tax collector for the Roman government and was naturally hated by the people. He was seated at the tax office or toll house when Jesus passed by and said, "Follow me." Luke tells us that Levi made a great feast at his house for Jesus and invited a great many publicans and others to the feast. Then the Pharisees began complaining to the disciples, as they did in Lk. 15, that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Jesus' answer was two-fold: "People who are healthy have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Thus, those who refused to come to Jesus affirmed that they were healthy and righteous: they had no need of Jesus. But the other answer He gave was: "But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." The reference is to Hos. 6:6. The prophet was not saying that God never commanded the people to bring sacrifices; for He did, but that He desired mercy and the knowledge of God *more than* burnt-offerings. The Pharisees were punctilious in the religious observances but their hearts were far from God. They honored Him with their lips but denied Him by their works.

## **10. Question About Fasting**

**References:** Matt. 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-22; Lk. 5:33-39

Putting the three accounts together we learn that disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus asking why they and the Pharisees fast often but His disciples fast not. Jesus did not answer why the others fasted, but He likened Himself to a Bridegroom feasting with his groomsmen. As long as He was with them they were feasting, but after He will be taken from them then they will fast and not feast.

Where and how did fasting originate? There is no command in the Bible to fast. The earliest reference to fasting is in Judg. 20:26. Israel was in a state of civil war over the terrible sin which the Benjamites in Gibeah had committed in raping the concubine of a Levite until she died. All of the eleven tribes went up against Benjamin and in the ensuing strife many thousands were killed in battle, but the children of Benjamin were winning the battle. Then in vs. 26 we read: "Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came into the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace offerings before the Lord." A terrible crime had been committed in Israel, the guilty ones were gaining the victory, and tens of thousands of their soldiers had fallen in the strife. What were they to do? They just sat before the Lord. Who among them had an appetite for food? They offered sacrifices and enquired of the Lord, and the Lord responded and gave them the victory the next day. It would seem from this first mention of fasting that it was just the natural reaction to great grief and sorrow and disappointment. It seems that wherever true fasting occurred in the Bible it was always in the midst of deep sorrow or trouble or sin that was recognized and confessed (cf. the entire 58<sup>th</sup> ch. of Isaiah). Fasting is mentioned in connection with the Apostle Paul on six occasions; first when he and Barnabas were sent forth as missionaries (Acts 13:2), then in 14:23 before ordaining elders in the churches; again in 27:9 where the fast is thought to refer to Day of Atonement in Lev. 23:27, when the people were to afflict their souls, and although fasting is not mentioned the Jews did observe that day with fasting; then in 27:33 when the sailors had been fasting for fourteen days while the ship was driven out of control by the storm. There are only three references in his epistles: 1 Cor. 7:5, where Paul speaks to husbands and wives giving themselves to prayer and fasting in relation to their sex life; 2 Cor. 6:5 where he relates ways of approving one's self as a minister of God; in stripes, imprisonment, tumults, labors, watchings, fastings; and finally 2 Cor. 11:27, where he tells of all that he had endured for the sake of Christ, including hunger and thirst and fasting often. When a religious law is made about fasting, as Roman Catholicism has done, especially in regard to what is called Lent, it becomes for most people a perfunctory observance with little meaning, or a meritorious endeavor. The Christian has no feast or fast days, but that does not mean that he cannot feast or fast. But to be meaningful fasting must be spontaneous, from the heart.

We believe this is the reason for the two brief parables which follow. That of the old garment being patched with a new piece of unshrunken cloth, which

causes the tear to become worse; and that of the old, brittle wine skins filled with new wine, the fermentation of which breaks the skins and spills the wine. The old speaks of the legal system of the Law. The main difference between the Old Covenant and the New is the fact that in the former God's laws were external, written on tables of stone: in the New the law is internal, written on the tables of the heart. The Old commanded, the New intreats. The Old said, "This do and thou shalt live;" the New says, "Because you now live, do." As Paul puts in 2 Cor. 3:6, the letter of the Law kills; the Spirit, the New, gives life. Wine is a symbol of joy, and the joy of those who were joined to Christ could not be restricted to the confines of the old wine skins of the Law. The Law works wrath, but Jesus had come that their joy might be full (John 15:11).

## **11. The Third Sign - Healing of Impotent Man**

**Reference: John 5:1-47**

John does not tell us which feast of the Jews this was. It has been identified as the feast of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Dedication, Purim, and the Day of Atonement. Neither does John tell us anything which Jesus did in connection with the feast. The entire account is taken up with the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda and the subsequent encounter of Jesus with the Jewish religious authorities. There is first the healing itself, then the revelation of Jesus to the man who was healed, and then the encounter with the Jewish leaders, and the four-fold witness to the Messiahship and Deity of Jesus Christ.

This is the third great sign of John's Gospel, and as stated earlier, we believe there is a definite correspondence between this third sign and the sixth sign, the giving of sight to the man born blind (ch. 9). We will therefore deal with these two signs first of all. Note the correspondence or similarity between these two signs: Both took place in Jerusalem. Both took place at pools, one at the pool of Bethesda and the other at the pool of Siloam. In both cases the men had been afflicted for a very long time, one for 38 years and the other from birth. Of both it is stated, "Jesus saw him," and in both cases it was Jesus who came to the afflicted ones, and not as was usually the case, the afflicted coming to Jesus. Both men were healed on the Sabbath day, and in both cases great persecution by the Jews resulted. In only these two signs is sin mentioned, and strangely enough in both cases the ones healed did not know at the time who had healed them.

One does not need to have great spiritual insight to see that these signs point to Israel's spiritual condition, that of longstanding impotence and blindness. It seems further that the third sign, that of impotence, refers especially to Israel's condition during Christ's earthly ministry, and that the blindness of the sixth sign applies to their condition during the latter half of the Acts period, so plainly described by Paul in Rom. 9-11. Of course, there was individual blindness among the Jews in Christ's time as well as before. One remembers such words of Christ as, "Blind leaders of the blind." But after Israel's rejection and

blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in the first half of the Acts the blindness became national and judicial. Before this they blinded or shut their own eyes to the truth: now it is God who pronounces blindness upon them. Listen to Paul's word in Rom. 11:8: "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear." And in vs. 25: "Blindness in part hath happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." And Paul links this blindness with the Mystery, that special body of truth that was entrusted to him by the risen Lord. This blindness will continue until the full compliment of Gentiles is saved in this dispensation of grace. After that God will resume His dealings with national Israel, and will open their eyes, even as Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man, and He will renew their strength as the eagle's. He will seek them out and return them to their land, even as Jesus sought out these two men to heal them. In that coming day God is going to "open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem a fountain for sin and uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1 ), and the pools may well speak of the place of cleansing. Both signs occurred on the Sabbath, and Heb. 4:9 tells us "there remaineth therefore a sabbath keeping for the people of God." The Millennial rest will be Israel's true Sabbath.

So much for the sign itself. When the Jews saw the man carrying his bed (actually a pallet), they said, "It is not lawful to carry your pallet on the sabbath." When he told them that the man who healed him told him to take it up, they asked who the man was, but Jesus had slipped away in the crowd before the man had had a chance to ask His name. Later Jesus found the man in the temple, "You have been made whole, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." Then the man went to the authorities and told them it was Jesus who had healed him. The Jews sought means to slay Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, but Jesus said, "My Father works still, and I work." This further enraged the Jews, for not only did He break the Sabbath but claimed equality with God. Jesus continued to speak about His Father and the fact that the Father had committed all judgment to the Son, to the end that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Israel up to this point knew God simply as God or Jehovah. Now things have changed. The Son of God has been manifested, and now if man does not honor the Son he cannot honor the Father. This indeed was a dispensational change which the Jews were not willing to accept.

John 5:24 is a favorite verse on assurance of salvation. It contains the promise of eternal life to those who receive Christ's word and believe on the Father who sent Him. Such an one passes out of death into life. At the time this was spoken by Jesus, He had not yet died for our sins, so that man was not asked to believe anything about the death which was yet future. However, in this present dispensation, while the promise of John 5:24 is still valid, it must be remembered that the gospel now contains the necessity of believing that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4). This is a most important truth which multitudes in Christendom do not understand. They

suppose that by simply becoming a follower of Jesus or subscribing to His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount they become Christians and hope to receive eternal life if they follow closely enough.

After this, Jesus speaks about resurrection and judgment which have been committed to His authority. The dead in vs. 25 who were at that time hearing the voice of the Son of God must have been those alive physically who were destitute of spiritual life, dead in trespasses and sins, and these are given life, for the Son has been given to have life in Himself. Then in vs. 28 He speaks of the physical dead, "they that are in the grave," shall hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of condemnation. These are two separate resurrections, occurring 1000 years apart according to Rev. 20:5. Traditional Christendom speaks of a general resurrection at the end of the world when everyone who has ever lived will be raised at the same time and all will be judged to see whether they will go to heaven or hell. But according to Scripture what they call the general resurrection includes only the unsaved. All of the saved will have been raised at least a thousand years earlier.

Following this in vs. 31-47 we have the four-fold witness to the Deity of Christ. When Christ said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true," He meant, "My witness is not necessarily true." God's principle has always been: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16 cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). Of course, whatever Christ had witnessed about Himself had to be true, for He was truth, but He, as a man, subjected Himself to this rule. He gives us four witnesses to Himself. First was the testimony of John the Baptist, described as a burning and shining light. But He had a greater witness than that of John. His works witnessed to the fact that the Father had sent Him, and thirdly, the Father Himself had borne witness when the voice came from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). And finally and the most basic and convincing witness of all is the Scriptures, and Jesus declared: "They are they which testify of me." The Jews claimed to trust in Moses (vs. 45), but Christ said, "I am not going to accuse you to the Father for your rejection of me; Moses himself is going to accuse you, because Moses wrote about me, and if you had believed Moses you would have believed me."

This latter statement is very important in establishing the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible, which destructive critics of the school of higher criticism deny, claiming that these books are a collection of documents put together very late in O.T. history. To reject Moses is to reject Christ, for Moses wrote about Christ. Just one example is that of Deut. 18:15: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Cf. John 1:21; Acts 3:22,23; 7:37). After His resurrection He showed His disciples not only what Moses had written about Him, but what all of the O.T. had to say about Him (Lk. 24:27,44).

Those who believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the entire Scriptures are accused by liberals who play fast and loose with the Bible of being worshippers of the Bible, or Bibliolatry. We do not worship the Bible, but the God of the Bible. The Bible gives us the only infallible knowledge of God and of Christ, and if the Bible cannot be trusted neither can the God and Christ of the Bible be trusted.

## **12. The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath**

**References: Matt. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-5**

Jesus went through the corn, that is, the cornfields. In America corn means Indian corn that grows on cobs. In England corn means the edible seeds of cereal plants, such as wheat, barley, rye, or oats. The disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears or heads of the grain, rubbing the heads in their hands to remove the husks, and probably tossing it into the air to winnow it, and then eating it. There would have been nothing unlawful about this on an ordinary day, but according to Rabbinic statutes, any one of these activities was unlawful on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, who seemed to be almost omnipresent in spying on Jesus to find fault, complained to Jesus that His disciples were breaking the law. Jesus, as He so often did, quoted two examples from Scripture of apparent lawbreaking which had God's approval. All three Synoptics mention the case of David eating the shewbread; Matthew also mentions the case of the priests in the temple on the Sabbath profaning the Sabbath and yet are guiltless. In the case of David (1 Sam. 21:6), David had been anointed by Samuel to be King over Israel in place of Saul whom God had rejected (ch. 16:13). The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit troubled him, and Saul tried to kill David. It was while David, the anointed King, was thus rejected that he and his men were hungry and were given the shewbread to eat. In like manner, Jesus, the rejected King, and His disciples were hungry and plucked the heads of grain to eat. In the case of the priest profaning the Sabbath the reference is probably to Num. 28:9, 10 where the priests had to offer the burnt-offering every Sabbath.

Jesus made two great claims for Himself on this occasion. He was greater than the Temple, for everything in the Temple and the Temple itself was but a type, a foreshadowing of Christ. He also declared that He, the Son of man, was the Lord of the Sabbath. According to Matthew He again quoted Hos. 6:6, as He did in Matt. 9:13. And Mark adds that He said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." One should read the following Scriptures about the institution of the Sabbath: Ex. 16:23-29; 20:8-11; 31:14-16; 35:2,3. Note Ex. 31:17 in particular: "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." The Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel. It is not a sign between God and the Church of this dispensation. That is the reason there is no mention or command for us today to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath is from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. It has never been changed. Jesus was in the tomb on the Sabbath and arose from the dead on the first day of the week. That is why believers began meeting for fellowship and preaching on Sunday.

The Sabbath was not a day of activity but of rest. Not only is the believer today not commanded to observe the Sabbath, he is warned against observing Sabbath days. "Ye observe days... I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (Gal. 4:9-11). "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:16,17). Jewish believers continued to observe the Sabbath during the Acts period, as it was part of their political law and they would have been liable to punishment for not doing so, but the Gentiles were never under the Mosaic law (Rom. 2:14). And in Acts 21:25, the Twelve and Paul had agreed and the Holy Spirit had approved (Acts 15:28), that the Gentile believers should observe no such things as the Jewish believers observed. As for Paul, he considered every day alike, a day dedicated to the service of Christ (Rom. 14:5). If a man wants to set aside a certain day for the Lord, that is all right with Paul, just so long as he does not force it upon another, or judge another for not observing it.

### **13. Man With a Withered Hand Healed**

**References: Matt. 12:9-14; Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 6:6-11**

It is most interesting to read consecutively the accounts of the three synoptists and see the little details which one gives and the others omit. Matthew and Mark simply state that the man had a withered hand, but Luke has the observation that it was his right hand. Mark and Luke state that the scribes and Pharisees watched Jesus whether He would heal on the Sabbath, but Matthew says that they asked Him: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" Then apparently they watched to see if He would heal. Matthew then injects a statement of Jesus which the others omit: "What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day." Mark and Luke tell us that after Jesus told the cripple to stand up He asked the Jews, "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm? to save a life or destroy it?" And Mark adds that they held their peace and would not answer, and then when He had looked around about on them with anger, and being grieved at the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man: "stretch forth thy hand." All of these little differences serve to show how three observers of an incident will tell essentially the same story but each noticing details that the other missed. Of course, Luke was not an observer of this event, but he got his information from someone who was.

One would have thought that everyone would rejoice at seeing this man's right arm being restored to normalcy and usefulness, but the Pharisees took council with the Herodians against Jesus how they might destroy Him.

Hardening of the heart is not only a fatal physical disease but a spiritual one also. Their refusal to answer His question, which showed their cowardice, and the complete lack of compassion angered the Lord. This word is "orge" and is

almost always translated "wrath." On this occasion Jesus held back His wrath, but the day is coming when His wrath will be loosed. Rev. 6:16 speaks of "the wrath of the Lamb." At least 26 times the N.T. speaks of the wrath of God. Love rejected leads to wrath.

## CHAPTER V

# The Middle Galilean Period

## RESUME

This period of our Lord's ministry extends from the calling of the Twelve Apostles to His withdrawal into northern Galilee. Again in this section we will notice that the order of events in Matthew differs somewhat from that in Mark and Luke. Matthew will skip from Ch. 12, where we ended the last section, to Ch. 10, and then to Ch. 5, 6, 7, then to Ch. 11 - 13, back to Ch. 8 and 9, and on to Ch. 14 and 15. Mark carries consecutively from Ch. 3:7 through 7:23. Luke likewise carries consecutively from Ch. 6:17 through 9:17. John Ch. 6 comes in at the close of the section.

### 1. Jesus Withdraws to the Sea of Galilee

References: Matt. 12:15-21; Mk. 3:7-12;  
Lk. 6:17-19

Although the Jewish leaders had been much upset over the claims of Jesus, this is the first time a council is held to find a means of destroying Him. Jesus, knowing their plot, withdrew Himself from them, but His fame was spreading so that people thronged from Jerusalem, Judea, Idumea, the areas east of Jordan, and from the seacoast to Tyre and Sidon to hear His preaching and to be healed. He tells those who were healed not to publicize Him. Matthew adds that this was done to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (42:1-4). It would have been easy for Jesus to raise up an army in revolution against those who were plotting His death, but this was not His purpose in coming into the world. "He shall not strive, nor cry out; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench," These words refer to the character of His first coming. But Isaiah also saw the second coming of Christ. Jesus did not act in judgment upon His enemies, but the prophecy continues, "TILL he send forth judgment unto victory, and in his name shall the Gentiles trust." When He returns, He will execute judgment upon the ungodly; He will establish His Kingdom, and in that Kingdom the Gentiles will come to Israel's Light. There are differences of opinion concerning the meaning of the bruised reed and smoking flax. One commentator thinks the bruised reed refers to a musical instrument that

produces discordant tones and the smoking flax to the offensive odor of a smoking lamp wick, both of which represent the rebellion and unbelief of Israel. The Hebrew of the Isaiah passage means a dimly burning wick He shall not quench, and in Isa. 36:6, "a broken reed" is used to represent the king of Egypt, as a support to lean upon. Such a reed would not only be an unreliable support, but also a source of injury, for it would pierce the hand. Others teach that these symbols speak of Christ's meekness, that if a man is bruised by sin He will not break Him off, and if his lamp is flickering He will not extinguish it, but fan it into flame. Still others say this prophecy teaches Christ's restraint from judgment during His ministry of grace. He withdrew in order that He might not smite them. These were His enemies. He cannot break or quench until He sends forth judgment to victory. We believe this latter idea is the correct one.

## **2. Jesus Chooses His Twelve Apostles**

**References:** Matt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3:13-19;  
Lk. 6:12-19

Luke informs us that before Jesus chose the Twelve He went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God. Important decisions should be preceded by much prayer. Luke also tells us that He called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He also named apostles. Apostle means one who is sent, an envoy, a missionary. These twelve were entrusted with special power and authority. As we shall see later, they are to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

In comparing the names in the three accounts it will be seen that Matthew speaks of Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus (vs. 3), whereas Luke calls him Judas the son (not brother) of James. The second Simon is called the Canaanite by Matthew and Mark, but Luke calls him the Zealot. The A.V. incorrectly calls him a Canaanite. The Greek reads, "Cananaean." The Zealots were a Jewish party which professed great zeal for the Law and resorted to violence in their hatred for foreigners. Simon apparently belonged to that party before becoming a disciple.

Luke tells us that Jesus came down from the mount and stood in the plain or a level place and great crowds came and were healed. There follows after this in Luke what appears to be an abbreviated form of the Sermon on the Mount. Some scholars think this discourse in Luke is separate and distinct from the Sermon on the Mount, and they call it the Sermon in the Plain. Since the two are so similar, they will be considered together under the next heading.

## **3. The Sermon on the Mount**

**References:** Matt. 5, 6, 7; Lk. 6:20-49

The Sermon on the Mount is a summary of the moral and spiritual qualifications of candidates for the Millennial Kingdom. There are certain moral

and spiritual absolutes which are unchangeable and which apply equally to God's people in all ages. Therefore, many of the principles enunciated in this Sermon are as applicable to members of the Body of Christ as they are to members of the Kingdom. But there are certain features of this Sermon which are applicable only to members of the Kingdom, and there is, therefore, need to rightly divide this portion of the Word.

The purpose of the Sermon is to instruct the disciples how to live in view of the persecutions and tribulation which they would suffer while waiting for the actual establishment of the Kingdom. They are instructed to pray for the Kingdom to come. The Sermon was given to the disciples in the presence of a multitude. The Sermon does not present the Gospel of salvation or explain how sinners may be saved: rather, it is addressed to people who were already saved, who could call God their heavenly Father. Much confusion has come from supposing that one can become a Christian by trying to live up to the Sermon on the Mount. There is a vast difference between living in order to become a saint, and living as becometh a saint (cf. Eph. 5:1-3).

With these introductory thoughts in mind, let us examine the following ten divisions:

**A. Character: Matt. 5:1-16; Lk. 6:20-26.** This division deals with the character and the blessedness of the Kingdom saints. It consists of what is generally called the Beatitudes, or the pronouncement of blessedness upon the eight traits of character which are enumerated. The first is poverty of spirit, the realization of one's moral and spiritual bankruptcy before God, which is just the opposite of pride of spirit, which characterizes the unconverted, who suppose they have such abundance of goodness in themselves that they have no need of a Savior. See the poverty of spirit of Isaiah in Ch. 6:5 of his prophecy, or that of Job in Job 42:1-6, or that of David in Ps. 51:1-5, or that of Paul in Phil. 3:7-9. Many of the parables of Jesus illustrate man's spiritual poverty by nature, such as the two debtors of Lk. 7:42. The Kingdom of heaven, not heaven, not the Church, but the Millennial Kingdom will belong to the poor in spirit.

The second blessing is upon those that mourn. But doesn't everyone in this world mourn at one time or another? People mourn over their losses, over their misfortunes and reverses, but all such mourning is based upon selfishness. Jesus mourned and wept over Jerusalem, over the suffering and injustice in society, over man's sinfulness and hardness of heart. This is the kind of mourning which we believe is meant here. And the promise is that all such will be comforted. There is comfort in knowing that some day God will put down everything that offends and the promise of comfort in this verse will be realized in the sabbath-rest of that glorious Kingdom.

Thirdly, there is blessing upon the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:

and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Meekness is not weakness. It is humility, submissiveness to God, mildness, gentleness. Whereas the word "meek" appears but three times in the Gospels, once in this beatitude and twice in reference to Christ, Paul admonishes meekness in the members of the Body of Christ nine times (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:23; 6:1; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25; Tit. 3:2). This meekness is not a product of human nature: it is the fruit of the Spirit. Paul would surely pronounce blessedness upon the meek also, but he never promises that because of their meekness they will inherit the earth. This earthly inheritance belongs to Israel's Kingdom saints. The Church's inheritance is heavenly. It is only in a secondary sense that members of the Church as joint-heirs with Christ will share in all that is His, which includes the redeemed earth.

Mother characteristic for which there is blessedness is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. There is the imputed righteousness of God which is given as a free gift to all who believe as a result of justification by faith, and there is an imparted and inwrought righteousness of character which is the product of the burning desire for likeness to God. If there is a desire, a hungering and thirsting to be like Christ, God will satisfy that longing.

The fifth beatitude is upon the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. It is because God is rich in mercy that anyone is saved (Eph. 2:4). Mercy emphasizes *the misery* with which grace deals. Bengel remarks: "Grace takes away the *fault*, mercy the *misery*.<sup>21</sup> God desires mercy more than sacrifice (Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8). The wise man of old had observed that "the merciful man doeth good to his own soul; but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh" (Prov. 11:17).

The pure in heart are singled out next, for they shall see God. There were many ceremonial purifications practiced in the Old Testament, which touched only the flesh, the outward man, but they were all typical of the inward purification which is now wrought by the Spirit of God in those that believe. Paul, in speaking of that work of God states: "Our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2: 14). Paul speaks also of purity of heart and purity of conscience.

Next, there is blessedness for peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Again, Paul has much to say about this subject. He says, "God has called us to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). "And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thes. 5: 13). "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Does this mean that all of those at the United Nations should be called the children of God? Are they not supposed to be there to bring about world peace? It should be evident to any unbiased observer that each of the nations represented in that body are there to keep peace only if it results in

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Vincent, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 263.

benefits to its own selfish interests. God and the peace of God are foreign to all of their undertakings. The peacemakers of our text are children of God. We do not know if there will be a need for peacemakers in the thousand year reign of peace in the Kingdom, but there is abundant need for them prior to its establishment.

We have purposely emphasized the fact that all eight of these character traits for the Kingdom saints are to be found in greater degree even in the Pauline writings to members of the Body of Christ, for the reason that charges are often made that a dispensational approach robs the believer of the truth in the Sermon on the Mount. If there is any dispensational difference, it is that in the full blaze of revelation in the Pauline epistles, we in this dispensation are under greater obligation to manifest these godly traits of character than were the people of Jesus' day. As we have seen, there are dispensational differences between promises made to the Kingdom saints and the Body saints, and as we shall see there is progressive revelation which produces changes, but there are other things which never change.

Finally there is blessedness for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Peter has a wonderful commentary on this passage:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy (blessed) are ye: for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4: 12-16).

The beatitudes conclude with two brief parables, that of the salt and the candle. Salt is a seasoning and a preservative. Light dispels darkness. The disciples were to be both the Light of the world and the Salt of the earth. Salt is needed where there is corruption, and Light where there is darkness. These two parables teach that the main work of the disciples was to influence for good those round about them. Salt that has lost its saltiness and a candle that is placed under a bushel are worthless: neither can fulfill its intended function. These principles are as valid today as they will be for Israel in the coming tribulation. (Col. 4:6).

**B. Moral Standards: Matt. 5:17-48; Lk. 6:27-36.** The scribes and Pharisees were very meticulous in observing the Law of Moses outwardly. Paul had been a Pharisee and he could say that he was blameless in its observance (Phil. 3:4-6), but this observance produced only self-righteousness. To enter the Kingdom one must have a better righteousness than that. It must be an inward righteousness.

As long as a man did not actually commit adultery, the Mosaic Law on sex could not touch him, even though he may have lived daily with a burning desire for another man's wife. But according to the higher law which Christ enunciated, such a man was an adulterer before God. In vs. 28, "whosoever looketh on a woman," looketh is in the present tense and therefore has the idea of continuous action, "keeps on looking and lustng after her." When Jesus spoke these words the people of Israel were still under the dispensation of Law, as borne out by the fact that Jesus spoke of bringing their gifts to the altar (vs. 23-26).

Jesus quoted from two of the Ten Commandments which deal with the foundations of society: "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and explained how the fulfillment depended upon the inner condition of purity of the heart. He next quoted two laws which have a very wide application in the inner-relationships of men. One deals with truth and the other with justice. Lev. 19:12 is first quoted: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself," that is "Thou shalt not swear falsely, but perform unto the Lord thine oaths." But Jesus says, "Swear not at all . . . let what you say be a plain yes or no. Anything more than this has a taint of evil." If a man has to swear an oath to prove he is telling the truth, it may well be doubted that he is trustworthy. Jesus next quoted Ex. 21:24, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." This is strict justice, but Jesus tempers justice with mercy. He tells His disciples to give to others more than they deserve. Instead of love your neighbor and hate your enemy, Jesus says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

We believe Jesus was speaking metaphorically when He spoke of cutting off one's hand or foot or other bodily member. God forbade actual mutilation of the human body, and besides such mutilation would be equivalent to suicide, for one would probably bleed to death. There are those who believe that Jesus intended this instruction to be carried out literally, but if so, we have no record of any one obeying the command. Nor do we believe Jesus intended that His disciples give away all they possessed to anybody for any reason. Even Jesus under certain circumstances did not turn the other cheek (cf. John 18:23). We are sure Jesus did not mean that if a robber entered the house of a disciple he should gladly give him all of his worldly possessions and permit his loved ones to be sexually abused and then give him a kiss of brotherly love and send him on his way rejoicing. When Jesus spoke of a person having a beam or a big log in his eye, we understand He was using hyperbole, for how could one get the whole trunk of a tree in his eye? Paul likewise tells us to "mortify, that is, put to death our bodily members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5). Do we take this literally, or do we understand it to mean that since we were crucified and put to death together with Christ, we are therefore to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God?

One needs only to read Rom. 12:17-13:10 to see that Paul gives almost identical instructions to members of the Body of Christ as Jesus gave to His Kingdom disciples. Listen to just a few of his Words: "Therefore if thine enemy

hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head... Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Notice how Luke renders Matt. 5:45-48 in Lk. 6:32-36. Luke says, "If ye love them that love you, or do good to them that do good to you, or lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, *what thank have ye?*" The Greek reads: "What grace is there in that?" We have previously pointed out the seeming influence of Paul upon Luke's writing, and here we see it again.

**C. Righteous Acts: Matt. 6:1-18.** The word translated "alms" in vs. 1 should read "righteous acts." Alms, Prayer and Fasting are here included as righteous acts.

a. *Alms*: *Alms* is a word which comes from the Anglo-Saxon, a word having the same meaning as *eleemosynary*, which is a transliteration of the Greek word used in our text. It is derived from the word mercy and means showing mercy or compassionateness. God can reward only that which is done from the heart and for His glory. A man might give all of his money to feed the poor, and if he did it to promote his own prestige, Jesus says whatever prestige he received would be his full reward. This same principle holds for any kind of so-called humanitarian or religious good works (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3).

b. *Prayer*: The Lord's Prayer, which might better be called the Disciple's Prayer, is related also in Luke 11:1-4, but on an entirely different occasion. The prayer was doubtless intended to be a sample or model for prayer: not a prayer to be memorized and repeated word for word, over and over again. Jesus warned against using vain repetitions in prayer. When God has answered our requests we do not continue to ask for that thing. If He has supplied not only our bread for today but for a week or month in advance, we should thank Him for the supply; not continue to petition Him. There is progressive revelation concerning prayer which must also be considered. It should be noted that the "Our Father" prayer makes no mention of the name of Jesus. Toward the end of Jesus' ministry He gave further instructions for prayer. He said, "Hitherto (that is, up to the present time) have ye asked nothing in my name." Now, He says: "Whosoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," (John 16:23,24). Asking in His name means to ask in His behalf, or for His sake. It is easy to end a prayer with the words, "in Jesus' Name" without having analyzed whether the petition is really for the glory of Christ. With these introductory thoughts in mind, let us look at each element of the prayer.

"Our Father, which art in heaven." Many Jews could not have 'prayed this prayer, for Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the Devil," (Jn. 8:44). It is most important to recognize the fact that the disciples were children of God, both as far as the prayer is concerned and as far as the following context is concerned.

Otherwise we may become confused on the matter of the security of the believer. All prayer should begin with praise and worship of God.

"Hallowed be thy name." The word "hallow" means to be holy, to sanctify, to make a person or thing the opposite of common. God's name stands for God Himself. That is why God commanded that we should not take His name in vain, or lower His name to the base and commonplace things of this world. This is a petition, which means that the one praying is asking for God's name to be hallowed in his own personal life.

"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." These two requests are very closely tied together, for when the Kingdom comes God's will shall be done in earth as it is done in heaven. This request is another evidence that the Kingdom in the Gospel accounts is the yet future Messianic Kingdom which shall be established here upon the earth. As we have seen, the Kingdom was near at hand but it had not yet come. It is a strange anomaly that many Christians who do not believe that Jesus will ever come back to establish a Kingdom on earth, repeat this prayer for the coming of the Kingdom at every public service of their church. The coming of that Kingdom depended upon Israel's acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah and King. Even though Israel rejected Him and had Him crucified, He prayed for their forgiveness and a new opportunity was given them in the early chapters of Acts to repent, but they again rejected Him and the Kingdom establishment was postponed until God's hitherto secret purpose concerning the Church is fulfilled.

"Give us this day our daily bread." There has been much controversy over the exact meaning of the word translated "daily." We have already commented on the inconsistency of praying for that which we already have. However, there are millions of hungry people in the world who could consistently pray such a prayer. But to place the prayer in its proper context of the coming Millennial Kingdom which will be preceded by the Great Tribulation, this request takes on added meaning. We know that when the Beast comes to power in that day no man will be permitted to buy or sell unless he has submitted to the Beast and received his mark in his right hand or upon his forehead, (Rev. 13:17). We can well imagine the awful plight of the godly Jewish remnant in that day, and how they will have to pray in earnest this prayer for daily bread. While we believe the prayer will have special significance for Israel in the time of Jacob's trouble, it is surely a legitimate prayer for God's people at any time in a state of emergency. Some understand the word "bread" to refer to spiritual, rather than physical sustenance. Christ is the Bread that came down from heaven (Jn. 6:33).

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Often this verse is placed in contrast to Eph. 4:32, where we are told to forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. It is said that in the Kingdom order one had to forgive others in order to be forgiven by God; whereas today we are to forgive others because we have been forgiven. We do not think this distinction is

justifiable. In the prayer as recorded by Luke this request reads: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." Besides this, the tense of the verb "forgive" in Matthew should be rendered as a perfect, and practically all of the other English versions render the Matthew passage: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." The forgiveness in this passage is the Father's forgiveness of His child, and not the once for all judicial forgiveness which one receives when he becomes a child of God. We will have more to say on this point when commenting on the verses which follow the prayer.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Here we must stop and ask whether God ever leads any one into temptation? Does not James state: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man," (Jas. 1:13). The solution to the problem lies in the proper understanding of the word translated "temptation." This word does not necessarily mean a solicitation to sin. The word means a trial or test of any kind. Notice how the word is used in the following passages. When Jesus asked Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these (5,000) may eat?" we read that Jesus said this *"to prove him."* Here Jesus was testing Philip's faith; not tempting him to sin (John 6:5,6). When the Jewish leaders tried to trap Jesus with the question of whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not, Jesus answered: "Why tempt ye me?" (Lk. 20:23). Jesus surely did not mean that these Jews were tempting Him to commit sin. They were putting Him on trial. When Peter at the council in Jerusalem asked: "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10), it is evident that he did not mean that they were tempting God to sin. When we read, "By faith Abraham, when he was *tried*, offered up Isaac," (Heb. 11:17), we understand that the word in this context means that God was testing or trying Abraham's faith: not that He was tempting him to sin.

Also the word "lead" us not into temptation has in it the connotation of seducing or enticing to sin. The Greek word means "to bring into." The American Standard version translates it: "And bring us not into temptation." Today's English version has it, "Do not bring us to hard testing." The New English Bible reads, "And do not bring us to the test."

While it is true that God never tempts any one to sin, He does sometimes bring us into situations where our faith is sorely tested, and in such situations there is the possibility of yielding to temptation to choose our own way and thus transgress God's way. But James is quick to point out that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed," (Jas. 1:14). It is not God who entices us to evil, but our own sinful lusts. Thus this petition is to keep us out of situations in which it would be beyond our strength to keep from sinning. We cannot live in such a world as ours without confronting tests and temptations to evil daily, but we have the promise that "God is faithful, who will

not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," (1 Cor. 10:13).

The negative part of the petition is, "Don't bring us into severe tests." The positive part is, "But deliver us from evil," or as many translate, "Deliver us from the evil one." Satan is ever on the job of enticing people to sin, but in the coming Tribulation period when he is cast out of heaven into the earth, we read, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," (Rev. 12:9-12). Since the primary interpretation of this prayer belongs to the Kingdom disciples who are destined to go through the Tribulation, we can see the special significance of praying to be delivered from the evil one.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." This final statement is omitted from the prayer as given in Lk. 11, and it is also omitted from certain of the Greek manuscripts of the prayer in Matthew. Most modern English versions also omit it. Whether these words were spoken by Jesus or added later by a scribe to complete the prayer we may not be sure, but the ascription of power and glory to the Father is true.

After giving the prayer to the disciples, Jesus continues to speak of forgiveness. He says: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Does this mean that one who does not forgive his fellow man will lose his salvation? or that one who does forgive, as in the previous verse, will gain salvation by forgiving? It is a serious mistake to equate forgiveness with salvation, since forgiveness is only one of the many facets of salvation. It is also a mistake to equate the Father's forgiveness of His child with the judicial forgiveness of the sinner at the moment of salvation. When one is saved the judicial penalty is forgiven once for all. After one becomes a child of God he still has the possibility of sinning, and such sin has to be dealt with, either by the child of God or by the Father. If the child confesses it to the Father, it is forgiven, (1 John 1:9). If the child does not confess it, then the Father must settle the matter, and He does this through judging the sin Himself and this results in chastening of some kind. Paul says, "If we would judge ourselves (confess our sins), we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:31,32).

An analogy might help at this point. A man may break into a store and steal merchandise. He is arrested and brought before the judge. He receives a penalty of punishment for a certain period of time in jail. On the other hand, a child may steal some money from his father's purse. What does the father do? Take the child to court and have him sent to jail? Of course not. The father knows what his son has done and he waits to see if he will recognize that he has done wrong and will come and own up to what he has done. Until the son confesses his wrong there is a strained relation on the part of the son to the father. But if the son does not come voluntarily to set matters right, then the father must take the

matter in hand and administer some kind of chastisement. The sin of a Christian is just as sinful, if not more so, than that of the unsaved person, but God deals differently with the sin of the unsaved and that of those who are His beloved children.

c. *Fasting*: The subject of Fasting has been discussed rather fully in Ch. IV, Section 10. Fasting has never been commanded by God, but when it is done the same rule applies as in the case of almsgiving and prayer. It should be done in secret before God and not before man. It is perhaps one of the most difficult things a minister of the Word has to contend with, when he receives the praise of his fellow-Christians, to give all of the glory to God and not to feel a little pride in what he has done.

**D. Riches: Matt. 6:19-24.** There are two great principles enunciated in this section: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," and "No man can serve two masters." The Bible contains many warnings about worldly riches. Here the warning is about the uncertainty of such riches. And even if a man succeeds in amassing a fortune, he may be like the rich fool of Lk. 12:20, whose soul was required of him and he could not take any of his riches with him. The believer can transmute base earthly labor and money into heavenly treasure and have it kept safe on deposit awaiting his arrival in glory.

Paul's main comments on riches, and they that would be rich are to be found in 1 Tim. 6:6-10. James has some scathing remarks about the rich in Ch. 5:1-6 of his epistle. God has entrusted some of His faithful people with worldly riches, and Paul has a word for them in 1 Tim. 6:17-19.

The parable of the Eye as the Light of the Body in vs. 22 and 23 seems to be related to the location of one's treasure as well as the serving of two masters. The eye that is single is an eye that is focused upon just one object, not on a complex mixture of objects. We should have an eye single to the glory of God (Eph. 6:5). Likewise our eye should be focused upon the Lord who is Light, otherwise the light that is in us becomes darkness.

"No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Mammon is an Aramaic word meaning property or wealth, and is here personified, as it is in Lk. 16:13. People try to serve both masters, but their loyalties are divided.

**E. Anxiety: Matt. 6:25-34.** Anxiety is a sin; it not only demonstrates a lack of faith (and whatsoever is not of faith is sin, Rom. 14:23), but is also injurious to health. The A.V., "Take no thought," is a very poor translation for today, although it was a good translation in 1611 when the word *thought* meant anxiety, as can be seen from Shakespeare's usage in Hamlet: "The native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

All six of the "take no thoughts" of this passage should be translated, "Don't be over anxious." Jesus did not mean a reckless neglect of the future, but uneasiness and worry and anxiety about the future. While many of the principles in this section can be applied equally to the Kingdom and to the Church, we believe there is a distinct difference in some of the Kingdom promises and those for us today. Kingdom promises include material blessings. The Kingdom disciples formed a kind of commune in which they shared all their possessions in common, and we read: "Neither was there any among them that lacked" (Acts 4:34), but a few years later, after the Kingdom program had been set aside in favor of the new Pauline dispensation, we read of these same people that they had become destitute, insomuch that Paul had to take up a collection from his Gentile churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). Since apostolic days numerous attempts have been made to establish Christian communism, but they have all failed, simply because that is not in God's program for the Church.

Paul condemns anxiety, just as Jesus did (Phil. 4:6), but he encourages industry and the laying aside of funds and the right use of money. He doesn't condemn the rich but tells them to be rich in good works. He warned those who *willed* to be rich, for this was an indication of the love of money, which is the root of all kinds of evil.

Matt. 6:33 is often misapplied. Two questions need to be asked: What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God, and, Are all these other things automatically added? The Kingdom of which Jesus spoke was still future, for He had just instructed His disciples to pray for its coming into being. They were to seek it as a future expectation. This expectation is ours today only in a secondary sense. Our expectation is the Rapture and to be manifested in glory with Christ. We are already in the spiritual Kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13). We are not seeking the Millennial Kingdom as the disciples of Jesus were. Even if we interpret seeking the Kingdom to mean, putting God first in our lives, does this automatically guarantee that all of these material things will be supplied? We have known people who have gone out as foreign missionaries who believed on the basis of this verse that God would add to them all of these earthly needs. They surely put God first in their lives. Some took no health precautions, thinking this promise took care of all such things, but they came down with malaria, dysentery, and parasites and had to be brought home. Others thought this promise would take care of all financial needs and went out without any financial provisions, only to find themselves stranded and penniless. We today must remember that the disciples were living in a dispensation under which they had power over all manner of diseases and even over poisonous serpents. We are not living in that dispensation. Putting God first involves putting His Word first, and that means following His instruction to rightly divide His Word, so that we know which part is for our obedience. In so doing we may learn that putting God first means industriousness, "for if any will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thes. 3:10); and the use of remedies for sickness (1 Tim. 5:23); and bodily exercise (1

Tim. 4:8 - it is profitable for a little, not profiteth little). God works according to a plan and He expects us to have a plan for our lives. We can make such plans without becoming anxious or worried. He gives us common sense and He expects us to use it. In every dispensation God and His glory should be put first, but the promises of physical blessings flowing from such actions may vary from dispensation to dispensation. Paul surely put God first in his life, but read of some of his privations in 2 Cor. 11:24-33.

**F. Discernment: Matt. 7:1-6; Lk. 6:37-42.** The commands in the Bible about judging can be very confusing unless we use discernment. The command here, "Judge not," seems to say that we should never judge. But that could not be so, for Jesus also said: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). And Paul instructs believers to pass judgment upon those in the Church who are misbehaving, and he asks: "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" (1 Cor. 6:5). And in another place Paul says: "Yea, I judge not mine own self" (1 Cor. 4:3) and in the same epistle, "if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged" (11:31). These are not contradictory statements. The context must determine the meaning. In Matt. 7:1 Jesus is saying, "If you don't want to be criticized, don't criticize others, for others will criticize you by the same standards you use in judging others. The measure you give will be the measure you get." And He says, before finding fault with others be sure you don't have the same or even greater fault. He illustrates this with exaggeration. How can you see to remove a speck from your brother's eye when you have a big log in your own eye? Getting the log out of our own eye is self-judgment. The meaning of these verses seems clear, but what did Jesus mean in Matt. 7: 67

"Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you?" This surely, does not mean to refrain from preaching the gospel to the unsaved, for this is the only message the Christian has for those outside of Christ.

In the figure which the Lord uses, the word "holy" refers to the meat of the animal sacrifice of which no unclean person could eat (Lev. 22:6,7,10,14,15,16). Dogs were unclean animals, a term which the Jews applied to Gentiles (Matt. 15:26). Early Christians applied this similitude of the holy things to the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, which should not be administered to the unsaved. The other similitude has a different character. Pearls have a resemblance to peas and acorns which are given to swine, but if thrown to swine, upon discovery that they are inedible they will trample them underfoot and turn upon the donor in anger. There is truth in the Bible intended for the unsaved, and there is truth intended for only the saved. To minister a heavenly diet to the unsaved is like trying to feed swine on pearls. The unregenerated mind cannot tolerate spiritual food. It is, as Paul says, foolishness unto him. When God gave the heavenly manna to the Israelites they treated it with contempt and lusted for the leeks and garlic and the fleshpots of Egypt (Num. 11:4-6). When churches admit unsaved people to

membership, they will not tolerate for long a pastor who tries to feed them on the meat of the Word. They will call for a pastor who discusses current events or social issues, or environmental problems.

In the corresponding portion in Luke "the measure" is enlarged upon. If you, as a merchant, fill the measure, press it down, and shake it down further and then fill it to overflowing, your customers will deal in like fashion with you. If you give a skimpy measure, you will get the same in return. This principle applies also to our relation to God, (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6). Luke also adds the parable of the blind leading the blind. If you have a log in your eye you are blinded and cannot see to lead another who is blind. Also, the disciple or learner is not equal to his master. One must study long to become perfected as a teacher, and then he becomes equal with his master. As the poet has said, "A little learning is a dangerous thing." Some people learn the meaning of a few Greek words in the N.T. and go about posing as authorities. They can easily lead others astray by conclusions based upon their ignorance of the language as a whole.

**G. Encouragements: Matt. 7:7-21; Lk. 11:9-13.** The encouragement is based upon prayer and the fact that if parents who are themselves evil know how to give good things to their children who ask, will not the heavenly Father rather give good things to those who ask Him? Asking, seeking, and knocking indicate varying degrees of earnestness in prayer. There is no promise of getting any or every request of a selfish nature (cf. Jas. 4:3). Parents have to be very unwise to give their children everything for which they ask. God gives good things, not requested things which would be for the hurt of the child. The comparison of bread and stones and fish and serpents might seem odd, but there can be a resemblance between these objects.

Lk. 11:13 has a variation on the Matthew rendering: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" In the O.T. the Holy Spirit came upon kings and prophets for special types of empowerments and might later leave them. The Holy Spirit was taken away from Saul because of his sins of disobedience. David prayed that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him (Ps. 51:11). The New Covenant promised that God would put His Spirit in the hearts of the children of Israel (Ezek. 36:27; 37:14). Christ told His disciples that the Holy Spirit was dwelling with them, and that later on He would be in them (John 14:17). John explains that when Jesus spoke of rivers of living water flowing out of one's innermost being, "He spake this of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). Whereas in that dispensation people had to pray for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell with them, and at Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given after repentance and water baptism, in the present dispensation the Holy Spirit is given upon believing (Eph. 1:13, where "after believing" as in the A.V., should be translated, "upon believing," for it is a present participle).

**H. The Golden Rule: Matt. 7:12.** Many people have the impression that to become a Christian one must try to keep the Golden Rule. But the Golden Rule is not a means of salvation. When Christ gave it He said: "For this is the Law and the Prophets." Scripture is clear that no flesh will ever be justified by keeping the Law. The law demanded that you do unto others what you would have them do unto you. There is nothing especially Christian about this rule. Confucius taught it 500 years before Christ and probably all religions contain the general idea. It is actually a part of natural law. But no man, aside from Jesus Christ, ever consistently lived up to this rule. But through the operation of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, God is able to fulfill all of the righteous requirements of the moral Law in the believer (Rom. 8:24). There is nothing wrong with the Golden Rule or with the Law. Man's sinful nature is at fault (cf. Rom. 7:12-18).

**I. Alternatives: Matt. 7:13,14.** Religionists often say that there are many roads that lead to heaven, but Jesus spoke of only two roads, and one of them led to destruction, leaving only one road that leads to life. In John 14:6 Christ speaks of Himself as the only Way by which men can come to God. In John 10:9 He spoke of Himself as the Door, through which if any man enter he shall be saved. In the passage before us the two gates and the two ways seem to refer more to the choices men make in life as they travel through this world.

A better translation of these two verses would be: "Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are the ones going through it: Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are the ones finding it." Notice the comparisons. One gate is very wide, the other very narrow; one way is broad and spacious, the other uneven and difficult to travel; one leads to disaster and destruction, the other leads to life everlasting.

If we isolate these verses from the remainder of Scripture we might get the impression that Jesus is teaching that in order to be saved one must by his own efforts overcome all of the obstacles and difficulties of the narrow way, that he must climb up to heaven by his own strength. But, of course, that is not at all what He is saying. When one enters through the narrow gate he is saved, but from there on the way will not be easy. Over and over Jesus told those who would be His disciples that they would suffer persecution and tribulation (John 16:33; Matt. 10:22; John 15:18), and the same is true in our present dispensation (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Thes. 3:4). In Jesus' day, as the opposition from the rulers mounted, it became more and more difficult to make the choice of going through the narrow gate, and the way became more and more straitened and difficult. On the other hand, it seems that the gate is so wide and the road is so broad which leads to destruction, that the unsaved are unaware of having gone through a gate. But they are aware of the bright lights and high life of Broadway, not realizing what is at the end of that road.

**J. Warnings: Matt. 7:15-27.** The Sermon ends with a two-fold warning. The first is against false prophets, and the second against a poor foundation. No doubt in the coming Tribulation period there will be a rash of false prophets as indicated in Matt. 24:21-24, but even now they are increasing in number. Just because a man preaches about Jesus and claims to work miracles in the name of Jesus does not mean he is a true prophet. Jesus said: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." In the light of these words, one should employ great discernment when viewing the growing charismatic movement. It is altogether possible that this movement is preparing the religious world for the host of false prophets who will arise after the Rapture of the Church to work their deceiving miracles as predicted by Jesus.

The other warning is the parable of the two houses, or more accurately, the two foundations. Regardless of the workmanship in the houses, their ability to stand the test depends not upon the beauty of their furnishings, but upon their foundations. The lives of some unconverted men may appear to be more noble, philanthropic, gentle, industrious than that of some Christians, but the one will be swept away in the flood of God's judgment and the other will stand. Luke's account adds that the wise man dug deep and laid his foundation upon the rock, and Paul tells us that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus was speaking about the importance and the character of the foundation. Paul starts with the only true foundation and speaks of the importance and character of the building. The Christian's life and ministry is the building. Paul laid the foundation for this dispensation as a wise master-builder, and we are to take heed how we build. We may build with wood, hay, and stubble, or with gold, silver, and precious stones. God's fire will test the building and all that is worthless will be burned away. The building is not the person. The building may be destroyed, but the person will be saved, because man is not saved by his building but by faith.

#### **4. Healing of the Centurion's Servant**

**References:** Matt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10

A comparison of Matthew's and Luke's account of this incident is most enlightening. If we had only Matthew's account we would suppose that the Centurion came personally to Jesus, but when we read Luke we understand that certain of the Jews acted as intermediaries. The centurion did not consider himself worthy to have Jesus come under his roof, and apparently he didn't feel worthy to even speak to Him personally. Or perhaps he had enough discernment to know that Jesus ministered only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This incident is one of the two recorded cases where Jesus ministered to a Gentile while He was on earth.

We think of Roman soldiers as hard, cruel, unconscionable men. But this man was different. To begin with, Luke tells us that this critically ill servant was "dear unto him." He loved this servant enough to go to the trouble of getting a delegation of Jews to go to Jesus to intercede for him. The second and almost unbelievable thing about this centurion was that he also loved the nation of Israel and had demonstrated his love by building a synagogue for the Jews. This Roman is a foreshadowing of Gentile salvation in the Millennial Kingdom. God had promised Abraham long ago that He would bless those who blessed Abraham's seed and curse those who cursed his seed. One cannot help but wonder whether there was any connection between this centurion and centurion Cornelius in Acts 10.

Jesus went with this delegation of Jews and when they were not far from the house, the centurion probably saw them coming and sent some friends to tell Jesus not to go to the trouble of coming to his house. All He needed to do was to speak the word and his servant would be healed. When Jesus heard this He said to all those about Him, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The friends upon returning to the house found the servant healed. One cannot help but wonder whether the centurion ever met Jesus face to face. If he didn't here in this life, we are sure he will in the life to come.

## **5. Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain**

**Reference:** Lk. 7:11-17

This miracle is recorded only by Luke. **Nain** is located about 16 miles S.W. of Capernaum and about five miles S.E. of Nazareth where Jesus grew up. As He and His disciples and the crowd that was following Him approached the gate of the city a funeral procession was passing through the gate. It was that of a widow's only son, and when Jesus saw the situation He had compassion on the woman. Perhaps Jesus, knowing that He was the Father's only Son, and the cost of Him giving His only Son to die for the sins of the world, was especially moved with compassion for her. At any rate, He stopped the procession and commanded the dead man to arise. And the dead man sat up and began speaking and Jesus restored him to his mother. One commentator feels that the compassion of Jesus is proof of His true humanity, and surely His command "to arise" manifested His Deity. The people all feared and said, "A great prophet has arisen among us." He was a great Prophet, as Moses had predicted, but apparently that was all the people saw in Him. They did not recognize Him as the Son of God and the Savior from sin.

## **6. John in Prison Sends Disciples to Question Jesus**

**References:** Matt. 11:2-30; Lk. 7:18-35; 10:21, 22;  
cf. Lk. 16:16

We learned earlier that Jesus left Judea when He heard that John the Baptist had been thrown into prison. The reason for his imprisonment is given in Matt.

14:3-5; Mk. 6:17,18; Lk. 3:19,20. We do not know whether it was John personally or his disciples who had doubts about Jesus. Something seemed to be going amiss if Jesus was the promised deliverer and His forerunner was languishing in prison. When they asked Jesus if He was the One who was to come or should they look for another, He did not answer them directly but told them to go back and tell John what they had seen, that is, the various kinds of miracles being done. Miracles are not necessarily a divine accreditation, for Satan can work miracles also. But John would know the Scriptures and he would know that Isaiah had stated specific works which would identify the Messiah. These were the very works they beheld Jesus doing. See. Isa. 29:18; 35:4-6; 60:1-3.

After John's disciples had departed Jesus began to question the people about John. What kind of a man was he? He was not a men-pleaser, a reed shaken with the wind. Neither was he a self-indulgent person living in worldly pleasure. He was a prophet the other prophets had predicted should come, (Mal. 3:1) to prepare the way for the Messiah. There was no one greater than John, according to Jesus, but strangely enough, he that is least (or lesser) in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Jesus did not mean that the lesser one in the Kingdom was personally or morally better than John, but that John belonged to a dispensation that was inferior to the new Kingdom dispensation which was now at hand. The Old Covenant dispensation contained promises of the new but John died before experiencing the new. Note the contrasts between the old and the new in Jer. 31:31-35 and 2 Cor. 3:6-16. The spiritual benefits of the New Covenant sealed with the blood of Christ are shared both by the Church in this present dispensation and Israel in the coming Kingdom dispensation (Rom. 15:27 ).

Jesus continued speaking about John: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There is a similar statement made on a different occasion in Lk. 16:16: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The word "presseth into" is the same Greek word translated "suffereth violence" in Matthew. Translators and commentators differ widely in their interpretation of these passages; mainly over the word violent, whether it refers to violent opposition to John and Jesus, or to the eager, enthusiastic thronging of the multitudes to get in on the blessings of this new dispensation. Interpreting the statement in the light of the immediate context it appears that Jesus is contrasting the period before John with the then present period. The law and the prophets were until John. The Kingdom of heaven was as yet only a promise. Now it is here, close at hand. It is being preached and multitudes are flocking to hear about it. The great multitudes who thronged Jesus are mentioned over 80 times in the Gospels. They would even have taken Him by force to make Him king (John 6:15, where "force" is the same Greek word translated "force" in Matt. 11:12). This does not mean that all of these multitudes became saved individuals, for many were like the "stony soil in the parable of the Sower" (Matt. 13:20,21): "the same is he that heareth the

word, and immediately with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, immediately he is offended." The multitudes were outwardly pressing into the Kingdom for the physical blessings which were being offered in the form of miraculous healings and supply of food, even though later on some of them would cry out: "Away with Him, crucify Him."

There is yet another point that needs clarification about the words: "The law and the prophets were until John." There are certain of the Baptist persuasion who teach that the new dispensation in which we now live began with John the Baptist; that he was the first Christian and the founder of the Baptist Church. If John was the first Christian and the founder of the Church, it is strange that the lesser one in the new arrangement is greater than John. But more importantly, Christ was not contrasting the law and the prophets with the Body of Christ Church of this dispensation, but with the Messianic Kingdom which will be set up on this earth at Christ's second coming. Everything about John the Baptist and the Kingdom was predicted by the prophets of old, but none of the prophets predicted anything about the Body of Christ, for it was at that time a secret hidden in God Himself.

There was a big "IF" in the ministry of Jesus, and it is here expressed in Matt. 11: 14: "And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah which is to come." The establishment of the Kingdom was contingent upon Israel's receiving of it. Had they received it, John the Baptist would have been the Elijah who was to come, but Israel did not accept John or Jesus and the Kingdom economy was set aside.

Jesus seemed to be at a loss for words to describe the generation in which He lived, and we might say that the character of succeeding generations has not changed. He asked, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation?" He then gives the similitude or parable of the children in the market place playing games of weddings and funerals. Children were accustomed to putting on skits in the market place and were disappointed when people did not dance or lament in response to their plays. So John came preaching repentance and the people did not lament, and Jesus came preaching the abundant life and the people did not dance. They accused John of being demon possessed and Christ of being a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But Jesus said, "Wisdom is justified of or by her children," which is usually understood to mean that God's wisdom is justified or proved right by its results. Christ is the wisdom of God personified (1 Cor. 1:24) and those who believed in Him were the children of wisdom. They repented at John's preaching and understood the mercy and grace of Jesus in eating and drinking with publicans and sinners.

The cities around the Sea of Galilee were the most privileged cities of the world, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum where Jesus made His headquarters and where so many of His mighty works were done. And yet they rejected the Light and nothing but judgment awaits them. Here we see the foreknowledge of

the Lord Jesus, one of His divine attributes. He knew that the cities of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom would have repented if the same mighty words had been done in them. Therefore it will be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for the cities in which Jesus ministered.

Jesus then turned away from this scene of rejection and judgment and turned to His Father in heaven thanking Him that He had hidden these truths from the wise and the prudent and had revealed them unto babes, for so it seemed good or was well pleasing in His sight. The wiseacres of this world are foolishness with God. Paul states: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the thing preached to save them that believe," (1 Cor. 1:21). Jesus did not thank the Father in the usual sense of that word. He confessed or acknowledged the fact, for that is what the Greek word means. The word "babes" in this context does not mean actual infants but those who are humble and lowly in their attitude to God. When the Son came into the world the Father delivered all things to the Son and no one fully knows the Son but the Father, and no one fully knows the Father but the Son and the one to whomsoever the Son wills to reveal Him. There are a number of different words for knowing in the N.T. Here it means full or complete knowledge. It also bears the sense of relationship, as when it is stated that Joseph did not know Mary until she had brought forth her firstborn child (Matt. 1:25), or when Jesus professes, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). The unsaved man knows about God but he doesn't know God; he has never come into a saving relationship with Him. He can know about God as revealed in nature but he can never come into a living relationship with God by any natural means. This knowledge of God does not come by education but by revelation. The Spirit of God must reveal God to us for us to know Him in this relationship.

Jesus concludes this section with the invitation for all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him for rest. The invitation to come is made to both sinner and saint. After coming to Him we are told to take His yoke upon us. A yoke is not made for one animal or person, but for two. It is that which couples two together to pull a load. We thus become yokefellows with Christ Himself. Yoke-fellows must have the same objectives and must pull in the same direction. When yoked with Christ the burdens and work of the ministry" become easy and light.

## **7. Jesus Anointed in the House of Simon the Pharisee**

**Reference: Lk. 7:36-50**

This story involves a parable of grace. We have pointed out before that Luke in his association with Paul must have imbibed the spirit of grace from this apostle of grace, for whereas the word grace does not even appear once in Matthew or Mark, it appears eight times in Luke, and the verb for showing grace appears three times more in this present incident.

Simon apparently wanted to learn more about this Rabbi who was creating such a stir so he invited him to dinner. There was a woman also who is described simply as a sinner, who had heard that Jesus was dining with Simon and she took advantage of the situation to meet Jesus. She came with a gift, an alabaster box of ointment. Apparently she had listened to the teaching of Jesus, had been convicted of her sin and had repented of it, and brought this gift to show her gratitude. It is difficult for us to visualize this scene since we eat sitting up with our feet under the table. The orientals reclined on couches around the table and their feet were thus extended to one side. It was the servant's duty to wash and anoint the feet of guests, as seen from the story of Abigail (1 Sam 25:41). Thus this woman took her place as a servant of the Lord. Instead of water, she washed His feet with her tears, tears which manifested a true sorrow for her past sinfulness, and then anointed His feet with the perfume.

While all of this was going on Simon sat back trying to figure out what kind of a Rabbi this was. Surely if Jesus was a prophet He would have known that this woman was a common sinner and would never have let her touch Him. Jesus, being a prophet, not only knew what kind of woman this was, He also knew what was going through Simon's mind. So He related a little parable to Simon which was designed to make Simon himself pass judgment upon himself. It is one thing for a teacher to tell others of their sins; it is another thing to have the person tell himself he is a sinner, and this is what Jesus forced Simon to do, although he did it unwittingly.

A certain creditor had two debtors. One owed 500 pence and the other 50. Neither of them had a penny to his name, so the creditor frankly forgave them both. "Frankly forgave" is literally: "engraced them," did something for them they did not deserve. "Now Simon, which one will love him most?" Simon answered, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most?" And Jesus agreed: "Thou hast rightly judged." Then Jesus turned to the woman and began telling Simon that she had performed all of the social amenities toward Him that Simon had failed to do. Then He said concerning the woman, "Her sins which were many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." And He said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven."

Probably if Simon ever came to the place of admitting he was a sinner at all, and was the one who owed but fifty pence and unable to pay one penny, he would have been further convicted of his sin of self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and lovelessness and would have seen himself as sinful as the woman. This parable is, to our way of thinking, one of the clearest presentations of salvation by grace. If there is such a thing as big and little sinners, this story puts them all in the same fix; they are all morally and spiritually bankrupt. They can't do one little thing to pay their debt of sin. And while they are in this hopeless condition, the Lord freely engraces them and cancels their debt, taking the loss upon Himself.

Simon answered correctly. If he stuck by his answer he had to admit that he had very little love either for God or his fellow man. John says: "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?" (1 John 4:20).

## **8. Christ's Companions on Second Preaching Tour**

**Reference: Lk. 8:1-3**

While Jesus did not appoint any women apostles or place women in places of leadership, He did lift the status of women and recognize their place of ministry. On this preaching tour through Galilee He took with Him, not only the Twelve, but three women whose names are mentioned, along with many others who ministered to Him and His apostles of their means. Susanna is mentioned only this once in the N.T. Joanna is mentioned here and in Lk. 3:27 and 24:10. Mary Magdalene is mentioned twelve times: Matt. 27:56,61; 28:1; Mk. 15:40,47; 16:1,9; Lk. 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1,18). We have no record of how or when these women became disciples. Nothing is said to identify Susanna. We do know that Joanna was the wife of King Herod's steward, which is an interesting sidelight. But Mary Magdalene is described as a demon possessed woman out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. These women seem to have had more spiritual insight than did the apostles. The two Marys are mentioned together at the sepulchre of Christ watching as Joseph wrapped the body of Jesus in a linen cloth and laid it in the tomb and then rolled a great stone over the door. These same two Marys were the first at the tomb, at daybreak on Sunday morning, and they were the first human beings to see the risen Christ (Mk. 16:9). And when these women told the Apostles Jesus had arisen from the dead, they believed not. God has honored and rewarded these women by placing their names in Holy Writ for hundreds of generations to further honor them for their love and devotion to Christ. It seems that Mary Magdalene was one of those, who like the woman in the previous chapter, loved the most because she was forgiven the most.

## **9. The Unpardonable Sin**

**References: Matt. 12:22-45; Mk. 3:19-30,  
cf. Lk. 11:14-23; 6:43-45; 11:29-32**

The references in this section are quite fragmented, especially in Luke. Therefore to assist the student in correlating these passages we point out the following parallels:

	Mk. 3:20-21	
Matt. 12:22-26	3:22-27	Lk. 11:14-16
12:27-30		11:20-23
12:31-32	3:28-29	
12:33-35		6:43-45
12:36-37		

12:38-42

12:43-45

11:29-32

11:24-26

First, Mark tells us that the multitudes surrounded Jesus to the extent that no one could so much as eat bread. The friends of Jesus thought He was crazy and went to take charge of Him. (It is not clear whether His friends said He was crazy, or the people who were gathered.) On this occasion Jesus was casting out a demon from a blind and dumb man. When the man spake and saw, the multitudes marvelled, but the Jewish leaders accused Him of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons. Jesus showed the impossibility of their charge, for if Satan was divided against himself, his power would be destroyed. But if Jesus was casting out demons by the Spirit of God it was evident that the Kingdom of God was manifesting itself.

Then follows what has been called the unpardonable sin, which has been so misinterpreted as to cause many people deep spiritual harm, for fear they have committed it. It has been said that if a person fears he has committed the unpardonable sin, it is evident he has not committed it, for a blasphemer would not be concerned about his sin. The character of the sin is said to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This sin could not be any sin against Jesus Christ, for Christ plainly stated that sins against Himself were forgivable, but this sin against the Holy Spirit was not forgivable. What is this sin? Do we read anywhere of men thus blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

We believe first that this sin could not be committed until the Holy Spirit was given, and that was after the death and resurrection of Christ. Next, we believe that Israel's sin against the Son of Man in crucifying Him was forgiven, for Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given, and one of the functions of the Spirit was to enlighten and reprove of sin, because they believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ. After Pentecost the rulers of Israel were no longer acting in ignorance. In rejecting Christ now they were sinning against the Holy Spirit. Therefore we read Stephen's indictment in Acts 7:51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did so do ye." They were resisting the Holy Spirit, but when Paul was raised up as the new apostle of the Gentiles, Paul still had dealings with the people of Israel in the dispersion. On his first missionary journey when he was in Antioch of Pisidia and the Jews opposed him, it is said, "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." As a result Paul pronounced judgment upon them and said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Again the same thing happened at Corinth: "And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). And finally the same thing happened when Paul reached Rome as a prisoner and preached to the Jews (Acts 28:25-28). Paul says that he himself was formerly a blasphemer, but he

acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Tim. 1: 13), and in his hatred of Jesus he forced others to blaspheme (Acts 26:11). Therefore we believe that this sin against the Holy Spirit was committed by Israel during the book of Acts period, and by its very nature it is not a sin which is committed today. Every sin is unforgiven until one receives Jesus Christ as Savior, and every sin is forgiven when one does receive Him. There are many warnings against sin of any kind in Paul's epistles, but nowhere does he speak of an unforgivable sin in this dispensation of grace.

After this Jesus gave some similitudes of good and bad men bringing forth good and bad fruit, even as good and bad trees do. The importance of spoken words is emphasized. Men will have to give account of every idle or careless word they speak. Men will be justified or condemned by their words.

The next paragraph deals with signs. God has always dealt in signs with Israel. Paul tells us that the Jews require a sign (1 Cor. 1:22). Here the Jews demanded a sign from Jesus to accredit His claims. The only sign He will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. It goes without saying that Jesus knew and believed the story of Jonah to be a true historic event. Those who call this story a myth impugn the testimony of Christ. While the story of Jonah is historically true it is also a parable or illustration of the nation of Israel. Israel had a commission from God to make His name known to the Gentile nations, but like Jonah they refused. As a result God dispersed them among the Gentiles, even as Jonah fled to Tarshish. On board the ship a great storm arose and Jonah was cast overboard into the sea, which is often a figure for the Gentile nations, where Jonah was miraculously preserved, even as Israel has been preserved as a distinct ethnic group over the centuries. As Jonah was vomited up out of the sea, so Israel will again be restored as a nation upon her own land. And finally as Jonah then went to Nineveh and preached and the whole city repented, so Israel, when they are restored, will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the nations; the so-called Great Commission will be carried out, and the nations of the earth will be converted. But in the present context Jesus makes the experience of Jonah in the belly of the sea-monster to be typical of His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus claimed to be greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon: hence the greater the condemnation which would come upon those who had the greater enlightenment and yet did not repent.

The final paragraph in this section is the record of a demon who is evicted and later returns with seven other demons worse than himself, so that the latter end of the one possessed is worse than the first. This is the story of the nation of Israel. They had reformed and evicted the demon of idolatry with which they had been possessed in the days before the dispersion, and now they refuse to be filled with the Spirit of God. When the demon returns he finds Israel "empty, swept, and garnished." He enters in with even worse companions and takes possession of Israel again. This describes their condition in the time of great tribulation (cf. Rev. 12:13).

## **10. The True Kindred of Christ**

**References:** Matt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35;  
Lk. 8:19-21

We do not think that Jesus showed disrespect for His mother and brothers according to the flesh by apparently denying them and turning to His true disciples and calling the ones who did the will of the Father in heaven, his mother and brethren. Rather Jesus was making it plain that His mother and brothers in the flesh did not have any unique or favored relationship with Himself. He no doubt foresaw what would happen in the future, how that Mary would be exalted as the Mother of God and would be given a place almost higher than Himself. As we have seen, Jesus placed Himself in subjection to His earthly parents until He became of age, and even as He was dying on the cross He made provision for His mother (John 19:26,27).

Spiritual ties can bind people more closely together than physical ties. In fact, many times believers find their natural relations antagonistic to spiritual things. Jesus Himself experienced this, for we read: "Neither did His brethren believe in Him." In fact, Jesus predicted that because of His being rejected by Israel, instead of bringing peace to the world, He would bring division: father divided against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law (Lk. 12:49-53).

## **11. The Parables of the Mysteries of the Kingdom**

**References:** Matt. 13:1-53; Mk. 4:1-34;  
Lk. 8:4-18

**A. Why Parables?** *Matt. 13:10-17; Mk. 4:10-12; Lk. 8:9.10.* The Greek word "parable" means "something thrown alongside." The parable places a truth from nature alongside a spiritual one. Since parables are figures of speech used to illustrate spiritual truth, Christ's answer to the disciples' question may seem paradoxical: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Also He said: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Thus parables were used by Christ to reveal truth to His disciples, and to conceal truth from the unbelieving Jews.

While various spiritual applications may be drawn from the parables, it is most important to understand their primary interpretation. The parables deal with either the subjects of the Kingdom or with the chief Character of the Kingdom, who is depicted under such figures as Nobleman, King, Bridegroom, Builder, Master, Judge, Sower, Husbandman, Shepherd, Physician, Creditor, Rock, Cornerstone. After we understand the primary meaning of the parables, we may make secondary applications to ourselves in this Church age, for the simple reason

that there are certain moral and spiritual truths which are unchangeable and apply to mankind in every age.

The parables in this section concern "the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven." The Kingdom of heaven in Matthew is synonymous with the Kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. This Kingdom is not to be thought of either as God's general sovereignty over the universe, or as a purely spiritual kingdom which consists of all holy and righteous beings. Both of these aspects of the Kingdom of God have always existed whereas that aspect of the Kingdom which is before us in the Gospels is something that was near at hand at that time, but its establishment was yet future. Therefore it seems evident that the Kingdom of which Christ spoke was the Davidic, Messianic, earthly Millennial Kingdom which is the subject of Old Testament prophecy.

The word "mystery" in Scripture is not something mysterious, but rather something which had been kept secret but is now revealed. There was nothing secret about God's purpose to establish the Messianic Kingdom upon the earth. This was one of the main burdens of Old Testament prophecy. What then is the secret about the Kingdom which these parables reveal? As we understand it, the secret is that the Kingdom was not to be established at the first coming of the Messiah, but at His second coming. The Jews expected that the Kingdom would appear immediately (Lk. 19:11). Instead, Christ taught that the Messiah must first die, and then there must be the worldwide sowing of the Gospel of the Kingdom, during which good and evil would grow up together until the end of the age, at which time He would return, judge the nations, and establish His Kingdom. Old Testament prophecy does not distinguish between the two comings of Christ and the interval in between. Isa. 61:1 is an example. Thus far a period of over 1900 years has intervened between the first and last clauses of this verse. The same is true concerning the 70 heptads of years which Daniel prophesied unto the establishment of the Kingdom. There is no intimation that 1900 years would intervene between the 69<sup>th</sup> and the 70<sup>th</sup> heptad. It is therefore not exactly correct to state that Christ came the first time to offer the Kingdom to Israel. He did preach that the Kingdom was near, but He came to present Himself to Israel as the Messiah, to be rejected, and to die a sacrificial death. It was only after this that the Kingdom could be offered to Israel, as indeed it was in the early chapters of the Acts. Those who fail to understand the meaning of the mysteries of the Kingdom teach that Christ came the first time to offer and establish the Kingdom, and that since Israel rejected the offer, God began something entirely new and different on the Day of Pentecost.

Before looking at the parables themselves, we might ask: Why would Christ adopt a method of teaching which would keep certain people from understanding the truth? To answer this we must understand something about what is called "judicial blindness." This means that when people harden their hearts toward God and close their eyes to the light, He confirms their action and keeps them in the dark. Christ quoted Isa. 6:9,10; read Matt. 13:13-15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; John

12:39-41; Acts 28:25-27; and Rom. 11:7-12. All of these passages speak of the judicial blindness which God pronounced upon the people of Israel, first in Isaiah's day, then in Christ's day, and finally in Paul's day. In all three cases Israel closed their eyes to the light which God gave them, and as a judgment God sealed their eyes shut. This blindness of Israel was not total, that is, not all Israelites were blinded, for some did believe. Paul states that "blindness in part has happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and then all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25,26).

It should be noted that while Matthew records seven "mystery" parables, Mark and Luke record only the first one, about the Sower. Mark then relates the parable of the candle and the parable of the unconscious growth, before giving another of the mystery parables, that of the Mustard Seed. Luke also mentions the Mustard Seed and the Leaven in a different context (13:18-21).

**B. The Parable of the Sower: Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mk. 4:1-20; Lk. 8:4-15.** Jesus Himself explained the interpretation of this parable, and we would not presume to improve upon His words. The Sower is Christ, the seed is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and the ground upon which the seed fell represents four different kinds of hearers. The wayside hearer is the one who hears the Kingdom message but does not understand it, and the wicked one comes as a bird would and snatches the Word from his heart. The stony place hearer is the one who hears the Word and immediately with joy receives it but because he has no root in himself, becomes offended as soon as persecution or tribulation arises, as represented by the heat of the sun. The seed which fell among thorns and was choked or stunted represents those who permit the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the Word and thus become unfruitful. Finally the seed which fell on good ground represents those who hear the Word, understand it, and bear varying degrees of fruit.

Nothing is said specifically about salvation. The parable is concerned with fruit-bearing. It is evident that those in the first category could not have been saved, and those in the latter must have been saved. The second group seem not to have been saved since they had no root. The third group might represent saved people who had become unfruitful. However, the only way we can be sure people are saved is by their fruit. God alone knows the heart. Fruit-bearing is always the result of salvation; never the cause of it.

The parable teaches that the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel will not result in the conversion of the entire nation or of the world. There will be only partial success. Only a fourth of the preaching will produce fruit. We know that the same principle holds true for the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God in our day and hence we may make a secondary application of the parable to our own preaching. However, we must be careful in making such an application that we do not confuse personal salvation with fruit bearing. Truly saved people have

been caused to doubt their salvation by a faulty application of this parable to our day.

**C. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares: Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.** We are fortunate again in having Christ's own explanation of the meaning of this parable. It is a parable of two sowers. One man sowed good seed in his field and his enemy sowed tares in the same field while the man slept. Jesus again is the man who sowed the good seed. The enemy is the Devil; the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the Kingdom and the tares are the children of the wicked one. The workers ask whether they should pull up the tares, and the answer is, "No, you may also pull up the wheat along with the tares; let them both grow together until the harvest." The harvest is the end of the age; the reapers are the angels who are sent forth by the Son of man to gather out the tares. Those that are evil will be cast into a furnace of fire, and then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

In trying to apply this parable to God's present spiritual program with the Church several facts should be observed. The first is that the wheat represents the children of the Millennial Kingdom; not members of the Body of Christ. Next, this parable culminates with the end of the age. This present evil age ends with the second coming of Christ after the Great Tribulation. The Body of Christ will be raptured or gathered out of this world before the Great Tribulation. In the parable the ones who are gathered out by the angels are those who offend and do iniquity; the righteous are left on earth to enjoy the Kingdom. Just the opposite happens at the Rapture: the saints are gathered out to be with Christ in glory, and the ungodly are left to go through the Tribulation on earth. The only thing in this parable which is similar to God's present spiritual program is the fact that both good and evil exist together in the world; all else is in contrast.

The first two parables are given in much detail and are fully explained for us. The remaining five must be interpreted in harmony with the first two. The lesson of the first two is that there will be a period of preaching of the Kingdom during which good and evil will grow up together, which will be terminated by the second coming of Christ at the end of the age to punish the wicked and to reward the righteous in the new age of the Millennium.

**D. The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Matt. 13:31,32; Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18,19.** The mustard plant in this parable is thought to be the black mustard (*Sinapsis nigra*), which grows quite large. There are smaller seeds than the mustard, but it is probably smallest of the garden seeds. The statement that the birds lodged in the branches does not mean that they built their nests in it, but lighted on its branches to rest or to eat the seeds. The birds were probably small sparrow-like birds.

The parable speaks of rapid growth, but growth that is temporary, for mustard is an herb which lasts for only a season, and not a tree which endures for many

years. Some commentators believe that the birds represent forces of evil, corresponding to the tares in the previous parable and to Satan's emissaries, the birds, in the parable of the Sower. It should be remembered that these parables are not depicting the character of the Kingdom after it is established at the second coming of Christ, but its character prior to that time when it contains a mixture of good and evil. This form of the Kingdom existed for only a few years from the beginning of John's ministry through the early part of the book of Acts. When the program with Israel is resumed during the Tribulation the mystery form of the Kingdom will last for a period of only about seven years.

**E. The Parable of the Leaven: Matt. 13:33-35; Lk. 13:20,21.** What does leaven represent in the Bible? There can be no doubt about the meaning Paul placed upon it: "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. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:6-8). What meaning did Christ place upon it? Jesus told His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees," by which He meant the unscriptural "doctrine" of these Jews (Matt. 16:6-12). In no place in Scripture is leaven used to represent truth or that which is good.

Jesus did not say that the kingdom was like leaven or evil; He said it was like leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. The Kingdom is likened to the whole process. Traditionally the leaven is interpreted as the Gospel, the woman as the Church, and the three measures of meal as the world. The interpretation is that the whole world will be permeated by the Gospel through the instrumentality of the Church, thus resulting in a converted world. This interpretation is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the first two parables as explained by Christ Himself. It is also opposed to experience, for the non-Christian population of the world is increasing at a much more rapid rate than that of new converts to the faith. It is also opposed to the plain, pre-millennial teaching of the Bible. It is also opposed to the a-millennial view which many Christians hold.

It should also be remembered that even the Millennial Kingdom, which apparently begins with a converted world, will end in a great rebellion when Satan is loosed from his prison in the abyss (Rev. 20:7-9). There will be no Kingdom of absolute righteousness until the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

**F. The Parable of the Hid Treasure: Matt. 13:44.** This is the first of the parables spoken privately to His disciples after He had dismissed the multitudes and gone into the house. This parable is about a treasure buried in a field which a man found, and after finding it he buried it again and went and sold all that he had and with the proceeds purchased the field. It seems evident that this parable

illustrates a different aspect of the Kingdom from that which has gone before. We believe this speaks of God's hidden purpose to redeem Israel and in so doing to redeem the world. In the other parables the field is the world and there is no reason for changing it here. This treasure in the world must speak of people. Ps. 135:4 states: "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure." In Ex. 19:5 God says to Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine." Since Israel is God's chosen nation, His peculiar treasure which He found in this world, there seems no reason not to inject that meaning into the parable. We would not be dogmatic on what the hiding of the treasure depicts, but we would suggest that it could refer to the fact that Israel has been dispersed and in a sense hidden among all the nations of the world. But God's sovereign purpose with Israel is not going to fail, although the Kingdom in its mystery form may seem to fail. Paul explains the apparent failure of God's promises to Israel in Rom. 10, and in Rom. 11 he shows that the present fall and casting away of Israel resulted in the reconciliation of the world. "But if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness" (vs. 12-15). And so Paul concludes: "All Israel shall be saved," even though they are enemies of the gospel at the present. "But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake." There can be no doubt that the giving up of all in order to purchase the field refers to Christ's leaving behind heaven's riches in order that He might pay the redemption price for the world on Calvary's cross.

**G. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price: Matt. 13:45,46.** The interpretation of this parable is much the same as that of the hidden treasure. Some interpreters claim that the pearl represents the Church as distinct from Israel. It is our belief that the truth about the Church of this dispensation (it must be remembered that Israel is also called a church) was as yet a secret and not revealed until it was given to the Apostle Paul. It has been suggested that the Pearl, instead of representing Israel as a nation, represents the remnant of Israel which shall be saved before the final establishment of Israel as a nation in the Kingdom. (Rev. 7:4-8; 12:17 cf. Rom. 9:27; 11:5 and the many references to the remnant in Isa., Jer., Ezek., and Micah.) Again, Christ is the Merchant who gave up all to purchase this Pearl, this remnant which remained faithful in spite of trial and testing and great tribulation.

**H. The Parable of the Dragnet: Matt. 13:47-50.** This parable reinforces the teaching of the other parables that during the interval between the two comings of Christ the good and the bad will co-exist. The net cast into the sea enclosed every kind of sea life edible and non-edible. The fishers drew the net to the shore, sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. The fulfillment of this will come at the end of the age, that is, at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns.

There is a remarkable passage in Jer. 16:13-21, where God says concerning the remnant of Israel: "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them." There are many Old Testament passages which speak of the regathering of Israel and the separation of the faithful from the rebels, (cf. Isa. 27:12,13; Ezek. 20:13-38). According to Matt. 24:31, God will use the angels as the fishers to gather the elect. In the symbolism of Revelation the sea represents peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (Rev. 17:15; cf. Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:2).

**I. Parable of the Scribe and the Householder: Matt. 13:52.** This statement is not actually called a parable and is not recognized by many commentators as such. However, we have included a number of similes and will treat this one as such. In this comparison the scribe who is instructed concerning the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth out of his treasure things old and new. A scribe in Bible times was a scholar whose business it was to study and teach the Law. But sad to say the scribes, as a body, were ignorant of the Kingdom and they rejected the teachings of Jesus. But every scribe who is instructed (literally, has been made a disciple to) the Kingdom brings forth out of his treasure things new and old, the New Testament secrets of the Kingdom as taught by Christ and the Old Testament truths concerning the Kingdom. These scribes would be dispensationalists of that day who rightly divided the Word of Truth. They would be able to put the old and the new together in a unified whole. There is an old saying, "Whatever is new is not true, and whatever is true is not new." The only new things in the spiritual world are revelations of truth from God. The axiom we have just quoted would not have been true in Jesus' day, for He was revealing new truth about the Kingdom, but it is true in our day because God completed His revelation with the apostles and the canon is closed. We may find much that is new to us, but if it is true, it has been in the Scripture all along. God revealed a whole new body of truth to the Apostle Paul for members of the Church which is His Body, and although it has been in the Book for nineteen hundred years the great majority of Christians are unaware of its existence. When told about it they exclaim, "That's something new; it can't be true; it must be a modern invention." The Church today needs many scribes who are instructed in the truth of the Mystery; just as Israel needed many who were instructed in the mysteries of the Kingdom.

## 12. The Stilling of the Storm

References: Matt. 8:18, 23-27;  
Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25

A scene like this is a cause for wonder. Here the Lord Jesus, the Creator of heaven and earth, is asleep in the stern of a little boat on the Sea of Galilee and a sudden squall swamps the boat and threatens the lives of those abroad. And Jesus slept through it all. Was God asleep? What would happen if God went to sleep? But, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:3). Here we are confronted again with the mystery of the Incarnation. The Man Jesus was asleep, but as God He was not asleep. When awakened by the frantic

disciples, Jesus calmly asked, "Where is your faith?" Could the ship sink with the God-man aboard? And He rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and there was a great calm. No doubt we ourselves, who have had the advantage of studying the completed Word of God, would marvel as much as did the disciples if we were put through a similar experience. "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" The story could have many spiritual applications to the presence of Christ with us in the many storms of life we all experience.

### **13. The Healing of the Maniac at Gadara**

**References: Matt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39**

Usually the Gospel of Mark gives an abbreviated account of events but on this occasion it is the longest and gives more details. Some believe that the account in Matthew happened upon a different occasion, because in Matthew there were two demoniacs, and only one is mentioned in Mark and Luke. It seems rather unlikely that two events so similar would happen at the same place with the demons entering the swine and the swine being destroyed by rushing over the cliff into the sea. Williams has a unique explanation:

Mark and Luke only speak of one; just as they only speak of one blind man at Jericho and one colt at the entry to Jerusalem. This shows design, not discrepancy. The prophecies immediately preceding Matthew predicted the advent of Christ as King of Israel and Prince of Judah. The Holy Spirit in this first Gospel therefore, records the historic facts that there were two demoniacs, and two blind men, and two animals, for these represent Israel and Judah. No such duality was needed in the other Gospels.<sup>23</sup>

Mark adds such details as when the demoniac saw Jesus "from afar" he ran and worshipped Him; that there were about 2,000 swine; and that after he was healed he began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; whereas Luke says, "throughout the whole city." Decapolis is not a city, but a league of ten cities, as the name means.

This story not only shows the power of Christ over the Satanic world and the fact that these spirit beings recognized and confessed who Jesus really was, but it reveals a great deal about demons. There can be degrees of demon possession. In some cases there was only one demon, in another the one went and found seven others worse than himself and entered into the man, and in this case there must have been a thousand, for their name was Legion. This may explain the super-human strength of the man that enabled him to break the fetters and chains with which the authorities tried to bind him. Further, these demons requested Jesus to send them into the swine, and Jesus granted the request. They knew that swine were unclean animals and therefore Jesus would be more inclined to grant their request than if they had asked to go into a herd of

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<sup>23</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 704.

sheep. But why did they want to go into any creature? We know very little about the nature of demons, but they appear to be disembodied spirits who constantly seek embodiment of some kind. Some think they are the fallen sons of God in Gen. 6:4. They are characterized as being unclean. They are not like Satan who appears as an angel of light and a minister of righteousness, (2 Cor. 11:14). They are degraded and cause those they possess to engage in all kinds of filth and insane behavior. But what a contrast between this poor soul before and after meeting Jesus. He was sitting, not raging and cutting himself; he was clothed, not naked; and in his right mind, no longer a maniac. One would have thought that the people of the area would have welcomed a healer who could perform such cures, but He had apparently damaged their illegal business, and that coupled with their superstitious fear caused them to ask Jesus to depart and He granted their request, but not before telling the healed man to tell others of his deliverance.

#### **14. The Raising of Jairus' Daughter**

**References: Matt. 9:1,18-26; Mk. 5:21-43; Lk. 8:40-56**

Again in this incident Mark gives us details omitted by Matthew and Luke. Mark and Luke give the name of the ruler, Jairus. Mark and Luke mention the daughter was near death when Jairus first spoke to Jesus and that as they were on the way to the house the message came that the daughter was dead. Matthew begins with the Ruler saying, My daughter is dead. Mark and Luke both mention the age of the child, twelve years; Matthew doesn't. All three mention that the woman with an issue of blood who intercepted Him on the way, had been afflicted twelve years. Twelve is the number of Israel. The physical diseases of the people healed are representative of the moral and spiritual condition of Israel. In just this one chapter 9 of Matthew we see illustrated man's condition by nature as paralyzed (vs. 2), dead (vs. 18), diseased (vs. 20), blind (vs. 27), and dumb (vs. 32).

Mark also gives details of the woman's illness and experience with the physicians, having spent all she had without any improvement, but rather had worsened. Mark also tells us that when Jesus said, "Who touched me?" the disciples said, "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" Only one in that pushing, shoving crowd really touched Jesus. The woman was fearful and timid but she had strong faith.

Mark and Luke also tell us that Jesus took Peter, James, and John into the house with the parents, after He had expelled the mourners, to raise the child. And Mark alone tells us that Jesus said, "Talitha cumi," which is Aramaic for "Damsel, arise." After raising the child He prescribed a good meal. After a fatal illness one would have to be careful about diet, but having been restored by Jesus the child was now in the best of health. When Jesus healed, He restored to perfect and complete health.

## **15. Two Blind Men and a Dumb Demonic Healed**

**Reference:** Matt. 9:27-34

We find a great deal of variety in the healing ministry of Jesus. He did not have some fixed way of dealing with everybody. People are different, their problems and needs are different. They need to be dealt with in a personal way. In this case the two blind men followed Him crying out for mercy. Jesus apparently gave them no heed, so they followed Him into the house. Then Jesus asked: "Do you believe I am able to do this?" and they said, "Yes, Lord." So He touched their eyes and they received sight according to their faith. As He had done with others, He strictly charged them to tell no man, but they went forth and spread abroad His fame. It would seem in some of these cases, at least, Jesus wanted to show the impossibility of silencing a testimony of one upon whom God had done a real work.

Then upon the healing of a dumb demoniac the people said, "It was never so seen in Israel," but the Pharisees said, "By the prince of demons he casts out demons."

## **16. Second Rejection at Nazareth**

**References:** Matt. 13:54-58; Mk. 6:1-6

Some commentators believe this is a record of His first and only visit to Nazareth, which is recorded in Luke 4:16-30, and which was commented upon under the Early Galilean Period, number 3, (see pages 57-59).

## **17. The Mission of the Twelve**

**References:** Matt. 9:35-11:1;  
Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6

Since we have already dealt with the appointment of the Twelve Apostles we will confine our remarks to their commission. This is one of the great commissions of the N.T. Here we learn that Jesus gave His apostles authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sicknesses and diseases. The disciples had been in training up to this point. Now they are to be sent out to preach and to heal diseases. Disciples are learners; apostles are officially sent ones.

This commission consists of several commands. The first is: "Don't go to the Gentiles;" second, "Don't go into any city of the Samaritans;" third, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" fourth, "Preach that the kingdom of heaven is near at hand;" fifth, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons, and do all of this as freely as the ability has been given you;" sixth, "Don't take any money with you; don't pack a bag for your journey; don't take a change of clothing or of shoes; don't take a staff; for the worker is worthy of having these needs supplied."

This commission is a very good example of the dispensational character of the Bible and of God's dealings with His people. Many of these commands were changed by Jesus just a few months later. In the next commission Jesus gave to these same apostles after His death and resurrection, He rescinded the restriction on the Gentiles and Samaritans, and told them to witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and then to the uttermost part of the earth. This command is a complete reversal of the previous command. On the night before His death He asked these same apostles: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then he said unto them, BUT NOW, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip (bag), and he that hath no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one" (Lk. 22:35,36). Again there is a complete reversal of commands. For the apostles to obey the commands of Jesus in Matt. 10 after receiving the new commands in Lk. 22 would constitute disobedience.

But why would Jesus give one set of commands only to reverse them in a few months? The answer lies in God's covenant relationship with Israel. God had covenanted with Israel to establish His Kingdom with them, and after that to bless all of the other nations through Israel. Therefore, while Christ was on earth, when the Kingdom was near but not yet established, His message had to be addressed to Israel alone; just as He told the Syrophenician woman: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs" (Matt. 15:24-26). Israel had to be filled with her promised blessing before any blessing could go to the Gentiles. But after His death and resurrection when the Kingdom was being offered to Israel and when there was the possibility of the Kingdom being established (contingent upon Israel's repentance and acknowledgement of Jesus as Messiah and King), Christ changed His commands and told them to go to Jerusalem and Judea first, then to Samaria, and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth. But before they had progressed far enough to go to the Gentile nations the rulers of the Jews rejected the ministry of the Apostles, blasphemed the Holy Spirit, and killed some of the witnesses. Thereupon God interposed a moratorium on the Kingdom offer; raised up a new apostle with a new dispensation and a new commission, and the Twelve who had been commissioned to finally go to the Gentiles, turned the Gentiles over to the Apostle Paul (Gal. 2:9).

It is strange that many Christians suppose that God cannot or has no right to change His commands. Some are still trying to carry out commands given by Moses to Israel; others are trying to carry out the commands of Jesus in Matt. 10; and it seems that the great majority of Protestants as well as Catholics are trying to carry out the Kingdom commission of Matt. 28 and Acts 1. If it was disobedience to work under the Matt. 10 commission after the Matt. 28 commission was given, is it not also disobedience to try to fulfill the Matt. 28 commission after a new commission was given to and through Paul?

After telling the Apostles how to behave in their ministry and how they will suffer as sheep amongst wolves, He tells them that they who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10:22). This is a favorite proof-text for Arminians. Modern preachers who use this verse not only remove it from the *context* of the Kingdom dispensation, but they also fail to understand what *the end* means. It is usually construed to mean "to the end of one's life," whereas the end of which Christ so often speaks is the end of the age. If the Kingdom was near, the end of the present age was even nearer. (Cf. Matt. 13:40; 24:3,6,13,14 where world means age.) Those who endure through the time of Jacob's trouble, the Great Tribulation, will be saved.

Matt. 10:23, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come," has puzzled Bible scholars. Those who deny the literal second coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom argue that this verse shows that Jesus intended His coming to be understood in a figurative sense, for surely the Apostles went to these cities and 1900 years have transpired and yet Jesus has not come. It might be well to quote three other similar passages and point out a fact which is common to all and which explains the meaning from a grammatical standpoint.

Matt. 16:28, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

Matt. 23:39, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ."

Matt. 24:34, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

It will be noted that in all four of these passages the word "till" occurs. In the Greek text there is an untranslatable particle, "an," used with the subjunctive mood. On the meaning of this particle, Thayers Greek-English Lexicon states: "an, a particle indicating that something can or could occur on certain conditions, or by the combination of certain fortuitous causes."<sup>4</sup> In other words, these statements are conditional. We might read our present text: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man may have come depending upon the fulfillment of certain conditions. If the conditions are fulfilled, the Son of man will come before you have gone over all the cities of Israel." What then is the condition upon which His coming depended? There can be no doubt but that it depended upon Israel's repentance and acceptance of the offered Kingdom. Acts 3:19,20 makes this abundantly plain. Even though Israel had rejected Christ in incarnation, now they were given the opportunity to accept Him in resurrection and had they done so Peter says that God would have sent Him back to bring in the times of restitution spoken of by the prophets. We know now that Israel did not repent and therefore the condition stated in these four references was not satisfied, and therefore Christ did not come.

In exhorting His disciples to faithfulness in the face of violent opposition the Lord made a remarkable statement, recorded more fully in Matt. 10:28 than in Lk. 12:5. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (gehenna)." This statement is a sufficient answer to those who claim that physical death results in the death of the soul. The body may be killed without killing the soul. It must therefore exist apart from the body. Only God has the ability, not only to kill, but to destroy both the body and soul in gehenna. Destroy never means annihilate in Scripture. The word used here is *apollumi*, and is the same word as translated lost sheep of the house of Israel, (Matt. 10:6; 15:24); go after that which *is lost*, till he find it (Lk. 15:4); the prodigal son *was lost*, and is found (Lk. 15:32). The word means loss, not of being, but of well-being.

Gabriel's message of peace on earth is reversed by the Lord in the hostile environment in which He found Himself. He had not come to send peace but a sword (Matt. 10:34). This passage is similar to Lk. 12:49-53, upon which comment has already been made. Many Christians are at a loss to explain how Jesus could say He had come to send a sword and not peace, and many critics of the Bible, ignorant of this statement and the reason for it, try to impugn the claims of Christ by pointing to the fact that Christianity has failed to bring about peace in the world. The fact is that not only here did Jesus make such a statement, but in the Olivet Discourse He plainly stated that there would be wars and rumors of wars down to the very end of the age; that is, to the time of His second coming.

To be worthy of Christ the disciples must place Christ before their nearest of kin (vs. 37), before their own interests and safety (vs. 38), before life itself (vs. 39). He closely identified Himself with His own (vs. 40), and promised reward even for giving a cup of cold water to one of these little ones.

Matthew ends the section by stating that Jesus departed from there to teach and preach after thus commanding His twelve apostles, but Mark and Luke state that the Apostles went out and preached the gospel everywhere (in Israel and only to Israelites as Christ had commanded), casting out demons and healing the sick.

## 18. Death of John the Baptist

**References:** Matt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29;  
Lk. 9:7-9

This Herod was one of the sons of Herod the Great who had ordered the slaughter of the innocents. His official title was Tetrach, "ruler of a fourth part." On the death of King Herod his dominions were divided into four parts: Archelaus obtained two parts, Philip one part, and Antipas (the Herod of this story) one part. Herod's wife was a daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, whom he dishonored by taking Herodias, the wife of Philip, to be his wife. Salome was the daughter of

Herodias. John had condemned Herod for his immorality and Herod had put him in prison.

John had been arrested perhaps eight months before his martyrdom. Possibly he was imprisoned at the fortress of Machaerus on the east side of the Dead Sea although some think it was at Herod's palace in Samaria. There Herod had built not only a fortress with dungeons, but an ornate palace. The feast which he gave on this occasion must have been at this palace. The word "here" in Matt. 14:8 at least suggests this, for Salome said, Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist. John must have been nearby for the execution to take place and the head to be brought before the feast was over. It would have required considerable time to go from Jerusalem to Samaria and back. Herodias and Salome knew of Herod's reluctance to put John to death, and they wanted the deed done before Herod had time to change his mind.

When Herod had heard of the mighty works of Jesus he was sure that John had risen from the dead. It is strange that he was superstitious enough to believe John had risen from the dead, but refused to believe Jesus had risen from the dead later on. Mark tells us that Herodias was so incensed by John's condemnation of her marriage to Herod that she tried to have him killed, but Herod feared John, knowing he was a holy and righteous man, and kept him safe. Herod had apparently had several conversations with John, for we read that he was much perplexed when he listened to him and yet he heard him gladly. He apparently put John in prison only because of the insistence of Herodias, and now when he made the rash promise to Salome, she and her mother were quick to see the opportunity to have done what Herod had refused to do. Herod was outfoxed and although he was very sorry, to save face before his guests he caused John to lose his head. Herod had two fears: one, a superstitious fear that John might be able to put a curse on him; and the other, a fear of the people, because they considered him to be a prophet. He apparently had no fear of God. God is going to have two great witnesses in Jerusalem during the Tribulation and the rulers will do the same thing to them that Herod did to John (Rev. 11:3-10).

John's disciples buried John's body and went and told Jesus what had happened. Jesus was near the Sea of Galilee when the news reached Him, and He withdrew from there in a boat to the other side of the sea, which place Luke identifies as Bethsaida.

#### **19. The Fourth Sign - Feeding of the Five Thousand**

**References:** Matt. 14:13-23; Mk. 6:30-46;  
Lk. 9:10-17; John 6:1-15

#### **20. The Fifth Sign - Jesus Walking on the Water**

**References:** Matt. 14:24-36; Mk. 6:47-56;  
John 6:16-21

These two sections will be considered together, since they involve the fourth and fifth signs of the Gospel of John, and as pointed out earlier these two signs correspond with one another. These are the only two of the eight signs in John which appear in the Synoptics, and the Feeding of the Five Thousand is the only one that appears in all four Gospel accounts.

We will first briefly review the historical aspects of the story and then deal with the significance of the miracles as signs. When the Apostles returned from their preaching tour they came and told Jesus all that they had done and taught. There had been so much activity they hardly had time to eat, so Jesus took them to a secret place to rest. But the crowds saw them leave in a boat and ran on foot around the shore and got to the destination before Jesus and the disciples arrived. When Jesus saw the multitudes He had compassion on them, and instead of taking the needed rest, He taught them all day, and toward evening the disciples asked Him to dismiss the meeting and send the people to find food and lodging.

John tells us that Jesus asked Philip, "How can we buy bread for all of these people to eat?" He did this to test Philip to see what he would answer. Would he say, "We don't need to buy bread, Lord; you are able to feed them miraculously?" Instead, Philip quickly figured that two hundred pennyworth of bread would hardly be enough to give each person just a bite. Then Peter volunteered the information that there was a lad in the crowd who had brought his lunch, five little barley rolls and a couple of fish, but what was that among such a multitude. Christian workers have to learn that little is much when placed in the Lord's hand. Jesus knew from the beginning what He was going to do, so he had the disciples make the people sit in companies on the grass, and blessing the lad's lunch He took it and broke the rolls and fish and gave to the disciples to distribute until they were all filled. Actually we do not know how many people were there, for Matthew tells us there were five thousand men, besides women and children. There was such an abundance of food that twelve baskets of scraps were picked up after the meal. John tells us that the people were about to take Jesus by force and make Him King, and Jesus knowing this withdrew into the mountain by Himself. The reason they wanted to make Him king was the prospect of having a ruler who would give them free meals (John 6:26).

Immediately after the meal Jesus made the disciples get in the boat and go to the other side of the lake before Him, while He dismissed the multitude. He then went up in the mountain to pray. In the meantime night had closed in on the disciples and a storm had developed making it very difficult to man the boat. They had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs towards Capernaum (about four or five miles), when in the fourth watch (between three and six A.M.) Jesus came walking on the water, and Mark says that He would have passed them by, but they, when they saw Him, supposed it was a ghost and they all cried out in

fright, for they all saw Him. Whereupon Jesus spoke to them, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid."

Matthew gives us the additional details concerning Peter who said, "Lord if it is thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters." And He said, "Come." Peter stepped out of the boat walking toward Jesus, but when he took his eyes off Jesus and saw the storm he began to sink and cried out for help. Jesus took his hand, rebuking him for his lack of faith, and together they boarded the boat. Immediately the wind ceased and the boat was almost immediately at the place they were headed for. Mark tells us that the disciples were dumbfounded, for they did not understand the incident of the loaves; their hearts were hardened. In spite of the miracle of the loaves, they still did not see who He was. When they disembarked, the people recognized Him and began bringing their sick to be healed.

Let us notice now the similarity between these two signs, and then what they might signify. In both the glory of Christ as Creator is displayed. Only the Creator could transform five small loaves and two fish into enough food to feed over five thousand people with twelve baskets of leftovers. And only the Creator could have such powers over the forces of nature as to defy the law of gravity by walking on the water, to still the raging storm, and instantly cause the boat with its occupants to be at its destination. He is not only the Creator of Israel (Isa. 43:15), He is the faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:19), and as such He can and will supply both the physical and spiritual needs of His people. Both of these signs are prefaced by the statement: "Jesus went up into a mountain" (vs. 3 and 15). Mark informs us that He went up into a mountain to pray and that He saw the disciples toiling in rowing because of the storm on the lake. This is a foreshadowing of that future time of Jacob's Trouble, but Jesus as the ascended great High Priest sees them in their trouble and speedily comes to deliver them and bring them quickly to their land of millennial rest.

Thus in the first and the eighth signs Israel is pictured as destitute of all those things that make for an abundant life and the ability of Christ to fill Israel's joy to the brim and to supply sustenance in excess of their needs. In the second and seventh signs Israel is seen as destitute of life itself and in both Christ is the Giver of life and of every perfect gift. The third and the sixth signs depict the impotence and blindness of Israel and Christ's ability to restore them as a nation and to give them spiritual sight. And finally in the fourth and fifth signs, Christ is seen as the faithful Creator of Israel who will take them through their time of rejection and trouble, scattered among the nations, bringing them to their desired haven.

## **21. Discourse on the Bread of Life**

**Reference:** John 6:22-71

The multitude that had been fed which wanted to make Jesus King had seen the disciples leave in the only boat on the shore and they had seen Jesus retire into the mountain for the night, and the next day they began looking for Him. They knew He could not have left by boat, but not finding Him they decided to go back to Capernaum, His headquarters, to look for Him there. Upon finding Him they asked when and how He had come to Capernaum. Jesus did not answer their inquisitiveness but got down to the more important question of why they were looking for Him. He told them they wanted to make Him King simply because they got a free meal and were filled, and that they should not work for perishable food, but for that which endures unto life everlasting. This answer brought forth another question, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

The word *believe* appears about one hundred times in John and is especially important in this context, since Jesus made some other statements which caused many of the Jews to stumble, and still causes people to stumble. He stated: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." The Jews murmured first because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven," and secondly because He said they must eat His flesh to have eternal life. What did He mean by this latter statement? We can be sure that Jesus was not stating several different ways to have eternal life. He had made it plain that there was only one way and that He was that way to God. He stated in vs. 29 that the work of God was to believe on Him, and in three of the following verses He stated without any qualification: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He then spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood to have everlasting life. Unless this is a second and different way from believing on Him, eating His flesh must be equivalent to believing on Him. We have seen that receiving Christ is equivalent to believing on Him (1:12), and eating is another figure of receiving and assimilating Christ into one's own being, just as food is in a physical sense. It is plain that Jesus was not advocating cannibalism, for He said, "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." It seems clear from vs. 51 that He was referring to His coming death when He spoke of giving His flesh for the life of the world. And then He says, "If this saying about my death offends you, what about my resurrection: What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

The statement, "the work of God is to believe," sounds almost contradictory, for in other Scriptures work is just the opposite of believing (cf. Rom. 3:27; 4:5; 11:6; Eph. 2:8,9). The Jews were works oriented; they believed man must work his way to eternal life through religious observances and law keeping. It would seem that Jesus used their word "work" to show that it was not work but simply believing. Believing is not an activity of working, but a passive acceptance of what God has done for man. It should be pointed out that the word "work" is not always bad when used in a spiritual sense. While no man can work or do works

of righteousness to accomplish his salvation, his salvation has recreated him for the very purpose of producing good works (Eph. 2:10). Faith is an active principle, and Paul speaks of the work of faith (1 Thes. 1:3; 2 Thes. 1:11), which is just the opposite of the works of the flesh and the works of the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 5:19).

It is self-evident that after Jesus had given the Jews the Sign of Creating Bread for them that He should interpret this sign by giving the discourse on Himself as the Bread of Life. It turned out to be a hard saying for the Jews, many of whom turned away and no longer followed Him. Why did some reject and others, such as the Apostles receive Him? Jesus explained it: "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life," (vs. 65, 40). Peter makes his great confession of Christ, (vs. 68, 69), but Christ confesses that one of the Twelve He has chosen is a devil.

## **22. Eating With Unwashed Hands**

**References:** Matt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23

This section deals with the complaint of the Pharisees that Jesus' disciples did not observe the traditions of the elders, of Jesus' rebuttal showing that the traditions of the elders made void the commandments of God, and of a parable concerning that which defiles a man.

Mark goes into a little more detail of explaining some of the traditional teachings of the elders. The fact that the disciples did not wash before eating does not mean that they were unhygienic. The washing referred to was a ceremony of baptism. The last clause of vs. 4 should read: "And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the baptizing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and couches upon which they reclined at meals." The Law of Moses did contain a number of baptism rites, such as the sprinkling of blood and of the water of cleansing, but these traditional baptisms were inventions of the elders of Israel.

Next, Jesus showed how these traditions made the law of God meaningless. God had commanded that a man should honor his father and mother, but tradition of the elders taught that by making a gift to the temple a son could free himself of any responsibility toward his parents.

Then Jesus explained that it was not physical things which entered man's body that defiled him, but the things that came forth out of his heart: evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. This is a Biblical definition of human depravity. Man has a corrupt, sinful nature. Cleansing the outside of man with various baptisms and washings cannot change the inward condition.

Christendom has developed many traditional teachings over the centuries, the same as Judaism, many of which make void the Gospel just as did the traditions of the elders. The traditions of the Roman Catholic Church which are held on a par with the written Word of God, make void that Word by teaching baptismal regeneration, the intercession of Mary, the resacrifice of Christ, and a host of other antisciptural doctrines. We must always ask: "What saith the Scriptures?"

## CHAPTER VI

# Final Period of the Galilean Ministry

## RESUME

This is sometimes called the Period of Retirement. It begins with the withdrawal of Jesus into Northern Galilee and ends with His final departure for Jerusalem. It covers roughly Matthew 15-18; Mark 7-9; Luke 9; and John 7, 8. This trip took Jesus all the way up to the borders of Phoenicia, where He had the encounter with the Syrophenician woman. Some of the notable events during this period were the Feeding of the Four Thousand, the important encounter with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Peter's confession of the Deity of Christ, Christ's prediction of the Millennial Church, the Transfiguration, the discourse on Little Children, predictions of Christ's betrayal and death, the woman taken in adultery, Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and His two discourses on the Light of the World and True Freedom.

### 1. Children and Dogs, The Syrophenician Woman

References: Matt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30

The story of the Syrophenician woman is one of the most definitive dispensational elements in the Gospel accounts, for it shows with unmistakable clearness the relative positions of Jews and Gentiles in relation to the earthly ministry of Christ. It shows the priority of the Jews over the Gentiles in the prophetic Kingdom purpose of God. It explains the order in which the blessings of the Kingdom were to be bestowed upon Israel and the nations.

Jesus had withdrawn from Galilee and had gone to the northwest into the area around **Tyre** and **Sidon**. These two cities are mentioned numerous times in the O.T. They were the chief cities of Phoenicia. The Phoenicians were known under the name of Canaanites or Sidonians in the O.T. One thinks of Hiram, King of

Tyre, who provided David with cedars of Lebanon for his house when he became king over Israel (2 Sam. 5:11), for we read that "Hiram was ever a lover of David" (1 Kgs. 5:1). And when Solomon became king, Hiram provided him with wood for the Temple, (1 Kgs. 9:11). When the temple was restored under Ezra, Tyre and Sidon also provided the cedar and the carpenters (Ezra 3:7). But in time these cities and kingdoms fell under the judgment of God as depicted in Ezek. 27 and 28. Jesus declared it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for the cities of Israel wherein He had done His mighty works (Matt. 11:21,22). These two cities are located a little to the south of modern Beirut in Lebanon.

Matthew calls the woman "Canaanitish," and Mark refers to her as Greek, a Syrophenician by race. The woman's little daughter was grievously possessed by an unclean demon spirit and she came crying for Jesus to help her by curing her daughter, but Jesus answered her not a word. The disciples seemed embarrassed and asked Jesus to send her away. Jesus replied, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the woman fell down and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." Jesus answered: "Let the children first be filled; it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." It is clear that Jesus was referring to Israelites as children and to Gentiles as dogs. Dogs were unclean animals, and He contrasts them with sheep, clean animals. It is also clear that God's order was for Israel to first be filled with her blessings before the Gentiles were to receive any blessing. In fact, the prophetic kingdom program was that the Gentiles were to be blessed through Israel; therefore Israel must first be blessed before she could in turn pass on the blessings to the Gentiles. It is axiomatic that wherever the message is to Israel only, or to Israel first, the ministry is that of the Messianic Kingdom. This is in direct contrast to the dispensational order today, when Israel has been blinded and cast aside, when no nationality has the priority. The very name of the present dispensation: the dispensation of the grace of God, prohibits any such discrimination.

The woman in our story apparently understood that as a Gentile she had no claim upon Christ, since she was a stranger from the covenants of Israel, and she took her place as a dog and replied to Jesus, "Yes, Lord, it is true that it is not right to cast the children's bread to dogs, but do not the little dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs?" Even though Jesus as yet had no ministry for the Gentiles, this expression of great faith prompted Him to make an exception to the rule, one of the two recorded exceptions, and He granted the woman's request and her daughter was freed of the demon spirit. This is the only record of His ministry in this region of Tyre and Sidon.

## **2. Return to Decapolis**

**References:** Matt. 15:29-31; Mk. 7:31-37

Matthew tells of multitudes of lame, blind, deaf, maimed and others being healed as Jesus passed through the cities of Decapolis. Mark singles out one

deaf man who had a speech impediment, whom Jesus took aside privately and healed. The healing was unique in that Jesus put His fingers in his ears and spat and touched his tongue and said, "Ephphatha," Aramaic for, "Be opened," and immediately his ears were opened and his tongue was loosed so that he spake plainly. The multitudes marvelled and glorified the God of Israel. Although he charged those who were healed to tell no man, the more He charged them the more they publicized the miracles.

It should be noted that Jesus used great variety in His healing miracles. For some He simply spoke the word, others He laid His hands upon them, some simply touched His garments, others such as this man and the blind man upon whose eyes He applied clay made from spittle, He used outward means. This variety illustrates the variety God uses in the spiritual realm in the work of salvation. Some are saved simply by reading the Word, others pass through some great crisis; some are saved through personal witness, and others are converted in evangelistic services. There are those who argue that a person is not genuinely saved unless he has gone through their particular conversion experience. These facts should be a sufficient answer to such claims.

### 3. The Feeding of the Four Thousand

References: Matt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8:1-9

This miracle was very similar to the feeding of the five thousand, the only differences being in the numbers involved. In the former there were five thousand men, the disciples had five loaves and two fish, and they picked up twelve baskets of fragments. In this miracle, there were four thousand men, seven loaves and four fish, and they picked up seven baskets full.

There are those who believe that every number in Scripture has spiritual significance. F.W. Grant, for example, in his Numerical Bible, in commenting on the feeding of the five thousand in Matt. 14 states: "The twelve baskets full may point to the resources of power for them in the presence among them of their King; the five thousand men, the responsibility of such realized capabilities ( $5 \times 10^3$ ), which yet unbelief might make of no effect."<sup>24</sup> Commenting on the four thousand in Mk. 8, he states: "We have now seven loaves with seven baskets, and four thousand men: the numbers of perfection and of the world at large. They remind us of the perfect sufficiency of divine blessing for all human need, and of all men without restriction being in God's desire participants in it."<sup>25</sup> E.W. Bullinger also was a believer in scriptural numerology. He wrote: "Numbers are used in Scripture, not merely as in Nature, with *supernatural design*, but with spiritual *significance*."<sup>26</sup> While certain numbers in Scripture do seem to have spiritual significance, there is always the danger of speculation. We believe that God gave His revelation so that ordinary people could grasp its message without

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<sup>24</sup> F.W. Grant, *The Numerical Bible* (New York; Loizeaux Brothers, 1904), The Gospels, p. 157.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>26</sup> *The Companion Bible*, op. cit., Appendix 10, p. 141.

going into complex mathematical problems, such as counting the numerical value of the letters of every word in the book and finding a secret meaning between the lines, to be known to only a select few. One who reads the Bible naturally associates such numbers as three with the resurrection or the Godhead, seven with the completion of creation, ten with the law, and twelve with the government of Israel, but we doubt that God intended some hidden spiritual significance for every mention of a number in Scripture.

#### **4. Encounter With Pharisees and Sadducees**

**References:** Matt. 15:39-16:12; Mk. 8:10-21

After feeding the four thousand Jesus dismissed the multitude and entered a boat bound for Magdala or Magadan, according to Matthew, and Dalmanutha, according to Mark. These two areas were probably contiguous. Their exact location is in doubt. There He encountered some Pharisees and Sadducees who tempted Him, asking to see a sign from heaven. He rebuked their spiritual blindness by stating that although they could discern the signs in the atmosphere concerning the state of the weather, they were blind to the signs of the times. People today who are always clamoring for signs should remember what Christ told these Jews: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," and in their case no sign was to be given but the sign of the prophet Jonah. This reference to Jonah by the Lord surely supports the historicity of the story of Jonah in the O.T. If Jonah was not three days and nights in the whale's belly, Christ was not three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Jesus had no more to say to these who had closed their eyes to the truth, so He left them and departed to the other side of the lake with His disciples.

The disciples had forgotten to take food with them and while they were discussing the problem Jesus told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (and Mark adds, of Herod). The disciples supposed He was rebuking them for not bringing bread with them for the trip. But Jesus was rebuking them for their unbelief and lack of spiritual perception, recalling to their minds the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand. Why should they ever worry about lack of food in the light of such experiences? Here again we see a distinction in dispensations. Whereas the disciples were supernaturally fed while Christ was with them in the flesh under the Kingdom program, later under the Church program we find the great Apostle Paul oftentimes hungry, thirsty, naked and cold (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 11:27; Phil. 4:12). Israel was promised physical blessings for obedience (Deut. 28:1-4), but we have no such promise as members of the Body of Christ. He will supply our needs, thank God (Phil. 4:19), but that is different from the riches promised to Israel.

#### **5. The Blind Man at Bethsaida**

**Reference:** Mk. 8:22-26

We referred to this healing a few paragraphs back in discussing the healing of the deaf man with a speech impediment. For a reason not given, Jesus led this blind man by the hand outside the village, and there spit on his eyes and laid His hands on him. At this point the man's sight was partially restored, so that he saw men as trees walking. Then Jesus laid His hands on his eyes again and his sight was completely restored. God sometimes does things instantaneously and at other times He does things gradually through a longer or shorter process. No two people have identical experiences. No doubt in this case Jesus chose to work through a process to meet a particular spiritual need of this man. Or perhaps this gradual healing was indicative of the slowness of the disciples to gain spiritual vision.

After seeing so many miracles they still did not perceive. Jesus then sent the man home and warned him not to even enter into the village. We saw in Matt. 11:21 that Christ pronounced woe upon Bethsaida because of their unbelief, and one of the judgments of unbelief is enforced judicial blindness. Because of their unbelief, Jesus withheld from the inhabitants the testimony of this healing miracle, performing the miracle outside the village and forbidding the man to return to it.

## **6. Peter's Confession and the Millennial Church**

**References:** Matt. 16:13-20; Mk. 8:27-30;  
Lk. 9:18-21

All three Synoptics record the same confession by Peter of the identity of Christ, but Matthew, being the Kingdom Gospel, gives the further details of the keys of the Kingdom and the Church which Christ will build in relation to that Kingdom.

The confession was called forth by Christ's own question: "Who do men say that I am?" Some speculated that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life, or Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the old prophets risen from the dead. Then Jesus directed the question to the disciples: "But who say ye that I am?" Peter answered for the group: "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus declared that Peter did not learn this fact from any human source but that it was revealed to him by the Father in heaven. Here we have what is perhaps the clearest claim of Jesus Himself to His Messiahship and His unique relation as the Son of God. He not only claimed it for Himself, but declared that God the Father was the originator of this revelation. Men who have not had this truth revealed to them by the Father may deny His title as the Anointed One or as the Son of God, but they cannot deny that Jesus claimed this for Himself.

There follows after this a statement by Jesus which is one of the most misunderstood of all of His sayings: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on

earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Rome uses this passage as proof of the Papacy: The Church built upon Peter with the power to forgive and to bind sin. Protestants have used all manner of interpretations to try to deny these claims of Rome. Some argue that Peter's name means a little pebble, but the rock upon which the church is to be built means bedrock foundation, and that foundation rock is not Peter but Peter's confession. Others argue that Peter had no more authority to forgive sin than the humblest believer and that all Jesus meant to say was that when we preach the gospel we are using the keys to the kingdom, so that we can say when a man believes his sins are forgiven, and when he doesn't they are retained. And Rome further uses the statement about the gates of hell to claim infallibility for the Church: the Devil will never be able to prevail by bringing false doctrine into the Church. And of course Catholics and Protestants alike agree on one point, and that is the Church of which Christ spoke is our present Church, the Body of Christ.

If we could only stop for a moment and put Scriptures in perspective we would be saved from all of this controversy and confusion. The first fact is Paul's plain teaching that the Church of which he was made the revelator and minister was a secret truth hidden in God and never before revealed to the sons of men in past generations (Eph. 3:3-9; 5:32). The other fact is that the Church of which Jesus spoke is associated with the Kingdom of the heavens, which as we have seen, is the long promised Messianic Kingdom predicted by all of the prophets, which will be established here on earth when Jesus returns as King of kings. To make this church identical with the Church of our present dispensation we must either say Paul was mistaken about our Church being a previously unrevealed secret, or we must say that the term "kingdom of heaven," has suddenly taken on an entirely different meaning from the way it has been used previously in Matthew's Gospel. But if we let Scripture speak for itself and recognize that Christ is going to have a great congregation or church (*ekklesia*) in the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Heb. 2:12 which is quoted from Ps. 22:22), the meaning becomes perfectly clear. Christ told Peter and the other Eleven that they would sit on thrones in that Kingdom judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). It makes little sense to argue that a judge sitting upon a throne exercising his authority has no more authority than the humblest believer. Why do we have to resort to an interpretation which completely nullifies the words of Christ to try to answer the claims of Rome? Rome is correct in delegating authority to Peter, but wrong in making the Millennial Church to be the Church in the world today. Rome is wrong in limiting this authority to Peter, for Christ gave this same authority to all Twelve of the Apostles, for all of them are to sit as Judges in that Kingdom (John 20:23).

Many people have the mistaken idea that the Church is something that is limited to the New Testament and is separate and distinct from Israel. This is true of the Church, the Mystery, the Body of Christ, but the word "church" (*ekklesia*) appears over 40 times in the LXX (the Greek translation of the O.T.). There was definitely a church before the death of Christ, as seen from Christ's instructions in

Matt. 18:17. That church was entirely Jewish and was the nucleus of the Kingdom Church. The church of our dispensation is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, where all such nationalistic distinctions have disappeared.

There is misunderstanding also about the meaning of the gates of hell not prevailing against this millennial church. Hell here is the Gr. Hades, the place of the dead, the unseen world, and sometimes translated "grave." Hell as the lake of fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels, is an entirely different word. Christ had predicted that many of His followers, who were members of His church, would suffer martyrdom, and what He is saying here is that the gates of death will not prevail against His church, for He will conquer death and bring all of these back to life to take part in that Church.

It is altogether possible that Christ spoke these words in Aramaic and not in Greek, and if so, there is no possibility of making the distinction between Petros, a little stone, and petra, a foundation stone, in the Aramaic language. In every dispensation God has given special authority to certain men. Surely Moses and Aaron, David and Paul were men of special authority. Why take it away from Peter in the government of the Messianic Kingdom? If we understand this passage correctly, it refers to the yet future millennial Church, the program of which was interrupted and temporarily set aside because of Israel's rejection of Christ and their choice of Ceasar rather than Jesus as their King. It has no reference to the Church of this dispensation, of which Paul is the master-builder (1 Cor. 3:10).

## **7. Christ Begins to Foretell His Death and Resurrection**

**References:** Matt. 16:21-28; Mk. 8:31-9:1; Lk. 9:22-27

This passage marks a natural division in the Gospel of Matthew. The two divisions are marked by the expression: "From that time forth Jesus began," (Matt. 4:17 and 16:21). In the first half the King is presented: in the second half He is rejected. Of course, we see indications of His rejection before this, but now the fact is sealed by the revelation that He is actually going to be put to death.

One would have thought that Jesus would have commended Peter for his loyalty in defending Him from those who would dare to lay a hand on Him, but instead He speaks as though Peter were Satan and rebukes him for being a stumbling block and for not minding the things of God. It is evident from this passage, as well as others, that the primary purpose of the first coming of Jesus into the world was to die a redemptive death. Anything that would turn Him aside from that purpose was Satanically inspired. There are some dispensationalists who teach that the purpose of His first coming was to establish the Kingdom of Israel, but there could be no possibility of the Kingdom being established until Christ had first suffered. In Scripture the order is always, "First the Cross and then the Crown," (Lk. 24:26; Acts 3:18-21; 1 Pet. 1:11).

Jesus then called unto Him the multitude with His disciples and laid down the rule for those who would follow Him. Before this it was apparently easy to follow Jesus, to get healed, to be fed, but now He is entering upon a dangerous period when violence will come upon Him and His followers. Therefore He says a man must take up his own cross and be ready to lay down his life for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Those who seek to save their lives would lose them, but paradoxically those who laid down their lives would in reality save them. And it was at this point He uttered the familiar words: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life (soul), or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" He ended this discourse with a "verily," that some standing there would not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom. The statement contains the conditional particle "an" (cf. comments on Matt. 10:23), but the primary reference seems to be to what happened six days later (Matt. 17).

## 8. The Transfiguration

**References:** Matt. 17:1-13; Mk. 9:2-13;  
Lk. 9:28-36

Both Matthew and Mark state that the Transfiguration took place six days later, while Luke states it was about eight days. There is no contradiction. The six days are exclusive; the eight are inclusive. As remarked in the last lesson, the statement that some in that audience would not die until they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, contains the untranslatable particle "an" which requires a condition to be fulfilled to make the promise come to pass. We believe that condition was Israel's national acceptance of Jesus. There was still the possibility that Israel would repent and be converted after the predicted death and resurrection of Christ. However, in view of His impending death Jesus took the inner circle of the disciples up into the mount where He was transfigured before them. Peter refers to this incident in his second epistle (1:16-18):

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

The word *transfigured* is the Gr. "metamorphosed," which indicates a change of form, as a pupae is metamorphosed into a butterfly. The essential inner nature is revealed in a new form. When Jesus was metamorphosed His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as the light, glistering and dazzling. This reminds us of Paul's statement that God dwells in the light which no man can approach unto (1 Tim. 6:16), and of the blinding light which struck him down on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3). This outshining of His glory is surely an

evidence of His Deity. The Hebrews writer describes Him as "being the brightness or effulgence of His glory" (Heb. 1:3).

Luke informs us it was while Jesus was praying that He was transfigured, and further, that the two men who appeared with Him in glory, Moses and Elijah, spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. We would not speak of death as an accomplishment, but for Jesus it was the main work He had come to accomplish. He was born to die. We can only wonder what Moses and Elijah said, but apparently that death was the chief topic of conversation in heaven. And on the side, the appearance of these two men with Jesus is proof that there is a conscious existence after death. Although Elijah was translated without dying, we know that Moses did die and was buried by the Lord (Deut. 34:5,6).

Some commentators criticize Peter for being impulsive and brash, but we wonder what we might have said under the circumstances. The Scripture says that Peter really didn't know what he was saying when he said: "If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles (booths); one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Although Peter put Jesus before Moses and Elijah, it was not God's purpose to place these two great men of God on a par with Jesus, for while he was yet speaking they were engulfed in a bright cloud of light and the Voice from the cloud declared: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Suddenly they looked around and saw no one, save Jesus only. Luke informs us that they held their peace and told no man in those days of the things which they had seen. Matthew and Mark state as they were coming down from the mountain Jesus told them to tell no man of the vision until the Son of man be risen from the dead. They as yet did not understand the truth of the resurrection, for they questioned among themselves what the rising again from the dead should mean. In fact, they did not understand and believe until Jesus actually appeared and showed them his pierced hands and feet and side and ate in their presence (Lk. 24:36-45 cf. Mk. 16:11-13).

The disciples must have been perplexed by all that was going on. They asked Jesus why the scribes say that Elijah must first come? Jesus replied that Elijah would come first and restore all things, and that Elijah had come and the rulers had done unto him whatsoever they listed, and that He, Jesus would suffer a like fate. Then the disciples understood He was speaking about John the Baptist. See notes on Matt. 11:13,14.

## **9. Demon Possessed Boy Healed**

**References:** Matt. 17: 14-21; Mk. 9:14-29;  
Lk. 9:37-43

Mark gives us the most detailed account of this healing. While Jesus was on the mountain top being transfigured before His three apostles, Satan was at work at the foot of the mountain tormenting this lad. This demon afflicted the boy with

fits of epilepsy, throwing him down, causing him to foam at the mouth and to grind his teeth so that he became speechless. Satan would sometimes throw him into the fire or into the water in an effort to destroy him and this had been going on from his childhood. The father had brought the boy to the other of Jesus' disciples but they were unable to cast out the demon. A large crowd had gathered and certain of the scribes were questioning the disciples. When Jesus appeared and was told what was going on, He rebuked them as a faithless and perverse generation, and asked that the boy be brought to Him. While the boy was coming to Jesus the demon threw him to the ground convulsing him violently. The father pleaded for compassion: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus told him if he could believe, all things were possible. Whereupon the father cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Then Jesus rebuked the demon: "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." As the spirit came out he convulsed him again, crying out, and left the boy as dead, so that many said he was dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up and restored him to his father.

Naturally, the disciples wondered why they couldn't cast out the demon, and Jesus told them that this kind of demon could be exorcised only by prayer and fasting, according to Mark, but Matthew gives the additional reason, "Because of your unbelief." While the gift of exorcism is not listed in the Pauline Church epistles as belonging to this dispensation, these epistles nevertheless tell us of our conflict with Satanic powers and the necessity of having on the whole armor of God, described in Eph. 6:13-17, in order to be victorious over Satan. "Above all," Paul says, "take the shield of faith." And part of that armor, or perhaps the environment in which that armor is to be used is, "Praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

## **10. Christ Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection**

**References:** Matt. 17:22,23; Mk. 9:30-32; Lk. 9:44,45

There is a very important fact to be noted in connection with these predictions about Christ's death. We are so accustomed to making the death of Christ the central truth of the Gospel, we cannot think Gospel apart from that death. That is due to Paul's clear definition of the gospel which he preached in 1 Cor. 15:1-3. However, earlier in this ninth chapter of Luke we read, "And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere" (vs. 6). They were preaching the gospel, but what gospel were they preaching? Were they telling the people about the death and resurrection of Christ as the good news of salvation? If anything could be said dogmatically about their preaching of the gospel, it is that not one word was said about the death and resurrection of Christ, apart from which we could not preach the gospel today. How do we know this? This passage makes it plain: "But they understood not this saying (about His death and resurrection), and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask him of that saying" (Lk. 9:45). Later on He told them again

of His impending death, and we read: "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken" (Lk. 18:34). If they understood nothing about His death and resurrection and if this truth was hidden from them, it is not likely that they were preaching about it when they were preaching the gospel. The good news they were preaching was called the gospel of the Kingdom. It was the good news that the long promised Messianic Kingdom was near at hand and that the healing miracles were an evidence of that fact. Of course, the death of Christ was to become the basis for the establishment of that Kingdom, but as yet it was not being proclaimed. That is why we must go to the epistles to learn what the gospel of salvation really is. Those who insist on sticking with the earthly ministry of Christ and fail to go on to the Pauline revelation either confuse the message of salvation or give people a false hope. To preach the Golden Rule as the gospel is to preach salvation by works and thus frustrate the grace of God. The Sermon on the Mount was not given to show how to be saved; it was instruction for the covenant family of God.

## **11. Tax Money**

**References:** Matt. 17:24-27

In the Law of Moses, Ex. 30:11-16, a half-shekel tax was imposed on rich and poor alike. The rich should not give more nor the poor less. This was called the temple tax. When Peter was asked if his Master paid the temple tax, he replied, "Yes." When Peter came into the house, before he had opportunity to mention the matter to Jesus, Jesus asked him: "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute or custom? of their own children, or of strangers? .... Of strangers," Peter replied. "Then are the children free," said Jesus. "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a stater; take that, and give unto them for me and thee." A stater was a shekel, sufficient to pay the half-shekel for both of them. It is evident that neither Peter nor Jesus had any money, and therefore the miracle. Jesus in His omniscience knew someone had dropped a stater in the lake. He knew that a certain fish had picked it up while scrounging on the bottom for food. And He knew that when Peter cast in his hook and line this would be the first fish to bite. If Jesus foreknew that much about fish and about one particular fish out of the millions in the sea, how can we doubt but that He knows everything that concerns us human beings, especially those that are His. If He could so work things together with the fish, is He not also able to work all things together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose? It should be noted, however, that this is not the normal way God supplies our financial needs. He is surely able but in His present spiritual order for us today He has commanded that we work to earn for our needs, and if we won't work neither should we eat (2 Thes. 3:10).

## **12. Discourse on Little Children**

**References:** Mat t. 18:1-14; Mk. 9:33-50;

### Lk. 9:46-50

The discourse on little children was occasioned by a dispute among the disciples while on their way to Capernaum. They had been arguing over which one of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom when it was established. When they arrived and came into the house Jesus asked them what they had been arguing about, but they were apparently ashamed to tell Him, so they kept silent. Jesus, of course, knew what had been the subject of discussion, for He knew and still knows all things; so He took a little child in His arms and set it in their midst and proceeded to give them a lesson on humility. The disciples had been judging greatness no doubt on such qualities as strength, courage, finesse in oratory, knowledge and wisdom. But they had to learn from this little child, which had none of these qualities, that greatness in God's sight consists in humbleness as of an infant, helpless in itself and totally dependent upon its parents for sustenance. The disciples might have learned this from their Scriptures (cf. 2 Chron. 7:14; Prov. 16:18,19; Mic. 6:8). Jesus, of course, will be the greatest in the Kingdom, not only because He is the Son of God, but because as the Son of man He is the perfect example of humility. Although having equality with God, He humbled Himself, even to the death of the Cross (Phil. 2:6-9), wherefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.

Jesus not only used the little child as an object lesson of humility, but He gave a stern warning to any one who would cause one of these little ones to stumble, to be offended, to go astray. Jesus said that in the world as it is constituted offenses must needs come, but woe to the man by whom they come. It had been better for such a man that a millstone had been hanged around his neck and he had been drowned in the depths of the sea.

Then Jesus spoke of safeguarding one's self against committing such offenses. When He speaks of chopping off one's hands or feet, or plucking out one's eyes, if these members of the body cause one to commit offenses, we believe He was using figurative language and was not advocating self-mutilation of the body. We have commented on this subject where similar injunctions are given in the Sermon of the Mount (see Chapter 5). It no doubt would be better to go through life with a maimed body than to have a perfect body and be cast into the lake of fire. For the believer in our present dispensation, he is told to mortify, to put to death his members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, and to put on the new man (Col. 3:3-10). But this is done, not by physically cutting off parts of the body, but by faith reckoning ourselves to have died with Christ and to have risen with Him in newness of life, (Rom. 6:6-13).

Christ's statement about the angels of the little children beholding the Father's face in heaven has been used to teach that there is a guardian angel appointed for each child born into the world. There is no other passage in the Bible which

teaches such a doctrine, and from the tragic plight of millions of children during the centuries it would seem that the supposed guardians haven't been doing much guarding. There is a similar statement in Acts 12:15, where Peter was miraculously released from prison where he was to have been beheaded, and where, coming to the door of Mary's house in which the disciples had met for prayer, the disciples refused to believe it was actually Peter, and said: "It is his angel." Did they mean Peter's guardian angel, or Peter's spirit? It seems most plausible to understand that they thought Peter had been beheaded and this was an apparition of his spirit. Although one cannot be dogmatic, it also seems plausible to believe that Jesus was speaking about departed spirits of little children who had the closeness of relationship with the Father in heaven. The passage does not teach that children are all in a saved condition because of their innocence, for the very next verse in Matthew states the fact that the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. All humanity is lost by nature, and Jesus came to save the lost, which includes little children.

Matthew next records the parable of the one lost sheep which is applied to infants, for it is not the will of the Father "that one of these little ones should perish." The same parable is told in Lk. 15 where it is applied to the prodigal son.

On the other hand, Mark records next the parable of the Salt, which was also told on several different occasions, which explains the different ways it is stated. In Matt. 5:13 Jesus said to His disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." In our present passage in Mark, Jesus said: "For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." The Salt parable appears later in Lk. 14:34,35: "Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is fit neither for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. He that hath ears, let him hear."

Salt is used primarily in Scripture as a seasoning to make food palatable. Job asked, "Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?" (Job 6:6). Mark refers to Lev. 2:13 where it is commanded that every sacrifice be salted with salt. Num. 18:19 speaks of a covenant of salt. When two men ate salt together they bound themselves in a friendship that could not be broken. Any one who breaks such a covenant of salt is fit only to be cast out. Israel had a covenant of salt with God, but they had broken it, and according to custom and to parable, they were fit neither for the land nor the dunghill, but to be cast out.

Salt was also used as an antiseptic. Newborn babies were bathed and salted (Ezek. 16:4). Here salt takes on a purifying aspect. We know that salt is also used as a preservative for meats.

Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and "have salt in yourselves." What did He mean? He meant that everything that salt is to the material world, His disciples were to be to the people of the world. Paul said: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). Speech seasoned with salt is just the opposite of corrupt communications out of the mouth (Eph. 4:29).

Mark and Luke both inject into this context John's answer concerning the incident of the disciples forbidding a man who was casting out demons in Jesus' name because he did not belong to the company of the disciples. John's answer to Jesus was apparently called forth by Jesus' words in the previous verse about receiving such "children *in my name*." John said the man whom they had rebuked was casting out demons "*in thy name*." John's conscience was apparently bothered by what they had done. Jesus replied: "Forbid him not: for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part." These words of Jesus are in contrast to what He said in Matt. 7:22,23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have we cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I confess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These statements appear to be contradictory. However, the Lord knows what is in the heart of man, and these in the latter passage He knew to be workers of iniquity, even though they claimed to have done these things in His name. The man whom the disciples had forbidden apparently was a true believer.

### **13. Discipline in the Church and Forgiveness**

**Reference: Matt. 18:15-35**

This is the second time in Matthew that Christ has spoken about His Church. As we have seen in ch. 16:18,19, this Church is associated with the Messianic Kingdom. While it is true that the Kingdom had not yet been established, Christ was in the process of calling out His people for that Kingdom, and that is the meaning of the word "church," a *called out company*. The rules He gives here for dealing with a sinning brother are similar to Paul's instructions for members of the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3-5; 6:1-5; Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:19,20). The binding and loosing on earth and in heaven means that the results of such scriptural proceedings here on earth are approved in heaven. It should be remembered that the Lord was addressing His apostles who were to be judges in Israel.

This fact needs to be remembered also in connection with the promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." This prayer promise cannot be isolated from all of the other promises and instruction which Christ gave to His Kingdom apostles. Christians may make two serious mistakes about prayer. One is taking in an unqualified manner the prayer promises for the Kingdom and applying them to the present divine economy, and the other is isolating one particular promise from all of the others. We do not believe that Jesus ever

intended to leave the impression that His disciples could ask anything for themselves in prayer without any qualifications whatsoever, with the promise that the Father would grant their request. We have record of a number of things which the disciples asked, which were not only refused, but the disciples were rebuked for asking such things (cf. Matt. 20:21,22; Lk. 9:54). Our Lord laid down several conditions for prayer. It had to be in His name, and that involved more than merely tacking on those three magic words at the end of the prayer. The disciples had to abide in Him and His words abide in them (John 14:13; 15:7). James, who was a Kingdom disciple, surely didn't believe in unconditional prayer promises (cf. Jas. 1:5-7; 4:3). John likewise lays down conditions (cf. I John 3:20-22; 5:14). And we surely find no so-called unconditional prayer promises in Paul's letters to members of the Body of Christ.

This section ends with a discourse on how often we should forgive a brother who sins against us. Peter thought seven times was sufficient, but the Lord said, "Seventy times seven." The Lord reinforced this teaching with the parable of the King who freely forgave his servant an enormous debt of 10,000 talents (\$20,000,000 if silver talents, or \$300,000,000 if gold talents), and then the self-same servant refused to forgive his fellowservant a paltry debt of 100 pennies and had him cast into prison. We cannot estimate the magnitude of the debt of sin which we owed to God and which He has freely forgiven through the death of His Son; therefore we should "forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us" (Eph. 4:32). Does the command that we forgive mean that we must forgive in a sort of automatic way? Luke gives these words of Jesus which show that forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance: "if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Lk. 17:4). This is a most important principle which many people forget. God does not forgive unless there is a change of mind on the part of the sinner, and He does not ask us to forgive those who wrong us and who remain adamant in their sin.

#### **14. Christ Attends The Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem**

**Reference: John 7:1-52**

In the introduction to this lesson one is reminded of Joseph and his brothers in the Old Testament, for they did not believe in Joseph, even as the brethren of Jesus did not believe in Him ("not believe" is imperfect - they were habitually unbelieving). They urged Him to leave Galilee and go to the feast in Jerusalem and show his works openly if He was what He claimed to be. But Jesus would not go into Judea, for He knew the Jews there were seeking to kill Him. He let His brothers go up to the feast first and then He went up rather secretly. The Jews at the feast were all looking for Him and inquiring about Him and expressing their beliefs and disbeliefs concerning Him. Then in the middle of the feast which lasted seven days (Lev. 23:34), and came in early autumn, He entered the temple and began teaching. This resulted in many questions being

raised by the crowds. "How is it that this unschooled man has such learning?" "Isn't this the man whom they seek to kill? But lo, he speaks boldly and they say nothing to him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Messiah?" "What is he talking about: Ye shall seek me and not find me; and where I am ye cannot come? Where will he go that we cannot find him? Will he go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles and teach the Gentiles?"

Jesus answered some of their questions and asked some of His own. He told them that His learning, His knowledge, His doctrine was not His own, but God's who had sent Him. He asked, "Why are you plotting to kill me?" They said: "No one's plotting to kill you; you must be demon possessed." Jesus asked: "You circumcise a man on the sabbath day that the law of Moses be not broken, then why are you angry at me because I have completely restored to health a man on the sabbath?"

The culmination came on the last day of the feast, which was the most important day. Edersheim, an authority on Jewish antiquities, graphically describes the liturgy performed on that day, which greatly enhances the Scriptural account. Space does not permit quoting all of the preliminary celebrations, sacrifices, chanting of Psalms by the priests, etc. The priest had filled his golden pitcher with water when the temple procession had reached the Pool of Siloam and then returned to the temple to pour out the water at the altar. Edersheim states:

We can have little difficulty in determining at what part of the services of the last day, the Great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried: If anyone thirst let him come unto me and drink! It must have been with special reference to the ceremony of the outpouring of the water, which as we have seen, was considered the central part of the service. Moreover, all would understand that His words must refer to the Holy Spirit, since the rite was universally regarded as symbolical of His outpouring. The forthpouring of the water was immediately followed by the chanting of the *Hallel*. But after that there must have been a short pause to prepare for the festive sacrifices (the *Musaph*). It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Psalm cxviii given thanks, and prayed that Jehovah would send salvation and prosperity, and had shaken their *lulabh* towards the altar, thus praising with the heart, the mouth, the hands, and then silence had fallen upon them - that there arose, so loud as to be heard throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them.<sup>27</sup>

What an electrifying sight that must have been, as that Voice rang out in the midst of this great celebration: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow

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<sup>27</sup> Edersheim, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 160.

rivers of living water" (and John explains "this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified"). There was a mixed reaction among the multitudes. Some said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But others objected: "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Doesn't the scripture state that the Christ will come of the seed of David and from Bethlehem?" And there was a division and the ones who had been sent to arrest Him returned empty-handed to the chief priests, who asked, "Why did you not bring him?" and they answered, "Never man spake like this man." Whereupon the Pharisees replied, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the Pharisees believed on him? The common people don't know the Law; they are accursed." But there was one Pharisee who secretly believed on Him and he enquired, "Does our law judge any man before it has heard him and knows what he has done?" Nicodemus who had interviewed Jesus at night in secret, and who had been a secret believer, later came openly with Joseph of Arimathea and begged for the body of Jesus from Pilate and prepared the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:38-42). One who is a true believer cannot remain in silence and secrecy forever. When the crisis arises he must speak out and declare his faith.

Jesus' time had not yet come and the Sanhedrin was again thwarted in their attempts to take Him and put Him to death.

## **15. The Woman Taken in Adultery**

**Reference:** John 7:53-8:11

After the feast of Tabernacles we read that "they went every man to his own house, but Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives," where He spent the night and early in the morning He crossed back over the Kidron valley to the Temple and sat down and taught the crowds of people which surrounded Him. The scribes and Pharisees, still looking for some trick whereby they might catch Jesus in their trap, had found a woman who was guilty of adultery and felt sure if they brought her to Jesus, and He let her off with perhaps a rebuke instead of sticking to the law of Moses and inflicting the death penalty on her, they could accuse Him of violating the Law. It would be interesting to know what it was that Jesus wrote with His finger on the stone floor as He stooped down, while they continued asking Him. Perhaps He hesitated just long enough to make these religious bigots think they had surely trapped Him this time. But then He looked up and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." How quickly Jesus had turned the tables on them. They all knew they were sinners, and that was one of the reasons they wanted to get rid of Jesus, because of His preaching against sin. Who of them would have the gall to pick up a stone and hurl at the woman, when everyone in the crowd knew he was guilty of sin, perhaps the very sin of which they were accusing this poor woman. And so the crowd evaporated, beginning with the oldest, leaving Jesus alone with the woman. It is most instructive to see the divine wisdom with which He then dealt with the woman. "Where are your accusers? Didn't any man condemn you?" He

asked. "No man, Lord," she replied. Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." If we had been dealing with the woman we probably would have preached a long sermon to her, telling her what an awful sinner she was and thus humiliate her as much as possible. But the woman knew she was a great sinner and that she had come very near to being stoned to death, but she had been saved by the gracious and loving act of Christ, and although we are not told, it is our belief that this woman never again became involved in this sex sin. Jesus did not condone her sin. It was not His business to enforce the law. He merely showed that the rulers whose duty it was to enforce it, were all as guilty as the woman, and therefore unable to enforce it, because the law required at least two witnesses and none remained to prosecute her.

## 16. Discourse on The Light of the World

Reference: John 8:12-30

Jesus calls Himself "the Light of the World." Light is a characteristic term in John's Gospel and in his first Epistle it portrays the manifestation of the life of God in the person of Jesus. John the Baptist was called a burning and shining light (John 5:35), but there the word is "*luchnos*," a lamp. Here the word is "*phos*." In John 1:7,8, it is said of John: "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the *Phos* that all men through him might believe. He (John) was not that *Phos*, but was sent to bear witness of the *Phos*." John was a *luchnos*, a hand held oil lamp, lighted by Another, in whose brightness men might rejoice for a season and which would ultimately be extinguished. Christ is the True *Phos* (John 1:9), in antithesis to John, the Eternal Light which never needed to be kindled and which will never be extinguished. Light occurs 23 times in John's Gospel. God is light essentially (1 John 1:5), and in Him is no darkness, the opposite of *Phos*. Paul says that whatever makes manifest is light (Eph. 5:13). Light is an emanation which requires an organ adapted for its reception. Light is not apprehended where there is no eye or there is blindness. Man is naturally incapable of receiving spiritual light because as a sinner he lacks the capacity for spiritual truth.

It is illuminating to note that Jesus spoke these words in the Treasury, where there were four golden candelabra, with four golden bowls filled with oil, which were lighted on the first night of the Feast. This may have provided the backdrop for Jesus' words. Isaiah in four places speaks of the coming Messiah as the Light (cf. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 60:1-3). Malachi calls Him "the Sun of righteousness who will arise with healing in his wings," (4:2). "Wings" refers to the sun's rays.

This discourse is one of the clearest defenses which Jesus made for His Deity. As the Light of the world He was one with the Father, for only God is Light. He claimed that even if He did bear witness of Himself, His witness was true. He knew where He came from, from the Father, and where He was going. He said He was going to a place where they could not come. He said He was from above, and unless they believed He is the "I am" they would die in their sins. The

translators have added "he" to the "I am." But "I AM" is the covenant name of God in the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14 cf. also John 8:28,58; 13:19; and 18:6). Who else but the great I Am could say, "If ye believe not that I Am, ye shall die in your sins?"

## 17. The Discourse on True Freedom

Reference: John 8:31-59

The last verse of the preceding section stated: "As he spake these things, many believed on him." The first verse of this section states: "Jesus then said to those Jews which believed on him." The A.V. has missed the distinction in the Greek. The latter statement should read: "The Jews which believed him." There is a difference between believing on and simply believing. Within this group which believed Him were some which truly believed on Him. The following context brings out this fact. He told them if they continued in His word, they would be His disciples indeed. And as we continue, we see these very ones who believed Him arguing that they were Abraham's seed and had never been in bondage to any one, although they had been in bondage to the four great world empires, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and now Rome. And finally Jesus has to tell them that instead of having Abraham as their father, the Devil is their father. (Refer back to our comments on John 2:23-25.) Then the Jews called Him a demon-possessed Samaritan. When Jesus claimed that one who kept His saying would never see death, the Jews responded: "Now we know you have a demon. Abraham and all the prophets are dead. Are you greater than Abraham who is dead?" Jesus replied, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." "Why, you are not fifty years old and have you seen Abraham?" they responded. Then Jesus made another claim to Deity: "Before Abraham was, I AM." By this time some of these who had previously believed Him took up stones to kill Him, but Jesus hid Himself, slipping through the multitude, and went out of the temple.

The freedom and bondage Jesus spoke about had no reference to political or physical conditions, but to sin and deliverance from it. Israel had been promised both political and spiritual freedom, but the spiritual had to be experienced first, and they are here rejecting it. The unsaved today boast to being free men, just as the Jews did, but Jesus says they are bondslaves. Only those who have been delivered from the guilt and power of sin are sons, and therefore free.

Universal Reconciliationists who teach that ultimately every created intelligence, including the Devil, will be reconciled to God, in reality make God to be the author of sin and therefore justice demands that He finally save everyone. They base this teaching partly on John 8:44, where Jesus stated that the Devil was a murderer "from the beginning." They make this to mean that the Devil was created as a devil; that he was always a devil from the very beginning of creation. But there is more than one beginning in the Bible. John 1:1 says that the Word was in existence at the beginning, and that beginning goes back before the first

creative acts of God. There was a beginning of the creation of the heavens and the earth. But the beginning of John 8:44 cannot be that earlier beginning, for the word "murderer" is actually in the original, "manslayer." There could be no manslayer until there was a man to slay. Therefore the beginning from which the Devil was a manslayer was the beginning of the human race. This does not prove that Satan was not the Devil before he caused the human race to fall, but it does destroy the argument that the Devil was created as a Devil. And besides, there are numerous passages which speak of the fall of Satan (Lk. 10:18; Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:15). The teaching of Jesus that these unbelieving Jews were of their father, the Devil, contradicts the liberal's teaching of the universal Fatherhood of God. God is presented in the Bible as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as the Father of all who believe and have thereby been born again into the family of God.

## CHAPTER VII

# The Period of the Perean Ministry

### RESUME

As stated earlier, it is not possible to fit all of the events of Christ's ministry into a perfect chronological order. Some writers end the Period of Retirement with Mark 9:50, and insert next a Judean Ministry beginning at Mk. 10:1 taking in the trip from Galilee to Jerusalem and continuing through the Feast of Tabernacles to the Feast of Dedication in John 10. Because the events at these two feasts are recorded only in John it is uncertain exactly where they fit into the Synoptic record. We are beginning the Perean Period with Christ's final departure from Galilee and ending in His last appearance in Jerusalem. As will be seen the greater part of this period is covered only by Luke. Of the 43 topics in this section, only 9 are common to the Synoptics - 5 are found only in John, and 28 only in Luke.

**Perea** is not a scriptural name. It is the name used by Josephus to describe the district which the rabbis habitually referred to as "the land beyond Jordan," which in the Greek is "peran tou lordanou" (Matt. 4:15; 19:1). It was bounded by Pella in the north to Machaerus in the south and extended from the Jordan river on the west to the desert on the east. Perea was considered as a part of the land of Israel, along with Judea and Galilee and was under the same religious and political laws.

## **1. The Final Departure From Galilee**

**References:** Matt. 19:1,2 cf. 8:18-22;  
Mk. 10:1; Lk. 9:51-62

Much of our Lord's ministry was in Galilee, but now He is leaving Galilee behind and heading for the eventualities which will transpire in Jerusalem, although there still remains several months of ministry beyond Jordan. The chronology of this section is uncertain. Luke states that when the time had come for Him to be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. But following this is the account of certain men who would follow Jesus, but only after they had taken care of other business. This same account is found in Matt. 8, which means that the passage is out of chronological order in either Matthew or Luke, or the same situation happened on two different occasions.

The Lord never made it easy to be a disciple. He reminded these men that even the animals have a place they can call home, but He didn't own so much as a place to lay His head. We are not told whether the man changed his mind about following Jesus when he learned that. Then Jesus said to another, "Follow me," but he asked for permission to wait until his father died and was buried, but Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead." This sounds strange, for how could a dead person bury another dead person? Undoubtedly Jesus used "dead" in two different senses. The unsaved are spiritually dead. There are many jobs they can do as well or better than a saved person. The saved person should be sure he is doing God's work first of all. Another man wanted to wait until he went back home and bid farewell to his friends and family. Many a person has thought of serving Christ, but after consulting with friends and relatives has been dissuaded. It is man's nature either to be too forward (vs. 57), or too backward (vs. 59), or too undecided (vs. 61).

The Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews (John 4:9), so when Jesus sent His disciples to find lodging in the Samaritan village, they would not receive Him because He was going toward Jerusalem. James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven, and while the fire will fail some day, it was then the day of salvation and not of judgment.

## **2. The Mission of the Seventy**

**Reference:** Lk. 10:1-24

Jesus appointed these seventy disciples to go ahead of Him in pairs into every city and village He was going to visit to prepare the way for His coming. Just as the number twelve is significant in connection with Israel, so is the number seventy. Beginning with Jacob, there were seventy souls that came forth out of his loins (Ex. 1:5). There were seventy elders in Israel (Ex. 24:1,9; Num. 11:16). Israel's period of captivity in Babylon lasted seventy years (Jer. 25:11). Daniel prophesied that seventy weeks (of years) had been determined upon Israel (9:24

cf. vs. 2). And the ruling body in Israel, the Sanhedrin, was composed of seventy men. The Septuagint was supposedly translated by seventy scholars.

The commission of the seventy disciples was very similar to that of the Twelve, given in Matt. 10. They were to take no supplies with them; they were not to pass the time of day with people on their journey; they were to be entertained at a home that would receive them, and if no one received them they were to wipe the dust off their feet as a gesture of shame against that city and tell them to be sure of the fact that the Kingdom of God had come near unto them. Then Jesus berated the cities in which He had done His mightiest works, stating that they would suffer a sorcer judgment than such wicked cities as Tyre and Sidon.

When the Seventy had finished their mission and had returned they were very happy, for they said that even the demons were subject to them through the name of Jesus. Jesus replied: "I was beholding (imperfect) Satan as lightning having fallen (aorist) from heaven." This may refer to Satan's original fall, but more likely to what had just been transpiring. While the Seventy were getting the victory over the servants of Satan, Christ was beholding Satan fall as a dazzling flash of light which was quickly extinguished. The divine protection against serpents and scorpions is similar to that given to the Apostles in the commission of Mk. 16:17,18. However, their greater cause of rejoicing was that their names were written in heaven. The disciples were honored above many kings and prophets who never had the privilege of seeing and hearing the things they were experiencing.

### **3. The Good Samaritan**

**Reference: Lk. 10:25-37**

The expressed purpose of this parable was to answer the question of the lawyer: "Who is my neighbor?," and this should be the primary interpretation. The lawyer, one versed in the Mosaic law, was tempting Jesus, that is, trying to trip Him up. As usual, Jesus made His questioner answer his own question. It was most difficult for the Jewish lawyer to admit that a despised Samaritan was a better neighbor than a priest or Levite of the Jews, but that is what he had to admit and that is the primary teaching of the parable.

However, the parable has many applications, and Christians generally make only applications and never use it to teach the human relationship of neighborliness.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Anyone who has visited Jerusalem knows that one literally goes down from Jerusalem, 2500 feet above sea level, to Jericho, 825 feet below sea level. The usual application of the parable makes the certain man who thus went down to represent Adam's fall. He was robbed of his innocence and righteousness, mortally wounded and left to die. The priest and the Levite who happened along, when they saw the dying

man, passed by on the other side of the road. They represent the Law. The Law cannot forgive, or restore life; it can only condemn and put to death. That is the clear teaching of Paul's epistles, especially Romans and Galatians. But then a certain Samaritan came along, and came to where the dying man was, had compassion on him, treated his wounds and bandaged them, put him on his own beast of burden and brought him to the inn and took care of him. And when he left the next day, he gave the host money and promised upon his return to pay the entire bill for caring for this robbed and wounded man, who had no money to pay his own debts, and had no strength to take care of himself. And in the application, Jesus, of course, is the good Samaritan. In fact, shortly before this incident the Jews had said: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon?" (John 8:48). Jesus is the only man who ever loved God with all His heart and His neighbor as Himself. He is the only good, really good, neighbor this world has ever had.

#### **4. The Visit to Martha and Mary**

**Reference: Lk. 10:38-42**

We often hear of women's societies in churches which call themselves the Martha Society, but seldom do we hear of a Mary Society, and yet Mary was the one who chose the better part. The inference might be made that Mary was an impractical kind who shirked her household duties; however, the text proves just the opposite. When Martha said: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone," the verb, "hath left," is in the aorist tense. "She did leave," indicates that she had been helping until Jesus appeared. The text makes it plain that the house belonged to Martha and she was the one who invited and received Jesus under her roof and was responsible for providing the hospitality. We dare not condemn Martha for what she was doing, for she was doing her best to entertain Jesus in her home, and we can think of many things worse than that. But Martha did not have the spiritual discernment possessed by Mary. She was interested only in providing the outward, physical things for the enjoyment of her Guest, but Mary realized that the Guest had spiritual blessings to bestow, and so took time off from the physical preparations to become spiritually prepared.

The word "cumbered" is an interesting word. This word appears only twice in our A.V., here and in Lk. 13:7; however, they are entirely different words in the Greek. Here the verb means to be distracted. She was distracted from the person of Jesus by the many little chores which needed to be done.

The word "help" is also an unusual word. It is a compound of three words: "to take hold," "together with," "reciprocally," so that Martha said: "Bid her therefore that she take hold and do her part together with me." This word occurs only one other time, in Rom. 8:26, where we are told that the Spirit "helpeth" our infirmities; that is, the indwelling Holy Spirit takes hold of the heavy end of the load we are called upon to bear and thus helps us in our weakness.

The one needful thing is to hear the word of Christ. It was Paul who, as it were, sat at Jesus feet after His ascension and passed on those latest words of His which He spoke from heaven.

## 5. The Sixth Sign - Healing of Man Born Blind

Reference: John 9:1-41

We have already dealt with this sixth sign of the Gospel of John in connection with the Healing of the Impotent man in John 5. There we saw some of the dispensational significance of these two signs. Here we would point out a few other principles involved. The first is what we might call the mediate and the immediate cause of disease. Disease is the result of sin, and so naturally the disciples asked: "Who committed the sin which caused this man to be born blind, the man himself or his parents?" In saying that neither this man nor his parents sinned, Jesus did not mean that they had never committed sin, but that it was not their sin which caused the blindness. A man may commit a sin which is the immediate cause of disease, or it may be some defect which he has inherited meditately through his forebears. Ultimately all the sin and disease in the world came in a mediate way from Adam. But in this case Jesus said the man had been born blind that the works of God might be manifested in him. How little did he or his parents have any such concept until the day that Jesus worked this great miracle, for there was no case on record of the restoration of sight to a man born blind. There are doubtless cases today where God has permitted one to be diseased for this very same purpose, that God might do some work through him to bring glory to God, but apart from revelation it would be mere speculation to make such judgments today.

Actually this man was not the only blind person involved. The Jewish rulers in their hatred of Jesus were spiritually blind. They closed their eyes to every bit of evidence: refused to believe the man had been blind until his parents testified he was their son and although they didn't know how he had received his sight they knew he had been blind from birth. Faced with this evidence they went back to the man and tried to make him confess that Jesus was a sinner. They accused him of being a disciple of this sinner Jesus, but claimed they were Moses' disciples, and knew not where this Jesus came from. The man marvelled at the ignorance of the rulers: here is a Man restoring sight to the blind and the rulers don't even know anything about Him. This answer enraged the rulers: "Are you who were born in sin trying to teach us?" And they cast him out.

Up to this point the only thing the man knew for certain was that whereas he was blind, now he could see. When Jesus had heard what the leaders had done, He found the man and asked if he believed on the Son of God, and he replied: "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe?" And Jesus revealed Himself to the man as the Son of God and he believed and worshipped Him. It has often been pointed out that if Jesus accepted the worship of man, and Jesus was not truly

God manifested in the flesh, He was guilty of blasphemy and was the greatest imposter the world has ever seen.

In conclusion Jesus told the Pharisees, "For judgment I am come into the world." He did not mean that He had come to judge the world, for He explicitly stated: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). The original meaning of judgment was separation, such as dividing the sheep from the goats at the judgment of the nations. Thus His coming into the world resulted in a judgment, a separation between those who believed on Him and those that rejected Him. Phillips catches the idea in his paraphrase: "My coming into this world is itself a judgment - those who cannot see have their eyes opened and those who think they can see become blind." Some of the Pharisees overheard this and said: "So we're blind too, are we?" .... "If you were blind," returned Jesus, "nobody could blame you, but as you insist, 'We can see,' your guilt remains."

## 6. The Good Shepherd

**Reference:** John 10:1-21

The first five verses of this chapter constitute a parable, but the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant by the parable. In the verses that follow Jesus applies the parable to Himself as the Shepherd who enters in by the door, in contrast to all who came before Him, who climbed in by some other way and were thieves and robbers. Actually the expression "some other way" (vs. 1), means from some other quarter. It is a matter of origin. Christ had been insisting previously that He came from above, from heaven. The others had their origin from a different quarter: they were from the world. Christ is the door for the sheep. It is said that the shepherd, after bringing his flock into the fold, lies down at the entrance, so that any intruder would have to come in contact with him before getting at the sheep. He is thus both shepherd and door. The shepherd's job is to lead his sheep in and out for pasture so that they might have abundance of life, as well as to protect them from danger. All of this is in contrast to the hirelings, the rulers or shepherds in Israel. Read the entire 34<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezekiel for God's appraisal of these false shepherds, and for God's plan for the restoration of His flock and fold.

The interpretation of this portion belongs to Israel, as is evident from both the 34<sup>th</sup> and the 37<sup>th</sup> chapters of Ezekiel. The traditional interpretation makes the other sheep of vs. 16 to be the Gentiles, which are to be incorporated with Israel into the Church. This mistake has been partly due to a failure to recognize Old Testament prophecy and partly to the inaccurate rendering both in the Vulgate and the A.V. of the words for flock and fold. These two translations ignore the differences between these two words.

Vincent remarks on this passage:

The A.V. entirely ignores the distinction between *aulē*, *fold*, and *poimne*, flock. The latter word is found in Matt. xxvi. 31; Lk. ii. 8; 1 Cor. ix. 7, and always distinctly meaning a *flock*, as does also the diminutive *poimnion*, *little flock* (Lk. xii. 32; 1 Pet. v. 2, etc.). Render as Rev., *one flock, one shepherd*. So Tynd. Compare Ezek. xxxiv. 23. We are not, however, to say with Trench ('Authorized Version of the New Testament'), that the Jew and the Gentile are the two *folds* which Christ will gather into a single flock. The heathen are not conceived as a *fold* but as a *dispersion*. 'Nothing is said of one fold under the new dispensation' (Wescott). It will readily be seen that the incorrect rendering fostered by the carelessness or the mistake of some of the Western fathers, and by the Vulgate, which renders both words by *ovile*, *fold*, has been in the interest of Romish claims.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, vs. 16 should read: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold (*aulēs*): them also I must lead out, and they shall become one flock (*poimne*), and one shepherd."

The Gentiles are nowhere in Scripture represented as being a sheep fold. Instead, it is evident from Ezek. 37 in the sign of the two sticks, that Israel's one fold became divided into two folds when the northern ten tribes split off from the southern two tribes and became two nations. The prophet was told to take two sticks and write the name of Judah on one and Ephraim on the other, and then to join the two sticks together into one stick. This was a sign of what God was going to do:

Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel: and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all;... And David my servant shall be king over them, and they shall have one shepherd...and the heathen (Gentiles) shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (Ezek. 37:21,22,24,28).

Here the one shepherd is over the two folds of Israel which have been united into one flock in contrast to the Gentiles. By refusing to interpret literally the Old Testament prophecies and by refusing to recognize the mystery character of the Body of Christ which had not been revealed while Christ was on earth, traditional theologians have applied this passage in John to the Gentiles of the present era. The great blunder of the Church has ever been to identify itself with Israel, appropriating to itself the Israel promises, and leaving only the curses to the Israel to whom the promises were made.

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<sup>28</sup> Vincent, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 193,194.

While it is true that Jesus is Israel's Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep, we know that at the same time God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Here we need to distinguish between the dispensational and the doctrinal aspects of Christ's life and ministry.

In laying down His life, Christ made it plain that no man could take His life from Him. He had the power to lay it down and to take it again. This is another evidence of His Deity. The truth of John 9:39 is seen again, in that His words caused a division among the Jews, some claiming He was demon possessed and others asking if a demon could open the eyes of one born blind.

## **7. The Feast of Dedication**

**Reference: John 10:22-42**

The feast of dedication was not one of the original Mosaic feasts in Israel. This feast was established during the inter-testament period by Judas Maccabaeus when he freed Jerusalem and the Temple from the Greeks in 164 B.C. It was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Chislev (December), which seems to be good evidence that Jesus was not born on that day. Just three years to the day after Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated the temple it was rededicated. The word dedication means "renewal." It was also called the feast of Lights. For the eight days of the festival lights were kindled in the temple and in every Jewish home. Solomon's porch, according to Josephus, was a remnant of the original temple of Solomon which had remained intact after the Babylonian destruction. It was on the east side and the morning sun would warm the place on a winter morning.

The Jews asked Jesus, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." Jesus had told them plainly on several occasions and He repeats His claim to Messiahship again. Jesus attributed their unbelief to the fact that they were not His sheep and therefore did not hear His voice. The case was just the opposite with those who were His sheep.

Verses 28 and 29 are very strong security promises for the believer. "I give (not will give or may give) unto them eternal life and (if it is eternal then it must be true) they shall never perish." The believer is pictured as being held in the hand of Christ, and His hand held in the Father's hand, so that no man will ever be able to snatch him out of those almighty hands.

Christ follows this, not only with the claims of Messiahship, but with equality with the Father: "I and my Father are one." The Greek reads: "I and my Father one we are." The verb is plural and "one" is neuter singular. If "one" had been masculine, it might have implied "one person." The neuter implies "one in essence." The statement thus affirms the distinction of Persons in the Godhead and the unity of essence and nature. But this claim of equality with God, perfectly understood by the Jews, angered the Jews and they took up stones again to kill Him for blasphemy. They could find no fault with the good works which Jesus

had done, but for a man to make Himself God was too much. Then Jesus quoted Scripture to them, as He often did: "Is it not written in your law, I have said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

You will notice that Jesus said that this was written "in your law," that is, the Jew's law, which means God was calling certain Jews gods. This fact is further emphasized in the statement "to whom the word of God came." The word of God came only to the people of Israel. This does not mean that God called every Israelite a god; howbeit, He did call them all, children of the most High (Ps. 82:6). This verse begins, "I have said," indicating that God had said this previously. If we turn back to Ex. 21:6 and 22:8,9, we discover that the word translated "judges" in these verses is the Hebrew "Elohim," or gods. Moses is also called a god in Ex. 7:1. Thus God called the judges, the prophets, and the rulers "gods" as being His representatives. Jesus is not saying that He is a god only in the sense that the judges of Israel were called gods. But rather, if they could be called gods in an official sense, how much more properly could He, who was sealed and consecrated by the Father, be called, Son of God. After answering their charge of blasphemy He appeals again to the character of His works: If they don't bear the character of the Father, don't believe me; but if they do, which you have admitted, believe the testimony of the works, even though you don't believe me, that you may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him. Again, they would have stoned Him but He escaped out of their hands. So Jesus went away again "beyond Jordan" where John at the first had baptized and there He abode and many believed on Him, for John's testimony of Him had proved to be true.

We should point out that Jesus also defended the infallibility of the Scripture on several occasions: here, when He asserted: "The scripture cannot be broken."

## **8. Discourse on Prayer**

**Reference: Lk. 11:1-13**

This chapter begins with Jesus teaching some disciples to pray, as John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. Jesus used almost the same format for prayer as we find in the sermon on the mount. The setting here in Luke seems altogether different from that in Matthew, although the wording of the prayer is very similar.

**A. The Parable of the Importunate Friend.** Jesus follows this instruction with two parables on prayer. The first is that of the Importunate Friend, and is found only in Luke. On the surface prayer seems to be a very simple thing, simply making request for a particular need. But there is more in the outworking of prayer than human wisdom can fathom. Men rationalize that if God has foreordained and foreknown everything that will ever happen from the beginning,

how can man's prayer cause anything different to happen? We can answer only by saying that God has ordained the means as well as the result, and prayer is often the means. Thus, God foreknew that a missionary would have a particular need and that He would supply that need, but He also foreknew that a group of believers ten thousand miles away would pray for that need and their prayer would be answered.

The present parable deals with the importunity of prayer. Importune means to urge with frequent application, press urgently, be insistent. The parable seems to be saying that if one keeps on asking long enough God will finally give in and grant the request. But on another occasion the Lord said: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7). The parable is not encouraging man to act like a selfish child, always crying, "Gi'me! Gi'me!" There is more to real prayer than simply saying, "Bless the foreign missionaries," and then taking the attitude you have discharged your duty and there is no further need to talk to God about it until another urgent request is received. Prayer should be born of concern. If a loved one is at the point of death, we do not pray in that fashion. We continue in prayer pouring out our hearts, and that is a good Pauline admonition: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). The teaching of the parable seems to be if we can by importunity obtain our requests from an unwilling friend, how much more can we expect to receive from a willing Giver?

**B. The Parable of Fatherhood.** This is a self-explanatory parable of God's willingness to give good things to His children. Often people think of God only as a Judge whose only motive is to catch us doing wrong, to punish, and to take away our pleasures. God is, of course, a righteous Judge, but the believer has passed out of judgment into God's family and now knows God as a loving Father. The objects which Christ contrasted in this parable: a stone for a loaf of bread, a serpent for a fish, and a scorpion for an egg, might seem odd at first sight, but there is a similarity in appearance between these pairs of objects. There are also contrasts between an earthly father and the Heavenly Father and between good material gifts and spiritual gifts. Apparently the Lord did not mean that the Father would give the Person of the Holy Spirit to those who asked, for Christ made it plain that the Holy Spirit could not come as an indwelling presence until He had ascended to the Father (John 16:7). In the Greek text Holy Spirit appears without the definite article, and this usage usually means gifts or endowments of the Spirit. Christ also told His disciples while He was with them the Holy Spirit was also with them, but that later on He would be in them. Believers in the present dispensation do not have to pray that God would give them the Holy Spirit; nor do they have to tarry for Him (Lk. 24:49); they receive Him and are sealed by Him upon believing (Eph. 1:13, where the present participle "after ye believed" should be translated, "upon believing"). Both of these parables lend great encouragement to the child of God to make request to His heavenly Father.

## 9. Conflict With the Pharisees

**A. The Unpardonable Sin: Matt. 12:22-32; Mk. 3:22-30; Lk. 11:14-23.** After healing a man who was blind and dumb, the Pharisees accused Jesus of using Satanic power, but Jesus showed the inconsistency of such a charge, for in that case Satan would be fighting against himself and his kingdom would be destroyed. But if He was casting out demons by the Spirit of God, this was proof that the Kingdom of God had come upon them. He illustrated this truth with the parable of the stronger man (Christ) binding the strong man (Satan) and then spoiling his goods. Matthew and Mark give the added details of what is generally called the unpardonable sin. Christ stated that all manner of sin against the Son of man would be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would never be forgiven: it is an eternal sin. This passage has caused many Christians to fear, lest they have committed this sin and have therefore lost their salvation. First of all, it should be evident that anyone who is sincerely concerned about being saved through faith in Christ has not committed this sin. In fact, after one has received the gift of eternal life and has been sealed by the Spirit unto the future day of redemption, there is no sin or power that can separate him from the love of Christ, or as we have recently seen from John 10, nothing that can snatch such a one out of the hands of Christ and the Father. The unpardonable sin is usually interpreted as ascribing the work of Christ which He wrought through the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan, as these Pharisees were doing. It seems, however, there is a deeper meaning than this, for Jesus Himself prayed that these people who had thus accused Him and finally had Him crucified might be forgiven because they really didn't know what they were doing. However, when the Holy Spirit was miraculously poured out at Pentecost and the people of Israel were enlightened by the Spirit (cf. Heb. 2:3,4; 6:4-6), they were no longer ignorant of what they were doing. We read in the book of Acts that the Jews blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, which means that that generation of natural Israel committed this sin and they could not be renewed unto repentance. This, we believe, is the true meaning of that sin. It was committed by Israel, and as such it is a sin which cannot be committed today. Every sin is forgivable through faith in Christ, and no sin is forgivable apart from faith in Him.

**B. The Unclean Spirit Who Returned: Matt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26.** All we know about demon spirits is what we read in Scripture. Jesus said that when such a spirit goes out of a man he walks through dry places seeking rest and finds none, so he returns to the man from whence he departed and finds the place swept and garnished and then brings with him seven other spirits worse than himself and the latter end of the possessed man is worse than the first. This is apparently not a case where a demon had been cast out by Jesus, for we cannot imagine that these people He healed ended up the worse for His healing. It seems that the demon left of his own accord, at least when he left, the man's house or body was left empty, unoccupied. When a person is saved today his body is occupied by the Holy Spirit, which rules out the possibility of an evil spirit coming back to take possession again. It seems that man's body is either occupied or strongly influenced by either the Holy Spirit or the evil spirit. Paul

states that before we were saved, the prince of the power of the air was the spirit that was energizing us (Eph. 2:2). This does not mean that all unsaved people are demon possessed, but it does mean that Satan has access to their spirits and can mightily work in them. But thank God, the Spirit who energizes us is greater than Satan and will not permit him to take control of us, although when the Spirit is grieved and not allowed His rightful place in our lives it is possible for Satan to take advantage of us.

Some feel that this story of the unclean spirit is a case history of Israel. Israel became idolatrous in O.T. times; God sent them into captivity and they gave up their idolatry in reformation without actually committing themselves to God, and now in the days of Christ the demons have come back and the latter state of Israel is worse than it was at the first.

**C. The Mistaken Woman: Lk. 11:27, 28.** People often make the mistake of placing the emphasis upon the wrong thing. What they say is not necessarily untrue, but the truth is distorted. While Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd, apparently admiring Jesus for His wonderful words and works, and perhaps wishing that she had had a son like that, shouted out: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!" The woman was blessing the mother of Jesus, rather than Jesus Himself. Sad to say, this mistake has become a creed in Christendom. She is honored as the Mother of God, immaculately conceived, assumed up into heaven, where she intercedes for mankind with her Son, Jesus. Mary was indeed highly honored in being chosen to become the human mother of Jesus Christ, but the gentle rebuke of Jesus in answering this woman clearly indicates that Jesus did not give Mary the exalted place above Himself which Rome has given her. Jesus said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." He did not dishonor His human mother, but as far as blessedness was concerned, any humble soul who heard God's word and obeyed it was more blessed than His mother in the flesh.

**D. The Sign of the Prophet Jonah: Matt. 12:38-42; Lk. 11:29-32.** It will be noted that Matthew placed the sign of Jonah before the story of the unclean spirit, whereas Luke reverses the order. Matthew includes the statement: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," (cf. Jonah 1:17), whereas Luke simply states: "For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation." The men of Ninevah will rise up in the judgment and condemn the men of Jesus' day, because they repented at Jonah's preaching (cf. Jon. 3:5-10), and a greater One than Jonah was there present and they repented not. The Queen of Sheba will also testify against those of Jesus' day, for she came from a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon (cf. 2 Chron. 9:1-12), and a greater than Solomon was there. The generation which lived through the earthly ministry of Christ bore the greatest responsibility of any generation in the past. Earlier generations had much less light of revelation and yet in many cases they were more responsive than those

of Jesus' day. It is our belief that people in our present generation bear even a greater responsibility than those of Jesus' day, for we have the full and completed revelation of God's Word which leaves man totally without any excuse whatsoever.

**E. Parable of the Lighted Lamp:** *Lk. 4:1:33-36; cf. Matt. 5:15; Mk. 4:21; Lk. 8:16; Matt. 6:22,23.* See notes on the above passages where this parable is expounded.

**F. Dining at the Pharisee's House:** *Lk. 11:37-54.* The Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dinner marvelled that Jesus did not baptize Himself before reclining at the table. It would have been a great service to the English reader if the translators had always rendered the Greek "baptizo" as baptize, instead of "wash" as in this instance. By saying that Jesus and His disciples did not wash before eating, the impression is left that Jesus paid little attention to bodily cleanliness. Also the true significance of baptism is veiled. Most Christians suppose that baptism has only one meaning and that it is a ceremony to be performed only once at the time they join the church. The Mosaic religion contained many baptisms, according to Heb. 9:10, and the Jews had added many more since Moses' day. They ceremonially baptized themselves before every meal, as well as baptizing their eating utensils. Jesus not only did not practice these traditions of the elders, but stated that these practices had made void the word of God.

It was no doubt because Jesus understood what was going on in this Pharisee's mind that He began pronouncing woes upon them. They washed the outside of the cup, the part that man could see, but left the inside dirty and encrusted with mold and corruption. If only they would cleanse the inside they would not have to worry about the outside. They obeyed meticulously the smallest outward requirements of the law, such as tithing of various things, but they passed over judgment and the love of God. They should have done the lesser outward things, but even more they should have done the weightier things that were inward. He said they were like unmarked tombs that men trample underfoot without knowing it. In another place He called them whitewashed tombs, white on the outside but full of dead men's bones. There were some lawyers present also, the experts in interpreting the Bible. And they said, "Master, you have insulted us also by your words." And Jesus fearlessly flayed them also. They placed heavy burdens upon the laity but freed themselves from all obligation. They built tombs for the prophets which their fathers had murdered, thus consenting to the deeds of their fathers. And again we see the great responsibility which devolved upon that generation. He said that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the beginning of the world, all the way from the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20-22), would be required of this generation. The lawyers had taken away the key of knowledge; they had not gone in themselves and they stopped those who were trying to go into the Kingdom.

It had not been a very pleasant dinner party for the Pharisees and Lawyers. After dinner they became very bitter and tried to draw Him out on many subjects, hoping to pounce upon some incriminating statement, whereby they might condemn Him.

For further denunciations of the Pharisees, cf. Matt. 23:4-36 and Mk. 12:38-40.

## **10. The Leaven of the Pharisees**

**Reference:** Lk. 12:1-12

There are a number of warnings against the leaven of the Pharisees, cf. Matt. 16:6, 11; Mk. 8:15, which the Lord described as hypocrisy. A hypocrite is one who plays a false part, one who feigns to be something other than he really is, an actor on the stage who wears a false face. But Jesus declares the day is coming when everything that has been covered up is going to be revealed, when things spoken in secret will be shouted from the housetops.

On the statement, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body," see notes on Matt. 10:28. On the reference to the sparrows and the hairs of your head, cf. Matt. 10:29-32; Lk. 21:18. On the unpardonable sin, cf. Matt. 12:31,32. On the Holy Spirit teaching what to say, cf. Matt. 10:19,20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 21:14,15.

## **11. Parable of the Rich Fool**

**Reference:** Lk. 12:13-34

This parable is introduced as a result of an appeal of a bystander for Jesus to make his brother divide the inheritance with him. Jesus refused, for He apparently saw that this request was motivated by covetousness. A man's true life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. Many a rich man has committed suicide because his riches couldn't buy anything that satisfied him. There are a number of principles which may be derived from this parable. A man who lays up treasure just for himself is a pauper towards God. The parable points out the uncertainty of life and of worldly riches. Man works hard to amass a fortune and when he is ready to enjoy it the stock market may crash, he may lose his health, or life itself. And what he has laid up for himself is left behind to be enjoyed and perhaps squandered by others. The whole book of Ecclesiastes is a commentary on this parable. "Yes, I hated all my labors which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored" (Eccl. 2:18,19 cf. 5:10-17; 6:1,2).

There are many general lessons to be drawn from this parable; however, there are some important dispensational principles also which must be distinguished. These are primarily "Kingdom teachings" and they are addressed to the little

flock to whom the Father was going to give the Kingdom (vs. 32). If the mark of a true Christian is selling all that he possesses and giving away every cent of it, there are not many Christians in the world. Many attempts have been made to establish Christian communism, where all things are had in common, as in Acts 4:32, but they have all ended in failure and delusion. The failure was not that of God's Word, but of refusing to rightly divide that Word. Having all things common worked as long as God's Kingdom program was in effect in the early Acts period, but after that program was set aside and God began a new dispensation under Paul, the old program fell apart. By the end of the Acts period these people, who had had all things common so that no one lacked, found themselves destitute, so that Paul had to take up collections from the Gentile churches to help these poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-27). Paul never tells members of the Body of Christ to sell all and give it away. He does tell the believer to work with his own hands, so that he might supply not only his own needs but the needs of others (Eph. 4:28; 1 Thes. 4:11), and if any would not work neither should he eat (2 Thes. 3:10). Paul does not tell the rich to sell everything, but he does charge them to be rich in good works (1 Tim. 6:17,18). Paul's instructions on Christian giving are to be found especially in 2 Cor. 8 and 9, which he wrote in connection with this collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. If Paul's Gentile converts had given away all of their possessions they would not have had anything left to give. Political and economic conditions will be vastly different in the coming Kingdom from what they are in the present world.

## **12. Parables on Readiness for the Coming of The Son of Man**

**Reference: Lk. 12:35-48**

There is great emphasis in the Kingdom teachings of Christ upon readiness for the coming of the Son of Man to judge the world and to set up His Kingdom here on the earth. Refer to comments on Matt. 24:42-51; 25:1-13; Mk. 13:34-37; Lk. 21:36.

There are actually three parables in this section. The first is based upon the bridegroom returning from the wedding and finding his servants ready and waiting for him. The second concerns the unexpected visit of the thief who breaks into the house, and the third that of a wise and an unwise steward, one who always acts in view of his master's expected return, and the other who acts as though his master will long delay his return. This latter parable ends with a statement of principle upon which judgment will be based: greater punishment for those who knew God's will but did not prepare themselves to do His will, and lesser punishment for those who did not know. Stated in another way: "Unto whom much is given much will be required. Unto whom little is given, less will be required."

There is always the danger when speaking of judgments and rewards, to apply these things to the salvation of the soul. It will help to remember that no one, in any dispensation, receives salvation as a reward for his works or faithfulness.

The unsaved who are finally cast into the lake of fire are judged and punished according to their works, and therefore there will be degrees of punishment. The saved will also be judged, but not for the penalty of their sin which has been forgiven, but for their service for Christ. This will result in reward or loss of reward. Believers in this present dispensation also are instructed to wait for the coming of the Lord (1 Cor. 1:7; Tit. 2:13), but this coming is not to earth to judge the world and to set up His Kingdom, but His coming in the air to catch up the Church in resurrection and glorification.

### **13. The Baptism of Death**

**Reference: Lk. 12:49-59**

Christ's statement that He had come to bring division on earth rather than peace seems to contradict the angel's announcement of peace on earth, good will toward men. His object in coming was to bring peace, but the effect of His coming was to bring fire and persecution and division, for the people were divided over Him. Christ was baptized by John the Baptist at the beginning of His ministry, and now He says I have a baptism which will bring my ministry to a close. The first was a baptism in water, the second a baptism into death. This death baptism would be the culmination of the division among the Jews regarding Him. Through the Apostle Paul it has been revealed that the believer shares in His death baptism through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ (by the Holy Spirit) were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3). For that reason, Paul could say, "I was crucified together with Christ." None of this truth of our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection is to be found in the Gospels. It is part of the distinctive revelation given to Paul. (On this death baptism see also Matt. 20:22-24 and Mk. 10:39).

Christ follows this with a denunciation of the people in that they were able to discern the signs which affected the weather, but were not able to discern or interpret the signs from the Word of God regarding the coming of the Messiah. "This time" in vs. 56 is the time predicted by the prophets, such as Dan. 9:25; see also Matt. 16:2,3.

Then Jesus asked why they could not judge what is right. They were in the wrong and He advised them to do as a man would who was being brought before a judge by an accuser. Settle the matter before you get into court or you will go to jail and stay until you have paid the last penny. This verse is used to support the idea of purgatory. It is rather advice to get right with God before being hailed into the final judgment from which there is no release, for man can never atone for his own sins.

### **14. Repent or Perish**

**Reference: Lk. 13:1-5**

Public calamities often happen and we wonder why certain people should meet such fate. Had they committed some terrible evil? Was God punishing them for their sins? Two such calamities are here mentioned, one in which Pilate had shed the blood of certain Galileans, mixing their blood with the blood of the animal sacrifices they were offering, and the other the death of eighteen men when the tower of Siloam collapsed and crushed them. Jesus said that none of these unfortunate people were greater sinners than the rest, but He predicted, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It is altogether possible that Jesus had in mind the coming destruction of Jerusalem in which great multitudes perished. The parable which follows bears this out.

## **15. Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree**

**Reference: Lk. 13:6-9**

There are three basic parables about the fig tree in the Gospels. In two cases the tree was unfruitful. In one it was cursed and withered away (Matt. 21:19), in the other it was cut down. (Cf. Matt. 24:32-35; Mk. 13:28,29; Lk. 21:29-31; for the sign of the Fig.)

Israel is depicted in Scripture under the figure of the Olive Tree, the Fig Tree, and the Vine (cf. Rom. 11:24-26; Isa. 5:7; Jer. 24:1-10). All three are mentioned in Jotham's fable of the trees in Judg. 9:8-15. The Olive is an evergreen which has great length of life, and is thus a fitting type of Israel's covenant blessing which will never fail. The Vine seems to refer more to Israel's spiritual blessings, as set forth in John 15. The Fig probably represents Israel's national blessings. The Fig was chopped down, but branches of the Vine and the Olive were cut off, so that the covenant and spiritual blessings still existed for those who believed.

The certain man of this parable represents Christ who came to Israel looking for fruit and found none. This is exactly what Christ did in Matt. 21:19 when He cursed the fig tree and it withered away. In this parable, however, the owner of the vineyard told the gardener that He had come for three years looking for fruit and had found none; therefore cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground? That is, why is it taking up valuable space and making the ground unproductive. But why did Jesus say, "three years" instead of perhaps two or five? Three years was the length of His public ministry to Israel. But notice that the Dresser of the vineyard interceded in behalf of the fig tree. He said, "Let's give it one more year. I will cultivate and fertilize it, and if it then bears fruit, well and good, but if it doesn't, then we will cut it down."

Traditional interpretation cuts Israel's fig tree down at the Cross, at the end of Christ's three year ministry, and begins an entirely new spiritual order on the day of Pentecost; thus completely negating the plain teaching of this parable. What about the extra year when Israel was to be given another opportunity? What are the historical facts? First, we know that Christ did intercede for Israel as He hung upon the Cross: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Next, we

know that Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stated in Acts 3:17 that through ignorance Israel and its rulers crucified Christ. And finally, Peter still addressing the people of Israel states: "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" (Acts 3:26). Whether one bases his teaching on this parable or not, the fact is that Israel was not set aside at the Cross, but because of Christ's intercession Israel was given another opportunity in the early chapters of Acts to repent and receive her Kingdom blessings. If Israel and her Kingdom were not set aside in early Acts, then it is evident that a new and unprophesied spiritual order did not begin on that notable Pentecost. Instead it was the fulfillment and continuation of Israel's prophetic Kingdom program.

## **16. A Daughter of Abraham Healed**

**Reference: Lk. 13:10-17**

It seems that Jesus intentionally performed many of His healing miracles on the Sabbath day, apparently to show that He was Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8), and also that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27,28). As Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath He saw this woman with a strange illness which Satan had brought upon her, so that for eighteen years she had not been able to stand up straight, but was constantly bowed over. He called the woman and laid His hands on her and pronounced her healed and immediately she stood up straight and glorified God. The president of the synagogue was indignant, got up and announced to the congregation there were six days in the week for working; therefore come on one of those days to be healed. No wonder that Jesus stood up and no doubt pointed His finger at the ruler and said: "Thou hypocrite; does not each one of you untie your ox or ass and lead it out to drink on the sabbath? Ought not this daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound be loosed from her infirmity on the sabbath?" This rebuff shamed the leaders and the remainder of the people rejoiced for the glorious things Jesus had done. The contrast is between the bowed over woman who was made straight, and the upright indignant ruler who was forced to bow in shame.

## **17. The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven**

**Reference: Lk. 13:18-21**

See notes on these two parables in Matt. 13. They were told again here to meet the immediate need. The word "Then" in vs. 18 shows the connection between what went before and these two parables. The word is actually "therefore." Both parables begin with something small which grows into something large: a seed becomes a great tree, and a few cells of yeast multiply until all of the meal is permeated. This is what the Kingdom of God is likened unto. The usual interpretation is that the Gospel begins in a very small way in the hearts of a few and it grows until it converts the whole world. The only thing wrong with this interpretation is that it is contrary to the facts. The world did not

get converted under the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel, and it is far from being converted after 1900 years of the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. It is also contrary to Scripture because Scripture plainly asserts a great apostasy will take place before the return of Christ. Other parables liken the Kingdom to a field in which good and bad seed is sown and both grow up together until the return of Christ, and to a net cast into the sea that enmeshes both good and rough fish, or to different kinds of soil, some of which produces little if any fruit. Therefore when we think about the Kingdom of which Jesus was speaking, we must not think of heavenly bliss with everything pure and holy. It is something like the temple at Jerusalem. It is called the temple of God. Jesus called it My Father's house, but it had become a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12,13). Israel's Kingdom was the Kingdom of God but it was filled with evil. Some feel that the fowls of the air which lodged in the mustard tree are representative of Satan's emissaries, as they apparently are in the parable in Mk. 4:4, which devoured the good seed before it could sprout. Likewise leaven is always representative of the principle of evil at work. Leaven was excluded from the food and even the homes at Passover (Ex. 13:6,7). Jesus called the false teachings of the Pharisees leaven (Matt. 16: 6). Paul likened leaven to malice and wickedness and warned that a little leaven would leaven the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Thus these two parables explain how a daughter of Abraham in the Kingdom of God could be bound by Satan for eighteen years, and how the rulers of the synagogue could be so blinded as to rebuke the Lord for healing this woman on the Sabbath day.

## **18. How Many Will Be Saved?**

**Reference: Lk. 13:22-30**

This is a question which many, no doubt, have asked. In our modern world comparatively few are professing Christians and fewer yet are truly saved people. How was it back in Israel in Jesus' day? Jesus did not answer this man's question directly, but instead appeals to his questioner to strive to enter in at the narrow door. (Gate in the A.V. should be door, for it is an entrance to a house.) Christ does not state what the narrow door is, but it is the door that leads to eternal life and salvation. In a similar illustration in Matt. 7:13, Jesus said: "Enter in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Jesus in other places declared that He Himself was the Door and the Way, and it seems most reasonable to give that meaning to the "door" before us in this passage. The door and the way do not lead to heaven as such, but to the Messianic Kingdom which will be established on the earth. When Christ returns the door will be closed and it will be too late to try to enter. There will be great weeping among the unsaved when they see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets, along with those from the east and west, north and south, sit down at the banquet, and themselves cast out. When we remember that there will be great tribulation just before Jesus returns to earth, it will be better understood

how different will be the way for those who accept Jesus as Messiah. While the principle of Christ as the Way is the same today, our Gospel message is not to strive to enter it, but to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and His vicarious death in order to be saved.

## **19. Jesus Warned About Herod's Plot**

**Reference: Lk. 13:31-33**

Jesus at this time was journeying from Perea toward Jerusalem through Galilee. Galilee was Herod's jurisdiction (Lk. 23:7). The Pharisees, surely not to protect Jesus, but apparently to frighten Him, told Him: "Get out of the country; for Herod has determined to kill you." But Jesus knew their intentions and replied: "Go tell that fox." It is illuminating the figures under which the Bible characterizes certain people. The Gentiles were referred to as dogs, an unclean and vicious animal at that time. His disciple Simon He called a Rock. He refers to Himself in the verses that follow as a lowly hen who protectingly gathers her chicks under her wings. But Herod was a fox. He had murdered John the Baptist and numerous others in his quest for power. What was the message they were to carry back to Herod?

"Behold, I cast out demons and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." There is disagreement about the meaning of being perfected. The word perfect means to come to an end, and the question is whether Jesus meant His ministry in Galilee would be completed within three days or He would come to the end of His life. We know that His death did not occur within three days, and we do know that He soon after left Herod's jurisdiction, so that He was out of Herod's reach. It does seem however, that clearly implied in that "third day" and His being perfected was His death upon the Cross, for He goes on to speak of His death in the next verse: "Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Jerusalem has been called the slaughterhouse of the prophets. What Jesus is saying is: "It would not be fitting for such a Prophet as I to be killed anywhere but in Jerusalem." His mention of Jerusalem and its hostility to God's prophets caused Him to begin weeping over this great city, the account of which follows in the next section.

## **20. The Lament Over Jerusalem**

**Reference: Lk. 13:34,35**

This lament over Jerusalem took place outside the land of Judea. After He reached Jerusalem He lamented over the city again as recorded in Matt. 23:37-39. Perhaps the most striking thing about this lament is not the tender compassion of Jesus for a people who hated Him, but the mystery of the interaction of the Divine will and the human will. The words, "how often would I" and "ye would not" are actually the words for "to will." "How often I willed to do it, but you willed otherwise." There are people who cannot understand how there

can be such a thing as human will if God's will is sovereign, hence they teach that man has no freedom of will. Others go to the other extreme and practically make man's will sovereign by discounting the will of God. But both things are taught in Scripture and while human wisdom may not be able to reconcile the existence of both, it is the act of faith which accepts both. Jesus, the Son of God, willed to gather Jerusalem's children together, but the children had a will of their own and they willed not to be gathered under His wing. God is not willing any to be lost (2 Pet. 3:9), and yet there are those who are lost. Some of the difficulties associated with this subject may be alleviated by recognizing the distinction between the two words used for will in the Greek N.T., "thelo," and "boulomai," the former implying more the idea of wish, desire, and the latter more the idea of the deliberate exercise of the will, determination. But with all of the lexical helps there is still an unbridged gulf in our understanding of this subject.

Christ further declared: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," and "Ye shall not see me, until the time when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The temple was originally God's house, but Christ now calls it "your house." It is evident that this prophecy was not fulfilled until the year 70 A.D., when the Romans under Titus destroyed the temple. Before that happened God gave Israel another opportunity to repent and receive the Kingdom, but again they rejected Christ, persecuted His Apostles and blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

## 21. Two Parables In the House of a Chief Pharisee

Reference: Lk. 14:1-24

In spite of the fact that the Pharisees opposed Jesus, it seems that He was often invited into their houses to eat. Their motives most often seemed to be that they might find something in His teaching to condemn Him. This occasion took place on the Sabbath day. They were constantly looking for Him to break the Sabbath, the penalty for which was stoning to death (Num. 15:31-36). There was a man present who was afflicted with dropsy and Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. By now they apparently had learned not to answer Jesus' questions, for every time they did they got themselves into deeper trouble, so they remained silent. Jesus then healed the man and let him go. He asked them again, as He so often did, if their ass or ox fell into a pit on the Sabbath would they pull it out on the Sabbath day? And again they remained silent.

**A. The Parable of the Ambitious Guest.** This parable was evoked by the actions of the guests who tried to beat the others to the seats of honor at the table. The parable is a simple lesson in courtesy and humility in social behavior, but it surely has spiritual applications also. The one who exalts himself will be abased and the one who humbles himself will be exalted. There may be exceptions to this rule, at least temporarily, in the social realm, but not in God's realm.

Then Jesus turned to His host who had invited Him and told him when He made a feast not to invite his friends and relatives and rich neighbors, for they would repay him by inviting him to feasts in their homes. Instead, he should invite the poor and crippled and blind who could not recompense him in this life, then he would be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. The principle is that men will not be rewarded or recompensed by God in resurrection if they have already been rewarded in this life (cf. Matt. 6:1-7). It is certain Jesus did not intend by this parable that people should not be hospitable to family and friends. He was speaking here of parties given to ingratiate one's self with others for ulterior motives.

**B. The Parable of the Great Supper.** One of the guests upon hearing Jesus' words said, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Jesus answered him with a parable, the nature of which indicates that this seemingly pious remark actually indicated that the man looked upon himself as an elect Israelite who had been predestinated to eat bread at the Messiah's table in the Kingdom, but who had actually been making excuses in summons to God's invitation. This certain man made a great supper and invited His guests: "Come, for all things are ready." But they all had what they thought were legitimate excuses. So the Host told His servants to go out into the streets and alleys and bring in the poor and crippled and blind. Having done this the servants reported there were still empty seats, so He sent them out again into the highways and hedgerows to compel them to come in until the house was filled. "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." There can be no doubt that the ones that were bidden were the people of Israel, particularly the leaders, the rulers of Israel. The poor and crippled and blind are not necessarily representative of the Gentiles, although we know that in the Kingdom all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Paul states an important principle in Rom. 9:6: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Mere physical descendants of Abraham are not children of the promise. There is a spiritual Israel but they are also physically the seed of Abraham (Gal. 6:16). Gentile Christians have made the mistake of making themselves to be spiritual Israelites.

## 22. Parables on Counting the Cost

Reference: Lk. 14:25-35

The healing miracles of Jesus made Him very popular with the common people. Great multitudes followed Him, but they were following Him largely for what they might be benefited and not because of love or dedication to Him. So He turned and said: "If any man come unto me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." No doubt Jesus was using hyperbole, for to actually hate father and mother is to break God's commandment. And Paul states: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Eph. 5:29). What He was saying is that no man could be His disciple who places love for anyone else,

even his own self, above his love for Him. He was God and the Law demanded love with the whole of man's being and powers toward God, while at the same time requiring love for others. If present day church rolls were called of all who did not meet Jesus' requirement, there would be a drastic drop in membership statistics. We are prone to go for numbers, to make grace to mean relaxation of responsibility, to make Christianity popular. Jesus had only a "little flock" (Lk. 12:32) of real disciples, in spite of the fact that great multitudes thronged Him.

Both the parable of the tower and the parable of the king going to war teach the same lesson. The lesson is stated in vs. 33: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." This does not mean a literal forsaking of parents or wife or children, which would be desertion, which again would be the breaking of God's Law, but one who does not so dedicate all that he has to Christ cannot be His disciple. Both of these parables are most often misinterpreted. In the first a man planning to build a tower sits down first and counts the cost to be sure he has sufficient money to complete it. Not to do so and having to leave it half finished would expose him to ridicule. This is usually interpreted to mean that before one becomes a Christian he should sit down and see if he thinks he has enough strength to hold out to the end, and if he decides he doesn't he should forget the whole idea of becoming a Christian. The same interpretation is given to the parable of the king going to war. The king sits down first and consults with his generals whether his army of ten thousand can defeat the other king who has twenty thousand soldiers. And if he sees he has no chance of a victory he sends a message ahead before the battle begins desiring conditions of peace. This stronger King has been made to represent Satan and before declaring war on the Devil one should be sure he is strong enough to defeat him.

But the true interpretation of these parables is just the opposite. When or where in Scripture did God ever tell people to sue for peace with the Devil? Or where did He ever tell people to be sure they were strong enough to live a good life before becoming a Christian? If Scripture teaches anything, it is that the natural man is weak and sinful and incapable of doing anything to please God. And who is the King who confronts the sinner, if it is not Satan? It is God. When we see our weakness and sinfulness and our inability to fight against Him, all we can do is to sue for peace. Don't wait until the judgment day and then go into battle for your goodness and righteousness. One who thinks himself sufficient to confront God in that way will turn but like the salt in the following parable (vs. 34,35), which lost its savor and was good for nothing but to be cast out. Refer to Matt. 5:13 and Mk. 9:50 for other references to salt.

### **23. Three Parables of Lost Things:**

**The Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son**

**Reference: Lk. 15**

These parables were spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees who were complaining because Jesus was receiving sinners and eating with them. They not only did not consider themselves to be sinners; they isolated themselves from those they called sinners and had only hatred for them. Jesus was just the opposite. In these parables He portrays God's joy and rejoicing over the repentance of sinners. It is most common for us to talk about the joy of sinners upon finding salvation, but Jesus emphasized the joy of the Father in finding sinners. Grace is emphasized more in Luke than in either Matthew or Mark. The word "grace" does not even appear once in those two gospels, but it is found eight times in the Greek in Luke. The word does not occur in these parables but the working of grace is clearly manifested. The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin manifest the grace that seeks out the sinner, and the Lost Son manifests the grace that receives the sinner. There is a parable about the Lost Sheep also in Matt. 18:12 which was given as a conclusion to Christ's teaching about little children, which reinforces the truth that children need to be saved. They are not automatically saved because they are children. A terrible condemnation rests upon one who offends or leads astray one of these little ones.

It is most important to distinguish between repentance and salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and this change of mind is always involved when one is saved. However, one may change his mind and still not be saved. Repentance is not sorrow for sin, although it often does and should result in such sorrow, but sorrow for sin is not to be equated with salvation. Many other factors are involved in the act of salvation. However, one may be truly saved and still have the need for repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-12). The question therefore arises whether the parable of the Prodigal Son best represents the original salvation of a sinner, or the restoration of a saint. This problem is complicated by the fact that the Jewish people were in covenant relation with God, which in a sense made them all children of the covenant and children of God. The emphasis of John's and Jesus' preaching was repentance for this straying, sinful chosen people of God. Today, the covenants as such are suspended. No one by nature has a privileged place before God. God has placed all on the same plane and all must believe the gospel about Christ's death and resurrection to be saved. Only truly saved people are children of God today: under the covenants a whole nation was the people of God which included many whom we would not consider to have been saved. This fact is borne out further by the older son in the parable. All acknowledged that he represented the Pharisees, but the Pharisees were the chief enemies of Christ who plotted to have Him put to death, and yet the Pharisee is pictured as a son, and not only as a son, but as a son who had stayed with the father faithfully serving him. To apply the parable to salvation today one must make some changes in the story to fit the facts. For today it might better represent two saved persons, one who had gone away into deep sin and the other who had become self-righteous and unloving.

It will be well to notice a few principles from this parable. The younger son said, "Give me." This was the moment of his fall. He fell as soon as he desired

his father's wealth apart from his father's presence and fellowship. Sinners never fall up, they always go down and it was not long before the son found himself down in a pigpen, eating what the swine left. The boy came to himself and then came to his father. The Holy Spirit speaks first to the conscience and then to the heart. The father saw him when he was a great way off and ran and kissed him. No one turns to God without God meeting him more than half way. The father did not reprimand his son and tell him to go take a bath and find himself some decent clothes. He kissed his son and told the servant to prepare a feast and to bring the best clothes and robe him royally. The son hoped only that his father might take him back as a hired servant, but the father honored him as his son. The other son was angry and refused to take part in the celebration, thus revealing the true heart condition of the Pharisee who professed to be righteous and law abiding. Actually he was hateful and opposed to God's love and mercy and grace.

## 24. Parable of the Unjust Steward

Reference: Lk. 16:1-13

Alford in the *Greek Testament* states: "No parable in the Gospels has been the subject of so much controversy as this." The main problem concerns the commendation of this unjust steward by his master. Some contend that according to the laws that governed stewards this man had the right to discount bills and thus he actually did nothing amiss in thus ingratiating himself with his master's creditors. Others think his action in discounting the bills was illegal and that the master's commendation was not an approval of the act of bilking him out of his rightful due, but simply a recognition of the shrewdness and sagacity of the steward in planning for his future welfare. But if the steward was guilty of malfeasance, why did not the master have him arrested? One answer is that the steward, knowing he would be fired, made up out of his own pocket the amounts he had allowed the creditors to discount their bills, knowing that he would be more than repaid by the favors he might expect from the creditors. *The Companion Bible* makes vs. 9 a question: "Do I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness?" And the answer is, "No." *The Living Bible* paraphrase also gives this sense, holding that the end does not justify the means. Although the exact meaning of the parable may be hard to come by, it is clear from what follows that it was spoken against the Pharisees, for we read that they being covetous "derided him." The word "derided" is derived from the word for "nose," and means "they turned up their noses at Him." The ancients had an expression, "to hang on the hooked nose," that is, to turn up the nose and make a hook of it, on which to figuratively hang the subject of ridicule.

The general lessons from the parable are that worldly people show more wisdom in making provision for their future material needs than the children of light do in making provision for their future in the Kingdom; that faithfulness or unfaithfulness do not depend upon the size of the responsibility; that

unfaithfulness in caring for another's goods unfits one for being entrusted with true riches; and that it is impossible to serve two masters.

## 25. The Rich Man and Lazarus

Reference: Lk. 16:14-31

There is, of course, a vital connection between this story and what has gone before. Jesus has been dealing in particular with the Pharisees who were sticklers for law observance, and yet many of their traditions had negated the law. That is why Jesus told the parable of the unjust steward, for the Pharisees were lovers of money (covetous - vs. 14); and why He brought up the matter of divorce, for the Pharisees had liberalized divorce far beyond the permission of the law. And that is why He told the story of Dives (Latin for rich) and Lazarus, for no doubt the rich man represents the Pharisees.

This story is often called a parable, although the Scripture does not do so. Since this story, if factual, proves the falsity of all views about death being soul-sleep or non-existence, those who hold such views claim that this is a parable and suppose that they have eliminated the objections posed by this story. But whether it is a parable or not has not the slightest effect upon its reference to death. A parable is a figure of speech in which a story from real life is used to illustrate some higher truth. If consciousness does not continue after death, then it would be impossible to base a higher spiritual truth upon a statement which is false. Consider, for example, the parables in Matt. 13. If a sower never sowed seeds but only rocks, the parable of the sower would be ridiculous, for rocks never sprout and produce fruit. The same would hold true for the parables of the tares and the mustard seed. If a field was not a plot of ground but only a mental concept, then hiding a treasure in a field would be meaningless. If pearls were dead leaves, it would not make sense for a man to sell all that he had and invest his entire fortune in one dead leaf. If nets were never cast into the sea but only into a vacuum, how could it trap all kinds of fish? And likewise, if death is always complete unconsciousness or non-existence, as some claim, how could the dead be represented as talking to one another?

There are numerous doctrinal questions raised by this story. Perhaps the most evident one is: Was Lazarus saved because he had no enjoyments in this life, and was Dives lost because he did have enjoyment? The context gives ample evidence of why Dives was lost. As representative of the Pharisees he was a hypocrite (12:1); he denied the claims of Jesus Christ (12:9); he was a rich fool (12:20,21); he was an unfaithful steward (12:47,48); he was unrepentant (13:5); he refused John's baptism (7:30), thereby rejecting the counsel of God. No statement is given why Lazarus was saved, but perhaps his name throws some light upon his character. Lazarus is the Greek name for the Hebrew Eleazar, which means "God is helper." The fact that the beggar is named but the rich man is not is significant. God calls His own by name.

There is also an eschatological question: Is Abraham's bosom heaven and is hell or hades where the rich man went, the lake of fire? Apparently the story dealt with the then present time, for the rich man's brothers were still alive. The lake of fire had not yet been opened up, but after it is, hades will be cast into it (Rev. 20:14). Although the final judgment had not yet taken place, the unsaved were already in a place of suffering. Old Testament saints at death went to sheol (Hebrew equivalent to the Greek hades), Genesis 37:35, grave is *sheol*. Therefore it would seem that Hades must be divided into two parts, for the saints did not go to the same place as the wicked, yet both went to sheol. The story of Lazarus does present two places with a great gulf fixed between them. We know too that Christ went to Hades, for God's promise was that His soul would not be left in that place (Acts 2:27). Some believe that when Christ ascended and led captivity captive He led all of the souls of the saved in the upper compartment of Hades into heaven itself. However that may be, it must be remembered that the saved have not yet been perfected in their resurrection bodies. Luke 16:24 might seem to contradict this fact, since Dives prays that Lazarus might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his parched tongue. How could disembodied spirits have fingers and tongues? In answer we can say only that man was made in the image of God, and that God is pure Spirit, and yet God can speak; the Bible speaks many times about God's hand and His arm (Ps. 44:3; Isa. 52:10), and other members which we associate with the body. If pure spirit without bodily parts can have faculties comparable to our bodily parts, it may well be that the human spirit without the physical body has similar counterparts.

This parable or incident from history, whichever way it may be understood, teaches several important lessons. God's people should have social concern for those less fortunate. The greater wealth God permits one to gain the greater the responsibility to use it for the good of others. Riches in the life to come are far better than riches in this life. Decisions made in this life endure for eternity. After death there is a great gulf fixed between the saved and the unsaved. There will be no second chance after death. There is conscious existence after death, either of joy or of sorrow. On the part of the unsaved they would do anything to keep their relatives and friends from sharing their fate. God has given us His Word and if we won't be persuaded by that Word, nothing will persuade us, even though one rose from the dead. People often say they would believe the Bible if they could see someone come back from the dead and tell them about it. The fact is that some One has come back from the dead and has told us all about it, and still they refuse to believe, all of which shows their insincerity and pretense.

## 26. Repentance and Forgiveness

Reference: Lk. 17:1-6

Compare this passage with Matt. 17:20; 18:6,7,15,21,22. Children often play pranks on their fellow-playmates, such as tripping them and causing them to stumble or perhaps fall. Sometimes such pranks can cause very serious injury. It seems that as we grow up we are prone to transfer this trait from the physical to

the moral and spiritual, where the results are even more serious. Christ said that in the world, constituted as it is, it is inevitable that occasions of stumbling will come, but woe to the one who causes them. The word "skandalon" (from which we get our word scandal) meant originally the part of a trap where the bait was fastened, and then it came to mean a snare or the trap itself. In Scripture it is always used metaphorically of anything that causes prejudice, that hinders others or causes them to fall or stumble. It is translated "occasion to fall (stumble), offense, thing that offends, stumblingblock." Almost always the cause of stumbling is evil, as in the present case. On the other hand the wicked may be caused to stumble by that which is good in itself. Christ Himself is called a "rock of offence," (Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8; 1 Cor. 1:23), and a cause of stumbling to those who are disobedient to the Word. The preaching of the Cross was a stumbling block to Israel. Paul speaks of "the offence of the cross" (Gal. 5:11). Romans 11 is all about Israel's stumbling and fall. In vs. 9 we read: "And David said, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them."

Paul shows that the misuse of Christian liberty can be a cause of stumbling: "Let us not therefore judge one another anymore; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion of falling in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:13). He also shows that teachings contrary to sound doctrine can be occasions of stumbling (Rom 16:17). Especially serious is that which causes a little child or a young Christian to stumble and go astray. A mature person should be able to protect himself from tripping over such stones and is therefore the more responsible.

A failure to forgive may also be a cause of stumbling. Christ goes on to say: "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against thee seven times in a day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." There is a great deal of teaching in the Bible about forgiveness and the impression is often gained that forgiveness should be granted to all, regardless of their sins or their attitude. In this teaching of Christ, it is plain that forgiveness is to be granted only after repentance or change of mind on the part of the one who has sinned. God is surely the most gracious and forgiving One in the universe, but does He forgive the unrepentant? Those who refuse to admit they have sinned and therefore refuse to receive the gracious gift of salvation? We may do great harm both against the offender and the one offended by granting blanket forgiveness without any indication of change of attitude on the part of the offender.

We can feel with the disciples when the Lord told them to forgive a brother who offends seven times in one day. That almost seems too much. We can almost hear them sigh: "Lord, increase our faith." The Lord spoke much in parabolic language and we take His words to have this meaning, when He said: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine (actually the black mulberry) tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the

sea, and it would have obeyed you." This is in itself a parable in answer to the disciples' request for more faith to be able to live up to Jesus' teaching on forgiveness. Faith is compared to a mustard seed. The seed is planted in the ground where it has to overcome many obstacles in pushing its seed-leaves up through the hard, lumpy soil. A living faith is something like that; it has power to overcome all obstacles.

## 27. Parable on Discharging One's Duty

Reference: Lk. 17:7-10

The social order has changed much since Biblical times. Slavery was universally practiced. Whereas the word *slave* occurs but twice in the A.V., the word meaning *slave* but translated *servant* appears hundreds of times. Even though our social order has changed, so that we no longer find slavery permitted in most civilized societies, there are still two masters to whom men are slaves: either to God or to Satan. Paul states:

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves slaves to obey, his slaves ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the slaves of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you . . . But now being made free from sin, and become slaves to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:16,17,22).

God owns the Christian by right of creation and by right of redemption. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19,20).

The parable before us is based upon the duty of the slave to his master. The slave has certain duties which he is supposed to perform. He deserves no praise for doing only what is his duty. Service to the master comes first, before consideration of self. Therefore, Jesus says: "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say 'We are unprofitable slaves; we have done that which was our duty to do.'" Although he has done all his duty, yet he has done nothing except what he ought to have done, so he can claim no merit for himself. He could claim to be profitable only if he had done more than his duty. This parable may give the impression that Jesus is a hard taskmaster, but from the Christian's viewpoint, if he is truly humble, his very best service for Christ falls short of his ideal. But from the divine standpoint, even though we feel ourselves unworthy and unprofitable, yet He will reward even a cup of cold water given in His name. God sets us free from the slavery of sin and Satan, and we then yield ourselves to Him as His bondslave. We must never forget that relationship.

## 28. The Seventh Sign - Raising of Lazarus

Reference: John 11:1-46

This is the seventh great sign in John's Gospel that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We have already considered its significance in connection with the second sign, the raising up of the nobleman's son who was at the point of death. The second sign took place at the beginning of our Lord's ministry when the nation of Israel was at the point of death, but now at the end of His ministry He has been rejected and Israel is dead spiritually. Having already considered the typical and dispensational aspects of this sign, we will point out a few matters of special interest.

Note that Martha and Mary did not ask Jesus to come: they simply sent the message: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." True love responds without being urged. The sisters knew Jesus would come when He heard of their need.

When Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death," it might appear that He was mistaken, since Lazarus did die. What He meant was that the final outcome of this sickness would not be death, but that which would glorify God in restoring life to Lazarus.

It seems strange that after saying Jesus loved, in a very special way, these two sisters and their brother that He would delay two whole days before setting out to help them. But God always does things at the right time, and Jesus knew by waiting two days Lazarus would have died and been buried four days before His arrival, and this would give Him the opportunity to demonstrate that He was indeed the Resurrection and the Life, by bringing back to life one whose body had already gone into corruption. No doubt God often delays in answering prayers for similar reasons. The sisters were probably saying, "O, if He would only hurry and get here in time." And then after He did arrive, all they could say was, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But Jesus had told His disciples: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." If we were going to see a loved one who was critically ill we would be sad and disappointed to learn that he had died before we could get to him. If he had been there Lazarus would not have died, for no one ever died in His presence, and He would not have been able to perform this sign.

We have already seen a difference in the spiritual character of Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38-42). Martha makes a good confession of her faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and in her belief in the resurrection, and she says exactly the same thing to Jesus that Mary said a little later: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But when Mary spoke these words and Jesus saw her weeping, we read: "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him?" and "Jesus wept." There was something in Mary's spirituality that touched Jesus far more deeply than in Martha's.

No doubt the raising from the dead of Lazarus can be used as an illustration of salvation when a spiritually dead person is raised to life. First, it is important to

understand that this work of regeneration is wholly the work of God. Jesus did not say, "Now, Lazarus, you do your part and between the two of us we will get you back to life." Jesus simply shouted: "Lazarus, come forth." And he came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes. This was a double miracle. He came out of the cave-tomb even though his binding was tightly wrapped so that he couldn't move his hands or feet. Although the giving of life is entirely the work of God, there are things that man can do and is responsible for doing. Man could roll away the stone from the door of the tomb, and man could loose him from the grave clothes. Both of these things are the responsibility of the Christian ministry. But sad to say, many converts never get fully loosed from the grave clothes so they can enjoy the freedom and liberty there is in Christ Jesus. Christ spoke of the Son setting us free and Paul exhorts us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free (Gal. 5:1), and not to be bound with the grave clothes of ritualism.

## **29. Withdrawal to Ephraim**

**Reference:** John 11:47-54

The reason for the withdrawal to Ephraim was the intense hatred and connivings of the chief priests and the Pharisees. After the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, many more of the Jews believe on Him and the rulers feared that the whole nation would become His followers unless they took action to stop Him. The chief priests were Sadducees and His bitterest enemies. The reasoning of Caiaphas, the high priest was that if the whole nation acclaimed Jesus as Messiah and King, the Romans would come in with their armies and destroy their nation. Therefore it is expedient that this one man Jesus should die for the people, so that the whole nation should not perish. Caiaphas was not preaching substitutionary atonement: he was merely saying it is either Jesus or us. Either we kill Him or we will all get killed. But at the same time it was true: he being the high priest prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for that nation only (the Jews in the land), but that He should gather in one the children of God which were scattered abroad (the dispersion of Israel). This could not refer to the Gentiles, for they were not the children of God and they were not scattered abroad. The dispersion Israelites were the covenant children of God and they were scattered among the Gentiles.

It would seem that the Lazarus episode was the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak. Caiaphas said to the others in the Sanhedrin, "Ye know nothing at all." That is, you don't understand how serious this matter is. We must take action. And so we read: "From that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death." It was for that reason that Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but retired to a wilderness area to a town called **Ephraim**, where He continued with His disciples. This takes us back to the record of the Synoptists who record some of the further events before Jesus went back to Jerusalem for His last Passover, where He Himself became the Passover Lamb.

### **30. Ten Lepers Healed**

**Reference:** Lk. 17:11-19

This story illustrates again the great variety Jesus used in His healing ministry. These ten lepers in a certain village Jesus passed through stood afar off (cf. Lev. 13:45,46), and cried: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus did not anoint them, lay hands on them, or go through any kind of ceremony, but simply said: "Go show yourselves to the priest," for the priest was the one who had to examine the leper and pronounce him either clean or unclean. It was only after they had started off to find a priest that they were healed. But the unusual thing about this miracle is that only one of the ten turned back to thank Jesus and he was a Samaritan. Unthankfulness is a sign of apostasy. Paul describes the apostasy of the human race in Rom. 1:21 in this way: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ..." Only one out of ten glorified God and was thankful. Thankfulness is one of the chief attributes of the true believer.

### **31. The Coming of the Kingdom**

**Reference:** Lk. 17:20-37

The first two verses of this section are peculiar to Luke. Much of the remainder of the section is repeated in the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24. We will reserve most of our comments until we get to that part of the narrative.

The Pharisees demanded to know when the Kingdom of God should come. Jesus' answer has been twisted to mean that the Kingdom of God will never come in a literal sense upon this earth, but that it is entirely a spiritual condition within the hearts of men. Even a superficial reading of the text should be evidence enough that Jesus was not telling these Pharisees who were plotting to kill Him that the Kingdom of God was in *their* hearts. That would have been the last place to look for the Kingdom of God. What Jesus said was, "The Kingdom of God is in your midst." The central theme of Christ's preaching was that the Kingdom was near. The King of that Kingdom was in their midst. The statement that the Kingdom of God does not come with observation does not contradict all of the other statements of Christ about His visible return in power and great glory to establish His kingdom upon the earth. In fact, just a few verses after vs. 20, Christ states: "For as the lightning, when it lighteth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day." When Christ came the first time the Kingdom was present in His person. It was in their midst, but it did not come with any spectacular, sudden events. It was like the seed that fell into the soil and gradually developed. It is interesting that the cognate verb of the word "observation" is used in Lk. 6:7; 14:1; and 20:20 of the Pharisees, "And they watched (or observed) Him." They were watching Him, of course, to try to trap Him in either His words or His works whereby they might accuse Him.

While very similar to parts of the Olivet discourse this section does contain several other statements unique to Luke. One is that the days would come when the disciples would long to see one of the days of the Son of man and would not see it; that is, Jesus would be absent from them and they would be going through persecutions and would have to stand alone. The other is that besides speaking of "as it was in the days of Noah," here He says: "Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed." And finally, there is an additional word concerning those who are taken and those who are left which is not in the Olivet account. Many expositors teach that those who are taken are the saints who are raptured at the coming of Christ. It is evident that the ones taken in Noah's day were taken in the flood and Noah was left. The same was true in Lot's case. He was left and the others were taken away. But here the disciple asked, "Where, Lord?" and He answered: "Where the body is, thither will the eagles also be gathered together." Where are they taken? Surely not to heaven, but to judgment, the same one mentioned in Rev. 19:17,18, which is called the "supper of the great God," when the eagles will consume the bodies of the ungodly.

### **32. The Parable of the Unjust Judge**

**Reference:** Lk. 18:1-8

This parable is similar to that of the Importunate Friend in Lk. 11:5-10. There the comparison was between two friends, one which came late at night seeking a favor, and the other refusing to get out of bed to help until he was moved by the importunity of his friend. Here the comparison is between a poor widow who has been wronged and an unjust judge who refused to discharge his obligations to the woman, but who finally did so because he became weary of her continual coming to him. In neither case does Jesus teach that we have to keep praying until God gets weary of hearing our prayers before He will be moved to answer. Rather, the lesson is that if an unjust judge would avenge this widow because of her continual coming to him, how much more will God avenge His elect which cry day and night unto Him? The application of this prayer parable is to the time of the great tribulation through which God's elect remnant of Israel will go, which will immediately precede the coming of the Son of man, referred to in vs. 8. The answer to this prayer will be the outpouring of God's wrath upon those who have been venting their wrath on God's elect.

### **33. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican**

**Reference:** Lk. 18:9-14

The preceding parable of the Unjust Judge was eschatological in nature, having to do with God's elect in the future tribulation. This one is soteriological, having to do with salvation. However, it must be interpreted dispensationally. The Publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," has been adopted by many

evangelists as the model prayer for new converts, only they add, "and save me for Jesus' sake." While it is true that it is only by the mercy and grace of God that any sinner gets saved, this Publican was not simply asking God to be merciful to him. The verb, "be merciful" is "hilaskomai," to be propitious. It is the same word translated "reconciliation" in Heb. 2:17. The noun form, "hilasterion" is translated "mercy seat," in Heb. 9:5. By referring back to Ex. 25:17-21 it will be seen that the mercy seat was the lid of the ark of the covenant which contained two tables of the Law. The Israelite killed his animal sacrifice and the priest took the blood and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat. The blood thus intervened between God and the Law which had been broken, and effected an atonement for sin. No doubt this publican had offered his sacrifice and now he prays that God would accept his offering and be propitiated toward him. This was the divine order before the death of Christ. But now since the death of Christ we learn that God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25). Therefore God has already once and for all been propitiated: there is no need to pray for God to do it again. All we need to do is to receive the propitiation and thus be reconciled through the death of His Son. We do not pray for God to send His Son to die for our sins: He has already done that. Why, then, should we tell new converts to pray that God would be propitiated when He already has been? Rather tell the sinner, or the new convert, that God has been propitiated, that is, that His holiness and righteousness have been completely satisfied by the death of His Son, so that He is now free to justify ungodly sinners simply upon believing in Jesus.

The Pharisee trusted in himself that he was righteous and therefore had no need of reconciliation. Jesus said the Pharisee prayed with himself. Even though he told God he was thankful he was not a sinner, his prayer got no higher than his head. He informed God about all of his fine qualities and goodness, while the Publican, convicted of his sinfulness, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast in contrition. This Pharisee fits perfectly into Paul's description of Israel in Rom. 10:3: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." See Paul's self-righteousness in which he once boasted and what he did with it after his confrontation with Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:4-9).

### **34. Teaching on Divorce**

**References:** Matt. 19:3-12; Mk. 10:2-12

If we had only Mark's account of Christ's discourse on divorce and the two verses in Luke (16:17,18), we might suppose that there was no situation where Christ would permit divorce. But in this account in Matthew, as well as in Matt. 5:32, He does make the exception in the case of fornication. The Pharisees asked Him about the legality of a man putting away his wife for any and every reason. They hoped to find something in His answer by which they could condemn Him. As usual, Jesus answered by asking them a question: "What did

Moses command you?" And they replied that Moses permitted divorce. But Jesus told them that God's plan from creation was that man and wife become one flesh and remain in that relationship. However, because of the hardness of man's heart Moses wrote this law permitting divorce. Marriage is a relationship in the flesh, "one flesh," and therefore death which brings an end to the flesh, brings an end to the marriage, so that the remaining partner is free to marry again. Jesus plainly taught that a husband who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the same rule holds for the wife. Paul teaches essentially the same principles for this present dispensation. He teaches that death dissolves the marriage bond (Rom. 7:2,3). In the same verses he taught that a divorced person who remarries commits adultery. He went back to the Eden edict that man and wife become one flesh (Eph. 5:31). He taught that married partners should not separate, but if they do they should remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:10,11,39). He further taught that when one partner dies the other is free to remarry, but only to another believer. If a man or woman is married to an unbeliever (apparently married before one of them became a believer), the believer should remain with the unbeliever in hopes of converting him or her to the faith, but if the unbeliever deserts the believer, Paul says the believer is not under bondage in such cases (1 Cor. 7:15). Some understand this to mean that the believer is then free to remarry. Paul also teaches, among other things, that officers in the church should have only one wife (1 Tim. 3:2). Living under the dispensation of grace does not mean that the believer is free to sin. Next to our union with Christ, Paul upholds the marriage union as the highest of all human relationships. In fact, he illustrates our union with Christ by the marriage relationship, teaching that having been raised from the dead through identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, we are married to Him (Rom. 7:4).

Matthew gives us a little added detail in that the disciples, when they heard what Jesus taught about divorce, said, "If that's the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." Christ's answer, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given," does not mean that His teaching about divorce applied only to the few who heard it. Rather it applies to the statement of the disciples: "it is better not to marry." For Jesus goes on to say there are three classes of men who remain unmarried: those who are sexually incapable from birth, those who have been made incapable through surgery, and those who for the sake of the Kingdom of God have chosen to remain single. Paul was an example of the latter (1 Cor. 7:7-9,32). Paul does not command celibacy. He says that every man has his proper gift of God. Some are able to live pure, clean lives apart from marriage. Others do not have this gift, and for them, Paul says, it is better for them to marry.

### **35. Christ Blesses the Little Children**

**References:** Matt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:13-16;  
Lk. 18:15-17

Matthew introduces this section with the word *then*, which indicates that Jesus' words on the sanctity of marriage apparently prompted mothers in the audience to bring their children to Jesus for His blessing. It is interesting that Matthew and Mark call them "paidion" (young children) and Luke calls them "brephe" (a new born baby). There was probably quite a range of ages represented. The disciples thought it was beneath the dignity of Jesus to be distracted from His more important work by children, so they scolded the mothers who were pressing forward with their little ones. Mark says that Jesus was indignant with this action of His disciples. Great emphasis is given throughout the Scriptures on the importance of the proper care and training of children, and yet many pastors, like the disciples of old, think it is below their dignity to minister to such. They always want to be delving into the "deep" things of God. Why waste their years of study and training on such simple folk? Relegate the children to those of lesser or no special training!

Both Mark and Luke record the further application which Christ made that unless one receives the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter in. Because children are of such a trusting nature it is doubly important that they be given God's truth to believe, and to be protected from false teaching which they would receive with equal readiness. Parents who take the attitude: "I am not going to force my beliefs on my children. I am going to let them grow up and choose what to believe for themselves," are not only unwise but are definitely disobedient to the Scripture (Prov. 22:6).

There are certain Christian denominations which teach that the Church is spiritual Israel and therefore heir to Israel's covenants. They believe that the children who are members of their church family are children of the covenant and therefore have a special relationship to God which other children do not enjoy. They believe baptism has taken the place of circumcision, so that at baptism the infant is regenerated as a child of the covenant. Some call this "presumptive regeneration," that is, they presume the child is regenerate until later in life the contrary becomes evident. Thus churches become filled with young people who presume they were regenerated at baptism, but are in fact unregenerated. Regeneration takes place only in association with personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The logical conclusion of infant baptismal regeneration is that unbaptized children are lost and if they die in an unbaptized state, they will be forever separated from God. Rome tries to mitigate this harsh doctrine by teaching that such infants do not actually go into the fires of hell, but are confined to a place called "limbus infantum," forever shut out from heaven.

Much confusion and harm has been done by a failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church of this dispensation, and the relation of people to the covenants of Israel. Baptism never took the place of circumcision in New Testament times. Both were practiced concurrently by the believing Jews. No child is regenerated by baptism. Children are born with a sinful nature and need

to be saved as they become able to personally receive Christ as their Savior. They need the redemptive work of Christ the same as an adult. And on the basis of that redemptive work, God is now free in His elective purposes to apply that work to any and every infant that He chooses to remove from this life in infancy. But God has not set an age of accountability, so that we can say, the child is covered by the work of Christ until he is six or twelve years of age. That age may differ widely with different individuals. We cannot begin too early to tell our children the story of God's great love and grace in giving the Lord Jesus to die for our sins.

### **36. The Rich Young Ruler**

**References:** Matt. 19:16-30; Mk. 10:17-31; Lk. 18:18-30

In our interpretation of this story it must be remembered that it took place under the dispensation of Law. When the rich young ruler asked, "What good thing must I do to have eternal life?" the Lord replied with the requirements of the Law. In the dispensation of grace when the jailer asked Paul the same question, Paul replied: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The question arises, Does the Bible teach two different ways of being saved: by law keeping and by grace apart from law keeping? Paul makes clear two facts in his epistles. The first is stated in Rom. 2:6,7,13 that "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified)." On the surface this sounds as though Paul is teaching that man can be justified by keeping the law. It is rather a statement of God's just dealing with man. And Paul goes on to show the second fact that there has never been a man since Adam's fall that could measure up to that standard; for he proves that all have sinned and the conclusion is inescapable: "Therefore by the doing of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Although the young ruler claimed to have kept the Law from his youth, Jesus showed him he had broken the two great commandments of the Law. He didn't love his neighbor as himself, for he refused to share his wealth with the needy, and he did not love the Lord with all his heart, for he turned away sorrowful and refused to follow the Lord. The ruler had called Jesus Good Master, and Jesus had said, "There is none good, but one, that is, God." If Jesus was good then He was God. The ruler was not God, therefore he was not good, as he supposed himself to be in his self-righteousness. The law was given to show man that he is not good, but the Jews as a nation never learned the true intent of the law, as Paul explains in Rom. 10:1-3. Faith is the one thing necessary for pleasing God in every dispensation, but faith was demonstrated in different ways in different dispensations. If God said a flood was coming, faith believed and built an ark. If God said, "without the shedding of blood is no remission," faith believed and brought an animal sacrifice. But after God had proved the whole human race guilty and had given His Son as the once for all sacrifice for sin, faith no longer

engages in things required by the ceremonial law but believes and receives Christ as the all-sufficient sacrifice.

The disciples were astonished by Jesus' remarks concerning the difficulty of a rich man entering the Kingdom and asked: "Who then can be saved?" Jesus said, "With men it is impossible," that is, it is impossible for man to save himself. But, "with God all things are possible." God has done what for man was impossible. He has found a way to justify the ungodly, entirely apart from human merit or goodness.

Matthew, being especially the Kingdom Gospel, records the further remarks of the Apostles which were called forth from Christ's dealings with the young ruler. They said, "We have left everything and followed you. What will we have?" Jesus told them, "Verily, I say unto you, In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This is a special reward which Jesus will give to these men, and these only, when He returns to establish the Kingdom of God in this earth. There is personal, spiritual regeneration which the sinner receives when he believes the Gospel and is saved. There is also a regeneration in nature which will occur when Christ returns and removes the curse from nature and restores the earth to its original glory. Peter called it "the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (cf. Isa. 65:17-25; Rom. 8:21).

### **37. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard**

**Reference: Matt. 20:1-16**

In order to get the setting for this parable we must go back to the conclusion of Ch. 19. The last verse of that chapter reads: "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." And the parable ends: "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen." The parable was told to illustrate the truth at the end of the previous chapter.

The parable also illustrates the sovereignty of God and His purpose in election. The householder went to the market place to hire laborers, going very early in the morning, then at nine o'clock, then at noon, and again at three in the afternoon, and finally at five o'clock, each time hiring idle men. He agreed on a wage with the first ones and told the others he would pay them what was right. At the end of the day he called the laborers together and told his steward to pay them, beginning with the last and ending with the first. The ones who worked only one hour got a penny and when the steward came to those who were hired early in the morning, they supposed they get much more, but they too got one penny. When they complained of injustice, the householder replied: "Didn't you agree to work all day for a penny? It is not lawful for me to do with my own what I desire? Is your eye evil because I am good? It is my will to give unto these last even as unto you." We are quite sure that modern labor unions would have taken this

householder to court for unfair labor practices, even though the men who worked all day got what was generous pay for that period in history. Man, of course, is not sovereign, but God is, and the householder in the parable represents God.

There are several significant things to notice about the parable. The men in the market place were idle. They were unemployed. They did not go out looking for work; instead, the householder came to them and gave them a job. This is a picture of man in his lost condition. He is not seeking God, but instead God seeks the sinner (cf. Rom. 3:11; Lk. 19:10). No one would have been saved unless God had taken the initiative and sought out the sinner.

The interpretation of the parable has to do with rewards in the Kingdom. Martin Luther and others have taught that the penny or denarius represents salvation which each receives whether he has labored much or little: all get the same eternal life. However, such an interpretation makes salvation a reward for work, and salvation is always a free gift. Others have supposed the parable teaches that although salvation is a free gift, all of the saved will receive exactly the same reward for their service, but of course such teaching is contrary to almost every passage dealing with rewards (cf. Matt. 16:27; Rev. 20:13). Some have tried to see in the first who were called the Apostles and the later ones the Gentiles, down to the very last ones to be saved before the Lord comes. The context does not bear out such an interpretation. If the Apostles are represented by the workers hired first, then the parable must teach that they will be the very last and least in the Kingdom, which is contradicted by our Lord's promise that they are going to be reigning as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel.

It appears that the parable was called forth by Peter's question: "What are we going to get as rewards for our work?" When a child of God takes the attitude expressed by some who were first called that they deserve more than others, that they have done more for the Lord, it is evident that his motive for service for God is wrong. God will not forget any labor of love (Heb. 6:10), but work that is done, simply for self-aggrandizement is really not a labor of love. Some great world-renowned evangelist may be surprised at the judgment seat of Christ to discover that some humble believer whose name the world has never heard will receive as great, if not greater reward than himself. God is the One who gives abilities and opportunities and apart from His gifts we could do nothing for Him. We may take credit for leading a soul to Christ, when in fact ten other people had more to do with the result than we did. We must ever remember, as Paul tells us, that the worker is really nothing: he may plant or water the seed, but only God can give the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-8). Some who thought they would be first may end up at the end of the line, and others who took no credit to themselves and placed themselves last may end up at the head of the class.

### **38. Christ Again Predicts His Crucifixion**

**References:** Matt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34;  
Lk. 18:31-34

Jesus is here on His final visit to Jerusalem. He was walking ahead, leading the procession of His disciples. Mark alone tells us of the emotional condition of the disciples. He says they were amazed and afraid. Other translators say they were filled with alarm, were astonished, filled with terror and dread, dismayed and afraid, in a daze and apprehensive, filled with awe and afraid. There must have been something in the demeanor of Jesus, something strange and foreboding in His manner which struck fear into their hearts. Jesus, knowing their fears and knowing all that would happen to Him in the next few days, took the disciples aside and told them again of all that would befall Him in Jerusalem. He would be delivered to the chief priests and scribes and then to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged, to be killed, and after three days to rise from the dead. And Luke adds: "And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." The fact that they didn't understand is evident from subsequent events as seen in the statement of the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:21), and in the fact none of them believed He had arisen even after the report of the women who first saw Him after His resurrection (Mk. 16:10-14).

As pointed out earlier, although these apostles had been preaching the gospel of the Kingdom for over three years, it is evident that their preaching contained nothing about the redemptive death of Christ and His resurrection, which truths in our dispensation comprise the very heart of the gospel, (1 Cor. 15:1-4). That is why we must turn to the epistles to learn the secret of the Gospel. We find the revelation of the meaning of the death of Christ only after He had accomplished the work of salvation and had ascended back to heaven, from whence He made known the glorious truth of the gospel of the grace of God.

### **39. Ambition of James and John**

**References:** Matt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45;  
cf. Lk. 12:50

This incident of the two brothers, along with their mother, requesting a place of preeminence in Christ's Kingdom is first of all a proof that Christ actually taught that He was going to establish a kingdom here on the earth, which was different from the universal Kingdom of God which has always existed. There are so many proofs of this truth in the Gospels that it might seem trite to even mention it, but there are many evangelical Christians who teach that the Jews were completely mistaken in supposing that the Messiah would establish a literal Kingdom upon the earth and therefore there will never be a Millennial, Messianic Kingdom. This teaching is known as A-millennialism. But if the disciples were so carnal and mistaken in believing that Christ was going to establish such a kingdom in the future, why did Christ not correct their false notions about such a kingdom, instead of telling them it was not in His power to make such decisions? There was surely a Kingdom of God in Old Testament times, as well as when Jesus was on earth, but everywhere in the teachings of Christ His Kingdom was always

future. It was near at hand but it was not yet a reality. Therefore there must be a difference between that which was then present and that which had not yet come into existence.

The request of this mother for her two sons, which stirred up such indignation among the other disciples, simply points out one of the weaknesses of fallen human nature: self-aggrandizement. Man likes to exercise authority, to be able to lord it over others. But the prerogative of lording it over belongs to God alone, so that in Christ's Kingdom or for that matter, in the life of the Christian today, the Lord should be the only lord. If one wants to be greatest, he should be greatest in caring for and serving others. Paul teaches the same spiritual principles (cf. 1 Cor. 12:25; Phil. 2:3,20,21).

The cup and the baptism to which Christ referred (cf. Lk. 12:50), both point to His sufferings and death and the intimation is that the disciples also would suffer a like fate at the hands of the unbelieving world.

#### **40. The Blind Men Near Jericho**

**References:** Matt. 20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52;  
Lk. 18:35-43

There is a supposed contradiction between the Gospels here, in that Matthew says there were two blind men who were healed, whereas Mark and Luke mention only one, and to further complicate the problem Matthew and Mark both say the healing took place as Jesus was leaving Jericho, and Luke says the healing took place as He approached Jericho. If Mark and Luke had stated that Jesus healed only one blind man at Jericho there would be a contradiction with Matthew. It is not a contradiction to mention only one of the two who were healed. As to the other seeming contradiction it should be pointed out that Jericho in the time of Christ was a "double city." Cobern states regarding excavations made by Dr. Ernest Sellin: "They did however find a large Jewish town (600-400 B.C.), and proved that the Jericho of Jesus' day was a double city spreading itself out on both sides of the wadi."<sup>29</sup> Thus Matthew and Mark spoke of leaving one part of the city and Luke spoke of approaching the other part of this double city.

Mark alone gives us the beggar's name, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. He was probably a well known character in the community, whereas the other beggar was not, and that is probably the reason only Bartimaeus is mentioned. Mark also relates that when told by the crowd that Jesus had stopped and called for him, he not simply "arose," as in the A.V., but literally "leaped up."

Jericho was a cursed city (Josh. 6:26 cf. 1 Kgs. 16:34), but wherever Jesus went the curse was lifted. This is no doubt a picture in miniature of what will

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<sup>29</sup> Camden M. Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries* (New York; Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1928), p. 361.

happen when Jesus returns and takes away the blindness of Israel and lifts the curse from creation which sin has brought. Christ was made a curse for us to deliver us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13).

#### **41. The Conversion of Zacchaeus**

**Reference: Lk. 19:1-10**

The Greek grammar shows that Zacchaeus was not bragging about all of the good works he had done in the past, but of what he was going to henceforth do as a result of his conversion. It was common practice for tax-collectors to overcharge, to place fictitious values on property or income in order to enrich themselves. Zacchaeus vows now to restore four-fold to those he had cheated. According to Ex. 22:1 this was the restoration required of a thief. He was thus confessing his sin and calling it by the proper name. The expression in vs. 8, "I give," has the force of "I now give," or "from now on I will give." He was not only going to restore four-fold where he had cheated others, but was going to give half of his wealth to the poor. He thus stands out in bold contrast to the rich young ruler, who was not convicted of his sinfulness and refused to give his wealth to the needy.

There is an interesting play on words in the Greek text. The tree into which Zacchaeus climbed (translated "sycamore") was the fig-mulberry (*sukomorean*, a compound of *suke*, fig, and *moron*, mulberry). Then in vs. 8, the expression, "taken by false accusation" is the word *sukophanteo*, a compound of *suke*, fig, and *phanein*, to show: a fig-shower or fig-informer (an informant of the law forbidding the exportation of figs from Greece). It is our English word "sycophant." The word is used only one other time (Lk. 3:14) where it is translated, "accuse falsely."

Zacchaeus did not let his physical limitations keep him from his determination to see Jesus. We are reminded of the four men who made a hole in the roof in order to let down the palsied man into the presence of Jesus.

Zacchaeus must have been amazed to hear Jesus call him by name when he had never even seen Jesus before. This must have impressed him of the supernatural character of Jesus. Jesus' words: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house," have the ring of kingly authority. Zacchaeus did not extend an invitation, nor did Jesus ask, "May I stay at your house?" It was a command: "I must stay at thy house."

#### **42. Parable of the Postponed Kingdom**

**Reference: Lk. 19:11-28**

We are informed that Jesus told this parable because He was near to Jerusalem and because the people supposed the Kingdom of God was going to be set up immediately. The purpose of the parable was to show that the Kingdom

would not be established immediately; that the rightful King had to first go into a far country to receive the authority for the Kingdom; and then return to take over the actual Kingship.

It is helpful to understand that a few years prior to this both Herod and his son, Archelaus had gone to Rome to receive authority from Caesar to reign over Judea and had returned to take over the kingship. It is interesting also to note that Jesus spoke this parable in Jericho, the very city from which Herod had gone to Rome and to which he returned and built his palace. Thus the parable is built on an actual historical incident with which the people were familiar.

There is no doubt but that the nobleman represents Jesus Christ, and that the far country represents heaven, and the One from whom the authority is received is the Father. The return must represent the second coming of Christ to earth. There are many Bible interpreters who are fond of spiritualizing the Scriptures, as they call it, although there is nothing spiritual about it. They teach that the Kingdom is purely spiritual; that after His death Jesus went back to heaven in order to establish His Kingdom; that He is now reigning as King, and that all of the promises in the Bible of a literal, physical, earthly kingdom must be spiritualized to mean those blessings which Christians now enjoy; that Jesus will never return to establish a Kingdom on earth, but rather that when He returns He will bring an end to the world with the final judgment and resurrection. All of these ideas are completely opposite to the teaching of this parable. Herod did not go into the far country and set up his throne there in Rome, and neither is it stated that Christ went to heaven to set up His throne there. Today Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father's throne (Heb. 8:1; 12:2). And just as Herod's citizens had sent a message to Caesar saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," so the Jews declared they would not have Jesus to reign over them. And as Herod destroyed his enemies when he returned as King, so there will be a judgment when Christ returns as King and the wicked will be destroyed from off the earth. But those servants who were loyal to the King and had taken care of His business while He was away will be rewarded by being made rulers over various cities in the Kingdom. This is one of the clearest and most important dispensational parables concerning the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom at the return of Christ to earth. There is a somewhat similar parable in Matt. 25: 14-30, told a few days later in the Olivet discourse.

### **43. Anointing of Jesus By Mary of Bethany**

**References:** Matt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9;  
John 11:55-12:11

There are certain problems related to the correlating of these three scripture passages. While the three accounts have much detail in common, there are some differences. The account of the supper at Bethany and the anointing as given by both Matthew and Mark is prefaced by the statement: "ye know that after two days is the feast of passover." John tells us: "Jesus therefore six days

before the passover came to Bethany... so they made him a supper there." In Matthew and Mark the supper was in the house of Simon the leper, and the woman who anointed Jesus is not mentioned by name. In John nothing is said about Simon the leper, and the woman is named as Mary. This has led some to believe that there were two suppers and two anointings. However, almost everything that transpired at the supper is common to all three records. Most expositors believe that both Matthew and Mark inserted the supper account out of chronological order for a special effect and that therefore there was just one supper. Matthew does not say the supper took place two days before passover, but simply, "When Jesus was in Bethany." Some have speculated that Simon the leper, now healed, of course, was the husband of Martha. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are mentioned by name only by John. Matthew and Mark state that the woman anointed the head of Jesus; John the feet of Jesus. Mark says the ointment was worth above three hundred pence; John says three hundred pence. Matthew and Mark have the disciples indignant over wasting this amount of money; John says it was Judas Iscariot who objected. None of the differences are really contradictions. Mary could have anointed both His head and His feet. Judas may have started the objection that the ointment could have been sold for three hundred pence, and other of the disciples could have taken sides with Judas and said it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence.

Besides the Lord Jesus there are three characters that stand out in the story. One is Mary. She had sat at the feet of Jesus and learned of Him. She was the only one of the disciples who understood and believed that Jesus would rise from the dead. She anointed His body for burial beforehand. She was not in the group that went to the tomb with spices to anoint His dead body. The Lord rewarded Mary's love and understanding and devotion by having her name placed in Holy Scripture for millions of people to read about as a memorial to her.

Another character is Judas Iscariot. Here we learn that he was the treasurer for the Apostles and that he was a thief. He objected to what he called Mary's waste in anointing Jesus with the costly spikenard, because he would like to have seen it sold for three hundred pence and the money put in his bag for his personal use. It may seem strange why Jesus chose a man to be one of His apostles when He knew that he was unsaved. In fact, Jesus stated in John 6:70: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" And knowing he was a thief, why would He permit him to be the treasurer for the group? It may be speculation, but it may be that Jesus chose such a one because He knew that in any group of God's people in this world there will always be one or more who are not truly saved. If it could happen in a group which Jesus Himself chose, how much more likely it is to happen in assemblies where ordinary men do the choosing? Therefore, as a practical lesson for today, churches need to constantly be on their guard, especially about those who have to do with money matters. Even a saved person may be such a lover of money that he will steal or misapply church funds. Every safeguard possible should be used to protect both the congregation and the one who is in charge of finances. Paul was very careful

about the handling of money from the churches, but in spite of that he was falsely accused of being dishonest. Paul gives some good advice to churches. One of his qualifications for an officer in the church is that he is "not greedy of filthy lucre" (1 Tim. 3:3). He warns against those who will to be rich (1 Tim. 6:9). And he set an example when he took up offerings from the Gentile churches to help the poor saints at Jerusalem. The churches chose certain ones to travel with Paul to see to it that the money got to its proper destination (cf. 2 Cor. 8:16-24).

The third character is Lazarus. John tells us that many of the common people heard that Jesus was there, and they came, not only to see Jesus, but Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. A great number of Jews had become believers through the testimony of Lazarus, so much so that the religious authorities were seeking how they might put Lazarus to death also. We should like to know what experience Lazarus had during the four days he was dead, but God has not been pleased to satisfy our curiosity. We have no idea if Lazarus spoke anything about that experience. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven he saw things which He was forbidden to reveal (2 Cor. 12:4). Perhaps it was the same with Lazarus.

## CHAPTER VIII

# The Passion Week

## RESUME

The importance of this final week of our Lord's life upon the earth before His death and resurrection may be seen in the comparative space given to it by the Gospel writers. Matthew devotes seven chapters or 25% of his book to it; Mark five chapters, or 31%; Luke about four and a half chapters, or 19%; and John eight chapters, or 40%. It is also significant that in the Pauline epistles which are specifically addressed to members of the Body of Christ in the present administration of God there is hardly any reference to the events in the earthly ministry of our Lord and that practically all of his epistles are occupied with Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension. In certain passages Paul tells us, for example, that Christ WAS a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers (Rom. 15:8); that Christ "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," and skipping over His earthly ministry to Israel he continues, "and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3,4). The same treatment is seen in Gal. 4:4,5: "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of

sons." Paul in no way belittles the earthly ministry of Jesus by thus omitting everything between the birth and death of Christ: he simply recognizes that this ministry was only to the nation of Israel, and that he had been given a new dispensation which was based upon the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and upon His heavenly ministry as Head of the Church which is His Body. It has been estimated that if the entire life of Jesus were written with the same detailed coverage given to the Passion week it would fill about eighty volumes the size of the Bible. There can be no doubt but that God in His Word has placed the greatest of emphasis upon the vicarious death of His Son.

The events of the Passion week all took place in and near Jerusalem. On the first day of this week, which is celebrated in Christendom as Palm Sunday, Jesus came from Bethany to Jerusalem and as He entered the city riding upon the colt of an ass the multitudes spread their garments in the way and others put palm branches in the way and they cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David." This is commonly called the Triumphal Entry. He wept over the city and after going to the temple and looking round about on all things, returned at eventide to Bethany.

On Monday He returned to the temple after cursing a fig tree on the way, and there for the second time He drove out the merchants, overturning their tables and declaring that they had made His Father's house a den of robbers. In the evening He returned again to Bethany.

Tuesday morning Jesus returned to the City with His disciples, and as they passed the fig tree which He had cursed they saw that it had withered away. In the temple He confronted the chief priests and elders who questioned His authority. A great deal of space is given over to His teaching in the temple. Upon leaving the temple He went over to the mount of Olives and sat with His disciples and taught them about the coming great tribulation and other events which would happen at the end of the age just before His second coming back to earth. At the end of the day He told His disciples: "Ye know that after two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified." Meanwhile the chief priests and elders were plotting how they might take Jesus, and Judas Iscariot went to them and offered to betray Jesus to them for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus returned to Bethany and there is apparently no record of what transpired on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the first day of unleavened bread (Luke states that the feast of unleavened bread is called the Passover), the disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare to eat the Passover. He told them of the upper room where they were to make ready and there He ate the Passover and spoke His farewell words to the disciples as recorded in John 13-17. Near midnight Jesus and His disciples (Judas being absent) walked up the valley of Jehoshaphat to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed in agony and sweat as it were great drops of blood. There Judas betrayed Him to the mob of Jews, who arrested Him and

dragged Him to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where He was tried before the Sanhedrin and condemned to death. From there He was brought before Pilate, the Roman procurator, who found no fault in Him and sent Him to Herod Antipas for his judgment. Herod was happy to see Jesus because he hoped to see Him work a miracle, but Jesus remained mute in his presence and Herod and his men mocked Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate finally gave in to the cries of the Jews, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" He was delivered to the soldiers who led Him forth out of the city, bearing His cross, to Golgotha, where they crucified Him, about nine o'clock in the morning on Friday.

The above order of events is that which is followed by most Bible expositors. However there are those who contend that Jesus must have been crucified on Wednesday in order to allow for the full three days and three nights in the tomb, a period of 72 hours. The traditional Friday date for the crucifixion allows for only one full day and parts of two other days, but it is argued that Jewish law admitted part of a day as a day. For example, Sir Robert Anderson states: "A day and a night make an Onah, a part of an Onah is as the whole.' Dr. Lightfoot quotes this Jewish saying in his *Horae Hebraicae* (Matt. 12:40); and he adds: 'Therefore Christ may truly be said to have been in His grave three Onah.. .the consent of the schools and the dialect of the nation agreeing thereunto."<sup>30</sup> The confusion comes about largely by differences between the Synoptics and John. The Synoptics state positively that Christ ate the Passover with His disciples the night before His crucifixion (Matt. 26:17-19; Lk. 22:15); but John states it was the Preparation of the Passover when Jesus was crucified (John 19:14,31,42), which would seem to indicate that Christ was crucified on Wednesday morning, and that the Passover was eaten the next day, that is, after sunset on our Wednesday, remembering that the Jewish day began at sunset and not at midnight as does ours. This point seems further strengthened by the statement in John 18:28, that the Jews would not enter Pilate's judgment hall on the morning of the crucifixion, "lest they should be defiled," and therefore not be able to eat the Passover. It is further argued that the Last Supper was not the Passover and that Christ was crucified at the same time the Jews were killing the Passover lambs, thus perfectly fulfilling the type of Christ as our Passover.

For the benefit of those who would like to study the Wednesday theory further we will give a resumé of Dr. E.W. Bullinger's outline of the Passion Week.

On our Friday morning, which he identifies as the 9th of Nisan, he has Christ's first entry into Jerusalem, starting from Bethphage {Matt. 21:8,9}, riding upon an ass with its unbroken colt (Matt. 21:1-7}. He cleansed the temple (Matt. 21:12-16) and returned to Bethany.

The Sabbath began at sunset Friday, which Christ spent at Bethany resting. This was the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

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<sup>30</sup> Sir Robert Anderson, *The Bible and Modern Criticism* (London: Picketing & Inglis, eighth edition), p. 272.

Then after sunset Saturday which was the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Jesus attended the supper at Bethany at which He was anointed upon the feet by Mary with a pound of ointment of spikenard. The next morning which was still the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan or Sunday. He made His second entry into Jerusalem, that which is usually called the Triumphal entry (Palm Sunday). This entry started from Bethany and the ride involved only one animal, a colt (Mk. 11:1-7; Lk. 19:29-35; John 12:12). He returned to Bethany for the night.

The next morning, Monday, the 12th of Nisan He cursed the fig tree, made a further cleansing of the temple (Mk. 11:15-17; Lk. 19:45,46). Certain Greeks want to see Him. He teaches in the temple and rulers oppose Him. He returns to Bethany at night.

Tuesday morning, the 13th of Nisan, He returns and the disciples notice the fig tree has withered away. He teaches in the temple and gives the first great prophecy in the temple (Lk. 21:5-36). He then goes to the mount of Olives and gives the second prophecy (Matt. 24:1-51; Mk. 13:1-37). And He tells the disciples that after two days is the Passover. He then returns to Bethany.

After sunset Tuesday, which is the 14th of Nisan, He attends the second supper at Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and an unnamed woman pours ointment from an alabaster box upon His head. Judas plots to betray Christ.

Preparation for the Last Supper. The supper eaten. Upper room discourse. They go to Gethsemane. The arrest and trial during the night. Wednesday morning the crucifixion. Burial in haste before sunset, when the "high day" of the Feast began.

Three days and three nights in the tomb, from sunset Wednesday to sunset Saturday, 15th, 16th, and 17th of Nisan. The resurrection occurred at around sunset Saturday.<sup>31</sup>

It will thus be seen that Bullinger has two separate triumphal entries, two separate cleansings of the temple, two separate dinners in His honor at Bethany, and is anointed by two different women. We feel that the minor differences in the records of this series of events can be explained without making separate events out of them, that there is a satisfactory explanation for John's statements which seem to disagree with the Synoptics. We will therefore follow the more generally accepted view that our Lord was crucified on Friday and arose early Sunday morning, instead of being crucified on Wednesday and being raised at sunset Saturday. For a complete exposition of these differences and a defense for the Friday date, see Sir Robert Anderson's, *The Coming Prince* (chapter IX, entitled,

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<sup>31</sup> Companion Bible, op. tit., Appendix 156, p. 179-182.

"The Paschal Supper").<sup>32</sup> We will have more to say on this subject when we discuss the resurrection of our Lord.

### **1. The So-called Triumphal Entry**

**References:** Matt. 21: 1-11; Mk. 11: 1-11;  
Lk. 19:29-44; John 12:12-19

We have called this the so-called Triumphal Entry, not to detract from its glory, but to contrast it with the real Triumphal Entry when the Lord Jesus comes again in power and great glory and enters into Jerusalem and establishes His Kingdom. The contrast is between the King coming in meekness riding upon an ass into a city where He will be put to death as a criminal, and the King riding upon a white horse, coming out of heaven to earth to subdue His enemies in a great display of power and glory (Rev. 19:11-16).

Jesus knew that the Prophet Zechariah had predicted that He would be presented to Israel as their King, meekly riding upon a lowly colt of an ass (9:9), and when He reached the mount of Olives He sent His disciples into the village with instructions to bring a colt upon which no one had ever ridden which they would find tied. Here we see His omniscience in knowing all about the colt and its owners and theft reactions, and His Divine power over creation in being able to ride calmly and peaceably upon an animal which had never been broken.

When the multitudes who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem they went out to meet Him as He came up the Jericho road from Bethany and they cut down palm branches and spread them in the way and others spread their garments in the road and they began praising God and crying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." Hosanna is a word derived from the Hebrew in Ps. 118:25 and has the meaning of "Save now." Luke tells us that some of the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples for saying such things, but Jesus replied: "If these hold their peace, the stones will cry out." Jesus thus accepted the adoration and worship which the multitudes were bestowing upon Him. Luke also informs us that as He drew near to the city He wept over it for not knowing the things which belonged to its peace and predicted the impending destruction because it knew not the time of its visitation. On "visitation" see 1 Pet. 2:12. Israel did not recognize that God was visiting them.

John also adds an interesting sidelight. He states: "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but where Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." John refers to a similar case when Jesus spoke of destroying this temple and of raising it up in three days (cf. 2:19-22).

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<sup>32</sup> Sir Robert Anderson, *The coming Prince* (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, 1977), p. 106-118.

We do not read that Jesus did any teaching on this day which is now celebrated as Palm Sunday. Mark tells us that He did go into the temple, and when He had looked round about upon all things, it now being eventide, He went out unto Bethany with the Twelve. Bethany was the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus and was located on the road to Jericho, about 15 furlongs from Jerusalem, by the mount of Olives. It was from this spot that Jesus had made His entry into Jerusalem as Israel's King, and it was from the same spot, some forty-seven days later, that He made His entry into heaven (Acts 1:3-9).

## 2. Cursing the Fig Tree

**References:** Matt. 21:18-22;  
Mk. 11:12-14; 20-26

Jesus had spent Sunday night at Bethany and on Monday morning as He returned to Jerusalem with His disciples He became hungry, and seeing a fig tree He came to it but found nothing on it but leaves. Mark tells us that it was not the season for figs. Matthew in vs. 20 and 21 tells of the withering of the tree after Christ had said: "Let there be no fruit on thee henceforward for ever," as though it withered immediately, but according to Mark it was on the next morning as they passed by that they observed the tree had withered, not simply the leaves had withered, but it had withered away from the roots. The disciples were greatly impressed how quickly the tree had died.

The question which troubles most readers is why Jesus cursed the tree for not having figs, when it was not the season for figs. Edersheim claims: "It is a well-known fact, that in Palestine the fruit appears before the leaves, and that this fig tree, whether from its exposure or soil, was precocious, is evident from the fact that it was a leaf, which is quite unusual at that season on the mount of Olives."<sup>33</sup> It was a barren fig tree, like the one we considered in Lk. 13:6-9, which was good only to be chopped down. While there is nothing in the immediate context to point to a symbolic interpretation of the cursing of this barren fig tree, there can be no doubt but that the fig is symbolic of Israel, and the events which were to take place that day when He cleansed the temple and the next day in His teaching in the temple all point to the fact that what had happened to the fig tree was exactly what was going to happen to the nation of Israel. Israel had all of the leaves of religious profession, but for the three years that Jesus came looking for fruit He found none. While the lesson here is primarily about Israel, the application can be made to people in any dispensation. Fig leaves couldn't provide a suitable covering for Adam and Eve, and they couldn't satisfy Christ's hunger. Note some of the things Paul has to say about fruit bearing in this dispensation: Rom. 1:13; 6:21,22; 7:4,5; 15:28; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 4:17; Col. 1:6.

Peter apparently saw no symbolism in the cursing of the fig tree. It was the miracle that impressed him. Jesus answered Peter and said: "Have faith in God," and proceeded to use the cursing of the tree as an example of faith and the

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<sup>33</sup> Edersheim, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 574.

possibilities of faith in prayer. We believe in the literal interpretation of Scripture, but this does not mean that we refuse to recognize figurative and symbolic language where it exists. When Christ spoke of a faith that would move mountains, we do not believe He was talking about literal mountains. If He was, then there is no record of any one, including Jesus Himself, who had this kind of faith which actually uprooted a whole mountain and cast it into the sea. To do such a thing would cause great loss of human life and damage to property. Suppose for a moment that some one had the faith to cause the Swiss Alps to be cast into the Mediterranean Sea. Can one begin to imagine how many millions of lives would be snuffed out and the worldwide disaster from earth shocks? It is well-known that "rooting up mountains" is in common Rabbinic use a hyperbole for doing the impossible or the incredible. It was the absence of faith which caused Israel to be barren. What mighty changes could have come about in world history had Israel manifested that kind of faith in God! Israel's Kingdom could have been established. The Gentile nations could have been brought into subjection. Wars could have been outlawed. Armaments could have been converted into agricultural tools. That which seems impossible to accomplish through one small nation will some day become an actuality when Israel turns in true faith to God. But God has declared that nothing can now produce that Utopia, not even the greatest of faith, until Christ returns and Israel is converted; for Christ Himself declared that there would be wars and rumors of war until the very end of the age (Matt. 24:6,21).

### **3. The Second Cleansing of the Temple**

**References:** Matt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-19;  
Lk. 19:45-48

It is significant that at the first Passover of Jesus' ministry He cleansed the Temple by driving out the merchants and overturning the tables of the money changers. When asked for a sign to show His authority, Jesus said: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again" (John 2:19-22). Now at the last Passover of His ministry He duplicates this act, and as we shall see in the next section, He refuses to state by what authority He has done this.

As Paul points out in Rom 2:17-24 it was God's original purpose for Israel to bring the knowledge of God to the Gentile nations, but instead they had caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. Jesus said the original purpose of God for the temple was that it should be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but they had made it a den of robbers.

After cleansing the temple, the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them. When the chief priests and scribes beheld all of the wonderful works He was doing and when they heard the children crying out in the temple: "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were moved with indignation and demanded that Jesus refrain them. The day before when the crowds cried "Hosanna" as He entered the city and the Pharisees tried to rebuke Him for

permitting them to say such things about Him, He replied: "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." In the temple it was the children praising Him, and His reply to the rulers on this occasion was: "Yea, did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise?" (Ps. 8:2), "and He left them." What sad words! He not only left their physical presence and returned to Bethany for the night, but He left them in their sin, bereft of God's presence.

God can use children as well as adults. Strong cites an incident out of Eliot's novel: "Silas Marner, the old weaver of Raveloe, so pathetically and vividly described in George Eliot's novel, was a hard, desolate, godless old miser, but after little Eppie strayed into his miserable cottage that memorable winter night, he began again to believe. 'I think now,' he said at last, 'I can trusten God until I die.'"<sup>34</sup>

#### **4. Christ's Authority Challenged**

**References:** Matt. 21:23-27; Mk. 11:27-33;  
Lk. 20:1-8

It is little wonder that the chief priests and elders of Israel confronted Jesus after He had the day before chased all of the merchants and money changers out of the temple, overturning their tables and spilling the coins all over the floor and rebuking them for making His Father's house a den of robbers. It seems that these rulers were baffled to discover a means of coping with this Jesus, of getting rid of Him before He got rid of them. Their approach of this occasion was to ask Him: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" Truth is always consistent and error is always inconsistent. All Jesus needed to do was to ask them the right question to put them on the horns of a dilemma. So He said He would answer their question if they would first answer His. "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" After putting their heads together and analyzing the question, they realized they would lose regardless of how they answered. And after what must have been a long, embarrassing pause for them, as the multitude stood silently waiting to hear their answer, they replied, "We don't know." And Jesus silenced them by saying: "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

Preachers and teachers of the Word would do well to cultivate the art of questioning. Jesus, of course, was a master at it, as He was of all teaching techniques. Instead of getting into involved arguments the use of the right question will often clinch the truth and stop the mouth of the opposition.

#### **5. The Parable of the Two Sons**

**Reference:** Matt. 21:28-32

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<sup>34</sup> A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1912), p. 664.

We have remarked before that the expression, "the kingdom of heaven," is used only by Matthew and that in corresponding passages in the other Gospels the expression used is "the kingdom of God." However, whereas Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" 33 times, he also uses "kingdom of God" 5 times (6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:43; and here in this parable, 21:31). Does Matthew, by this usage, make a difference between these two kingdoms? It is possible that as heaven stands for God, the expressions are interchangeable. However, the Kingdom of God is used many times in the Bible without any reference to the earthly, Messianic kingdom, which is the special meaning attached to the "kingdom of heaven." Therefore there is the possibility that these five passages consider the kingdom in its wider, more general aspect.

This parable was spoken against the chief priests and elders of Israel. They had just been questioning by what authority Jesus had cleansed the temple and Jesus had caught them in their own trap by His question which they were afraid to answer. Although He did not tell them by what authority He did these things, He did give them this parable about the two sons, and again they were confronted with a question: "Which of the two sons did his father's will?" Of course, they had to answer that the first one did, who at first refused but later repented and did his father's bidding. And again they judged and condemned themselves by their own words. The publicans and harlots had at first said, "no" to God, but later repented at John's preaching and did the Father's will, but the chief priests and rulers who offered lip service to God refused to believe John, and even after John had shown them their true heart condition before God they refused to repent. They had refused to answer Jesus' previous question of whether John's baptism was from heaven or from man, for they knew if they said from heaven, Jesus would ask why they didn't believe him. But Jesus was not going to let them get off the hook so easily. This parable brought out the truth that they didn't believe John's message was from heaven and they therefore were rejecting the council of God against themselves.

## **6. The Parable of the Vineyard**

**References:** Matt. 21: 33-46; Mk. 12:1-12;  
Lk. 20:9-19

It is still Tuesday of the Passion week and Jesus is still being confronted by the rulers of Israel. Immediately after relating the parable of the two sons, He follows up with this one about the householder who sublet his vineyard to husbandmen (tenants). At harvest time he sent a servant to collect his share of the crop, but the tenants beat him and sent him back empty handed. The owner then sent one after another of his servants, all of whom they treated shamefully, even killing some of them. Finally the owner decided to send his well-beloved and only son. Surely they will reverence him.

It is easy to see that Jesus was reviewing the whole history of Israel. God has sent them one prophet after another whom they rejected and mistreated (cf. Heb.

11:35-38). Think of Jeremiah, thrown into the dungeon, Isaiah sawn in two, John, the last of the prophets, beheaded! And now God has sent His beloved and only Son to them. As Jesus was telling this parable these very rulers were plotting how they might kill Him. And so Jesus continued with His parable. What did the tenants do to his son? They said: "This is the heir to this property. Let us kill him and the vineyard will belong to us."

Again Jesus asks His question: "What will the lord of the vineyard do to those tenants?" The Jews replied, "He will come and destroy these husbandmen and will give the vineyard to others." Luke alone tells us when they heard it they said: "God forbid - may it not be so." They knew that they were the wicked tenants in the parable, but they couldn't face up to the punishment. Sinners who know the just judgment of God live in the vain hope that it won't happen to them. And then Luke tells us that the Lord "looked upon them," no doubt in pity and in hopes of seeing some sign of relenting, but He saw none and said, "What then is this that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner? Every one that falleth upon that stone shall be broken to pieces, but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Ps. 118:22,23). How could they escape destruction? It was written in the Scriptures that the Stone they were rejecting would become the Head of the corner and would crush them to dust.

Matthew ends with the additional words of Christ: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This statement is usually taken to mean that God will take the Kingdom away from the Jews and give it to the Church. There are only two things wrong with this idea. The first is, that the truth about the Church which is the Body of Christ had not as yet been revealed, and the second is that the Church is not a nation. If one thing characterizes the Church it is that it is made up of all nationalities. The Church of this dispensation is never called a nation, although Israel, as called out of Egypt, is called a church (Acts 7:38). No, the nation Christ speaks about is the New Israel, the nucleus of which was His little flock, for did He not say to His little group of Israelites: "Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom?" (Lk. 12:32). There will be a nation of Israel in the future to whom the Kingdom will be given.

## **7. The Parable of the Marriage Feast**

**References:** Matt. 22:1-14; cf. Lk. 14:15-24

This is the third of the series of parables of warning which Jesus spoke on that Tuesday of the Passion week. It was about a certain king who made a marriage feast for his son and sent out invitations to the guests, and they would not come. He then sent out a second invitation, stating that "All things are ready." But they made light of it and some even manhandled and killed the king's servants. So the king sent his army and destroyed these murderers and destroyed their city. He then sent his servants out into the highways, who gathered as many as they

could find, and brought them to the feast. But when the king arrived he spotted a man without a wedding garment and asked how he got in without a proper garment. The man was speechless and was bound hand and foot and cast out into outer darkness. And the parable ends with the same words as did the one about the laborers in the vineyard, "For many are called, but few are chosen."

The parable in Lk. 14 is very similar to this one, but it was given on a different occasion and is in several respects different. In Matthew it is a wedding feast; in Luke a great supper. In Matthew the rejectors are destroyed and their city burned; in Luke there is no mention of punishment. In Matthew there are two invitations sent; in Luke there is only one. In Luke the excuses are enumerated; in Matthew they are not. However, both parables have the same general interpretation.

At the first invitation the message is simply, "Come to the wedding feast." But at the second invitation the message is, "All things are ready." Both of these invitations went out to the rulers of Israel. The first invitation doubtless refers to the ministry of John the Baptist and the earthly ministry of Jesus, when the Kingdom was near at hand. But it was impossible that all things could have been ready at that time for the establishment of the Kingdom, for Christ made it plain, as did the O.T. prophets, that Christ must first suffer and rise from the dead before the Kingdom could be "ready" (cf. Lk. 24:26; 1 Pet. 1:10,11). Therefore there could have been no legitimate offer of the Kingdom until after Christ had suffered. All things would then be ready, and this is doubtless what the second invitation refers to. This invitation was extended at Pentecost and during the early Acts period. In keeping with the parable, this second invitation was rejected by Israel and Christ's servants were persecuted and slain. The next thing in the parable was the destruction of these murderers and the burning of their city, and we know that the Roman Titus carried this out in 70 A.D.

But from Paul's epistles we learn that instead of the Kingdom program going on and the marriage taking place, God has suspended this whole prophetic program and has begun a new, secret dispensation of the mystery (Eph. 3:1-9). Most commentators see the fulfillment of this parable in the present dispensation when Gentiles are being saved, and of course, there is a parallel. But the real fulfillment belongs to the future when the marriage of the Lamb will take place (Rev. 19:7-10).

Comment must be made on two details in the parable. It is stated that both good and bad were brought into the feast. This shows that the invitation was not based upon human character, but purely upon the grace of God. After man had so miserably treated God's servants, any favor shown had to be pure grace. The other detail concerns the man who came in without a wedding garment. It must be remembered that the King provided everything for the guests, including the proper attire. This fellow apparently liked his own suit better than the one the King provided. But when confronted by the King he was speechless. It reminds

us of Paul's statement in Rom. 3:19: "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." So this man who was clothed with his own self-righteousness was cast out into outer darkness. The Gospel provides a garment of perfect righteousness as a free gift. Those who reject this garment and insist on appearing before God in their own goodness will surely suffer the fate of the man in the parable.

## **8. Three Questions by the Jewish Leaders**

**References:** Matt. 22:15-40; Mk. 12:13-34;  
Lk. 20:20-40

There were three religious-political groups in Israel. The Herodians were the supporters of King Herod and his government. The Sadducees were the religious liberals who denied the existence of angels or spirit or resurrection. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives who had added to the Word of God many traditions and ceremonies. They were the ritualists. All three groups, though otherwise opposed to one another, united in an effort to trip Jesus in His words and find some cause whereby they might condemn Him. Perhaps they were aware of how successful Jesus had been in stumping them with His questions, so they decided to use the same tactics on Him.

The Herodians framed their question to try to get Him in trouble with the government. "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar?" If He said, "No," they could claim He was a rebel against the government. If He said, "Yes," then He would have to deny His claims of being the Messiah. They thought they had Him either way, but He didn't answer yes or no, but asked to see a coin which bore the image of Caesar, and replied: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." This is, of course, a principle which Paul upholds for our present dispensation (cf. Rom. 13:6,7).

Then came the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection and they thought they had figured out a question about the law of marriage which would cause Him to say something whereby they might accuse Him of breaking the Law of Moses. And so they related the story of seven brothers who carried out the instruction of Moses in Deut. 25:5, all having had the same woman as wife. "Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?" Jesus' answer to them was that they were ignorant both of the Scriptures and the power of God. Marriage is a relationship in this life only. There will be no such relationship as marriage in the resurrection. There will be no children born in heaven. Resurrection saints will be equal to the angels; that is they can't be born and they can't die.

Then Jesus reminded them that at the burning bush Moses called God "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The Sadducees accepted only the books of Moses and chimed that Moses did not teach resurrection. But Jesus here quoted from Moses to show that although these patriarchs had been physically dead for years, Moses spoke of them as living.

"God is not the God of the dead but the living." So there must be life beyond the grave. If the patriarchs had become non-existent there was no possibility of a resurrection. But they did exist and therefore could be resurrected.

The Pharisees believed in angels and the resurrection and they seemed happy that Jesus had confounded the Sadducees, their religious antagonists. And so they got together and one of them, a lawyer (Mark calls him a scribe), asked Him a question, tempting Him: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus answered by quoting Deut. 6:5, and stating the two most important commands, Love for God with one's whole being, and Love for neighbor as for self. The scribe replied that Jesus had given the right answer and that the fulfilling of these two commands was more important than all of the entire burnt offerings and sacrifices. When Jesus heard his answer, He said: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." And we read, "after that no man dared to ask him any more questions." There were doubtless a few Pharisees who were an exception to the rule, who were honest enough to agree with Jesus as this man did.

## **9. Christ's Unanswerable Question**

**References:** Matt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37;  
Lk. 20:41-44

We have called this an unanswerable question, not because there is no answer, but because the Jewish leaders found it impossible to answer without admitting the Deity of Jesus Christ. After the Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees had exhausted their questions on Jesus, and while the Pharisees were still gathered together, Jesus asked them one more question. When Jesus asked, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" He was not asking, "What do you think of me?" He was asking, "What do you think of the Messiah?" Of course, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, but the Jews as a whole did not believe Him.

The Pharisees answered that the Messiah was to be the son of David. Then came the further question, "How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Ps. 110:1).

Not only did Jesus attest the fact that David wrote the 110th Psalm, and that he wrote it under inspiration, "in the Spirit," and not in the flesh, but what is most important, he stated that a man who should be born of his seed would also be his Lord. The Messiah, according to David, was to be both man and God. In spite of the compelling evidence of this assertion, not one in the crowd of Pharisees answered a word, which was a clear indication that they had closed their minds to all reason and were determined in their hatred of Jesus to destroy Him by whatever means they could find.

## **10. Woes Pronounced Upon the Scribes and Pharisees**

**References:** Matt. 23; Mk. 12:38-40;  
Lk. 20:45-47

Both Mark and Luke give a very abbreviated account of this incident, each devoting only three verses to it, whereas Matthew takes a whole chapter of 39 verses.

The first three verses are important in showing that Jesus recognized that He was still living under the Mosaic dispensation. He plainly told His disciples to obey everything commanded by those who sat in Moses' seat. This is a very important principle in correctly understanding the earthly ministry of Christ. The New Testament, technically speaking, had not even begun as late as Matthew 23.

Then Jesus warned His disciples, that although they were to obey the Scribes and Pharisees as they dispensed Moses' Laws, they were not to imitate their lives, for they say and do not. And then follows the long list of grievances against these leaders. The first twelve verses are addressed to the disciples and bystanders; the remainder of the chapter to the Scribes and Pharisees. The character of these leaders can be summed up in two words: their love for authority to lord it over others, and their love of popularity, to make a great show of their piety before men. The disciples of Jesus were to be just the opposite: none were to lord it over others as Rabbi, or Father, or Master. Father in this context has nothing to do with the family relationship of father, but with the spiritual relationship. They were to recognize only One Master, Father, Teacher, and to make themselves servants of all.

Then turning to the Scribes and Pharisees He pronounces eight woes upon them.

1. They shut the door of the kingdom in men's faces; they didn't enter themselves, and they wouldn't let those enter who were trying to.
2. They took advantage of widows and foreclosed on their homes.
3. They went to any length to make a proselyte and then made him twice as deserving of going to hell as themselves.
4. They made the gold in the temple and the gift on the altar more important than the temple and the altar, by saying that a man is not bound by his oath if he swears by the temple or the altar, but is bound if he swears by the gold or the gift. They were thus demeaning God, for putting the gold before God who dwelt in the temple.

5. They were careful to give a tenth of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin to God, but neglected the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. They strained out gnats but swallowed camels.

6. They scrubbed the outside of the cup clean, but inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence.

7. They were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but inside full of dead men's bones and every kind of corruption.

8. They built tombs and monuments for the prophets who were killed by their ancestors, saying that had they been in their father's shoes they would not have done such deeds. Jesus said,

So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending to you prophets, and wise men, and teachers. Some you will kill and crucify, others you will flog in your synagogues, and chase them from town to town. As a result the punishment for all innocent men will fall on you, from the murder of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Then Jesus turned His gaze upon the city of Jerusalem and wept: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not let me. Now your house is left unto you desolate, for I promise you will not see me any more until you say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The house which is left desolate refers primarily to the Temple of God, for God was to forsake it and as we shall see from the next chapter, not one stone would be left standing upon another.

Here too we see the mystery of the will of man working against the will of God. Jesus said, "How often I willed to gather your children, but you willed the opposite." The same verb, "thelo," to will, is used in both cases. God does not will any to perish, but some will to perish and they will perish (2 Pet. 3:9; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4).

## 11. The Widow's Two Mites

References: Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:14

It is still Tuesday of the Passion week, and after finishing His denunciation of the Jewish leaders He went over and sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people casting their offering into the box. Some of the rich cast in large amounts, but then He noticed a poor widow who dropped in two mites, the

smallest coins minted, worth about one-fourth of a cent. He called His disciples over and explained to them God's estimate of man's work. God does not reward according to how many dollars we give, but according to the percentage of what we give compared with what we have. Since the widow gave 100% of what she had, she had given more than many of the rich.

Paul enunciates the same principle in 2 Cor. 8:12: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." And of course, that principle holds for all kinds of service. A man who has never had the opportunity for a good education and who uses the worst of grammar, may be rewarded as richly as an eloquent preacher who has been blessed with natural talents and opportunities. This is not to excuse poor habits of speech, for one who is serving the Lord should constantly seek to improve his abilities for the glory of the Lord, but it is true that not all are equally gifted. What God is looking for is the use to the utmost of what He has given us, whether it be much or little.

## 12. Certain Greeks Desire to See Jesus

Reference: John 12:20-36

John alone tells us about these Greeks who came up to worship at the feast. It seems that there were a number of Greeks who had become disenchanted with their own dissolute religion and had joined themselves to the Jews' religion. It would seem from Acts 13:42,43 that there were a number of Gentile proselytes who attended the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. Paul speaks of the middle wall of partition which formerly divided the Jews from the Gentiles, which has been broken down in this present dispensation. Actually there were in the Temple of Herod a number of courts, the outermost of which was the court of the Gentiles. There was erected a barrier or pillar beyond which no Gentile could go. In fact, excavators in 1871 uncovered a pillar which is now preserved in the Museum at Constantinople with this inscription in Greek: "No man of another nation to enter within the fence and enclosure around the temple, and whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues."<sup>35</sup> There was not only this physical barrier in the temple between Jews and Gentiles, but there was a great spiritual enmity which existed. Paul teaches that now through the death of Christ peace has been made between Jew and Gentile and God has made out of the two, One New Man, which is the Body of Christ, with Christ the Head.

John does not tell us whether Jesus granted the interview with these Greeks, but it seems from His words: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit," that He was saying, "I must first die and rise again before there will be a ministry for the Gentiles."

Anticipating what lay ahead for Him, Jesus said: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, for this cause I have come

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<sup>35</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 2253.

to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The Father answered with an audible voice from heaven, which some interpreted as thunder, others saying an angel had spoken to Him: "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." This audible voice came, not for Jesus' sake, but for the sake of the people, so that they might know that the Father had heard and answered His request.

We often speak of the centrality of the Cross, that is, that the Cross of Christ is at the heart of all of God's redemptive work for mankind. As Jesus anticipates the Cross He says: "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Actually the judgment of the world is yet future and the Prince of this world still goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The death of Christ is the basis upon which the world will be judged, and it is through His death that He will destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the Devil (Heb. 2:14). It was at the time of the Cross that Satan was destroyed potentially, but not actually. That time will not come until the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20: 10). It is important to keep this distinction in mind. When Paul says that Jews and Gentiles were reconciled in one body by the Cross (Eph. 2:16), he does not mean that the Body of Christ actually, historically began at the time of the Cross, but that it was by means of the Cross that this work was later accomplished.

Universalists often quote vs. 32 as a proof text that all men will be saved. Christ had just been approached by some Greeks. Up to this time His ministry had been only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now He says, "If I be lifted up on the Cross I will draw all men, both Jews and Gentiles, unto me." He does not mean all without exception, but all without distinction.

Paul preached Christ crucified, "to the Jews a stumblingblock" (1 Cor. 1:23). We see this illustrated in their question: "We have heard out of the law that the Messiah abideth forever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of man?" The rabbis had interpreted all of the scriptures which spoke of the sufferings of the Messiah to the nation itself. Israel as a nation was God's Son, and through Israel's sufferings salvation would come to the world. They had no use for a suffering Messiah. They looked only for a powerful, glorious King who would deliver them from their enemies. Jesus will come in that character some day, but first He must be the suffering One to bear away the sin of the world.

### **13. Isaiah 53 Fulfilled**

**Reference: John 12:37-50**

In this section actually two of Isaiah's prophecies were fulfilled: the first found in 53: 1, regarding Israel's unbelief and rejection of Jesus, and the second, 6:10, regarding the reason for their unbelief. It might seem that Israel was not really responsible for their rejection of Christ, since we read that they could not believe because Isaiah said, "He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart." However, there is a moral principle which must be understood, and that is that

when man closes his eyes to God's truth he becomes progressively more and more unable to see. We sometimes call it judicial blindness. It is a sort of self-inflicted penalty. It becomes a just judgment of God upon those who reject His light to confirm them in their blindness. Israel did not believe the report (John 12:37), therefore (vs. 38) God sent blindness upon them and they could not believe. This reminds us of what will happen at the end of the age, as Paul describes it in 2 Thes. 2:10-12, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they might all be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Paul has quite a bit to say about Israel's blindness, which is one of the keys to the mystery which was revealed to him for this present dispensation (see Rom. 11:7-10,25; and Acts 28:25-28). Blessing in the Kingdom will come to the Gentiles through Israel's fulness, but in our dispensation blessing has come to the Gentiles through Israel's diminishing and blindness.

To eliminate the supernatural from the Bible some critics have claimed there were two Isaiahs, or perhaps several writers of the book of Isaiah, none of whom was actually Isaiah. It is significant that our Lord quoted from both halves of the book and attributed both halves of the book to Isaiah. It is also stated that Isaiah saw Christ's glory. It was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ that Isaiah saw high and lifted up on His throne in the temple (Isa. 6:1).

We know who two of the rulers were who believed on Jesus but would not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue, but thank God their faith was strengthened and at the end they were not afraid to go to Pilate and beg for the dead body of Jesus that they might give Him an honorable burial (John 19:38,39).

Before Jesus came into the world men had what might be called a general faith in God; but after Jesus came that faith had to be individualized to be faith in Jesus. After Jesus came it was impossible to have faith in God without having faith in Jesus; and conversely, to have faith in Jesus was to have faith in God. In our present dispensation that faith is narrowed even more, for it is not simply faith in Jesus which is required, but faith in His death, burial and resurrection. One may believe in Jesus as the greatest teacher of all time, or subscribe to all of His Kingdom teachings without being saved. The only claim a Gentile has on Jesus is through His blood. Gentiles are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope and without God, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12,13).

#### **14. The Olivet Discourse**

**References:** Matt. 24:1- 25:46;  
Mk. 13; Lk. 21:5-38

**A. Predictions Concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the Age: Matt. 24:1-31; Mk. 13:1-27; Lk. 21:5-28.** After weeping over Jerusalem and telling Israel their house or temple is left desolate, Jesus went out of the temple. There is special significance to this act. The temple was left desolate when He left it. It is interesting to note the similarity between the desolation of the first temple with that of the second. It will be seen from Ezek. 9:3; 10:4,18,19; 11:23 that the glory of the Lord departed from the first temple in stages and finally went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city, that is, upon the mount of Olives, from which it disappeared into heaven. The glory of the Lord appeared again in the temple in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when He was rejected by Israel, He likewise departed in stages from the temple and finally left the temple and went out to the mount of Olives. We know that after His resurrection He went back to heaven from the mount of Olives and that when He returns to establish His Kingdom His feet will again stand on the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4 cf. Acts 1:11,12).

The disciples were admiring the beauty of the stone work and ornaments on the temple but Jesus predicted its utter destruction. When they reached the Mount of Olives, His disciples (Mark gives names of four) asked Him what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. The usual translation, "end of the world," has led many to believe that the world or earth is going to end, go out of existence, at this time. But it is clearly taught in Scripture that the golden age for this old world, the Millennium, is going to take place after the so-called "end of the world ." It is the present evil age which is going to end at the second coming of Christ, and this will be followed by the glorious Kingdom age.

Jesus did not set any date for His coming, but He did mention a number of things which would lead up to His coming. He knew that there would be much speculation and many attempts of Satan to mislead people on this important subject, and so He issued a number of warnings not to be led astray. Wars, rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, earthquakes in various places - all of these are only the beginning of sorrows: the end has not yet come. Every time there is a great war, or devastating earthquake speculators arise claiming it is a sign of the end of the world. It must be remembered that these signs all refer to Israel and the Lord's Jewish followers. Being beaten in the synagogues and hated of all the Gentiles and similar expressions indicate Jesus talking about His Jewish people and not the Gentile church believers of this dispensation.

"He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." This verse has often been snatched out of its context and made to mean that if one endures faithful until his death, holds on to the end, he will finally get to heaven; otherwise he will be lost. But what is the "end" which is the subject of this context? It is plainly the end of the age. Jesus is talking about those who endure through the period of great tribulation who will be saved to enter the Millennial Kingdom. There will be severe persecutions, many false prophets and delusions, none being able to buy

or sell without the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:17). The prayer to be delivered from the evil one and to be given daily bread will have real meaning in that day.

The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations and then the end of the age will come. The Gospel of the Kingdom is not the same as the Gospel of the Grace of God, which we are to preach today. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the announcement that Christ is going to establish His Kingdom on this earth. This message will again be proclaimed by the Jewish remnant in the Tribulation period just before the end of the age. Confusion on this point has led to the teaching that just as soon as we reach every nation with the Gospel the Rapture of the Church will take place. The truth is, that the Rapture will take place before this worldwide preaching of the Kingdom gospel.

The Great Tribulation will be brought about by the appearance of "the abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, (cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:1). Christ interpreted the O.T. prophecies literally. There will literally come a time when this one whom Paul calls the man of sin, the son of perdition, will stand in the Holy place of the temple claiming that he is God (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3,4). That will be a sign for the godly Jews in Judea to flee for safety, for there shall be Great Tribulation, worse than anything that has ever happened on earth or ever will happen.

The coming of the Son of man will be as lightning which flashes across the whole sky. John tells us in Rev. 1:7 that when He comes every eye will see Him. Some religious cults have set dates for His coming and when their predictions did not come to pass they claimed that He did come but it was invisible. All such claims are contrary to Scripture. And the statement that wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered, shows that there will be awful carnage just before His coming. Immediately after the Tribulation there will be spectacular signs in the heavens which will affect the sun, moon, and stars, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and all tribes will mourn when they see Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. There will be the sound of the trumpet and the angels will gather His elect from every place on earth. The elect here are the elect of Israel who have been scattered and dispersed into every nation under heaven, (cf. Isa. 27:12,13, which is here fulfilled). Those who believe in the Pretribulation Rapture of the church are very inconsistent in identifying this trumpet with the one in 1 Thess. 4:16 which calls the church to meet the Lord in the air, for this trumpet is said to sound immediately after the Tribulation. Besides, there is nothing said here about taking the elect out of the earth to meet the Lord in the air. These elect are the ones who will inherit the Millennial Kingdom.

Of extreme importance is that which is recorded by Luke, which, while similar to Matthew and Mark in some respects, is different. We refer in particular to the passage from vs. 20 to 24. In both Matthew and Mark we read: "When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the

prophet, standing in the holy place" (the fulfillment of Dan 12:1); but in Luke we read: "But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand... And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This section in Luke is not talking about what will happen at the Second Coming, but about what happened in 70 A.D. It is true that Jerusalem will be invaded and taken in the end time, but according to Zech. 14:3: "THEN shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations," and thus deliver Jerusalem and establish His Kingdom. There is nothing in Zechariah about Jerusalem being trodden down until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Jerusalem has been trodden down for nineteen centuries by Gentiles, and the times of the Gentiles has not yet ended, neither has the Lord returned to stand again on the Mount of Olives. The times of the Gentiles refers to the times during which Gentiles have exercised dominion over Jerusalem, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar. The times of the Gentiles should not be confused with what Paul calls, "the fulness of the Gentiles," (Rom. 11:25), which refers to the filling up of Gentile salvation in this present dispensation while Israel is blinded, and which will be followed by the times of Israel's fulness (Rom. 11:12).

**B. The Parable of the Fig Tree: Matt. 24:32-51; Mk. 13:28-37; Lk. 21:29-36**  
**cf. LR. 12:42-46.** Here is another parable about the fig tree; however, according to Luke it might be called "the parable of the fig tree and all the trees," for it is an illustration which could be made from any tree, except the evergreens, of course. The main point of the parable is that when you see the buds on the trees swelling you know that summer is near. Likewise, when people see these signs of which Jesus has just spoken, they will know that the Kingdom of God is near. The application of the parable is very simple, but the next words of Jesus have caused considerable misunderstanding: "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." This has led some to suppose that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. completely fulfilled all of these predictions of Christ. But by no stretch of the imagination could it be said that all of these things, including the second coming of Christ took place 1900 years ago. Others try to limit "all these things" to only that which Christ Spoke about the 70 A.D. event. Others say, "No, the *this generation* refers to the generation which is alive when these signs begin to come to pass." That, however, seems self-evident, that there would be a generation alive at the time of fulfillment. Still others think "generation" means "nation" the nation of Israel, that Israel as a nation will not pass away. While it is true that God has preserved Israelites scattered throughout the world, the nation as such did pass away. We have pointed out earlier that this statement contains an untranslatable particle "an" which indicates that a certain thing could happen under certain conditions. In other words, all of these things could have come to pass in that generation if certain conditions had been fulfilled. What are those conditions? Plainly, the condition was that Israel repent and be converted, which Israel did not do. Since the condition was not fulfilled, the events did not come to pass. But, of course, they will yet come to pass at the end of the age.

When you hear people setting dates for the second coming of Christ, just remember that Christ said no one knows it, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son of man, but only the Father.

Matthew alone mentions the comparison of the days of Noah, and one being taken and the other left. However, Luke in another context (17:26,27,34,35) states practically the same thing, showing that Christ often repeated His teaching and illustrations. See comments in Section 31 of the Perean Ministry.

Compare Matt. 24:45-51 with Lk. 12:42-46, which is practically identical. For comments on this parable see our notes on Section 12 of the Perean Ministry.

**C. The Parable of the Ten Virgins: Matt. 25:1-13.** The usual interpretation of this parable is that the wise virgins who had oil in their lamps represent true Christians who have the Holy Spirit, represented by the oil. The foolish virgins then would represent mere professors who are not really saved. At the coming of the Bridegroom, the second coming of Christ, the wise are accepted and the foolish are rejected. It is true that in Scripture the Holy Spirit is typified by anointing oil, and it is likewise true in this dispensation that all saved people have the Holy Spirit and the unsaved do not. But is this what this parable is teaching?

At the time this parable was told the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to believers as an indwelling presence, hence it would not have been possible for the disciples to place this meaning on the oil. Further, it appears that the five foolish virgins did have oil in their lamps when they started out. We read: "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." The wise not only had oil in their lamps, but they took along extra oil in case there was a delay and they would have need for their lamps to burn for a longer time. It is then stated that when the cry went out that the Bridegroom was coming they were all aroused from sleep, and the foolish ones said, "Our lamps are going out." Are we to suppose that their lamps had been burning all this while without any oil? But even if we admit that they never had any oil, what about the statement of the wise virgins when the others requested them to share their oil? "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Is it possible for believers to give some of the Holy Spirit to others? If the Holy Spirit is given to all believers, the wise should have been happy to share the gospel with the foolish, so that they might receive the Spirit. But instead, they refused and said go and buy some oil from the oil merchant. Is it possible there is not enough of the Holy Spirit for everyone, or is it possible to buy the Holy Spirit? That was the fatal mistake of Simon in Acts 8:18,19.

While the wise joined the procession and went into the feast with the Bridegroom, the foolish went off to the merchant to buy oil, which they apparently did, and when they returned with the lamps burning they found the doors shut

and they were refused entrance. Did the foolish ones now have the Holy Spirit and were shut out in spite of that fact? Since the wise and the foolish all bought their oil, was there a difference in the oil the foolish ones bought which made it unacceptable? These and many more questions might be asked about the traditional interpretations of this parable.

To begin with, this is a parable which applies to those Jewish people who will be alive on earth at the time of the second coming of Christ. We do not believe any of the saints of this dispensation will still be on earth at that time, since we believe the Rapture will already have occurred. It seems to us that this parable is teaching the same thing that many of the other parables teach, but under different figures of speech. The most evident lesson is preparedness for the Lord's return at the end of the age. Christ Himself summed up the teaching of the parable in these words: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Is not this the same lesson we learned from the parable of the Fig Tree, which He had just finished telling, or the parable of the Steward and his Servants (Lk. 12:46)? It might be supposed that after the Raptures in the Tribulation period things will continue much as today; churches will be in operation, the gospel of the grace of God will be preached, sinners will get saved and receive the Holy Spirit. But will they? We believe the Tribulation will present a vastly different dispensation from that of today. The Tribulation will be a time of testing and trial. It will be a comparatively short period and the plain teaching of Matt. 24:13 is that those who endure faithful to the end of the tribulation will be saved. There will surely be a difference in the message and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Church and all of the unique truth connected with it will have been consummated and removed from the earth. Endurance, faithfulness, and watchfulness through all the trials and testings of the Tribulation right down to the very hour of Christ's coming will be required of those who will be permitted to enter the Millennial Kingdom. Entrance into the Kingdom will not be a purely spiritual experience, but a literal, physical salvation as promised in all the prophets since the world began (Lk. 1:70-79). To try to fit this and the other Kingdom parables into the present dispensation is to distort either the teachings for the Body of Christ or for the Kingdom. The Rapture of the Body will take place at least seven years before this parable is fulfilled. It should be noted also that Christ is never addressed as the Son of man in connection with the Church. It is His special title in relation to Israel. The parable in Lk. 12:35-41 should also be studied in relation to the parable of the Virgins. Finally, it needs to be pointed out constantly that a parable is a story designed to teach some central truth, and that there may be many embellishments in the story which are not intended to be interpreted as symbolical.

**D. The Parable of the Talents: Matt. 25:14-30.** This parable is very similar to the parable of the Pounds, or as we called it, the parable of the Postponed Kingdom in Lk. 19:11-27. Comparing the parables, in one there are three servants and in the other ten; and instead of giving five, two, and one talents, the nobleman gave one pound to each of the ten. In Matthew the one who received

five talents doubled the money by trading, as did the one who was given two, but the one who received one talent hid it in the ground. In Luke one man gained ten pounds and another five, and another hid his pound in a napkin. Aside from these differences, the two parables teach much the same lesson, although the one in Luke, being told on a different occasion, brings out the further truth about the Kingdom not appearing immediately, but only after the Nobleman goes into the far country to receive the authority and then returns.

**E. The Judgment of the Nations: Matt. 25:31-46.** We call this a parable because the actual judgment of the nations which will take place at the return of Christ is likened to a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. It is given at the conclusion of a full day of teaching by Christ in the temple and later as He goes to the Mount of Olives. It was probably late on Tuesday afternoon that He uttered these words.

There are a number of problems which arise with the idea of judging nations. Does it mean that nations as such will be judged as nations, or does it mean that everybody in all nations will be judged individually? It must be remembered that this is a judgment of nations that are alive and existent at the time of Christ's return. There is no mention of resurrection or a judgment of the dead. We know that in the past God has judged nations as nations, causing some to flourish and others to be destroyed. God said to Jeremiah: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant" (1:10). And again: "But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord" (12:17). There is no doubt but that nations which have persecuted the Lord's brethren in the flesh will be destroyed and not permitted to exist as a part of the millennial earth. Does this mean that everyone in each of those goat nations will be eternally lost? No, for Scripture makes it plain that every man will be judged according to his own works. From Rev. 7:9 it appears that a great multitude out of every nation will be saved at the end of the Tribulation to enter into the Kingdom. When the nation of Israel rejected Christ it did not mean that every Israelite rejected Him. It was the rulers, the ones who guided the destiny of the nation, that rejected Him. This is not the final judgment. That will take place a thousand years later. It is a judgment to determine who will enter the earthly kingdom. Another problem is that these Gentiles appear to be saved or lost because of their works. Giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, visiting the sick, and those in prisons-none of these are the basis for granting eternal life today. How can they avail for salvation in their day? Christ's explanation is: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Who are His brethren? Israelites, of course. This is the final carrying out of the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12:3). Their treatment of God's chosen people will be reckoned to be the same as their treatment of Christ. By receiving His brethren they are receiving Christ, and in rejecting them they are rejecting Him. Their works are a manifestation of their faith. Those who are judged will have had opportunity to hear the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 24:14), and in spite of

God's judgments during the Tribulation, many will not repent but will curse God (Rev. 16:9). Likewise those that worship the beast are warned of their fate (Rev. 14:9-11).

The goat nations are said to have been cast into the lake of fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels. Although the Beast and the False Prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire at the time of this judgment (Rev. 19:20), there is no record of the goat nations being cast into that place at the beginning of the thousand years. It may be that they are, or it may be that they are slain and will be cast into the lake of fire along with Satan and all the rest of the unsaved dead at the Great White Throne Judgment of Rev. 20:10-15.

We believe that those who teach that the Body of Christ will go through the Great Tribulation and will be a part of this judgment of the nations are confronted with insoluble problems. There is going to be a different Gospel preached, and the basis for judgment will be the favorable or unfavorable treatment of the Jews. But where is there any indication in the Church epistles to suggest such changes? It is not that we believe that the Body Church is proof against tribulation, for Paul stated clearly that all who live godly in Christ shall suffer tribulation, (1 Thess. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:12), but the Great Tribulation is one of the most prophesied periods in Scripture which has to do specifically with the nation of Israel, whereas the Body of Christ is not a subject of prophecy. It was a mystery or secret hidden in God before it was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. Therefore we believe the Rapture of the Body will take place before God resumes His dealings with Israel in the Tribulation period.

## **15. Judas Conspires With the Chief Priests**

**References:** Matt. 26:1-5, 14-16; Mk. 14:1,2,10,11;  
Lk.. 22:1-6

We come now to the last events of Tuesday, the third day of the Passion week. Jesus reminded His disciples that after two days the Passover would be celebrated and He would be delivered up to be crucified. At this very hour the chief priests and elders were gathered at the court of Caiaphas, the high priest, taking counsel how they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill Him, but they said, "Not during the feast, lest a tumult rise among the people," for they feared the people.

We are not told where Jesus and His disciples went that Tuesday night. Perhaps He remained in the mount of Olives, although it would have been cold at night at that season, or perhaps He went back to Bethany. We do know where Judas went. He went to the chief priests, after that Satan had entered into him, and bargained with them to betray Jesus unto them for thirty pieces of silver. This was the amount of money under the Law that was to be paid for the slave who was made useless or killed by an accident. One should read and study Zech. 11:7-14 in connection with the thirty pieces of silver. It is a prophecy of the

rejection of Christ. Judas then began planning for any opportunity to deliver Jesus to them in the absence of the great crowds which were in Jerusalem for the feast.

It is interesting to note that sometime during the ten days between the ascension of Christ and the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and said,

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us and had obtained a part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another man take. (Acts 1:15-20)

David prophesied about Judas in Ps. 41:9 and as we shall see in the next section, Jesus Himself quoted this same scripture in John 13:18, explaining that what He had just spoken was not said to all of His disciples, for He knew whom He had chosen, and one of them would lift up his heel against Him, that is, Judas would betray Him.

## **16. The Last Supper and The Upper Room Discourse**

**References:** Matt. 26:17-35; Mk. 14:12-31;  
Lk. 22:7-38; John 13:1-14:31

Before entering into the details of this section we feel that we should first discuss the Supper itself. What was this supper which Jesus ate with His disciples? Was it actually the Passover supper and when did it take place? In the introduction to the Passion Week we discussed the two views, one which claims that it was not the Passover which He ate, but a supper eaten the night before the Passover, on Tuesday night after sunset, which was the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan. And since this 14<sup>th</sup> day lasted until sunset of Wednesday, Jesus was crucified at nine o'clock Wednesday morning and buried before sunset. It was on this day of the crucifixion that the Jews killed their Passover lambs, and then after sunset, which was the beginning of Thursday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, they ate the Passover meal. The other view claims that Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples after sunset on Thursday, which was actually the beginning of Friday and that He was crucified the next morning which was still Friday.

In defending the latter view we would point out the following facts:

- a. Matthew states: "Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the

Passover" (Matt. 26:17). The A.V. inserted the word "feast" before unleavened bread, which is not in the original text. This was not the first day of the feast, but the day on which all leaven was put out of their houses, which was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, on the evening of which the Passover was eaten. Mark makes it even plainer: "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover" (14:12). And if possible Luke makes it even plainer: "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed." Thus the three Synoptics state unequivocally it was on the first day of unleavened bread when the Passover lambs must be killed that the disciples prepared the supper which was to be eaten that evening.

b. John 13:1 on the surface seems to contradict the testimony of the Synoptics: "Now before the feast of the passover," Jesus ate this supper with His disciples. If the supper was before the feast of Passover, the supper could not have been the Passover. The Passover must have been the day after the last supper. This seeming contradiction between John and the others has come about by confusing the Passover supper with the feast. The supper commemorated the redemption of the firstborn in Israel the night before the Exodus; the feast commemorated their actual deliverance out of Egypt. Num. 28:16 and 17 clearly state this fact: "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten." Ex. 12:16 states that the first and seventh days of the feast of unleavened bread were to be holy convocations, or sabbaths, in which no work was to be done. This explains John 13:27. Jesus had told Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." None of the other disciples knew why Jesus said that, but "some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things we have need of against the feast." As we have seen the feast was a sabbath and even though it was past sunset, it was apparently still lawful to make purchases in preparation for the feast. This explains also why the priests refused to defile themselves early the next morning by entering Pilate's judgment hall: "but that they might eat the Passover." They could not have been talking about eating the Passover supper, for that was eaten after sunset, and Lev. 22:7 makes it plain that "When the sun is down he shall be clean, and shall afterwards eat of the holy things." Therefore even if the Passover supper took place the night after Jesus ate His supper, the priests could have become defiled during the day, and still have been cleansed and able to eat the supper after sunset. But such would not be the case if that morning was the morning of the feast, for the feast was eaten during the day and their defilement would still have been upon them. But, could the eating of the offerings at the feast be called eating the Passover? Deut. 16:2,3 identifies the whole week of the feast of unleavened bread with the Passover. One further evidence that Jesus was crucified, not on the day the Passover lambs were killed, but on the following day of the feast, is seen in the fact that all three of the Synoptics state that it was at the feast that the governor was wont to release a prisoner, and Pilate wanted to release Jesus. Thus the Synoptics agree that it was on the

Feast Day, the morning after the Passover supper was eaten, that Jesus was crucified.

c. There is one more statement in John that must be explained (19:14). "And it was the preparation of the Passover," when Pilate brought Jesus forth to the Jews and said, "Behold your King!" If Jesus ate the Passover the night before, how could the next morning be the preparation for the Passover? There is no place in Scripture where the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan is called the preparation. This expression was used to describe the day before the weekly sabbath. If Jesus was crucified on Friday, the next day would be the Sabbath of the Passover week. Mark 15:42 seems to make this plain: "And now when even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath."

d. The most damaging evidence against the Wednesday date for the crucifixion concerns the women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. According to this theory Christ ate the supper on Tuesday night, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Christ was crucified on Wednesday morning, which was also the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan and was buried that afternoon before sunset. The burial was in haste, since the next day beginning at sunset Wednesday was a high day, a sabbath in which no work could be done. Therefore we read that the women after the burial of Jesus "returned home and prepared spices and ointments and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Lk. 23:56). Now if this sabbath was from Wednesday sunset to Thursday sunset, as the theory demands, we have a strange case indeed. After resting over the Passover sabbath, Friday began at sunset Thursday, which was not a sabbath, yet they stayed at home with their prepared spices all night and all day Friday, and then came the weekly sabbath which began at sunset Friday, so they had to stay home another twenty-four hours, and finally very early on Sunday morning they went to the tomb with their spices. There can be no doubt that the women returned to the tomb at the very first opportunity, but according to this theory they did not. They could have come anytime on Friday, but they waited until Sunday. This seems to be psychologically impossible. The Friday date, however, agrees perfectly with the facts. They prepared their spices before sunset Friday, then rested on Saturday, the Sabbath, and then very early Sunday morning, at their very first opportunity, went to the tomb. Of course, they were too late. They never got to use their spices. Jesus had already arisen and there was nothing but the linen wrappings in the tomb which had been wound about His body. Mary was the only one who had anointed His body for burial. None of the others understood or believed He would rise from the dead.

Since Friday is the traditional date for Christ's crucifixion, a word should be said about tradition. Some people have the idea that since Jesus condemned the traditions of the Jewish teachers, stating that they had made void the commandments of God by their traditions, that traditions, per se, are bad. But what is a tradition? The word means that which is handed down. Paul calls the Gospel a tradition: God handed it down to him and he handed it down to others

(1 Cor. 15:3, where the word "delivered" is the same word which is translated "tradition" twelve times). The same word is used in 1 Cor. 11:2: "Now I praise ye brethren that ye... keep the traditions, as I traditioned unto you." The traditions of the Jewish rabbis negated the Word of God; the Pauline traditions were the Word of God. So we must not discard things simply because they are traditional.

Tuesday of the Passion week had been a very long day of teaching in the temple and instructing His disciples on the Mount of Olives. This was two days before the Passover. We cannot find any record of what Jesus did the day before the Passover. Perhaps He remained in Bethany or in the Mount of Olives in prayer and meditation before confronting that final day when He would undergo the billows of God's wrath against man's sin, when He would become the sin-offering, bearing mankind's sin in His own body on the tree.

Our narrative now opens on Thursday morning, on the first day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. This is the first occasion in both Matthew and Mark where the Passover is mentioned. Luke states that during the boyhood of Jesus He went up every year with His parents to the Passover, but there is no further mention of it after ch. 2:41 until this last Passover. John, however, has ten references to the Passover (2:13,23; 6:4; 11:54,55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28,29; 19:14). It is commonly supposed that the ministry of Jesus encompassed three Passovers. He was in Jerusalem on the first Passover (John 2:23) but there is no record of how He kept it. At the second Passover He was in Galilee (John 6:1,4). It was unlawful to eat the Passover in any place but Jerusalem (Deut. 16:5,6 cf. 2 Chron. 6:5,6).

Jesus sent Peter and John into the city to prepare the Passover telling them that they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water, whom they were to follow until he got to his home, and then ask him: "Where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?" And they did so and the man showed them a large upper room where they made ready. This would involve the sacrificing of the lamb and preparing it according to the divine ordinance (Ex. 12:1-28; Num. 9:2-14). Jesus, foreknowing the conspiracy of Judas to betray Him, possibly kept secret the place where He would be with His disciples by telling the two disciples not a particular address, but to follow the man with the pitcher. The priests wanted to catch Jesus when He was away from the crowds, for they feared a riot if they tried to arrest Him in a public place.

When evening arrived, He sat down at the table with His disciples, saying, "with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Luke tells us that He further said He would not eat of the Passover again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom, and that He would not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come. These words surely indicate that Jesus expected the coming of a literal kingdom upon earth in which He would eat and drink of the fruit of the vine.

At this point we must turn to John 13 to see what went on at the Paschal supper. We read that Jesus loved His own unto the end. What end is meant? Various views have been expressed: to the end of His life, to the uttermost, showed them the last proof of His love. Perhaps it means all of these and more.

Vs. 2, "supper being ended," should be rendered, "during supper," for there is a continuation of supper after the washing of the disciples' feet. John emphasizes the divine knowledge of Jesus: He knew the hour had come to depart out of this world; He knew the Devil had put it into Judas' heart to betray Him; He knew that the Father had put all things into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God. He arose from the table, and girded Himself like a servant, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple's feet. Perhaps He came last to Peter, who had the time to consider what was really going on - the Lord stooping to this menial task. "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Jesus explained that Peter didn't understand as yet why He was washing their feet. But Peter remonstrated: "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" This was not rebellion against Jesus, but respect for His dignity. Imagine a King, and the Son of God at that, stooping down and washing the dirty feet of one of His subjects! But Jesus said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." When Peter heard that he surely did not want to lose his partnership with the Lord, so he replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Then Jesus explained that when one had had a complete bath, he needed only to wash his feet. It must be remembered that the roads were dusty and often filthy and that people wore open sandals. A host always provided for washing the feet of his guests. It is evident from this incident that Jesus was not implying that Peter would lose his salvation if he didn't wash his feet, but that he could not have fellowship with Him. He had given Peter a complete bath: he was clean through the Word, so he was saved. But in order to come into Christ's presence and have fellowship with Him Peter had to keep his feet clean. The believer's walk is in question here. Many Christians do not recognize the difference between judicial forgiveness and parental forgiveness. Judicial forgiveness remits the penalty of our sins, and when the believer becomes saved all of the penalty for his sins, past present, and future is forgiven. But the saved person may still commit sin (get his feet dirty) and this disrupts fellowship with God. What he needs is not to get saved all over again, but to come to God and confess his sin (wash his feet) and God, now as a Father and not as a Judge, forgives, cleanses and thus restores His child. This is what John is talking about in 1 John 1:6-9.

Christ was also teaching His disciples humility; stating that they should wash one another's feet. It is evident that the Lord was not here inaugurating a ritual. He said they didn't understand as yet what He was doing to them, but they surely understood He was washing their feet. There were these deeper meanings in the symbolic act. Besides we never read that the disciples ever met together to wash one another's feet.

Judas was present and apparently had his feet washed too, but Christ made it plain that not all of His disciples had been bathed all over and were thus clean. It is difficult to imagine how the betrayer could have the gall to even meet with the Lord and the other disciples after he had already plotted and had been paid for the betrayal. But he had to keep watch for the most propitious opportunity to carry out his devilish scheme, and so he attended the supper as though nothing were amiss. But he had to be there also so that Scripture might be fulfilled, for the Psalmist had written: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). This whole event of the footwashing is told only by John.

All four of the writers report the next incident in which the betrayer is identified. John says that Jesus was troubled in spirit and announced: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." The disciples became exceeding sorrowful when they heard this and began asking, "Who is it? Is it I?" John tells us that he was reclining at the table next to Jesus, and Peter asked him to ask Jesus of whom He spake. So John asked Jesus, "Lord, who is it?" And Jesus said: "He it is, for whom I shall dip this piece of bread in the dish." And so doing He gave it to Judas and immediately Satan entered in to Judas and Jesus said: "That thou doest, do quickly." No one at the table knew why Jesus told Judas to do this. They speculated that since Judas was the treasurer Jesus had sent him out to buy supplies for the festival, or to give alms to the poor. Judas, having received the sop, went out immediately, "and it was night." It was night indeed. Judas had turned his back on the Light and had stepped out into eternal darkness.

There is a lesson here in Divine Sovereignty and human responsibility. It had been determined before the world began that the Son of man should be betrayed, but Jesus said it would have been good for that man that he had never been born. God's foreknowledge of the betrayer in no wise made Judas any the less guilty.

If it is difficult to understand how Judas could have behaved as he did, it is equally difficult to understand what Luke reports next. With the news their Lord was to be betrayed and with the sorrow that had filled their hearts there arose an argument among the disciples which one of them would be accounted the greatest. Apparently they had forgotten the lesson He had just taught in washing their feet, and the sorrow over His betrayal must have been very short lived. But Jesus deals graciously with them, gives them another lesson in humility, and then tells them they will be rewarded for continuing with Him through all of His trials. They will eat and drink at His table in the Kingdom and will sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This same promise was given in Matt. 19:28. Again we have positive evidence of the earthly character of the Kingdom which Jesus promised.

It should be noted that Matthew and Mark place the announcement of the betrayal between the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper,

whereas Luke runs the two together. Luke then has the betrayal announcement, followed by the strife between the disciples. Matthew and Luke have the exit to the garden following the announcement of Peter's denial. Mark has them going to the mount of Olives before relating the prediction of Peter's denial. Matthew says they sang a hymn before they went out. Whereas the Synoptics tell us nothing of what happened between the time they left the upper room and arrived at the Mount of Olives, John gives us a very detailed account in Ch. 14 of what transpired further in the upper room, and then, as some commentators believe, in Chs. 15, 16, and 17 of all He spoke to them as they walked from the upper room down to the brook Kidron, to cross over into the garden.

John is silent on the institution of the Lord's Supper, but it is recorded by all three of the Synoptics. It was while they were yet eating that Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it and gave to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is given for you." Then He took a cup, giving thanks, and gave it to them to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Then He told them He would no more drink of the fruit of the vine until that day He will drink it new in the Kingdom. It should be noted that everything in this context is concerning the coming Millennial Kingdom. Nothing has as yet been revealed about the Church, the Body of Christ. Since the Church is a separate and distinct outcalling, we might suppose that this supper which was to be kept by the disciples in remembrance of Christ was only for the Kingdom saints. But Paul, the revelator of truth for the Body, states that the truth about the supper was delivered to him as a part of the revelation for us to observe until Christ returns for us, (1 Cor. 11:23-26). The death of Christ is central to both the earthly Kingdom and the heavenly Body of Christ. We need to distinguish between the death of Christ and its redemptive truth which is common to all dispensations, and dispensational truth, which varies with each dispensation.

After Judas had departed to do his dastardly deed, Jesus spoke of His glorification which would be accomplished through His death (John 13:31,32). He then began His farewell to His disciples, telling them He would be with them for a very short while and that they could not accompany Him to the place He was going. He then gave them a new commandment. There was an old commandment to love God and neighbor as one's self. The new commandment was to love one another, "even as I have loved you." That is love to the nth degree. This is the constraining love of Christ which is shed abroad in the heart of the believer (Rom. 5:5) and which motivates him to live no longer for self, but for Him who died and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14,15).

We come next to the prediction of Peter's denial. By putting all four Gospel accounts together (Matt. 26:31-35; Mk. 14:27-31; Lk. 22:31-34; and John 13:36-38) we see that Peter interrupted the Lord by asking where He was going. Jesus told him he couldn't follow where He was going and Peter wanted to know why he couldn't. Then Jesus told them that they would all be offended because of Him

that night, for it is written: "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Zech. 13:7). When Peter heard this he said, "Although all shall be offended, I will never in no wise (a very strong negative in the Greek) be offended." Jesus then called Peter by his old name: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted (turned back again), strengthen thy brethren." But Peter remonstrated with the Lord: "I am ready to go both to prison and death. I will lay down my life for thee." But Jesus replied, "Before the cock crows (twice according to Mark), thou shalt deny me thrice." Mark says that Peter protested vehemently, contradicting the Lord, that he would never deny the Lord. And all of them said the same thing.

We have two things in the above worthy of note. The first is Christ's foreknowledge of an individual's actions. Christ knew absolutely what Peter was going to do before he did it and in spite of Peter's strong protestations that he would never do such a thing. There are those who claim that God cannot have foreknowledge of acts of free wills, because such free acts are uncertain. They say God can foreknow only that which He determines to happen, and what He determines is His responsibility and not man's. If this be so, then God was responsible for Peter's denial, as He was also for Judas' betrayal, since He foreknew both of these events and therefore must have predetermined them to happen. But Scripture holds both of these men responsible for their acts. The fact is, that many of the so-called free acts of the unsaved are done through Satan's energizing in them, as in the case of Judas (cf. Eph. 2:2). In the case of Peter, Satan desired to sift him as wheat. He was not permitted to enter into Peter, as he did into Judas, for Peter was a child of God. But as God permitted Satan to test Job, He permitted him to sift Peter, but Christ had interceded for Peter that his faith would not fail. This is the second thing we want to comment upon. Christ's intercessory work is for believers only. Christ prayed for Peter but He did not pray for Judas. In the great intercessory prayer which we shall soon consider in John 17, Christ said: "I pray not for the world, but for those thou hast given me" (John 17:9). This is one of the very important aspects of the doctrine of eternal security. Paul uses this truth in Rom. 8:34 in order to show us that no one can ever condemn one who is in Christ Jesus.

Luke brings in an interesting dispensational side light following this in 22:35-38. Jesus recalls the time when He first sent His disciples out, commanding them to take neither purse, nor wallet, nor shoes, and He asked if they had lacked anything. They answered: "Nothing." Now, because He is going to be absent from them He changes His commands: "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." Some Christians cannot understand how the unchangeable God can change His commands, but here is a simple example. It is possible to follow God's command and be disobedient at the same time. If God has rescinded that command and put another in its place, it is disobedience to follow the rescinded command. Many religious groups have carried over into their programs biblical

commands which have been rescinded, and yet they defend their practices as being biblical. This is one of the great causes of confusion between sincere, Bible-believing Christians.

Next, John adds the whole of ch. 14 to the discourse in the upper room where He ate the Passover and instituted the Lord's Supper, which the Synoptics omit altogether. In this chapter Jesus first comforts and reassures His disciples with the truth of His coming again to receive them; He identifies Himself as being one with the Father; gives new prayer instructions which are enlarged upon in the next chapter; promises not to leave them as orphans by sending the Holy Spirit to be their paraclete, one called alongside to help; then confers His peace upon them, and finally says to them: "Arise, let us go hence."

The traditional site of the Cenacle (Latin for "eating room") is on Mt. Zion, a little south of the old city of Jerusalem, hence it was quite a walk from there to the garden of Gethsemane through the Kidron valley. During this walk some think the Lord spoke the words recorded in John 15, 16, and 17.

The disciples had a number of reasons to be upset and troubled. Christ's strange words about betrayal, crucifixion, going away where they could not follow, and finally the prediction Peter would deny Him and they would be scattered, surely must have troubled them. But Jesus told them: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Then He told them about the many rooms in His Father's house and how He was going to prepare a place for them and come again to receive them unto Himself. The Father's house is generally understood to be heaven. However, some take it to be the Millennial Temple, since Jesus called the temple at Jerusalem His Father's house. Ezekiel gives a description of the Millennial Temple with its many chambers in ch. 40 - 42. It should be remembered that on this occasion Jesus was speaking only to His apostles. He had promised they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and here He promises them a special place in His Father's house. Most pre-millennialists make this coming of Christ to be synonymous with the Rapture in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. However, there has been no revelation in the Bible up to this point of a rapture, and besides, the context has in view the earthly kingdom. The Rapture is associated with a Body of saints, the existence of which was not made known until several years after Jesus spoke these words.

It seems that the disciples were very slow of perception. Jesus had told them He was going away and that they knew where He was going, but Thomas said: "Lord, we don't know where you are going, and how can we know the way?" But his question called forth that most important statement: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Later on Peter uttered the same truth in different words: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Even though Jesus had told them, "I and my Father are one," (John 10:30), Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied." Philip was one of the first disciples called and Jesus said, "Philip, have I been so long time with you and you do not know me. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This does not mean that there is no difference between Jesus, the Son, and the Father. Jesus was on earth and the Father was in heaven. Jesus prayed to the Father, not to Himself. There is only one essence in the Godhead, but three Persons. It is a compound unity. It is not  $1+1+1=3$ , but  $1\times 1\times 1=1$ . The Father is greater, not in essential being, but in office. Jesus then promised to send the Holy Spirit to be their Comforter. The word means an advocate, helper, counselor. The Holy Spirit had been with them, but the promise now is that He would indwell them. This indwelling began on the day of Pentecost, just as Jesus had promised in Lk. 24:49. The indwelling of the Spirit is a part of the New Covenant promise (Ezek. 36:27; 37: 14). Since the Gentiles of this present dispensation have been made partakers of Israel's spiritual things (Rom. 15:27), members of the Body of Christ also have their bodies made temples of the Holy Spirit. The three-fold "in-ness" is revealed in vs. 20: "I in my Father, ye in me, and I in you." The work of the Holy Spirit is enlarged upon in ch. 16.

Jesus ended His words in the upper room by bestowing upon them the gift of His peace. Peace with God and the peace of God is that which passes all understanding and that which garrisons our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

There is a great deal of disagreement among commentators on the meaning of the words: "Arise, let us go hence." Some take this arising in a figurative, not a physical sense. Some think Jesus simply retired from the dining room and retired to the drawing room where He continued His discourse. Some think that after arising, there was a pause while preparations were being made to depart during which Jesus uttered the words in the next three chapters. Some think, as we have suggested, that they actually left the upper room and these further words were spoken as they walked to the garden. Others think it impossible that He could have spoken these words while walking because of the throngs of people in Jerusalem at that season. However, it was night and most people would have been in their homes celebrating the Passover. Actually, it matters little where the words were spoken. We do not know for sure where the upper room was located, whether in the city or on Zion. We only know for sure that Jesus crossed over into the garden after He had offered the prayer of intercession in ch. 17. If He spoke these next three chapters of John while they were still in the upper room, we have no record of any conversation on the way to the garden. However, it is true that as one reads from John 14 into John 15 he has the feeling that there has been no movement or change of surroundings.

## 17. The Vine and the Branches

Reference: John 15

In the parable of the Vine and the Branches the central teaching is fruitfulness in the believer conditioned upon "abiding in Christ." In the previous chapter of John, Jesus had revealed that He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell them and that through this indwelling, He would be in them and they would be in Him, and this condition would last for ever. It is most important to grasp this truth that being in Christ is a permanent union which can never be dissolved. Failing to recognize this fact has caused many Christians to suppose that Jesus is teaching in this parable that believers may be cut off from Christ, as a vine branch is severed, because they do not bear sufficient fruit in their lives. If gaining salvation or maintaining salvation depends upon the believers' works, then salvation is no longer by grace alone: it is by works. If one thing is made plain in Scripture it is that salvation is by grace apart from works (Eph. 2:8,9). Paul states: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

Abiding in Christ in this context does not mean remaining in a saved condition, for as we have seen, all believers remain in a saved condition eternally, because they have eternal life and shall never perish and no power is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand. What, then, does abiding mean? Christ stated in vs. 10: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Abiding in His love means unbroken fellowship and an unhindered inflow of spiritual life, just as there is the inflow of the vital juices from the vine into the branches. A person can be in Christ and not bear fruit. That is plainly stated in vs. 2. Abiding is the condition for fruit bearing. Once this is understood there should be no difficulty in understanding the parable.

Two kinds of branches in Christ are mentioned: those that do not bear fruit, and those that do. It is said of the branch that does not bear fruit, "He taketh it away." This verb is translated over thirty times "take up" and "lift up." Jesus does not say He destroys it or casts it into the fire. There are two possible ways of understanding what this means. If a branch is trailing on the ground out of the sunlight it will not bear fruit. The vine-dresser would lift up such a branch so that it might bear fruit. Whether this is the intended meaning or not, it is certainly true that Christ chastens and graciously deals with believers who are not fruitful. But there is the possibility if the believer fails to be exercised by the discipline which Christ administers, He may take the life of such a one and remove him from this scene altogether. Paul had dealings with a brother at Corinth who was doing just the opposite of bearing fruit for God. Paul would turn such a one over to Satan for the destruction of his body, that his spirit might be saved in the day of Christ (1 Cor. 5:5). Paul speaks of some at Corinth who were sick and some had died because of sin in their lives, but they were saved people. Paul says that if the believer would judge himself he should not be judged. But if he doesn't judge himself then the Lord must judge, and that judgment takes the form of chastening, "so that we will not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:30-32). God alone is the judge of what constitutes a believer who is totally devoid of fruit.

The other kind of branch is the one that bears fruit. In this case the vine-dresser prunes, purges, cleanses, or trims clean so that it will bear more fruit. And when the ideal condition is met, of the believer abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in the believer, much fruit will result. The Father is glorified when the believer bears much fruit. But apart from Christ the believer can do nothing.. This sounds very similar to Paul's statement: "I was crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20), or "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). A believer may do a great deal of work, but if it is not Christ energizing in the believer it is for naught (Phil. 2:13).

Up to vs. 6 Christ has been speaking to His disciples as "you" and "ye," but in vs. 6 He Says: "If a *man* abide not in me." There must be a reason for this change in address. Up to this point it has been God's evaluation of the believer's work. Now it seems to turn to man's evaluation. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." This fire has nothing to do with eternal punishment. Men do not cast other men into hell: only God can do that. Whatever it is, it is something men do. James shows us how Abraham was justified before God by faith, but he was justified before man by his works (Jas. 2: 18-26). The only way a believer can justify his faith before the world is to manifest a consistent, Christ-honoring life. The world at least respects a consistent Christian but it has absolutely no use for one whose profession is denied by his inconsistent manner of life. It appears then that Christ is here stating what men do to mere whether they be saved or not. Remember, this is a parable. The non-abiding one is cast forth AS a branch. Men gather such branches and burn them, but this is a figure of what men actually do to men. They don't actually cast men in the fire and burn them. But they do it figuratively.

The result of fruit-bearing is glory for God and joy for the believer. Christ spoke these things that His joy might remain in them, and that their joy might be full (vs. 11). A good test of Christian service is: does it result in joy? If it is irksome and a chore, it is not a result of Christ's inner working, and it doesn't bring glory to God. Nothing produces deeper, lasting joy, than that which is done entirely for the glory of God and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus lifts the believer to a new level. He is no longer simply a servant, but a friend of God. God could have kept us in the dark about His plans, but He has revealed His plans and purposes to us and treated us as friends. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This was spoken to His covenant people, but when Paul is writing to the non-covenant Gentiles who were. by nature enemies of God, he says: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7,8). Christ died for the ungodly!

Finally, the Lord speaks about the relation of His disciples to the world. As someone has said, "Union with Christ (vs. 1-8), leads to Communion with God (vs. 9-17); and Disunion with the world (vs. 18-16:4)." The believer is in the world, but not of the world. The evil world-system hated Christ and put Him to death. It is no small wonder if it hates those who belong to the Lord. The world loves its own, but Christ has chosen the believer out of the world. When Christ said in vs. 24 that the world would not have had sin if He had not done His mighty works, He did not mean that they were sinless before He came, but they now had the sin of rejecting God, after having seen and heard Him. Thus the Scripture was fulfilled: "They hated me without a cause" (Ps. 35:19; 69:4). May it also be said of us as believers: "The world hates us without a cause." Peter writes to his readers: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:15,16).

## **18. The Promise and Ministry of the Spirit**

**Reference:** John 16

It is difficult to distinguish between the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, His presence with God's people, and His indwelling in the believer, and yet these three conditions are separate and distinct. The Bible from beginning to end testifies of the omnipresence of the Spirit. The Psalmist of old cried out: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (sheol), behold, thou art there." (139:7,8). There is no place in the universe where the Spirit of God is not present. Then Jesus said to His disciples: "for He dwelleth WITH you and shall be IN you" (John 14:17). There is a sense in which the Spirit may dwell with God's people which is different from His universal presence. And there is the further sense in which the Spirit may indwell the spirit of man.

In this chapter Jesus begins by warning His disciples of the persecutions which they will have to endure after He leaves them, but He promises them it is really for their good He is going away, because of the wonderful ministry of the Spirit which will result in the sending of that unseen Person to indwell them. In fact, He states that if He doesn't go away, the Holy Spirit will not come. This truth should cause us to stop and meditate. Many Christians, if they could have had the choice, would have chosen to live on this earth while Jesus was here ministering. Probably all of them forgot that as Gentiles they would have had no access to Jesus in the first place, and in the second place the disciples were more greatly blessed after the Spirit was given. We have Jesus' own word for it: "It is expedient for you that I go away." There were so many things about Jesus' teaching that they could not understand while He was with them, but when the Spirit was given, their understandings were quickened and they remembered His words and understood what He meant, (cf. John 12:16). Before, while on earth,

Jesus was on the outside of them, but later, when the Spirit came, He was on the inside of them to enlighten their minds and to give them spiritual understanding.

There are three particular ministries of the Spirit outlined in vs. 8-11. First, "He will convict (not simply reprove) the world of sin, because they believe not on me." The Spirit will prove to the world how wrong they were in rejecting Jesus Christ. The world does not always admit its guilt, but we believe that when the claims of Jesus Christ are Scripturally presented in the power of the Holy Spirit, men are sufficiently convicted of their sin to be held responsible before God. The sin here is not sin in general. The law and the conscience convict the sinner about such sin. The sin here is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ.

The Spirit also "convicts the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." What does this mean? It means first of all that although the world convicted Him of being a criminal, worthy of death, God has proved Him to be righteous by raising Him from the dead and receiving Him back into heaven to sit at His right hand. Some also see in this the fact that the sinner, being convicted of his own unrighteousness, is enlightened by the Spirit of the imputed righteousness of God which is available through faith in Christ. While imputed righteousness is available to all who believe, it is difficult for us to see it as a part of this text. John in his first epistle calls Christ: "Jesus Christ the righteous" (2:1).

The third part of the convicting or enlightening work which the Spirit performs upon the world of the unsaved is "to enlighten in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." "Judged" is in the perfect tense, and should be rendered, "has been judged." We often hear people misquote this passage, "of judgment to come." There is a judgment to come, but the judgment here is that which has already been accomplished upon Satan. Satan has not yet been cast into the lake of fire, but he has been judged. Heb. 2:14 states: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

This then is the three-fold work of the Holy Spirit to the unsaved. Before an unsaved person can be saved, the Spirit must do this enlightening work. This is a three-fold work. When the Spirit accomplishes this ministry He accomplishes all three parts of it. It is not in our domain to ask why, when the Gospel is preached, some are convicted and convinced and others are not. The Sovereign Spirit alone is responsible for doing His work.

We come next to the work of the Holy Spirit toward the believer. The truth of vs. 12 is most important. Jesus had many things he wanted to communicate to His disciples, but they were things He could not as yet reveal to them. It would be the work of the Spirit to communicate these further truths as God's program

developed. The whole Kingdom program depended to a large extent upon whether Israel would repent and turn to Christ after His death and resurrection. And even after His resurrection and before His ascension He still could not tell them (cf. Acts 1:6,7). The Spirit was to guide them into all truth, show them things to come, and glorify Christ. "The Spirit will not speak of Himself," that is, "He will not speak from Himself," He will speak only what He hears. It is not the work of the Spirit to glorify Himself, but to glorify Christ. When we hear preaching which is supposedly magnifying the Holy Spirit above Christ, we have the right to be apprehensive.

There are, of course, other ministries of the Spirit. Some of these relate to miracle-working and special signs to Israel, such as speaking in tongues. There are also unique ministries of the Spirit in our present dispensation, such as baptizing believers into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). We believe that the Holy Spirit continues today in His three-fold ministry to the world, but in only a secondary way the ministry He had for these Jewish disciples. The Holy Spirit has completed His work of producing an inspired Scripture, and is not engaged today in revealing truths that Jesus could not speak while on earth. But the Holy Spirit does take the things of Christ as contained in the completed Scriptures and He enlightens us in regard to them.

The disciples were puzzled about the statement Jesus made in vs. 17, "A little while and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me." The little while refers to the period between His death and resurrection. Two different Greek words are used for seeing in this passage, which indicate that when they see Him again in His glorified state they will see Him in His true nature. He compares their sorrow at losing sight of Him and their joy of seeing Him again to that of a woman in the pains of childbirth, suddenly relieved of all anguish because a child has been born.

Next the Lord gives some new instructions concerning prayer. While He had been with them, they came to Him, praying and asking, but in the coming days, He says: "Ye shall ask me nothing" (vs. 23). From now on they are to ask the Father in the name of, in the behalf of, Christ. We wonder how many people who recite over and over again the "Our Father" prayer, realize they are disobeying Christ, for that prayer is not in the name of Jesus Christ. The "Our Father" prayer has been used in religious convocations comprised of many groups who deny the Deity of Christ and His atoning death, simply because it has nothing to say about Christ. Asking in Christ's name is much more than simply ending the prayer with a rather flippant, "in Jesus' name." In Jesus' name means that you are signing the name of Jesus to your petition; that you are asking it in His behalf. Doubtless much prayer that goes unanswered is prayed in our own names, regardless of the way we end the prayer.

The disciples are assured that because the Father loves His Son, He loves those who belong to His Son, and the Son will pray the Father For them. But very

soon they are to be scattered and He is to be left alone; and yet not alone, because the Father is ever with Him. In the world they will have tribulation, but they are to be of good cheer; for He has overcome the world. John, in his first epistle, describes what he means by "the world." (1 John 2:15-17). It is important to know what we mean by the world, when on the one hand we say we love the world, and on the other hand, we hate the world.

## **19. The High-Priestly Prayer**

**Reference:** John 17

Although according to the book of Hebrews Jesus did not begin His High-Priestly ministry until He had left the earth and entered into heaven (8:4 and 4:14), we believe that this prayer of intercession for His own the night before His death anticipates the heavenly ministry, and has been recorded so that we might have an example of how He intercedes in heaven for us. A very important truth which is not generally recognized is that the work of the priest is never in behalf of the unsaved. It is a ministry for those who have already become children of God. Jesus has several offices: Prophet, Priest, King, Head of the Body, Judge, Savior. Each of these offices has its own special application. This is the reason why, in this prayer, Jesus says: "I pray not for the world, but for those which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (vs. 9). As Savior, Jesus has a ministry to the unsaved world, but as Priest he has none. It is interesting to see how this principle is developed in the Aaronic priesthood. A study of Exodus 24 and 25 will show that God first of all brought Israel into covenant relation with Himself through the ministry of Moses. After the great covenant sacrifice had been offered, then God gave instruction to build a tabernacle that the ministry of priesthood began. It was the purpose of the priesthood to keep the people of Israel in a cleansed condition so that God could dwell among them. It is the purpose of Jesus' priesthood to keep the believer in a saved condition, for He stands as our lawyer before God whenever we sin to defend us against any and every accusation, and since He ever lives to make intercession for us, He is able to save all of those right down to the very end who come unto God by Him (Heb. 7:25).

The opening section of the prayer is a request for Himself, that the Father would glorify Him with the glory He had with the Father before the world began. Jesus had the consciousness of His pre-existence with the Father before the universe came into being.

The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him (vs. 2). Here we enter into a humanly insoluble problem. Some men think they have solved the problem of the election of God and the freedom of man. Some do it by denying man's freedom of choice and some do it by denying God's election, but both doctrines are taught in Scripture. Jesus had said that no man could come unto Him except the Father draw him (John 6:44,65) and He spoke of His disciples as those whom the

Father had given Him. They belonged to the Father and the Father gave them to Christ. It would be easy to conclude from such statements that the Father must oppose some people from coming to Christ, but the Scripture doesn't say that. It says rather that "God does not will any one to perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9) and God "wills all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). There is something wrong with a man's theology who declares that God has willed that certain men be lost, or that a person couldn't be saved even if he wanted to, or that another couldn't be lost even if he wanted to. Such declarations are direct contradictions of Scripture. Our problem is that we are not infinite and we cannot completely and finally know all about God's ways. That is why Paul ended the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans the way he did.

Surely the security of the believer depends greatly upon the intercession of Christ, as we hinted earlier. He tells the Father as long as He was with them in the world He kept them, and now He prays as He goes out of the world that the Father would keep them. But there was an exception. He had kept them all and none was lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. Christ was not here associating Judas as one whom the Father had given Him. He was contrasting Judas with His true disciples. Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas was a devil. Perhaps the statement would be clarified by saying: "none of them is lost, but the son of perdition (who was a devil from the beginning) is lost."

Jesus speaks of the disciples' relation to the world in vs. 14-18. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. But they were in the world. Jesus told Pilate the next morning that His Kingdom is not of this world. Many have used this as a proof text that Jesus taught that His Kingdom would not be in this world but in heaven. But one can be in the world without being of (issuing forth out of) this world system. He does not pray that they be removed from the world, but that they be kept from the evil, and perhaps the meaning here is the evil one, or Satan.

The burden of His prayer is that His disciples may be one, as the Father and the Son are one. And this prayer is not just for the Apostles, but for all who should hereafter believe through their word. We must point out that there are some who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity and therefore the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, who use this statement of Jesus, to try to prove that the oneness between the Father and Jesus is the same kind of oneness which can exist between human beings who are united on a particular subject. If this were the only statement in Scripture regarding Christ's oneness with the Father we should have a very weak case indeed for the idea of the Trinity. We need go back only to the beginning of this prayer to see that Christ's oneness with the Father is of a far different kind than that which exists between humans. People who do not know the Scriptures can be easily persuaded by a statement such as this taken out of its context. Jesus prayed for their unity to the end that the world may believe that the Father had sent Him. Paul also exhorts us to unity in the Church

(Eph. 4:3), but unity among God's people is not something limited to members of the Body of Christ. The Psalmist wrote a thousand years before Christ: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). Even though there are differences in dispensational groupings in the Bible, Paul tells us that it is God's purpose "in the dispensation of the fulness of the times to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him" (Eph. 1:10). The truths considered in the Upper Room discourse are so similar to things in our own dispensation that most people take them to be identical. However, just about forty days later, after all of the post-resurrection instruction which the risen Christ has given them, they were still expecting Jesus to return to set up the restored Kingdom of Israel. There is not a hint that He taught them anything different from this. There is not a hint that He told them He was going to do something entirely new and different with them, namely form them into the Church which is His Body. But as suggested at the very beginning of this study John was written many years after Paul received his revelation about the Body of Christ, and it seems that John included those parts of the teaching of Christ which are parallel in large degree to the truths for the Church. It is a kind of doctrinal bridge. The emphasis is on believing. Repentance is not even mentioned. John begins with Christ having come and having been rejected by His own people. He deals largely with the area of the death of Christ: God so loving that He gave His only begotten Son; except a corn of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone; as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. Much more could be said on this point. The ascended Christ became Israel's Intercessor, and Paul says He is also Intercessor for members of the Body of Christ (Rom. 8:34).

The final request of the prayer is that those whom the Father had given Him might be with Him where He is; that they may behold His glory (vs. 24). This request awaits the day of His return; for He had already promised: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

## 20. The Agony In The Garden

**References:** Matt. 26:30, 36-40; Mk. 14:26, 32-42;  
Lk. 22:39-46; John 18:1

It is significant that John, who relates the long upper room discourse, which the Synoptics pass over without mention, says nothing about Jesus' agony and prayers in the garden, while the Synoptics give a rather full report of this experience. Since John stresses the Deity of Jesus Christ, it may be that he was led to omit this experience from his record, whereas the other Gospel writers stress His humanity, and this garden experience is one that tested His humanity to the fullest extent.

Who can begin to understand what transpired in the heart and soul of Jesus as He wrestled in prayer with His Father at this climactic moment when He was to

be made a sin offering, bearing in His own body the penalty for the sin of all mankind? This was something that He could not share with His disciples. He must bear this alone. He had His disciples sit down and wait, while He took Peter, James, and John along with Him and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled, saying unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." After telling them to watch with Him and pray, Luke tells us that He went on by Himself about a stone's throw distance, and there poured out His soul to His Father, praying: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Luke, the beloved physician, alone relates the fact that an angel appeared from heaven, strengthening Him, and being in agony He prayed the more earnestly, and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down unto the ground. The word for "drops" is "thromboi," meaning thick, clotted blood. The horrible weight of the sin of the world seemed to be crushing the life out of His body by rupturing His blood vessels, which might have been fatal had not the angel strengthened Him for the ordeal. Was this an attempt of Satan to crush the life out of His body to keep Him from going to the Cross? We know he tried to murder Him when He was but a child. The writer to the Hebrews refers to this terrible ordeal in 5:7: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Does this mean that He was saved from death in the garden by the coming of the angel in answer to His prayer? Or does it mean, not that He was saved from dying, but was saved out of death through the resurrection? Although both things are true there is disagreement on which thing is intended in this text.

The disciples' eyes were heavy. Sorrow had overwhelmed them. Their spirits were willing but the flesh was weak. On returning to them Jesus found them asleep. Awakening them, He warned them to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation. Satan's presence was seemingly recognized by the Lord, if not by the disciples. As we know He went back and prayed the same thing the second time, and again the third time, and each time He found them sleeping. At last He told them, "Sleep on now and take your rest." But apparently at that moment Judas arrived in the garden leading the mob which had come to arrest Jesus. He knew His hour had come and said to His disciples: "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me."

## **21. The Betrayal and Arrest**

**References:** Matt. 26:47-56; Mk. 14:42-53;  
Lk. 22:47-53; John 18:1-12

By piecing together the four accounts we discover the following sequence of events. Just as Jesus was predicting that the betrayer was near, Judas appeared with a great multitude from the chief priests and elders brandishing swords and

staves. Judas had prearranged a sign that he would kiss the man whom they were to arrest. Judas greeted Jesus with the words, "Master, Master," and then kissed Him. There is no record that Judas ever called Jesus, "Lord," as did the other disciples. Jesus responded, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" And then Jesus asked: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

Jesus then addressed the mob: "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." The answer of Jesus, "I Am," (not I am he) was an assertion of His Deity, for when He had said this they all went backward and fell to the ground, as though a great unseen hand had smitten them. He told the Jews that He had been teaching daily in the temple and no one had laid hands on Him: why have they now come out with weapons as though they were apprehending a thief?

Jesus had told the disciples before they left the upper room to take a sword, and now when the disciples perceived what was happening, they asked: "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Before the Lord could answer Peter had drawn the sword and attacked, cutting off the right ear of the servant of the high priest, whose name was Malchus. Luke, the physician, is the one who tells Jesus touched the wounded man and restored his ear. Then Jesus requested them to let His disciples go, and Mark says, "They all forsook Him and fled." Mark also tells of a certain young man who had a linen cloth cast about his naked body, who fled naked, leaving the cloth in the hands of those who attacked him. Many believe this man was John Mark himself.

Before the disciples fled, Jesus told them to put away their swords, and then uttered the well known saying: "All they that take sword shall perish with the sword." When Jesus told them to buy a sword He did not mean that the Gospel was to be propagated by means of force. He was about to leave them in the midst of a hostile world and they needed the weapon for self-defense.

Jesus also explained that He could pray the Father and He would give Him more than twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from the Jews, but then He asked, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" The scriptures predicted His betrayal and death and such a request on His part would negate the Word of God.

Of special interest is the statement in John that Jesus requested His disciples be let go: "That the saying might be fulfilled, He spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." has reference to His prayer in John 17: 12, which we might have interpreted only in a spiritual sense, the keeping of their souls in a saved condition. But in the Kingdom program the promised blessings were physical as well as spiritual. As long as He was in the world, He kept them physically as well as spiritually. While the Kingdom was being offered to Israel in the early Acts period, the lives of the Disciples were also protected, in spite of the fact that they were thrown into prison. But in Acts 12, when we come to the end of the preaching and the record turns to Paul and the new spiritual order of the

Church, Herod killed James, the brother of John, and thought to do the same to Peter. There is no promise of physical security in this present divine economy for those who preach the Gospel, but praise God, there is promise of spiritual security.

## **22. The Trial Before the Jewish Authorities**

**References:** Matt. 26:57-27:10; Mk. 14:53-15:1;  
Lk. 22:54-71; John 18:12-27

The order of events, according to John, indicates that following His arrest Jesus was taken first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. These men are mentioned elsewhere in Lk. 3:2; Matt. 26:3; John 11:49; and Acts 4:6. Annas had been appointed high priest by Quirinius, governor of Syria, in 7 A.D., and was deposed by Valerius Gratus in 15 A.D. Although deposed he continued to have great power as seen by the fact that five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas held the high-priesthood in almost unbroken succession. Some feel that Annas was more responsible for the plot against Jesus than was Caiaphas. After the preliminary hearing before Annas, Jesus was taken bound to the palace of Caiaphas, where the chief priests, elders, and scribes had assembled. John also informs us that Peter and an unidentified disciple, who was acquainted with the high priest, and whom we believe to have been John himself, followed Jesus to the house of the high priest. John went in with Jesus, but Peter was left standing outside at the door. Then John spoke to the woman tending the door and brought Peter in. This door-keeper was the first one to confront Peter, which called forth Peter's first denial of Christ and the subsequent first crowing of the cock. It was a cold night and a fire had been kindled in the hall, and Peter stood with the others warming himself. A little later another maid accused Peter of being a disciple of Jesus, which he denied with an oath, saying that he did not know the man.

Meanwhile the Jewish leaders had rounded up all of the false witnesses they could find, but none of their testimonies agreed. At last two witnesses appeared who accused Jesus of having said: "I am able to destroy the temple, and build it in three days," according to Matthew. Mark records one of the witnesses saying, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands," (cf. John 2:19-22). All during these accusations Jesus remained silent and refused to answer. The men who were guarding Jesus mocked Him, struck Him, and then blindfolded Him and again struck Him on the face, saying "Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?"

Very early in the morning they brought Jesus before the council or the Sanhedrin. The priests asked Jesus about His teaching and His disciples. He answered that He had taught openly in the synagogues and in the temple, never in secret, saying, "Why ask me? Ask these who heard me." Whereupon an officer slapped Jesus with the palm of his hand, demanding, "Answereth thou the high priest so?" Jesus remonstrated, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil:

but if well, why smitest thou me?" Then they asked, "Are you the Messiah?" Jesus replied, "If I tell you, you won't believe me." "Hereafter," He continued, "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then they all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" And Jesus said, "Ye say that I am." Then Caiaphas tore his robes and cried, "What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now we have heard his blasphemy." Then he asked the council, "What think ye?" and they replied, "He is guilty of death."

While the trial was in progress Peter was still standing by the fire, waiting to see what the outcome would be. Another of the servants, whom John says was a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off, accused Peter of having been with Jesus in the garden. And for the third time Peter denied, this time with swearing and cursing. Peter was in a position where he could see Jesus, and as Jesus turned and looked at Peter, Peter heard the cock crow for the second time, and he remembered how he had boasted that although all men deny Jesus, he would never do so, and how Jesus had predicted his triple denial before the cock crowed twice. And he went out and wept bitterly, in contrast to Judas who went out later and hanged himself.

After Judas had discovered that Jesus had been condemned to death, he became very remorseful. Remorse is not repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-10). He returned the blood-money to the priests, thinking thus to salve his conscience, but they would not take it back. He confessed he had sinned in betraying innocent blood, but the priests replied, "What is that to us? See to that yourself." He then threw down the thirty pieces of silver and went out and hanged himself. Peter, in Acts 1:16-20, tells us that when he hanged himself his body apparently fell down a precipice and was dashed to pieces. The priests used the money to purchase a burial ground for strangers, which was called "Aceldama," meaning, "the field of blood." As the reaction of Judas may be contrasted with that of Peter, it may also be compared with that of Esau (Gen. 27:32-38 cf. Heb. 12:16-17).

We can only speculate why Judas betrayed Christ in the first place. No doubt the basic motivation was covetousness. As business manager of the Apostles, he probably lived in expectation of having great financial power in the Kingdom when it was established by Jesus, and then when he saw that hopes for the Kingdom were coming to an end, he may have thought he could ingratiate himself with the rulers by betraying Jesus and thus earn a good position with them. But he learned that even evil men had no respect for a betrayer.

David predicted the betrayal by Judas a thousand years before it happened (Ps. 41:9 cf. John 13:18; Acts 1:16). Judas "went to his own place" (Acts 1:25). Jesus said it would have been good for Judas had he never been born (Matt. 26:24).

### 23. The Trial Before Pilate

**References:** Matt. 27:2, 11-31 ; Mk. 15:1-20;  
Lk. 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16

Again in this section, each of the Evangelists gives details omitted by the others. John tells us it was early in the morning when the Jews brought Jesus bound unto Pilate's judgment hall, and that the Jews refused to enter the hall, lest they become defiled and thus not be able to eat the Passover. We have already referred to the problem created by this statement of John, for it seems to contradict the Synoptics, which state that the Passover was eaten the previous night. But if the "preparation" was the preparation for the weekly sabbath instead of the preparation for the Passover, there is no conflict (cf. the discussion of this problem under no. 16 of this chapter).

Luke gives a more detailed account of the accusations which the Jews made before Pilate. They accused Jesus of perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, claiming to be a King, of stirring up the people throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to Jerusalem. When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee and therefore belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod to be tried. Luke alone records this visit to Herod. Herod had heard so much about the miracles Jesus had performed, he was anxious and glad to see Him, hoping to be entertained by some magic acts. Herod questioned Jesus while the Jews vehemently accused Him, but Jesus answered not a word. Finally Herod and his men of war treated Him with contempt, scoffing and ridiculing, and sent Him back to Pilate dressed in a brightly colored robe. That day Pilate and Herod became friends, for they had been at odds before. Luke places great emphasis upon Pilate's efforts to free Jesus, stressing that neither he nor Herod had found any fault in Him worthy of punishment or death.

Matthew gives two or three details omitted by the other writers. He tells us when Pilate sat down at the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." This warning may have been one reason Pilate tried so urgently to release Jesus. Matthew also relates the fact that after the clamor of the Jews prevailed over the better judgment of Pilate, he took a basin of water and ceremonially washed his hands saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." Whereupon all of the Jews shouted, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Many efforts have been made in recent years to absolve the Jewish nation of all responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus, and while it is true that the Roman soldiers and not the Jews nailed Jesus to the cross, it was the leaders of the nation who turned Jesus over to the Romans, demanding His death. And the Apostles accused their own leaders of murdering God's Son (Acts 2:23; 3:13-15 ).

John also gives further sidelights. Pilate tried to excuse himself of responsibility by telling the Jews to take Jesus and judge Him according to their laws. But they replied that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death.

However, the law of Moses did give authority for the death penalty by stoning, which authority they used later in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:59). But in the case of Jesus they demanded the Roman execution by crucifixion. And John adds that this came to pass that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying by what death He should die, by being lifted up from the earth (John 3:14; 12:32,33). David had also predicted Messiah's death by crucifixion (Ps. 22:16).

John also records Jesus' conversation with Pilate about His kingdom. "My Kingdom is not of this world," He told Pilate. This statement has often been misinterpreted to mean, "My Kingdom will not be upon this earth." But when Jesus said in His prayer in John 17:16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," He surely did not mean that neither He nor His disciples were upon the earth. He was declaring that His Kingdom did not originate out of this present cosmos-world system. His Kingdom has a heavenly origin, but it will be established upon the earth.

After this conversation Pilate went out and announced to the Jews that he found no fault in Jesus, and since it was the custom to release a prisoner at the feast, he would release Jesus. But they cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas," the insurrectionist and murderer. Then Pilate had Jesus flogged, and the soldiers brought Him out wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe. Pilate pointed to Him and said: "Ecce Homo," "Behold the Man." Pilate again tried to release Jesus, but the Jews replied, "By our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard that, he became more alarmed and afraid and took Jesus back into the hall and asked, "Where are you from? Who are you?" But Jesus remained silent. When Pilate remonstrated that he had power to release or to crucify Him, Jesus replied, "Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." When Pilate came out again and tried to release Jesus, the Jews used their strongest strategy against Pilate: "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself king is a rebel against Caesar." Pilate could not afford to let the blood of an innocent man stand in his way for political power, so he brought Jesus to the place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, "Gabbatha," and after the Jews had cried, "Crucify him; we have no king but Caesar," Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified.

## **24. The Crucifixion**

**References:** Matt. 27:32-56; Mk. 15:21-41;  
Lk. 23:26-49; John 19:16-37

The soldiers led Jesus forth carrying His cross, but as they came out they met Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming out of the country, and they compelled him to carry the cross to Golgotha, a Hebrew word meaning "the place of a skull." Luke calls it "Calvary," which is Latin for skull. The word in the Greek is "kranion," the equivalent of our English "cranium." Modern

visitors to Jerusalem are shown two probable sites of Calvary, the traditional one in the precincts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the other, Gordon's Calvary, a hill shaped like a skull, identified by General Gordon.

They offered Jesus a stupefying drink, a mixture of wine and gall, to help kill the pain, but He refused to drink it. And there they crucified Him. Mark tells us it was the third hour when He was crucified, which would be about 9:00 A.M., three hours after sunrise. There were also two thieves or malefactors crucified at the same time, thus fulfilling Isa. 53:9 and 12. Pilate wrote an inscription of His accusation in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, which read: "**THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**" The Jews wanted Pilate to change the reading to, "He said, I am King of the Jews," but Pilate refused, saying, "What I have written, I have written," for he knew it was for envy the Jews had demanded Christ's death.

Luke informs us that while Jesus was on the way to Golgotha a great crowd followed Him, and many women bewailed and lamented Him. But He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children," and He predicted the days would come when they would pray for the mountains to fall upon them to hide them from the terrible days of tribulation which lay ahead.

The soldiers who crucified Jesus divided His garments among themselves, and there must have been four of them, for John says, "they took His garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part," but since His robe was seamless, they threw dice for it. David, a thousand years before, had predicted these soldiers would do this very thing, (Ps. 22:18).

The chief priests, and scribes, and elders, along with the multitude, mocked Him, wagging their heads and shouting such things as, "He saved others; himself He cannot save!" If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him!" "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God!" The thieves likewise derided Him.

It is recorded that Christ spoke seven times while hanging on the Cross. The first was a prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke alone records this prayer, and it is in his further writing in the book of Acts that we see the answer to this prayer. In answer to this prayer, God gave Israel another opportunity to repent and to receive Jesus as their Messiah and King (Acts 3:17-26).

Luke also gives the details about the two malefactors. Matthew and Mark leave the impression that both malefactors mocked Jesus, but Luke tells us that one of them, after hearing Jesus praying for the forgiveness of His enemies, evidently changed his mind and rebuking his fellow in crime, turned to Jesus,

asking that Jesus remember him when He would establish His Kingdom. Jesus' reply, which was His second word from the Cross, was, "Verily, I say unto thee, This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is a word of Persian origin which means a garden of pleasure and fruits, and is the word used to translate "Eden" in the Septuagint (cf. also 2 Cor. 12:4 and Rev. 2:7). The statement is generally understood to mean that the spirit of the thief would be with the spirit of Jesus in the place of the righteous dead that very day. Jesus did not bodily ascend into heaven until some forty days after His resurrection; therefore He was not speaking about meeting the thief in heaven that same day. Those who believe in soul-sleep or the unconscious state of the dead punctuate this statement to read: "Verily, I say unto thee this day, thou shalt be with me in paradise." If the dead are unconscious the thief has not yet met Christ in paradise. In this altered punctuation the words "this day" would be superfluous. On what other day could He have said this unto the thief? Furthermore, we do not believe it was possible for the Son of God to be unconscious or non-existent for three days.

John alone records the conversation of Jesus with His mother from the Cross. She was standing there with John and several other women. The words spoken by Simeon over thirty years before must have been running through Mary's mind (Lk. 2:34,35). When Jesus uttered the words, "Woman, behold thy son," He was not referring to Himself, but to the Apostle John, for He then said to John, "Behold thy mother," and from that hour John took her unto his own home. Even in death Jesus was concerned about others, rather than Himself.

At high noon a supernatural darkness descended upon the land and remained until the ninth hour. These three hours were the darkest hours in Jesus' life, for He was actually bearing the sin of the world, as indicated in His next cry "My God, my God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" These words were spoken in Aramaic which was misunderstood by some to mean that He was calling for Elijah to help Him. It should be pointed out that Jesus did not go to that lake of fire, or hell, to bear our sins during the three days His body was in the grave. He told the thief that they would be in Paradise that very day. Peter says, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"(I Pet. 2:24). Likewise His blood was shed upon the Cross and it is by that blood we are cleansed from our sins.

Following His fourth cry, John tells us He cried: "I thirst!" One cannot begin to imagine the physical torture and extreme thirst of one hanging for six hours on a cross. Ps. 22 gives a vivid description of His physical sufferings, but the spiritual experience of darkness and thirst must have far outweighed the physical. Someone filled a sponge with sour wine and with a branch of hyssop placed it to His lips. After that He cried: "Finished,"(just one word in the Greek, "tetelestai"). He had completed the work the Father had sent Him to do. We speak of it as the finished work of Christ (cf. Heb. 10:12).

His seventh and final cry was: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and having said this, He yielded up His spirit. We remember the words of Jesus in John 10:17,18: "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. This commandment have I received of my Father."

Because the next day was the sabbath the Jewish rulers requested that the bodies be removed from the crosses before evening began, so the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two criminals, but were surprised to find that Jesus was already dead. Therefore they did not break His legs but a soldier pierced His side with a spear and forthwith came out blood and water. John saw this and bore witness to the fact it was true. Again, the soldiers unwittingly fulfilled Scripture, for Ps. 34:20 stated: "He keepeth all His bones; not one of them is broken," and Zech. 12:10 stated: "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."

Luke states that when the Roman centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man." And Luke concludes: "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

There is a difference between the fact of the Crucifixion of Jesus and what Paul calls, "the preaching of the Cross," (1 Cor. 1:18). The fact of the death of Christ is clearly prophesied in the O.T. Scriptures. The death of Jesus is never presented as good news in the Gospels or the early chapters of Acts. It was the worst news imaginable to the Apostles. Peter calls it a crime of which the rulers of Israel were guilty. But when we come to Paul's epistles we find that the preaching of the Cross is good news: it is the Gospel. God revealed to Paul that He was in Christ there on the Cross, reconciling the world unto Himself, so that this greatest tragedy in world history has now become the greatest good news the world has ever heard.

## 25. The Burial

**References:** Matt. 27:57-61; Mk. 15:42-47;  
Lk. 23:50-56; John 19:38-42

Two men who had been secret disciples of Jesus were responsible for the burial of Jesus' body. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man according to Matthew. According to Mark he was an honorable counselor who waited for the Kingdom of God. Luke says he was a good man and just, who had not consented to the decision of the Jewish council in condemning Jesus. And John tells us he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. According to Mark, Joseph boldly requested permission from Pilate to bury the body of Jesus. John alone tells us that Nicodemus, another secret disciple, came with Joseph, bringing about a hundred pound mixture of myrrh and aloes with which to anoint the body. They apparently took the body down from the cross, wrapped it in clean linen

cloth which Joseph had bought, along with the spices, according to Jewish burial practice, and laid the body in a rock hewn sepulchre in which no one had ever been buried. Matthew states the tomb belonged to Joseph, and John informs us that the tomb was in a garden near the place of the crucifixion, and that the body was placed in this tomb because the sabbath was drawing near and there would not have been time to take it elsewhere. Mark explains that "the preparation" meant the day before the sabbath. This would indicate that Jesus was buried just before sunset on Friday, since the sabbath began at sunset on that day. All of the Synoptics state that certain women, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses, sat watching where Jesus was buried, and Luke states that the women returned home and prepared spices and ointments and rested on the sabbath day according to the commandment. Thus they rested from sundown Friday to sunset Saturday. Joseph, according to Mark, rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

It is most encouraging and refreshing to read about these two secret disciples who turned out to be more courageous than the Apostles themselves. We read nothing about any of the Apostles helping in the burial of their Lord, but of these two prominent men, one a ruler of the Jews and the other a rich member of the Sanhedrin, both risking their lives and their positions, by boldly coming to Pilate and claiming the body of this One whom the Jews had condemned to death as a blasphemer. It sometimes requires a great crisis to bring a believer out of his shell, and such a crisis often produces a more viable testimony than evidenced by others who had been more open in their stand.

## **26. The Guards Keep Watch At the Tomb**

**Reference: Matt. 27:62-66**

On Saturday the Jewish leaders came to Pilate, saying, "Sir; we remember that the deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so that the last error shall be worse than the first." Pilate gave them a guard of soldiers and told them to make the tomb as secure as possible. In the presence of the guard they placed a seal on the stone over the door of the tomb and then left the guard to make sure no one came near the tomb. These Jews did not understand the meaning of Ps. 16:8-10, and the impossibility of death holding this One whom they had put to death (Acts 2:24).

## CHAPTER IX

# The Forty-Day Post-Resurrection Ministry

### RESUME

This final episode covers the forty day period between the Resurrection of Christ and His Ascension into heaven. Jesus arose from the dead sometime between sunset Saturday and sunrise Sunday. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene and soon after to other women. In the afternoon He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, as well as to Peter. Later in the evening He appeared to ten of the disciples, Thomas being absent. One week later He appeared to the Eleven, when Thomas saw the Lord and believed. He later appeared to seven of the disciples after they had gone up to the Sea of Galilee to go fishing. Jesus then made an appointment to meet them at a certain mountain in Galilee. It is possible that it was at this place the five hundred believers saw Him, as mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:6. Paul also tells us that Jesus appeared to James, the Lord's brother. The tenth and final appearance was forty days after the resurrection when He appeared unto the Eleven, giving them a final charge, and then ascending into heaven from the Mount of Olives.

#### 1. The Resurrection Morning

References: Matt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-11;  
Lk. 23:56-24:12; John 20:1-18

There must have been great excitement on the morning of the resurrection of Christ. For that reason it is difficult to piece together the exact order of events. Various individuals and small groups were coming to and returning from the tomb at different times and interacting with one another. Each seemed to be having different kinds of experiences, some seeing only the empty tomb, others beholding angels in shining garments, others having messages given to deliver to the disciples, and some actually seeing and conversing with the risen Lord.

The *Scofield Reference Bible* has worked out the following order of events as related in the four Gospels, which seems to be quite accurate:

Three women, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, start for the sepulchre, followed by other women bearing spices. The three find the stone rolled away, and Mary Magdalene goes to tell the disciples (Lk. 23:55-24:9; John 20: 1,2). Mary, the mother of James and Joses, draws nearer the tomb and sees the angel of the Lord (Matt. 28: 2).

She goes back to meet the other women following with spices. Meanwhile Peter and John, warned by Mary Magdalene, arrive, look in and go away (John 20:3-10). Mary Magdalene returns weeping, sees the two angels and then Jesus (John 20:11-18), and goes as He bade her to tell the disciples. Mary (mother of James and Joses), meanwhile, has met the women with the spices and, returning with them, they see the two angels (Lk. 24:4,5; Mk. 16:5}. They also receive the angelic message, and, going to seek the disciples, are met by Jesus (Matt. 28:8-10).<sup>36</sup>

Whether this is the exact order of events is not too important. There are several other events which deserve our attention. There was a great earthquake and an angel descended and rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, not to let Jesus out, but to let witnesses in to behold the empty tomb with the grave clothes still in place, as a cocoon is left by the emerging butterfly. The exact time of the resurrection is not recorded; all we know is that He had arisen before the first women arrived at the tomb at the dawning of the day.

It seems strange that the unbelieving Jewish leaders understood the claim of Jesus that He would arise from the dead on the third day, and therefore had guards posted at the tomb, but according to John 20:9: "as yet the disciples knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." We learned earlier from such passages as Lk. 18:31-34 that this truth was hidden from the disciples, so that they could not understand the things that Jesus spoke about His death and resurrection. But why would God hide this truth from them, and yet allow the unbelievers to understand it? We do not know, but might one reason be that if the disciples did not believe that Jesus was going to arise from the dead, any charge by the Jews that they stole the body out of the tomb to make it appear that He had risen from the dead would carry no weight at all. Although none of the disciples believed Jesus would rise from the dead, it would appear that John, upon seeing the empty tomb and the position of the grave clothes, was the first of the Apostles to believe that Jesus had actually arisen from the dead (John 20:8).

A problem has been created by Jesus' statement to Mary Magdalene not to touch Him, because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17), and by the subsequent act of the women who held Him by His feet a few moments later (Matt. 28:9). It would seem very unlikely that in this short interval of time Jesus would have ascended to the Father and then descended again to earth. In fact, there is no record of His ascension until forty days later. What then did Jesus mean when He told Mary not to touch Him? The verb "hupto," translated "touch," means "to fasten one's self to, to cling to." There is no idea in the word of a momentary touch. Apparently Jesus meant that she was not to cling to Him in the old relation which she had had in the past when He was in a natural body. He is now in a glorified, resurrection body and now her communion with Him would be in the Spirit, which would be made possible by His ascension to the Father, from whence He would send the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>36</sup> *The Scofield Reference Bible*, op. cit., p. 1043.

## **2. The Bribing of the Roman Guard**

**Reference: Matt. 28:11-15**

Earlier in this 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew we read that at the time of the earthquake and the appearance of the angel which rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb were so frightened that they shook and became as dead men. Now Matthew states that some of these guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When they had assembled the council they decided to give a large sum of money to the soldiers to say that the disciples came at night and stole the body of Jesus while they were asleep. They also promised to bribe the governor, so that no charges would be brought against the guards, who otherwise might have been put to death. It should have been evident to any thinking person that if the guards were asleep they could not have known who took the body away, and yet, this saying was still being circulated at the time Matthew wrote his Gospel.

There is one fact that is undeniable. The tomb was empty. The enemies of Jesus admitted it was empty. The body of Jesus had disappeared. There are only two feasible explanations for the empty tomb. Either someone stole the body, or Jesus actually arose from the dead. But it is evident that the disciples could not have stolen the body. They could not have overcome the Roman guard. The story of the guards being asleep is an evident fabrication, and besides, the disciples did not believe He would arise, as seen by the fact that Jesus had a difficult time convincing them that He had arisen in a body of flesh and was not a spirit apparition. His enemies had no motive for stealing the body: they were doing everything in their power to see that the body remained in the tomb. And even if they had removed the body they would surely have produced it to silence once for all the claims of the disciples that He had arisen. The only other plausible explanation is that He did arise as He claimed He would, and as He actually showed Himself to be alive by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3).

There is, of course, another far-out and ridiculous claim which some atheists and agnostics have made, which is generally called "the swoon theory." This theory has been revived recently in a blasphemous book entitled "The Passover Plot." The theory goes something like this. Jesus did not actually die on the cross. He may have taken a drug which made him appear to be dead. In the coolness of the tomb he revived and escaped. What happened to him after that is uncertain. The book just referred to has Him stumbling into an unmarked grave and dying. This claim is so unfounded and impossible that it hardly deserves mention, but no doubt many people who are ignorant of the historical facts, when they read the book, or see it portrayed in the movies or on television, will accept it as truth.

Here is what we are asked to believe. Jesus, after hanging upon a cross all day, after having His side pierced and the blood drained from His body, and after being pronounced dead by the authorities, revived in the tomb, rolled back the huge stone that was sealed across the door, overcame the Roman guard, and made His escape. Surely it would require far more credulity to believe such a fairytale than to believe He actually arose from the dead.

The truth of the Resurrection of Christ is one of the most basic tenets of the Christian faith. As Paul stated in 1 Cor. 15:13-19, if Christ did not arise from the dead, then our Gospel is vain, our faith is meaningless, we are false-witnesses, we are still in our sins, Christians who have died have perished, and we are of all men the most to be pitied. Note the emphasis on resurrection in the preaching in Acts 2:24; 2:30,31; 3:15; 4:10; 5:31; 7:55,56; 10:40; 13:37; 17:3,18,31; 23:6; 25:19; 26:8,23. Note also the importance given to the resurrection of Christ in Paul's epistles: Rom. 4:24,25; 6:4,5; 8:11,34; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15; Eph. 1:20; 2:5,6; Phil. 3:10,11; Col. 1:18; 2:11-13; 1 Thess. 4:14. One must not only believe that Christ died for our sins, in order to be saved; he must also believe that He buried and that He arose again from the dead on the third day.

### **3. The Walk To Emmaus**

**References: Mk. 16:12,13; Lk. 24:13-35**

Of the two disciples involved in this incident, we know the name only one, a certain Cleopas. Mary, the wife of Cleopas, was one of those who stood by the cross (John 19:25). Cleopas and his fellow disciple started out from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a walk of over six miles. As they walked and talked Jesus joined their company but they did not recognize Him. Upon relating to Jesus all the things that had happened concerning the crucifixion and the empty tomb, and how they had trusted that this Jesus would have the one to redeem Israel, Jesus rebuked them, saying himself."

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning

Dusk was coming on as they arrived at Emmaus and the disciples constrained this Stranger to abide with them overnight. As they sat down to eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, He vanished out of their sight. It has been suggested that they saw the nail prints in His hands and thus knew it was Jesus. At first their eyes had been "holden" that they could not recognize and now their eyes were released, by whatever means, and they knew Him, and they remembered how their hearts had burned within as He opened the scriptures to them as they walked. They immediately arose and rushed back to Jerusalem and

found the Eleven and others gathered and told them of their experience as they walked, and how He was made known unto them in the breaking of bread.

#### **4. The Appearance to the Disciples in Jerusalem**

**References:** Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:36-45; John 20:19-25

John tells us that the disciples were gathered behind shut or locked doors for fear of the Jews when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. It is evident that the resurrection body is organized on a totally different order from that of our natural bodies. Jesus could appear and disappear without going through doors. Finally, He was received up into heaven, which would have been an impossibility for a natural body of flesh and blood.

Mark simply mentions that Jesus upbraided the disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen Him after His resurrection.

Luke gives us considerably more details of what took place during this appearance. The disciples were all frightened when He appeared and greeted them with the words, "Peace be unto you." They thought they were seeing His spirit, but He reassured them, showing them His hands and feet which had been pierced, and by stating that a spirit did not have flesh and bones, as they could see He had. Then to give them further proof of His bodily resurrection He asked for some food and ate it.

He then reaffirmed the truth that all things had to be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Him. And he opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. John adds that He then said, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you. And when he had said this he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Compare these words with our remarks on Matt. 16:19 and 19:28. The Apostles were to be judges, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel in the Kingdom.

#### **5. The Appearance to Thomas and the Ten**

**Reference:** John 20:26-29

We know very little about Thomas, aside from the fact he was one of the Twelve Apostles. He is mentioned seven times outside the present context. Twice he is called Didymus, which means "the twin." He seemed to show real courage and love for Jesus, for he said in John 11:16: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Much like the other disciples he was slow in comprehending spiritual truth, for in John 14:5 he said to Jesus, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" And now we learn a further trait of his character: he could not believe what he could not see with his eyes. Having been

absent the week before when Christ appeared to the Ten, he makes it clear he will not believe unless he can place his fingers in the nail prints in His hands and thrust his hand into the wounded side of Jesus.

But when Jesus appears on this occasion and calls to Thomas to examine His hands and side, Thomas makes a better profession than the other disciples had done: "My Lord and my God!" We are prone to think how much more blessed it would have been to have lived while Jesus was here among men, so that we could have seen Him and handled Him (cf. 1 John 1:1). But Jesus said: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Our blessedness is thus greater than that of the Apostles. "We walk by faith; not by sight," (2 Cor. 5:7). "For in this hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," (Rom. 8:24,25).

## 6. The Eighth Sign - Miraculous Catch of Fish

Reference: John 21:1-25

Jesus had told the Apostles that He would go before them and meet them in Galilee. We do not know how long the disciples tarried at Jerusalem before going to Galilee, but from the previous appearing we know they stayed in Jerusalem for at least eight days. The seven disciples who are mentioned went back up to the Sea of Galilee and Peter decided to return to his old vocation and said: "I am going fishing," and the others decided to go with him. But they fished all night and caught nothing.

In the morning Jesus appeared on the shore, unrecognized by the disciples who were in the boat. Jesus called out, asking if they had any fish, and they answered, "No." Then He told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat, and the net enclosed such a multitude of fish they were not able to draw it in. John perceived who the Man on the shore was and said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter, impulsive as he was, dived in and swam to shore while the others came in a dinghy dragging the net full of fishes. They counted 153 large fish. Efforts have been made to find some mystic meaning of this number, but we do not feel that there is anything in the context to suggest this idea. We might better ask, What did they do with all of those fish? Perhaps they ate a few, although the Lord already had a fish breakfast cooked and ready for them to eat. We believe the fish were sold and that this was the Lord's way of providing for the financial needs of His little flock, as they had left all to follow Him. Of course, nothing is said of this in the account, but when the Lord calls people into His service, He always provides in some way for their financial needs.

This was the third time Jesus had showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection. After they had dined, Jesus engaged Peter in conversation which must have been embarrassing to Peter, as Jesus repeated His question three

times, "Lovest thou me?" Peter must have been keenly aware of his three-fold denial of the Lord, and he was grieved when the Lord repeated the question for the third time.

There is a play here on the words for "love." The first two times Jesus asked, "Lovest thou me?" He used the word "agapho," which is used of divine love and love which can be commanded, as in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Peter answered each time with the word, "phileo," which means to be fond of. But when Jesus asked the third time He used Peter's word. We might call this encounter, "Peter's Personal Great Commission," for after each of the three questions Jesus told Peter: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." Peter was thus commissioned to a pastoral ministry, for a pastor is a shepherd, and the duty of a shepherd is to feed and care for the lambs and the sheep.

After this the Lord told Peter what would happen to him when he was old and by what death he would glorify God. Peter refers to this prediction in his second epistle, ch. 1:14. Peter then turned to John and asked what was going to happen to John. Jesus answered, "If I will that he tarry until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." This was a gentle rebuke for Peter, and it is a reminder to us that we should be occupied with the Lord rather than being curious about other people. Also it is in a sense encouraging to know that even among the apostles rumors could get started, even as they do today. The rumor started that Jesus had declared that John would not die, but, of course, He did not say this.

John finally makes it plain just who he meant when he spoke throughout his Gospel of the disciple whom Jesus loved. Compare vs. 20 with vs. 24. It was the man who wrote this fourth Gospel.

## **7. The So-Called Great Commission**

**References:** Matt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18;  
Lk. 24:46-48; cf. John 20:21-23

We have used the expression "so-called," not in any way to belittle the greatness of this commission, but to call attention to the fact that there are other great commissions in the Bible. All of God's commissions are great, and to call just one of them great is to belittle the others. Christ gave a great commission to His Apostles in Matt. 10, which limited their preaching of the Kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In the present context He gave a great commission to the same Apostles to carry the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Some years later He gave another great commission, this time from heaven, to the Apostle Paul. We need to carefully compare these commissions to learn exactly what it is God wants us to be doing as members of the Body of Christ.

Usually the three scripture references in this section are lumped together as one and the same commission. However, the wording of each is entirely

different, and they were apparently given at different places on different occasions during the forty days. We know that the one in John 20:21-23 was given just a week after the resurrection, and in Jerusalem. The one in Matthew took place on a mountain in Galilee. There is no mention of the location in Mark, but Mark does state immediately after the commission: "So after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven . . ." and we know this took place at the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem. Luke, likewise, states immediately after the commission: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany... and it came to pass as he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." So this commission must also have been given in Jerusalem.

Our reason for noting these distinctions stems from the fact that some Christians lump all of these commissions together, believing that these are all Christ's order for the Church to follow today. On the other hand there are some who recognize the dispensational principle in scripture, who try to make one or the other of the commissions apply to the future Kingdom and others to apply to the Church today. Since there was no revelation about the Church which is the Body of Christ until after Paul was converted and received this revelation, it is our contention that all of these commissions apply to the Kingdom Gospel and the Millennial Kingdom program. However, since they were given on different occasions, it is possible that there are some elements in one commission which were to apply to different phases of the Kingdom program. For example, the commission as related by Luke in Acts 1:4-8, tells the Apostles how long they are to remain in Jerusalem, and then how they are to go first to Judea, then to Samaria, and then to the uttermost part of the earth.

By piecing together all of these commissions we discover the features:

- a. As just stated, there is now to be a universal preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, whereas before it had been restricted to Israel only.
- b. It was to be carried out in a definite order. Jerusalem and Judea must first receive the message before it could go to the Gentiles. "The children of Israel must first be filled" (Mk. 7:27). "Unto you Israelites first" (Acts 3:26). "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you Israelites" (Acts 13:46). In the present dispensation we are not called upon to follow any such order.
- c. The commissions, according to Mark, required faith and water baptism for salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Peter preached under this commission at Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.": This was not baptismal regeneration, but simply the appointed means of expressing faith, even as animal sacrifices and Levitical washings had no saving virtues in themselves, but were commanded as expressions of faith and obedience. Nations as such were to be baptized into the Kingdom. We do not believe that water baptism is any longer a

necessary ingredient in the manifestation of saving faith. Whatever Paul meant by his statement that Christ had not sent him to baptize, it should be evident that Paul did not consider baptism to be an essential manifestation of faith.

d. The commission commanded the teaching of all things which Christ had commanded while He was on earth. This included a number of things related to the Mosaic Law, such as bringing gifts and sacrifices to the altar (Matt. 5:24), and obedience to those who sat in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:2,3). The Kingdom was to be a Theocracy in which the religious, political, and social life would all be governed by the King. It is evident that in the present divine order there is no Theocracy. Efforts to enforce theocratic rules on society today have always resulted in failure and in frustration of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

e. The message of the commission is "the Gospel of the Kingdom." This is the good news that God is going to set up His Kingdom of righteousness and peace here upon the earth. It includes spiritual, material and physical blessings and the restoration of nature from the effects of the curse. This Kingdom will never materialize until Jesus Christ comes back as King of kings. The Church epistles reveal that instead of the Church bringing in this Kingdom on earth, spiritual and moral conditions will continue to worsen culminating in the revelation of the man of sin, the Antichrist.

f. The Kingdom commission promises that miraculous signs and wonders will accompany the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel, and these signs did follow while the Kingdom was being preached in the Acts period. Casting out of demons, speaking in new tongues, taking up deadly serpents and drinking poison without harm, and the healing of the sick are all part of this program. All of these things are called "signs," but signs of what? Signs that the message they were preaching was able to bring about millennial conditions where disease would be banished and the curse on nature would be removed. The modern charismatic movement is an attempt to revive these signs and bring in the Kingdom. But the fact of the matter is that the Kingdom is not just around the corner, disease and poisons, and pollutants grow progressively worse to the point where men of science question whether the human race can long survive. God still hears our prayers and in His mercy He may heal the sick, but the death rate continues to be one a piece. When we read that the Apostle Paul had to leave some of his most faithful fellow-workers sick and prescribe remedies for others, we should sense that the change of dispensation which came in with Paul brought about some changes in God's program for His people.

g. Where, then, do we find God's instructions for the Church? We believe they are to be found in Paul's epistles where the truth about the Church is revealed. Numerous passages might be cited as commissions for the Church, but notice just two, Rom. 16:25,26 and 2 Cor. 5:14-21. There is a similarity to the Kingdom commission in that the message is to be preached worldwide. Its objective, however, is not the establishment of the Kingdom on earth, but the outcalling

from the world of a heavenly Body. Its message is the Gospel of the grace of God and not the Gospel of the Kingdom. It makes absolutely no nationalistic distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, bond or free, male or female.

It is our belief that when this present divine economy is completed and God raptures the Church to glory, God will again take up His program with Israel, and this commission of the Kingdom will be carried out and Christ will return and establish His glorious Kingdom on the earth.

## **8. His Final Appearance and Ascension**

**References: Mk. 16:19,20; Lk. 24:49-53**

Before Jesus ascended to take His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He told the disciples He would send the promise which the Father had made, namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit. But they were to remain in Jerusalem until they were endued with Power from on High. We learn from the book of Acts that they were to tarry or wait for the day of Pentecost to come. Pentecost was one of Israel's seven national feast days, which followed the Feast of First Fruits by fifty days, hence the name, Pentecost (cf. Lev. 23). Christ fulfilled the Feast of Passover in His death (1 Cor. 5:7), and the Feast of First Fruits in His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23), and the Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled by the advent of the Holy Spirit. There is no place for tarrying for the Holy Spirit today. He came into the world 1900 years ago. One might as well tarry for the birth of Jesus as to tarry for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Both came long ago. Paul makes it plain that we now receive the Holy Spirit "upon believing," (Eph. 1:13).

It should be noticed that in this promise of the Spirit in the Kingdom program there is no reference to His baptizing believers into the Body of Christ. The promise at Pentecost was that they were to be endued with Power from on High, and we know from the book of Acts that the Apostles were given miraculous powers on that occasion. This enduement with power is described as "Christ baptizing with or in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-8). We believe there is a difference between Christ enduing His Kingdom disciples with power by baptizing them in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The former was experiential - mighty signs and wonders; the latter is non-experiential - unseen and unfelt, a work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes the moment a person is saved, and a work concerning which we are aware only because it is stated in Scripture as a part of the Spirit's ministry to members of the Body of Christ.

After instructing the Apostles to wait in Jerusalem until Pentecost, Jesus led them out of Jerusalem until they were opposite Bethany, and as He blessed them He was parted from them and a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they were still gazing up into heaven, two angelic messengers stood by them in white apparel, who said:

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The prophet Zechariah graphically describes the return of Christ, stating that when He returns His feet will indeed stand on that very **Mount of Olives** from which He ascended into heaven (Zech. 14:4).

The Apostles returned to Jerusalem with great joy. It should be noted that they did not desert the Temple and the Mosaic customs. They were to be found every day in the Temple. There was no break with the temple until after Paul came on the scene with a new spiritual order.

Although we have headed this section as the Final Appearance of Jesus, it should be understood it was the final appearance before His ascension, but not His final appearance in reality. For the Apostle Paul, in relating the several post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, states: "And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time," (1 Cor. 15:8). Paul received the revelation contained in his epistles, not by the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit, but by the personal appearance of the glorified Christ who communicated to him directly the message of the Mystery. He was caught up into the third heaven and received such an abundance of revelations that Christ gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble (2 Cor. 12:1-7). We do not exalt Paul when we place special emphasis upon his epistles, but Christ! For Paul's epistles contain the latest and final words of Christ which He spoke to His Church.

## **9. The Conclusion of John's Gospel**

**Reference: John 20:30,31**

These two verses make a fitting conclusion to this study of God speaking through His Son. As mentioned earlier in this study, the Gospel of John, having been written very late and well into the new dispensation, seems to be a kind of doctrinal bridge between the Kingdom and the Church dispensations. Its key word is "believe" and that is the key word of the Church epistles. And John often associates believing with the death of Christ. John states the purpose for his writing in these words:

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

All of our reading and studying about the life and ministry of God's Son will profit us little, unless we confess with Thomas: "My Lord and my God." We today have the completed Word of God and thus have a great advantage over these early believers. We have the full revelation of all that God accomplished through the life and death and resurrection of His Son. We have no excuse for not believing. Our responsibility before God is greater than that of the people of

Jesus' day. And upon believing and trusting in His redeeming death for us, we receive life, eternal life.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

**AMEN !**