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MEDITATIONS
IN
MATTHEW

By
August Van Ryn

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PREFACE

Meditations in Matthew is now issued with the fervent hope that it may provide help to a better understanding and deeper appreciation of the central theme of this Gospel, "The King and His Kingdom."

Some of my readers will know that this book completes a series of four volumes on the four Gospels, in the form of "meditations," rather than as formal commentaries. Known as *Meditations in John*, *Meditations in Luke*, *Meditations in Mark* and *Meditations in Matthew*, they have been sent forth in that order, and are all published by Loizeaux Brothers of New York. We feel deeply our indebtedness to them for their readiness to issue these books, and for their care as shown in the attractive appearance of these works. We can but pray that it may please the Lord to use the truths they contain for His glory and the blessing of His own.

There is no claim made for any outstanding excellence. Our desire rather has been to make the great truths of Scripture as simple as can be, so they may serve to help and cheer the average Christian, and also to furnish any who desire to be used of the Lord in the ministry of His precious Word with some ready ammunition for the battle.

This present gospel, as most believers know, is essentially of a dispensational character. It was written, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by a Jew for the Jews in particular, and largely unfolds the ultimate future of

the people of Israel. It is not by any means an easy book to either understand or interpret and hence there exists much difference of opinion even among believers concerning the truths it unfolds and their relation to ourselves today or to Israel by and by. I have, of course, expressed my judgment on these matters as *I* see them in the light of God's Word, but I can assure my readers that this has only been done after careful and prayerful study and consideration. Please read this book by the divine rule laid down in Scripture: "Prove [or test] all things [by the Word of God], and hold fast that which is good."

I would add that these meditations have been written, not chiefly to instruct the mind; but more particularly to help mold and fashion the life of the Christian, and to form his character so that God may be glorified in and through him.

Above all else we hope and pray as you read this volume, that Christ the Lord and King may assume greater magnificence in your eyes, and that in response, your life and mine may be more wholly lived in complete obedience to His will. To Him, to Whom all glory and power is given in heaven and on earth, be the praise and dominion for ever and ever!

Yours by His marvelous grace—
August Van Ryn

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PART ONE

Introducing Matthew

ITS AUTHOR

THE THEME OF THE GOSPEL

SOME SPECIAL FEATURES

WORDS FREQUENTLY FOUND IN MAT-
THEW'S GOSPEL

Its Author

MATTHEW the publican, as he calls himself (10:3) is the writer of this striking portrayal of Christ as the "King of Israel."

His name means "the gift of Jehovah," and it is concerning God's gift to sinful men that he writes. Israel rejected Jehovah's gift, and as a sad result has remained, as it were, under the "taxgatherer" all these centuries.

As a taxcollector for Rome, under whose galling yoke Israel was, Matthew was anything but popular with the Jews, yet it is he who presents to them their King, the One who would have delivered them from all bondage.

There is, to the devout student of Scripture, distinct internal proof that Matthew did indeed write this account of Christ. He alone speaks of himself as the "publican," which the other writers, Mark and Luke, kindly omit. Matthew also fails to mention that the feast he made for the Lord immediately upon his call was a "great" one, while Luke records this (5:29). Matthew humbly omits to say that he "left all" when he arose and followed Jesus, a detail which Luke again gives us (5:27). And while, paired with Thomas, Matthew puts himself last in order (10:4) both Mark and Luke put him first (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). These interesting sidelights not only prove that Matthew wrote this Gospel, but also show him to have been a humble, self-effacing man.

The only facts the Gospel gives about Matthew are his

call to follow Christ, which he did with prompt obedience, and the feast he made to which he invited many of his kind to meet and hear his new Master. Many of the other disciples were fishermen, but here is a businessman called into the ministry. He was chosen directly by the Lord Himself and apparently was not a disciple of John the Baptist.

In Mark 2:14, where he is called Levi (apparently his first name, as Matthew is his surname), we are told he was the son of Alphaeus. He was thus probably a brother of James the less (Luke 6:15) and possibly a brother of Thomas Didymus.

The date of the Gospel he wrote is uncertain, and is of little vital consequence. It is variously thought to have been between A.D. 40 and 70. It is argued that Matthew may have copied Mark's account some. This, to my mind, is rather doubtful, since Mark was not an apostle nor did he walk with the Lord during Christ's life on earth; and it seems rather odd to think Matthew, who was a disciple of Christ, should copy from one who was not. However, the main point is that Matthew's Gospel is with us; it was written, and we do thank God for this marvelous contribution concerning the person and work of Christ, portraying Him specifically as the King of the Jews.

The Theme of the Gospel

MATTHEW'S THEME can be set forth in five words: The King and His Kingdom.

He begins with the significant words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham." This is in sharp contrast to Genesis 5:1 where we read: "This is the book of the generations of Adam." These two expressions are descriptive of the two great themes of Scripture. The Old Testament is devoted to the record of Adam and his descendants, while the New Testament gives the history of Christ, the Son of God, and His family—the redeemed.

Matthew then, first of all, gives us the genealogy of Jesus as the King. Hence he traces Jesus' ancestry back to David the *king*, and further back to Abraham, for Christ is not King only, but He is King in relation to the Hebrew race. In Luke's Gospel the genealogy is traced back to Adam, for Christ is portrayed there as Man—the Son of Man.

So also in Matthew the genealogy is presented through Joseph, the husband of Mary, for in Judaism the title to the throne could only come through the father. But Matthew is careful to tell us that Joseph was not the Lord's actual father (1:25) for our blessed Lord was virgin-born. This King of the Jews is at the same time "God with us" (1:23). It has been well said: "If Jesus had not been legally the son of Joseph He could not have claimed title to the throne of David; had He actually been

Joseph's son, He could have claimed title to nothing whatever, for then He would have been a sinner." Praise God! He was miraculously conceived and born of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew's theme then is Christ as the fulfilment of Israel's Messianic hopes and promises. He is the King to whose coming Israel looked forward; yet whom, when He did come, they rejected and crucified. Thus Matthew goes on to show that the Kingdom would be taken from them and in the meantime take on a mystery form, in which it was unknown to the prophets of old. Yet eventually the Kingdom shall be established over Israel in the day of the Coming of the Son of Man, when the "elect" nation shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven, back to their own land.

Matthew, in its first place in the canon of New Testament Scripture, connects the past with the present and future. In its numerous quotations from the Old Testament it shows that there the New was enfolded, while in the New Testament the Old is unfolded.

Matthew is thus distinctly a dispensational Gospel (strikingly more so than either Mark or Luke). Even the "Church" is mentioned in it, and not in the other Gospels.

Some Special Features

THE OUTSTANDING FEATURE, of course, is Matthew's treatment of the Kingdom of Heaven. The term is found here 32 times and nowhere else in the New Testament. There are altogether 12 parables which are stated to depict the Kingdom of Heaven—seven in chapter 13 and 5 more in the rest of the book. These five are:

The parable of the unforgiving servant—chapter 18.

The laborers in the vineyard—chapter 20.

The marriage of the King's Son—chapter 22.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins—chapter 25.

The parable of the talents—chapter 25.

Only 3 of those 12 parables are found elsewhere: the parable of the sower; of the mustard seed; and of the leaven.

In addition there are two miracles found nowhere else: the cure of the two blind men; the piece of silver found in the fish's mouth. That of Peter walking on the water rather emphasizes Peter's feat than our Lord's.

Four events in the history of our Lord are unique to Matthew.

Six incidents connected with His death and resurrection:

Judas' bargain and suicide.

The dream of Pilate's wife.

The resurrection of the departed saints.

The watch at the sepulcher.

The earthquake and resurrection morning.

The story of the Sanhedrin—chapter 28.

There are nine great passages of our Lord's discourses:

The sermon on the Mount—chapters 5-7.

The invitation to the weary to find rest—11:25-30.

Idle words—12:36-37.

The prophecy to Peter—16:17-19.

Humility and forgiveness—18:15-35.

The rejection of the Jews—21:43.

The great denunciation—chapter 23.

The discourse on Mt. Olivet—chapters 24-25.

The Great commission—28:18-20.

Matthew and Luke alone record the so-called Sermon on the Mount, while all three synoptic Gospels record the second sermon of the mount—spoken on the Mount of Olives (chapters 24-25). In each case Matthew's account is far more extensive and elaborate. In the discourse on Mount Olivet (chapters 24-25), Matthew in his report covers the history of Israel, Christendom, and the Gentile nations, while Mark and Luke confine themselves entirely to Israel's past and future. Matthew is thus well-called the "dispensational Gospel" for it presents a view of the future of the whole world. Also it is known as the "didactic Gospel," for teaching takes up much space here, while in Mark action is the rule.

A broad division of Matthew might be like this:

1. Chapters 1-2: Christ born in Bethlehem, as seen in Micah.
2. Chapters 3-20: Christ the Light to shine upon Jew and Gentile—see 4:14-16, as prophesied by Isaiah.

3. Chapters 21-25: Christ as the King, prophesied by Zechariah.

Isaiah 50 and Zechariah 11 anticipate Matthew's Gospel in their outline.

In Matthew and Mark the Lord yields Himself to man's hands. The thoughts of His own elevation and glory do not stand out here, as they do in the Gospel of John. Israel rejected Him with the cry "His blood be on us and on our children!" Only Matthew mentions the potter's field bought by the priests with the blood money given to Judas for the betrayal of Christ. They intended this potter's field for the burial of strangers. All this illustrates how the Land of Israel, because of the crucifixion of Christ became a land of blood and the grave of the nation itself. Thus Israel, for 19 centuries has been an alien, while their land was in Gentile possession.

The veil is rent in the presence of the priests; the tomb in the presence of the soldiers, but neither were moved by these evidences of divine power. Israel refused God's stone and chose Caesar's stone. Thus His very enemies bear witness that their rock is not our Rock. Only in Matthew do we read of the angel rolling away the stone and sitting upon it. So some day shall the stone of unbelief be rolled away from Israel's heart, to let the light shine in.

Only in Matthew do we read that Israel's rejection of Him is answered by "all power given to Him in heaven and on earth."

This being the Jewish Gospel especially, the twelve apostles are given the commission to preach and to gather the nations to bow at the feet of the King. There is no

ascended Lord here. It is here upon the earth that He will reign over Israel, and that the Gentiles shall come to the brightness of His rising.

After His death the graves are opened; saints arise and appear in the holy city. Heaven is opened through the rent veil to let the saints in; the rocks are rent to let the saints out. Jerusalem is called the holy city, though its King was crucified outside its gate. It is called "holy" in view of the future. The resurrection of verses 52-53 is symbolic; then the dead nation shall arise as it looks on Him whom they pierced, and they shall then enter into their "holy city" and dwell there under the Messiah's beneficent reign.

Since Matthew is written for Jews, there is a strong Jewish flavor. Only Matthew mentions the gospel's going only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel"—(both in 10:6 and 15:24). He alone speaks of the twelve sitting on thrones in the regeneration (19:28); he too lays great emphasis on the law.

Yet, on the other hand, Matthew alone speaks of the coming of the Gentile wise men to worship the Child; he alone commends the faith of the Gentiles in the face of Israel's unbelief (8:10); he brings in the names of the Gentile Rahab and of Ruth the Moabitess. And he shows (4:14-16) how Israel *and* the Gentiles were to be blessed by Christ's Coming to earth. All these, plus many more such incidents found in Matthew, intimate that through Israel's defection the Gentiles would be blessed, and that Christ is not only the King of the Jews but the Saviour of the world.

Sin is presented in this fascinating Gospel as a violation

of the law, rather than as moral turpitude. The word "debt" is used in the Lord's prayer instead of "sin," and Matthew uses the word "lawlessness" (translated "iniquity"), which is found nowhere else in the Gospels.

Empty profession is much more prominent here than in the other accounts. Here we read of pearls cast before swine; of tares among the wheat; of fish thrown back as no good; of many on the broad road to destruction; of a guest without a wedding garment; of foolish virgins, etc. For the Kingdom of Heaven in this age is now a sphere of profession, whether real or false; at the coming of the King the false shall be separated from the true.

Since Christ is the Rejected One of Israel, there lies a certain shadow, a feeling of distance, over the whole Book. Discipline and judgment are often stressed. There is a Father in Heaven, it is true, but there is no real sense of nearness or intimacy. Forgiveness of sins, when mentioned, is seldom in its absolute and eternal form, but is conditional and revocable. The whole Book assumes a form we call governmental.

There are more than 60 references to the Old Testament Scriptures. When made by Matthew himself, the quotations are fresh ones from the original Hebrew, and not, as when in the mouth of others, from the Greek Septuagint.

Matthew's own style is full of Hebraisms, showing he writes specially for those who have a knowledge of Jewish law and customs, as Jews would be expected to possess. The Gospel very likely was written in the land of Israel itself.

Words Frequently Found in Matthew's Gospel

AS ALREADY SAID, "Kingdom of Heaven" is found 32 times and only here; "King" referring to Christ, 14 times, 12 times in John. The way this title is used in these two Gospels is enlightening. While in the opening of John's Gospel Nathanael, a Jew, acknowledges Christ as the King of Israel, here in Matthew it is Gentiles (the wise men from the East) who seek the King of the Jews. And while Nathanael owns Him thus as Christ entered on His public ministry at 30 years of age, the Gentiles came to Him at His very birth.

While in Matthew, at its close, Christ is seen as King who acts in power and majesty as He casts the sinner out into everlasting darkness (22:13), sends the wicked to perdition (25:40-41), and finally has all power committed into His hands (28:20), yet in John we see the very reverse—this same King disowned and dishonored. Pilate sets before the people a thorn-crowned, bleeding Sufferer and says: "Behold your King." When the leaders of Israel clamor for His death, Pilate says: "Shall I crucify your King?" And they answer: "We have no King but Caesar." In John 18:36 that blessed One Himself says that His kingdom is not of this world. We read nothing like that in Matthew. John presents Christ taking His place as the Rejected One at the hands of His own people; Matthew presents Him as asserting His royal prerogatives. John gives the truth of the present day; Matthew that of the future when Christ shall reign and

execute judgment. Matthew shows that He who is now rejected by Israel and by the world disowned, shall reign some day in power and glory.

He shall reign in the "holy city," mentioned twice in this Gospel and only here.

"Son of David" (1:1)—it is His title to David's throne. In the healing of the blind and dumb (12:22-23), they raised the question: "Is not this the Son of David?" That blind and dumb man illustrates Israel's present state, during their unbelief. When the Son of David ascends the throne, then Israel shall be healed. He is owned as "Son of David" when He entered Jerusalem, a foreshadow of the day when at His appearing He shall truly be hailed by Israel as David their King.

"In order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken." This is found 8 times in Matthew's Gospel, and nowhere else.

"That which was spoken"—12 times; "It was spoken"—6 times.

Matthew's favorite particle of transition is "then"; it is found 90 times; only 6 times in Mark and 14 in Luke.

"Father in Heaven" or "heavenly Father" is another characteristic phrase of Matthew's. It is found 19 times and nowhere else in the New Testament, except twice in Mark. (Luke 11:2 is incorrect.) It is significant. When used in praying to a Father in Heaven, it suggests distance, and therefore is suitable in the mouth of a Jew who belongs to God's earthly people. To my mind it is not a "Christian" expression, and is never found in any of the New Testament Epistles. We believers are seen as coming to the throne of grace—into Heaven itself (Hebrews 10:19).

"The end of the world"—found 5 times (13:39; 40; 49; 24:3; and 28:20), and not in the other Gospels. It is the word "age," meaning a period of time. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of two "ages" (2:5 and 9:26). Both refer to God's dealing with Israel. The one ended at the cross, as Hebrews 9:26 plainly proves, for in the end of that age Christ came to put away sin. The cross ended God's dealings with Israel under law; henceforth they were no longer His people, and could only be blessed as acknowledging their lost condition, the same as any sinner. The cross puts Jew and Gentile all on the same level. But God is not done with Israel and, as Matthew's Gospel so fully reveals, Israel shall yet be His redeemed people in a coming day. It is this to which Hebrews 2:5 refers as the "age to come." Matthew, in all of the five passages quoted, refers to the close of this first age which ended at the cross. It ended there morally, but (after the present interval of the Church age has run its course) Israel will again be taken up, and at the end of their awful time of tribulation the Lord shall return to them, as all these passages indicate, and after judging His enemies, Christ shall reign over His redeemed earthly people. Then Israel's past age shall reach its final close, and the future age, spoken of in Hebrews 2:5, which we know as the millennium, shall start on its happy course. We shall look at all this in detail, when studying Matthew 24 and 25.

"Reward"—9 times—the idea of "hire or pay."

"Servant"—slave—30 times—the idea of service, a prominent thought with Israel, and much found in Matthew.

"Wicked"—8 times; only twice in Luke. We read

of the wicked servant, wicked spirit, wicked one—Satan; wicked generation.

“Gnashing of teeth”—5 times; once in Luke.

“Son of Man”—31 times in Matthew; 12 times in John.

“Son of God”—8 times in Matthew; 13 times in John.

I am contrasting Matthew with John because both present Christ in His glory—as King and as Son of God. While in Matthew “Son of Man” is used of His Coming in glory (as in 26:64), the reverse is true in John. This again is consistent with Matthew’s portrait of Christ, for dispensationally Christ, of course, shall reign in power, and so Matthew, as guided by the Spirit, devotes much space to that engrossing subject.

PART TWO

*Four Events in the Infancy
of Our Lord*

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

THE SLAYING OF THE CHILDREN IN
BETHLEHEM

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

The Visit of the Wise Men

MATTHEW 2: 1-12

AT THE VERY OUTSET Christ's ultimate rejection by His own people Israel is intimated, for the query of the wise men, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" not only troubled Herod, but all Jerusalem with him. The coming of these Gentiles to worship is a prophecy of the future conversion of the Gentile nations (Isaiah 60:3). Matthew alone records this incident with its double truth—which is developed throughout this Gospel—of the refusal of the Messiah by Israel and the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ going out to the Gentiles, either in this age or the tribulation period.

These wise men came from the East, which was famed for its wisdom (1 Kings 4:30). These men were wise indeed when they turned their backs upon the seat of human wisdom and came all the way to bow low at the feet of Him who is the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). They were wise because they acted on what they saw, when the star appeared to them. Others may have seen the star, too, but these not only saw but came. They came from afar; they took a long, weary journey to see and worship the Christ. Today, alas, multitudes won't even come to Him right from where they sit in their seats.

These men were wise because they had great faith. They did not ask whether, but where Jesus was born.

They were concerned; those in Jerusalem heard but were indifferent or troubled.

They were wise because they recognized in the humble infant the Christ—the King of the Jews. This required great faith, for actually they merely saw a little baby, in a very common, poor home, nursed by a mother of the lower class. There were no signs there of royal splendor or magnificence—yet they fell before Him and worshiped. They were wise because they worshiped; they did not come all that way only to satisfy their curiosity.

They were wise because they worshiped the Child—not His mother, and because they presented their gifts to *Him*. Five times in this chapter do we read of the “young child and His mother; not once of the “mother and the child,” as Rome puts it, in its wicked idolatry.

They were wise men because they came, not to get, but to give. Today the gospel seems to center so much around what I am going to get when I come to Christ. They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh: highly significant gifts. Gold speaks of the glory of His person, His deity; frankincense of the perfection of His wondrous life; myrrh (an herb bitter to the taste) of the suffering He was to experience all through His life, and supremely so in His death upon the cross.

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” said they. This is truly unique. No earthly potentate is ever born a king. Such are born princes. But He was born a King, for no one ever was King before Him, nor ever shall be after Him. There shall never be a King Jesus the Second.

The wise men came from the East, saying they had seen *His* star there. Not merely a star, but *His* star. The same star perhaps long before promised in Numbers 24:17: "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." As it takes hundreds of years often for light to reach the earth, it has been suggested that possibly this very star, prophesied in Numbers 24:17, was placed in the firmament of heaven at the very moment those words were spoken, and its light was timed to reach man's vision at the psychological moment at which the magi saw it. At any rate, there was something about this star (or it was revealed to them somehow) that impressed these men that this was "it." Herod falsely professed to be interested and sent them on their way (to Bethlehem, no doubt, for there the chief priests and scribes said Christ was to be born).

However, after these men left Herod, the same star appeared to them once more and guided them to the house where Jesus was. This, of course, was not in Bethlehem nor in a stable, nor immediately after our Lord's birth. This can readily be verified, for immediately upon the visit of the wise men Joseph was told to take the child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and he did so (2:13-15). Yet, when we turn to Luke's Gospel we learn that six weeks after the birth of Christ Mary and Joseph were in Jerusalem (cp. Luke 2:22-24 with Leviticus 12:1-3). And immediately after that event, they returned to their own city Nazareth (Luke 2:39). This proves that they *could not* have gone into Egypt till many weeks after Christ's birth. Undoubtedly they were living in Nazareth when the wise men came. (I hate

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to spoil all those pretty Christmas cards that picture the magi in the stable of Bethlehem, but they don't agree with the Scripture record.)

It is for this reason that the star appeared, for otherwise the wise men, upon the advice of Herod, would have gone naturally to Bethlehem, where Jesus was not. Matthew 2: 11 tells us they found them all in the "house"; not in a stable. And afterwards Herod slew all children from two years old and under, after diligently having inquired the time, indicating this information put the birth of the Lord perhaps as far as two years back.

When the wise men came, they presented Him gifts—gold among them. This surely was a mercy from God, enabling His parents to pay their way and their stay in Egypt, until it was safe to return to Nazareth. How wonderfully God cares, even in the little things of life. It is worthy of note, too, that Joseph was told to flee into Egypt. Could God not have protected the child in the land of Israel? Of course He could, but it shows how perfectly our Lord took a place as the Perfect Man. Even He did not expose Himself with supernatural power to dangers, but set us the example to use discretion, even while trusting in the power and grace of God.

His star led these men to Christ. We believers are stars, who are to turn many to righteousness (Daniel 12:3). May each one of us be "His" star, leading men to the Saviour's feet, "stars" leading men to the "Sun—God's Son." And when the star had done its work, it disappeared; the wise men saw it no more. When we have led a soul to Christ it is time for us, too, to disappear, and let the convert see Jesus only. When a soul

has seen the Son, he no longer needs to look at the feeble glow of a star.

The wise men went another way (verse 12). So should we. Once we have seen Christ and worshiped Him, ever after we should be going another way—the way He marks out for us through life.

The Slaying of the Children in Bethlehem

MATTHEW 2:16-18

CRUEL HEROD slew all the children in the coasts of Bethlehem from two years old and under. But He, whom he wanted to slay, escaped. An obscure passage from Jeremiah 31 is quoted as a sort of prophecy of this massacre. However, verses 16-17 of that passage make it clear that a more complete fulfilment is contemplated there, for it is said there that the children of which Rachel was bereft shall come again from the land of the enemy, back to their own border. Jeremiah 31:15-17 pictures Israel driven from their land and thus in that way "dead," but to be restored some day. The whole passage looks on to the dreadful massacre of the tribulation Israel shall yet pass through and out of which she shall be delivered. Herod's murderous spite is but a partial picture of that future day of horror. Such twofold

application of prophecy is quite common in Scripture.

When Bethlehem mourned the slaughtered babes, then it was as if Rachel, from her grave close by, was repeating her lamentation. But Rachel (illustrative of the remnant of Israel that shall yet be saved by her Messiah) shall be comforted in a deeper way than as seen in the prophet Jeremiah. For He, whom Herod sought to kill, escaped; even as during the Lord's life repeatedly He was preserved from Satan's attempts to kill Him. He was to die the death of sacrifice on the cross. His life was not to be taken from Him, but He was to lay it down voluntarily. And so He would be able to redeem lost Israel, over whom Rachel weeps. Great weeping, lamentation, mourning, here in Matthew 2, some day is to be changed into rejoicing, praise, and glory when He, whom Herod sought to kill, and who has died, has risen triumphantly, and is now seated on the throne of grace, shall reign on the throne of His glory and bring redeemed Israel to the enjoyment of eternal blessing.

The Flight into Egypt

MATTHEW 2:13-15

JOSEPH was warned by an angel of the Lord of the impending danger from Herod, and fled by divine direction into Egypt. There is no display of power on Christ's

behalf. Though born King, He is not surrounded by royal guards, nor dressed in royal robes. In all things He stoops in lowly grace.

He went to Egypt so that an obscure prophecy from Hosea 11:1 might be fulfilled. This passage surely does not seem to have any connection with Christ. In the context there is a rebuke of Israel for its sin as a nation. Jehovah had taken them out from Egypt's bondage and made them His "son." They repaid His love by turning from Him to idolatry.

The Lord, according to this quotation in Matthew, fully identifies Himself with Israel; both are called "My son." A similar thought is given in Isaiah 49, where in verse 3 we read: "Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But the next voice we hear there is definitely that of our blessed Lord Himself. Thus He is identified with the nation; taking His place as servant in Isaiah; as son in Hosea. Both "sons" are brought out of Egypt. Israel was called "my son" which Jesus is, of course, in a far greater way.

Yes, He and Israel were both in Egypt; both came forth from there. But how widely different the circumstances. For Him there was no captivity or bondage. Egypt did not enslave Him; nay, rather, He found shelter and protection there. And the voice that called Him from Egypt was not in order that He might be delivered, but that He might become Israel's deliverer.

The thing that impresses one in a quotation like this is the vast possibilities of thought in God's precious Word. Apart from the Spirit's interpretation here, I suppose none of us would ever have applied Hosea 11:1 to Christ.

The Return to Nazareth

MATTHEW 2:19-23

IN WORDS SIMILAR to those that sent Moses back to Egypt, Joseph was told to return to his homeland (Exodus 4:19): "Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life." One cruel tyrant had succeeded another, however, and so Joseph did not go into Judea, where Archelaus reigned in his father's place, but he came and dwelt in Nazareth. Once more so that prophecy might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene." This does not refer to any specific passage of Scripture, but to the tenor of the prophets' message generally concerning the Christ.

The "Nazarene" He was called, generally in scorn. Nazareth was a town of ill repute (John 1:46). The word "Nazareth" comes from the Hebrew root *netzer*, meaning "sprout" or "root." It thus expresses lowliness, yet power, too, for a sprout has life. That root out of a dry ground, that had no beauty nor comeliness, should yet grow and become the righteous Branch, said to be the King who should reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth (Jeremiah 23:5). His lowliness was but the stooping of divine majesty: stooping even to death, followed by His rising in triumphant power. The lowliness of the Son of God is the glory of matchless grace.

The appellation "Nazarene" graphically describes Christ as set forth in Matthew. His lowliness is seen here,

yet also His majesty. The lowly root shall yet reign over Israel. In Matthew He is the Despised One, yet the Exalted One also. The unbeliever may call Him Nazarene in derision; the believer adores the matchless grace that made Him take the humble path that led to the cross. We shall eternally boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the King upon His throne we shall sing the praises of the Lamb that was slain.

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Jesus Christ the King

MATTHEW I

MATTHEW WAS SET the task, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to prove that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel. In his genealogy he proves Jesus' right not only to the throne of David, but to universal dominion, for He is not of the seed of David alone, but He is Emmanuel—*God with us*. In the chapters following, His Kingdom is announced, its laws set forth; His divine power is demonstrated in the miracles He did; the offer of the Kingdom is refused, and the climax is reached as the leaders of Israel plan to destroy Him (Matthew 12:14). Chapter 13 then introduces a new thing—the Kingdom now assuming a form unknown in the Old Testament Scriptures. It becomes a spiritual kingdom only, including within itself all who profess His name. The evidence that Christ is truly Israel's King is introduced in chapters 1 to 9, with the final offer made in chapter 10, followed in chapter 11 by Israel's rejection as a nation, and then at the close of chapter 12 Christ turns away from Israel, and the message of grace goes out to the Gentiles. There is no offer of the Kingdom to Israel after the tenth chapter of Matthew's gospel.

What a story this genealogy tells of man's ruin and of God's abounding grace! Matthew 1:12-16 shows that Joseph—the husband of Mary—was a direct descendant of Jeconiah, king of Judah (see also Jeremiah 22:24).

Now Jeremiah 22:30 tells us that no man of Jeconiah's seed could ever sit on the throne of David or rule in Judah. Joseph, therefore, as far as any title to the throne was concerned, was under the curse. Therefore, had the Lord been born of Joseph, He could not have been King. But His virgin birth of Mary made Him after the flesh the actual descendant of David, while Joseph's marriage to Mary after Christ's birth gave Him the legal title before men. Hence this genealogy speaks of the ruin of man on the one hand, and of the power and wisdom of God on the other. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

The story of grace is unfolded in the inclusion of the names of four women in our Lord's pedigree. It is unusual to find women included in any Jewish genealogy, but God would have us know—a lesson most important in God's dealings with sinful men—that grace has found a way to bring sinners into fellowship and relationship with Himself.

These four women:

Tamar finds her place here, although she was a sinful woman. That is how we are brought into blessing; our very sins give us a title to come to Christ, for He is the Saviour of sinners.

Rahab, also a sinful woman, was blessed because of her faith, showing that salvation is by grace, through faith.

Ruth was shut out from God's presence by the law (Deuteronomy 23:3), for she was a Moabitess. Not only was she brought into blessing through her union with Boaz, but she became in due time one of the "grandmothers" of the Lord. So divine grace brings us into

relationship with Him, where once the law shut men out.

Bathsheba—how great was her sin, especially since she was one of God's covenant people. But she was forgiven and became the mother of the great king Solomon. It tells the story that for the believer, too, as it were, there is forgiveness; that God's salvation is an eternal one.

Three times fourteen generations are given in this chapter. There were more than 14, however, in the last two sets. Between Joram and Uzziah (verse 8) at least 3 generations are left out—those connected with wicked queen Athaliah. Notice that in connection with the first set of fourteen, it says they were "all" the generations from Abraham to David (verse 17). There they were "all" given, because everyone of those names represent men of "faith"; and it is those God alone records. How blessed to have one's name written in Heaven!

Fourteen—two times seven—is a significant number. It suggests a complete witness (the meaning of the number two), which those genealogies bear to Christ, and His title to the throne.

From verses 18 to 25 Joseph's name occurs frequently, while in Luke's Gospel Mary's name is prominent. Since Christ's legal title to the throne comes through Joseph, his name appears here.

There is a sense of distance here, agreeing with the theme of Matthew. The angel appears to Joseph in a dream, as also to the wise men (2:12), and again to Joseph (2:22). In Luke, on the contrary, the angel appears to Mary while she was awake, and so to Zecharias. Since Christ is presented in Luke as "man," closer inti-

macy is apparent. These little touches all bespeak the perfection of the Word of God.

Mary certainly must have told Joseph months before of the visit of the angel and of the amazing announcement that she was to give birth to Him who is the Son of God. Now Joseph himself, is told by the angel from Heaven that the babe about to be born was conceived of the Holy Ghost. Joseph knew her not till after she had brought forth her firstborn son (verse 25). Jesus was truly "virgin-born," as Isaiah had foretold long ago.

Why should unbelievers question or reject this gracious, glorious miracle of His virgin birth? I have never been able to understand. We rejoice in it, and we bow in adoration at the feet of Him (not at Mary's feet) who saw fit to come into the world which He had made, in the lowly form of a little babe. To Him be all the glory!

Where the King Was Born

MATTHEW 2

FOUR EVENTS in the history of our Lord in infancy have been looked at elsewhere. Matthew 1 introduces Israel's Messiah. The next question is: "*Where* was He to be born?" Does Jesus' birth agree with the prophecies that went before on Him?

"Where is He?" asks man in Matthew 2. "Where art thou?" asks God at the beginning of the Old Testament. Herod does not know, so he enquires of the Hebrew theologians. In Bethlehem, say they, for thus it is written by the prophet (Micah 5:2). That is where Joseph and Mary went (Luke 2:4-6). As we saw when studying Luke, God caused Caesar Augustus to issue a decree that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem at the right time, so that Scripture might be fulfilled. His birth in Bethlehem therefore is another link in the chain of evidence proving Him to be truly the King that should come to reign over Israel.

The wise men saw His star in the East. The New Testament opens with His star; it closes with Him as the Star—the bright and morning Star. This star led to their coming to Him; that star of Revelation 22 speaks of His coming back to us.

These wise men saw; they came, they inquired, they followed divine guidance, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, they worshiped the Christ. Well may we follow their example.

Jesus lived in Nazareth—a humble despised village. The whole tone in this chapter is of a King ignored, weak, in danger, contemned. Surely these are all omens of His whole earthly path, for He was to be despised and rejected of men ere He would reign in power and glory. Coming events surely cast their shadows before.

The Herald of the King

MATTHEW 3

MONARCHS, when coming to their subjects, were always preceded by heralds announcing their coming, preparing the way before them. So with this King of kings, as prophesied by Isaiah (40:3-4). The voice of Old Testament prophecy had been silent now for some 400 years, but its last note was "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5). And now here came John the Baptist, one who was even in his external appearance—clothed with camel's hair and a leather girdle around his loins—very much like Elijah. And, as Jesus said in Matthew 11:14, if Israel had received John's message, he would have been truly Elijah to them, and the Kingdom would have been established in power, as it shall be in the day ahead.

John's language indicates that Israel was not ready to repent, and the Lord says (11:16-19) that Israel refused to bow both to John's and to His own ministry. As an outward expression of repentance John baptized with water, in the river Jordan. When Israel came from Egypt, they passed through the Jordan dry-shod; now they are buried in it. This but tells the story of their sin. Now there was no miracle performed, but a baptism that speaks of their sin and wickedness. That is why John called the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to his baptism a generation of vipers, for, while they thus pro-

fessed repentance, in reality it was nothing else than mere pretense. There was no real repentance of sin at all, no humbling of themselves before God. So today millions go on with a form of godliness, but without any inner reality or true humility before God.

The ax is laid to the root of the trees, says John. Men often cut down trees which are good for something—for lumber; God cuts down trees which are good for nothing. The tree John talks about is a “fruit” tree (3:10), and a fruit tree that does not bear fruit is useless. So a soul that does not bring forth fruit for God’s glory is no good; only fit for the fire. For 4,000 years, all through the Old Testament ages, men were cutting off branches, trying to spare the tree, and make it bear fruit. Man’s religion consists of “don’t do this and don’t do that.” Cut off this worthless branch and that. But God’s Word teaches that man himself is no good and never will be. He is only fit for the fire of divine judgment, so “cut him down.” In the cross man is set aside as no good: lost and helpless.

But, praise God, there is a Redeemer coming (verse 11) of whom John was the forerunner. John only baptized with water, unto repentance. Water cannot wash away sins; baptism was only *unto* repentance. But Christ can and does save. He shall baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire. These baptisms have direct reference to Israel, to whom John is speaking here. A sample of this baptism with the Holy Ghost is seen in Acts 2:17, yet this was not a fulfillment of John’s prophecy, for then the Spirit was not poured on “all” flesh, as it shall be in the day to come when Israel shall be redeemed to God. The baptism of fire speaks of the

judgment of God that shall fall on those who reject God's mercy. Verse 12 proves this when it changes the metaphor from a cut-down-and-burned-up tree to the threshing floor, whence the wheat is gathered home and the chaff burned with fire unquenchable. The heavenly saints—the Church—shall be raptured to Heaven first; then Israel will be gathered to their earthly inheritance, and the wicked destroyed by fire, as set forth in Matthew 13:42 and many other places.

Jesus, in infinite grace, takes His place with the guilty nation in baptism—a subject we shall consider separately elsewhere.

The King Victorious

MATTHEW 4

THIS CHAPTER answers the question: Does this Christ have the qualifications needed as the King? God's King must be both just and mighty. The temptation of our Lord, in this fourth chapter, proves that He is indeed the holy and mighty champion of man. In combat He defeats Satan, the archenemy of God and man, as once David slew the giant Goliath. He alone of all men could say, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Under another heading we shall look at some of the spiritual lessons displayed

in our Lord's defeat of the devil. He can justly lay claim to the kingdoms of the world, which some day shall be His (Revelation 11:15).

As Jesus starts out on His public life and ministry He leaves the village of Nazareth where He had been brought up and takes up His residence in Capernaum, not as a mere fancy, but that the Scripture might be fulfilled. That Scripture—Matthew 4:15-16—is a quotation from Isaiah 9:1-2. The expression in the Old Testament—"more grievously afflict"—is translated in the revised version by "hath made it glorious," so that the passage reads like this: "In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun . . . but in the latter time hath he made it glorious." How truly wonderful this is when we find the Spirit of God applying Isaiah 9 to the dwelling of Christ in Capernaum, for certainly His presence there, and the miracles He performed (11:23) brought high honor to that city, an honor which on the whole was so little appreciated. Jesus left Judea, that land of religious pride and pretense, and came to live in that very dark land of Galilee, sunken as it was to the level of Gentile wickedness, that there the grace and glory of the light might shine. Those people saw "great light," for the "Light of the world" dwelt in their midst. This is all of one piece with the whole tenor of Matthew's presentation of Christ. He, who was the rightful King, yet came in humble guise, accepted the place of rejection, and in grace reached out to the most depraved with His heart of love.

Now (verse 17) Jesus Himself begins to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Then He calls Simon and Andrew to follow Him. This agrees with Luke 5,

where the same incident is given; not with John 1. In John's Gospel we have the actual conversion of Andrew, who then brought his brother Simon to Jesus. The event in our chapter occurred later, for John had in the meanwhile been cast into prison (see verse 12). It refers to the Lord calling these brothers into His service—to become fishers of men. This is followed by the similar calling of James and John. How good to read that immediately they left their nets, their ship, and followed Jesus. We may have obeyed the call to trust Christ as Saviour; are we as ready to leave all, to follow and serve Him?

The chapter closes with the proof of His Messiahship, as it opens with it. He proved He was indeed the King by defeating Satan; He proves it again by the mighty miracles He performed. He was truly the One prophesied—"the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26).

Satan flees at His word; disciples unhesitatingly obey His call; diseases are instantly healed, and vast multitudes—of Jews and Gentiles alike—march in His train. Every whit speaks of His glory; all of it breathes His royal power; His human tenderness and love.

The Laws of the Kingdom

MATTHEW 5-7

IN HEBREWS 8:10 we read that in the day of Israel's glory, God will put His laws into their mind and write them in their hearts. Those laws are set before us in detail in this famous portion of God's word, known as the Sermon on the Mount. Chapters 24-25 give another sermon, no less important. That deals with dispensational events; this one with moral truths. Israel shall yet practise these moral principles in the day when Christ shall reign over them; they also have their application for us now, as we walk in the power of the Spirit of God.

In this sermon God's laws are applied to the inward man. The law is not set aside in Christianity, but is fulfilled as the believer walks by faith (Romans 3:31). A believer seeks to live his life before Him who does not look on the outward appearance, but looks on the heart. In the coming day of glory, Christ shall rule in perfect righteousness, but He is doing so now in the devotion rendered by His saints. In this way the commands unfolded in this Sermon on the Mount apply to us today, though they shall find their complete fulfillment in Israel's future.

Chapter 5 begins with what we are to "be"; it ends with what we are to "do," which is ever the proper order. Chapter 5 deals more particularly with our relation toward others; chapter 6 with our conduct God-

ward; chapter 7 with our life in relation to ourselves. This great sermon thus covers a comprehensive field of thought.

Signs Proving He Is the Christ the King

MATTHEW 8-9

THERE ARE ten miracles in these two chapters: 5 in each chapter.

Chapter 8:

The healing of the leper.

The centurion's servant healed.

Simon Peter's mother-in-law restored.

The storm on the lake of Galilee.

Two demoniacs delivered.

Chapter 9:

The man sick of the palsy.

The woman with the issue of blood.

Jairus' daughter raised from the dead.

Two blind men healed. (This miracle is found alone in Matthew; the only one of these ten.)

The demon-possessed dumb man cured.

All of the above are found both in Mark and Luke (with the exception noted); none are found in John's Gospel.

Chapter 8 connects directly with chapter 4, the

Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7 being a parenthesis. The thread of thought at the end of chapter 4 is taken up again here. Matthew 4:24 states that He healed all who came to Him. In these two chapters samples of this healing power are given, demonstrating His divine power and compassion. He is God and Man in One Person.

To the student of Scripture it is worthy of note that the order of events in Matthew is distinctly different from that in Mark and Luke. Matthew evidently arranges them, not according to chronological order, but with a definite dispensational view. For instance, the healing of the centurion's servant took place after the Sermon on the Mount (see Luke 7:1), while that of the leper happened earlier, yet both are together after the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. The third miracle—of the cure of Peter's mother-in-law—occurred even before the cleansing of the leper, yet finds its place third. Similar changes are seen in the rest of these miracles. There is divine purpose in all this. Matthew, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, follows a certain pattern, clearly visible to the instructed mind. He presents Christ as the Messiah, the King, and so calls attention to His power, His authority, yet, at the same time, to His rejection by the nation. This is pictorially set forth in the order the miracles appear in his account.

Jesus sends the cleansed leper to the priests as a testimony that He is truly Israel's Lord, for which purpose Matthew writes. But those priests evidently ignored Him, as He was ignored by the nation in general, for His own received Him not. This is followed by the great faith of the Gentile centurion, upon which the Lord

comments with wonder. If Israel is blind, the Gentiles will believe (see Isaiah 49:6). But those to whom the Kingdom should have belonged are cast out into outer darkness (verse 12).

Jesus touched both the leper and Simon's mother-in-law, but He healed the centurion's servant by remote control. How striking! For as the gospel is going forth today to the Gentiles, the blessing comes to them in just that manner. He is not here where He can touch men now, but blesses them, as it were, from Heaven above, as the risen Christ. But when Christ came to Israel, before this age of grace began, He came close to Israel as He lived among them here upon earth; He will come to earth again when He comes to bless them in the day yet future. This is seen in Jesus' touch upon the fevered woman. She is healed in the "house," again suggestive of Israel's relation to God, for they are so often known as the "house of Israel." When our Lord comes back, Israel's restless passions shall be subdued, and relief and peace shall come to that so storm-tossed nation.

These three miracles all prove His *power*, a note that is continued through the rest of chapter 8. Christ is seen as the Master over everything. He bids men follow Him without question; He stills the raging seas; He shows His authority over Satan's cruel domination.

In the case of the two demon-possessed men (Mark and Luke speak of only one demoniac), Matthew leaves out all detail not strictly necessary. He calls full attention to the Person who does the miracle. Along with this he presents the other side—His rejection by men—the dark shadow that hangs so much over all of this Gospel. In every way Christ shines out here in His glorious

Majesty. Disease flees before Him; Creation hushes at His word; demons own Him as the Son of God. Truly He is the "King."

Chapter 9. Not only the power of the enemy is broken, but now the guilt of the sinner—for He came to earth to save sinners—is lifted by His word and the paralysis (the inability to walk aright, which is the awful consequence of sin) is instantly removed at His command. The man with the palsy is healed—in soul and body. The Son of Man not only can conquer death, disease, and demons, but He has power to forgive sins. He came to heal the sick and to call sinners to repentance.

This is followed by the call of Matthew to follow Him, for following Christ is the natural result of being healed and blessed.

John the Baptist's disciples question Jesus about fasting and the Lord again intimates His rejection by saying that they would fast "when the Bridegroom is taken away from them." The new dispensation of grace was about to take the place of the old: no longer any patching of a faulty garment of legal self-righteousness (putting a piece of a new garment upon an old), but the divinely perfect garment of God's salvation, provided by grace divine to cover every poor sinner.

The next two parables—of the woman with the issue of blood and of the raising of Jairus' daughter—again press a clear dispensational lesson. The dead daughter of the Jewish ruler pictures the dead spiritual condition of Israel during this present age. In the meanwhile, a woman by faith touches Christ and is immediately healed. This presents the idea that at present the gospel goes forth to the Gentiles, to be laid hold of today entirely on the

principle of faith. When this age of grace has run its course, then, as seen in the picture here, the Lord restores to life spiritually-dead Israel, set forth in the resurrection of Jairus' daughter.

This latter age is once more stressed in the healing of the two blind men (verses 27-30). Israel today is blinded by unbelief (2 Corinthians 3:14) and only as Israel acknowledges Christ as the Son of David (as these blind men do here) shall her eyes be opened. This is the first time in Matthew that Jesus is owned as the son of David. He never speaks in that way of Himself, but seems to wait for these to do so, as Israel shall someday, of their own will, hail the son of David as their King—and He shall then take His place on David's throne, to reign forever.

This incident in turn is followed by the cure of the demon-possessed dumb man. So Israel, blind and dumb in their unbelief, shall yet be blessed in the future day, according to Isaiah's glowing prophecy: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isaiah 35:5-6). But that day has not come as yet; 1,900 years ago the leaders of Israel, in their wicked envy and their blind unbelief attributed His wonder-working mercy to Satanic power. No wonder the nation was scattered (verse 36), and has been for the last nineteen centuries, till He shall come and gather them from the four corners of the earth. Then shall their eyes be opened and their lips shall shout His praise.

The miracles and incidents of these chapters shall all be considered more in detail under other headings.

The King Offered to Israel The Final Offer

MATTHEW 10

JOHN AND JESUS both preached that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Now here is the last and final offer, this time brought to that rebellious and gainsaying people by the twelve apostles.

We know but little of these messengers beyond what the Bible tells us about them, and that is not much. Except for a few prominent ones, we read little of them even in the Gospels. After Christ's death they fade out of the picture, with a few exceptions. Hardly a tradition even remains to remind us of them. Evidently it is not they whom we are to look at, but rather are to consider the ministry here committed to their trust, as they went forth at Christ's command.

They accompany their preaching with miracles (verse 8), as the Jewish messengers shall do in the age to come; these miracles were signs of the "age to come" (Hebrews 6:5). They go forth without money or supplies (verses 9-10) for they present the claims of Christ the King and so have a right to expect reception and support by those to whom they come. But in Luke 22:35-36, where He is seen as the rejected Saviour, we have the very reverse. There they were not to count on being taken care of by those to whom they preached. There the gospel is seen as going forth in this present age, and in this age those who go forth serving the Lord must look

to Him alone for support, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

Beginning at verse 16 there are a number of intimations that the message of the Kingdom would be refused. He sends the apostles forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, yet those wolves were supposed to be the lost "sheep" of the house of Israel (verse 6). They would be delivered up, scourged, imprisoned, etc., all of which did happen later on, after Pentecost. They would be hated of all, persecuted, and slain.

Verse 22 shows that the Lord, in speaking to these twelve, was looking beyond that time to the still future hour, for He says "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." This very expression (chapter 24) has there to do with the tribulation days, as the context clearly shows. It is then the Son of Man shall come and the "end of the age" be reached. Thus, in our Lord's words here, the whole present day of grace is omitted (as so often in the New Testament) and Israel's past, when Christ was on earth, is linked directly with their future, when He shall come again. The very same comprehensive look is taken in the "great commission" of Matthew 28:19-20, where Christ sends His disciples out right after His resurrection, yet assures them He will be with them till the "end of the age"—the very future "end" of our test here.

Please note that everything Jesus says in this chapter denotes the definite rejection of the offer of the Kingdom by Israel; and note that after this chapter there is never any offer of the kingdom to Israel until the day still future—the tribulation time—when once more the gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached for a witness unto all nations (24:14). A clear understanding of this

fact will prevent a great deal of misunderstanding and misapplication of Scripture.

The apostles could expect opposition and persecution, for the servant is not above his Lord. But they need not fear, for He had sent them out as "sheep among wolves." Surely He would never have done so, were He not able to protect them amidst such fearful dangers. Perhaps many might be called upon to lay down their lives in martyrdom, as we now know many eventually did. Men might kill the body, but they cannot touch the soul. The one to be feared is he who is able to cast body and soul into hell—Gehenna. Notice the Lord changes from "kill" to "destroy." The word destroy means to be lost or to ruin; the Lord stated therefore that the soul of man is never killed (man exists eternally), but that man—complete man—spirit, soul, and body—will be lost, ruined forever, in that place of eternal woe.

Fear not, says our Lord; preach the Word. That which is covered (speaking of the many truths never revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures) is now revealed (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-10). What was then hid is now made known. What the Lord told them in darkness—that is, in secret—they were to preach in the light and proclaim from the housetops. Notice that here the Lord plainly teaches that these apostles, since Israel would refuse their message of the offered Kingdom, were to announce the blessed truths of the Christian faith, so soon to be unveiled fully by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Israel was to be set aside, and the gospel was to be preached far and wide—from the housetops. I think these two verses—26-27—are of the utmost importance. There is a theory abroad that the twelve

apostles preached rather a Jewish gospel and that, when Paul came upon the scene, their message gradually receded into the background and the truth of the Church became known. Such say that the first Church was Messianic and was succeeded by the "Church which is His body"—a truth committed, say such, to Paul alone. Such argue that the "great commission" of Matthew 28 was given specially to the twelve and was set aside when fullblown Christianity under Paul took its place; and so all that went with the ministry of Matthew 28, including baptism, went by the board. The verses here in Matthew 10, as well as many other passages of Scripture, completely refute this fancy. In our chapter here the Lord gives the twelve their "great commission"—only here, before the cross, it was limited to Israel only. After His death (in Matthew 28:18-20) it is extended to all nations, and has been going forth throughout these centuries, for today Christ's kingdom is a spiritual one, into which every believer enters by new birth (John 3:3). After the Church is taken home to glory, this gospel of the Kingdom will be carried by Israel to the Gentile nations (we shall see this later on), till the end of the age comes, when Christ returns in power and glory. In the meantime, also, the great truths of the Christian faith are ministered today, as we have them recorded so wonderfully in Paul's Epistles.

It is a fallacy to claim that only Paul knew or preached the great truths connected with the Church. Scripture plainly proves that they were revealed to *all* the apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:5). And our text here in Matthew 10 proves that the Lord foretold the unfolding of these marvelous hitherto-unveiled

truths to the twelve, and told them they were to preach them from the housetops.

That Christ already takes His place as the Rejected One is clear from verse 34 on to the end of our text. He came not to send peace, but a sword. The Prince of Peace had come, yet His coming brought out the hatred and innate opposition of the human heart against all that is of God, bringing division rather than healing where His name was proclaimed. One must choose Christ *or* —! Similar language regarding families being divided because of Him is found in connection with Israel's future in the tribulation showing once more our Lord in thought included that day to come. For the first time in this gospel (verse 38) He hints at His death. To be worthy of Him one must choose the cross and follow Him, even though it mean separation from all else, and from all held dear below. But there is rich reward in this, for nothing shall be forgotten that is suffered or done for His sake. Even a cup of cold water given from love to Him shall in no wise lose its reward.

The Message Refused; Judgment Pronounced

MATTHEW 11

THE CHAPTER opens with John the Baptist's inquiry as to what he is to think of Christ; it continues showing

what Christ thinks of John. John may have his doubts of Jesus; Jesus has none of John. The servant may not know his Master, but the Master knows His servant.

Of those born of women there is not a greater than John the Baptist. I suppose because he was the last of the Old Testament prophets (verse 13), he was privileged not only to announce Christ's coming, as did all the others, but actually to see Him and point to Him as the Lamb of God.

Notwithstanding, says Jesus, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. Many interpretations have been given to this passage. It has been thought the Lord meant that the least believer in this day of grace occupies a higher position than John; but this could not be, for as yet there had been no revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven in its present spiritual form (this does not come till chapter 13). All that John knew about the kingdom was as it had been prophesied in the Old Testament, which is Messiah's reign in earthly power and glory. It could, therefore, well be that it is this thought the Lord had in view, for, after all, John was serving the Lord in the day of His rejection; far greater is the position of those who shall be in the Kingdom when Christ shall sit upon the throne of His glory. It is a passage of Scripture upon which it is difficult to dogmatize.

If Israel had received the message of John, he would then have been their Elias, as Malachi 4: 5-6 had foretold. But since the nation refused the Christ John preached, Israel's blessing cannot come till Christ returns in glory; then Malachi 4: 5-6 shall be fulfilled. Once more there is that sad but clear note that Israel saw no beauty in Him

that they should desire Him. He was despised and rejected of men.

Israel as such paid no heed to John's warnings of judgment; they were unmoved by Christ's ministry of grace. What is left? Only a solemn, necessary pronouncement of judgment. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not." Highly favored as they had been, with the Son of God dwelling in their midst and scattering His mercies in profused abundance, their doom must of necessity be worse than that of Tyre and Sidon, or of Sodom and Gomorrha. Turning from this sad note, our blessed Lord utters that precious invitation, so well-known to all the people of God: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The opening and closing portions of this chapter will be treated elsewhere.

*The Climax! Israel Rejects Christ;
Christ Rejects Israel*

MATTHEW 12

THE LORD declares Himself at the opening of this chapter as greater than the Temple and Lord of the Sabbath.

Both these were signs between God and Israel. Making much of outward forms, Israel rejected the One who instituted them.

Now (verse 14) for the first time we read of a deliberate plan to kill Him. The cleavage is becoming more pronounced. Jesus withdraws Himself but, as He does so, multitudes follow Him and He heals them all. His compassions fail not; in mercy His heart goes out to those in need. But He tells them not to make Him known; He accepts His refusal by the nation as such, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet: "Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My spirit upon Him, and He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust." How significant those last words! Cast out by Israel, the gospel goes out to the Gentiles, as chapter 13 so clearly intimates in those seven parables of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now (in verse 22) Christ heals a blind and dumb man, demon-possessed, typical of Israel's condition. For Israel is truly blinded today, dumb and unable to speak His fame; and shall be truly possessed of Satan during the tribulation when they worship the Antichrist—Satan's imitation of Christ incarnate. Christ shall deliver the believing remnant in that day, and their eyes shall be opened to see Him whom they pierced. Notice again the clear dispensational picture. In verse 15, He healed Israel while on earth; in verse 22 is a picture of what He shall

do in the future day; and in between we read of the Gentiles trusting in Him, as it is in this present day of grace.

The miracles Christ did should have proved to Israel that the Kingdom of God had indeed come (verse 28), and that their very King was in their midst. Alas, nothing is so blind as unbelief. Christ would yet bind the strong man and spoil his house (verse 29), reminiscent of the triumph of the cross, when through death He annulled him that had the power of death—that is, the devil—and delivered them who were Satan's captives; truly He spoiled his goods.

The issue is now clear, and the Lord insists that there can be no neutrality in regard to Himself: "He that is not with Me is against Me" (verse 30). But the leaders have made up their minds, and the Lord calls them—what John the Baptist had called them months before—a generation of vipers. The tree was evil, and the ax is laid to its root. Israel was no good, waiting only for God's judgment.

There is no use asking for signs (verses 38-42). Only an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, after having seen all His miracles of love and power; after listening to His words of grace. Israel's past sin shall be more than matched by her future, for the last state of that wicked generation shall be worse than the first (verse 45); when Israel shall sink into idolatry, worshipping Satan, who will sit on the throne in the person of the Antichrist.

And so, it is all over. Verses 46-50 tell us in picture that the Lord now repudiates all natural relationships, and acknowledges as His family only those who are

truly His own by divine birth. It is a virtual break with Israel as a nation. Lo, He turns to the Gentiles, as the opening verse of the next chapter suggests. He leaves the house—the house so often being typical of Israel's as God's earthly house—and He sits by the seaside—the sea in Scripture so often illustrative of the Gentile nations. The whole of chapter 13 gives the wider character of ministry—the Kingdom now including those of all the nations of the world.

*A New Departure; the Kingdom of Heaven
as a "Mystery"*

MATTHEW 13

THE STRUCTURE of the Gospel of Matthew and that of John are much alike. In both there is a definite, new departure at the 13th chapter. From John 1 to 12 the Lord has been speaking to "His own," referring to Israel (John 1:11); at chapter 13 He withdraws to the upper-room and now reveals to His disciples the great truths of Christianity; again to "His own" (13:1), but this time His own are the redeemed of this age—the Church—of which these disciples formed the nucleus.

So in Matthew the first 12 chapters deal with Christ's teaching to and about Israel chiefly, but in chapter 13 He

turns away from Israel, and the message of the Kingdom goes out world-wide. The distinction is that, in John, the "Church" is in view; in Matthew the Kingdom of Heaven. The one presents the inner, the other the outer view of Christianity. We shall note the distinctions between these two when we come to chapter 16.

The parables of the Kingdom unveil the truth concerning the Kingdom as it exists in the present day. Christ utters seven parables, with five more in the rest of this Gospel, and unfolds the Kingdom of Heaven in its hitherto mystery form. There are a number of "mysteries" in the New Testament, all of which unfold truths not known in the former times. Our Lord, in verse 17 of this chapter, says they were not known to the prophets and righteous men of those bygone days. And in verse 35 we are told those mysteries had been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

First the Baptist, then the Lord, and finally the twelve offered a literal kingdom to Israel, for the Kingdom in its spiritual sense had not yet been revealed then. Some tell us there is no evidence that Christ or His disciples presented an earthly, literal, political kingdom to Israel. The answer is that no such proof is needed, for our Lord's words in chapter 13 are crystal clear in showing that the Kingdom, as a spiritual one only, did not start till then; the Jews at that time (and today, still, for that matter) knew nothing else except a political kingdom here upon earth. All the Old Testament prophets spoke of this greatly longed-for hope of Israel, but when this Kingdom was actually offered, they rejected the King because He came in lowly form; they crucified their King. The word "repent" was the rock on which the hopes of

Christ's Kingdom, being then established in power, were wrecked. The visible kingdom is thus in abeyance. The King is in Heaven, but He reigns now in the hearts of His loyal, redeemed subjects. To that end the gospel is being sown in the "heart" (verse 19). Christ then, in this chapter, introduces a kingdom (not in outward, visible form; not a political one but a spiritual, inner kingdom), where the rejected Christ is crowned and given the throne of the trusting heart by faith. In its present state, this kingdom will be composed of those who are real, and also of those who make a false profession. The Kingdom of Heaven, from chapter 13 on, presents in these parables the sphere of Christian profession, of which much is false; we know it as "Christendom." As has been said, these parables set forth:

A kingdom without a visible king; yea, with a crucified King as its Head.

A kingdom without a visible, geographical headquarters.

A kingdom without material boundaries or limitations.

A kingdom without national distinctions.

This is truly a revolutionary conception, wholly unknown or revealed till we come to this great chapter 13 of Matthew.

Matthew alone employs this term "Kingdom of Heaven." The others all say "Kingdom of God." Some say there is little or no difference in these two expressions, but if so, why does Matthew alone use the first term? While some parables are found under both headings, it is to be noted that those which are seen to contain both believers and unbelievers are not spoken of under

the term "Kingdom of *God*"; such as the parable of the wheat and tares; the net cast into the sea; and the wise and foolish virgins. The Kingdom of God, according to John 3:5, takes in only those truly born again, while the Kingdom of Heaven includes the false as well as the real. At times, it is true, the Kingdom of Heaven is employed to speak of true believers only, as in Matthew 18:3, but you will find that in such cases the reference is to the future day—the millennial day of glory—when only believers shall enter. In the present age the Kingdom of Heaven includes both saved and lost.

Since Jesus, in His explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares, says that the Sower of the seed there is the Son of Man Himself (for the gospel began to be preached by the Lord—Hebrews 2:3), and since the parable ends with the great harvest at Christ's future Second Coming in glory, it is evident that these parables cover the whole period of time, from Christ's first Coming nineteen centuries ago to His Coming in glory by-and-by.

The Lord said that He adopted this parabolic form of teaching because He had been rejected and God's Word had been refused; henceforth those who wanted to know God's will and ways must be interested enough to "want" to know; those who inquired earnestly—who desired to know—would know (verses 36-37).

The seven parables of this chapter are divided into groups of 4 and 3. In the first four Satan is seen as active, seeking to frustrate God's purposes of grace; alas, how successful he has been in many ways! The first two parables deal with individual acceptance or rejection of the gospel; the next two give a mass view of its results. These

four were spoken to the whole multitude out in the open, suggesting that they could be understood by and were meant for all. They present the outward aspect of Christendom and it is certainly easy to see the fearful condition of religious confusion and empty profession that exists world-wide. But the final 3 of this chapter were spoken inside the house and to the disciples only. They reveal the inner, secret view of the Kingdom. Satan is not mentioned here; the Lord reveals to His own dear ones how God works to carry out His own plans of grace, in spite of all the devil may do to the contrary. The parables of the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea, picture the conversion of the Jew, the Church of God, and the Gentile nations, thus covering the whole world in their scope. All these are discussed under the subject of the parables.

The Divine Program in Pictorial Form

MATTHEW 14

THIS AND THE PRECEDING CHAPTER COVER the same period dispensationally; that in direct teaching, this in picture. It is the story of God's ways from the cross to the crown.

In the murder of John the Baptist we have foreshadowed the eventual crucifixion of Christ Himself. The

Lord feels it so, as it were, and withdraws into a desert place.

Next we come to the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 men (beside women and children) with the five loaves and two fishes. I suppose every gospel preacher has used this incident (the only one recorded in all the four Gospels), as a lovely picture of the bread of life being provided for hungry souls. Christ is the Bread of Life for the lost sinner, to be received and taken in by faith, even as we take real, material bread into our mouths in order to live. "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever," said He (John 6:58). As thousands were fed here, so millions have been saved and fed as they received Christ by faith as the Bread of Life. Thus this miracle pictures the going forth of the gospel from Christ's day till now.

Having performed this miracle, the Lord sent the multitudes away and told His disciples to go into a ship and go before Him to the other side, while He Himself went up into a mountain apart to pray. Here is the next step in the history as it unfolds, for Christ has gone up on high to pray for His own; and He has been interceding for them at God's right hand for the last 1,900 years. In the meanwhile His disciples were struggling across the stormy sea. I believe, strictly interpreting this, we have once more, as so often in the New Testament, the present day of grace left out as it were. These disciples are Jewish disciples, struggling, as the Jews have been doing for centuries, across life's—for them—so stormy sea. Jesus appears to them in the fourth watch, which answers to the rising of the sun and thus to Christ's coming in glory in the future. The picture is of Christ's coming

again to Israel, in the darkest hour of the tribulation, just before the sun is to rise upon them. This Gospel alone tells us that Peter left the boat to walk to Jesus. It illustrates that, just before Christ actually comes back, in that storm of tribulation that will rage so fearfully in the future day, there will be a remnant (pictured by Simon Peter) that will rise to meet the Messiah; that will recognize Christ as Messiah before the nation as a whole does. Ever so many Scriptures speak of this faithful remnant during the tribulation period. Applying Peter's act to ourselves, it also shows how a believer may walk by faith, trusting in the Lord alone, and thus be superior to all life's stormy circumstances.

Christ comes to them to the boat, and then, as John tells us (6:21) immediately the ship was at the other side. So, when Christ comes to Israel by-and-by, instantly the storm of suffering for them will be over, and Israel shall be safely through the tribulation, back in their own promised land.

Finally, in this chapter Jesus and His disciples come to Gennesaret and everyone there is blessed. This presents the millennial joys that will follow, when the blessing of God will cover the scene. Thus this striking "picture-chapter" covers the history of the age from Christ's First to His Second Coming. How wonderful is God's wonderful Word!

Out of the Heart Are the Issues of Life

MATTHEW 15

THE JEWS were very punctilious in attending to outward forms and ritual, as so many people are today; they needed to learn that God looks upon the heart. And when the heart is wrong, all else is wrong. They turned away from Christ because their hearts were not right in the sight of God. This chapter tells the story of four kinds of hearts:

1. The heart of the religious hypocrite. His heart is far from God (verse 8). To the commands given by God he had added a great deal of tradition, oftentimes thus setting aside God's plain Word to substitute man-invented ideas. The Lord calls their attention to one of these traditions: If they dedicated a gift to God, they could use such dedication as an excuse not to care for needy parents, pretending they had devoted such gifts to the service of God. There was double trouble here. First, they did not love their parents as they should, or honor them, when it should have been a delight to take care of them in their old age; secondly, they did not love God, for they did not give this money to Him because they enjoyed doing so, but as an excuse to get around their obligation to their parents. It made them appear holy and pious in the eyes of men, while in reality they were wicked. The whole trouble was with their hearts. Had they loved God truly, they would have loved the One

who was speaking to them, for He was their God. The hypocrite in his blindness actually seems to think that he can fool God as he does others.

2. The wicked heart of the sinner, deceitful above all things. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, etc. Not what goes in, but what comes out defiles the man. The evil lies within. Not circumstances, nor environment, nor education or the lack of it, are at the root of sin; the root is within—in the human heart; that heart needs to be purified by faith.

3. The loving heart of a poor Gentile sinner (verses 21-28). The Lord delighted in, and honored, the faith of this poor outcast, as He exclaimed: "O woman, great is thy faith." She was willing to be no more than a dog, if only her daughter might be healed. She was not even asking a blessing for herself, but for another. Oh, that we might have hearts that long for the blessing of others; that we might be willing to take the low place at His feet.

4. And then there is the compassionate, loving heart of Christ our Lord. He had compassion on the multitude, healing all that came to Him, and feeding the hungry thousands. How wonderful to think of Him Whose heart ever beats with compassion for all and who still says: "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

We Reach the "Peak" in Matthew's Gospel

MATTHEW 16

HERE WE REACH the zenith in this great Gospel account. Thus far, I trust, we have seen with some degree of clearness, how Christ came as King of the Jews, proved His title to the throne by His miracles, His mastery over all, and His messages. How the offer of the Kingdom under His rule was refused by a blind, self-willed nation. How He pronounced judgment upon them (chapter 11), and how they planned to destroy Him (chapter 12). At the close of chapter 12, Christ turns away from Israel and in chapter 13 unfolds the truths concerning the spiritual Kingdom of Heaven in this day—in the mystery parables. In chapter 15 He turns away from the bickering leaders of Israel to bless a poor Gentile outcast. And now in the opening of this chapter He tells the leaders, as they brazenly ask Him for a sign from Heaven, that a wicked and adulterous generation may seek after a sign, but no sign shall be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. The same incident is recorded in chapter 12:38-40, with the additional item of Jonah's sojourn in the whale being a type of Christ's death and eventual resurrection. Thus Israel in its unbelief is pointed to the Cross.

In the verses following, Jesus warns the disciples against the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Such hypocritical religious formalism—with Christ on

the outside—has become the curse of Christendom as well.

And now we come to the very heights in this Gospel. Now, for the first time, the Lord turns to His own and asks: "Whom do ye say that I am?" First they tell Him what others think of Him, and there were various answers there. But "others" do not know Him. Those who love Him and who walk with Him have learned to know Him and Peter, ever ready to speak, says without hesitation: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The term "Christ" is specially connected with Israel, for Israel had been promised the Coming of the Anointed One—the Messiah ("Christ" in the Greek tongue), while "Son of God" is His title as the Heavenly One—especially in relation to the believers of this day, God's heavenly people. Hence Peter confesses the Lord as Israel's Christ and the Church's Saviour. Of course, Scripture in the Old Testament is clear that the Messiah would be God's Son, as in the second Psalm, and would sit as King on the holy hill of Zion. Peter calls Jesus the Son of the "living" God; a word which afterwards he employed so often in his letters, as: the living Word; a living hope; living stones, etc. Peter's faith was a vital one, and Christ a divine, living reality to his soul.

Peter is told that the Father in Heaven revealed this unto him and he is called "blessed." Truly blessed is everyone who recognizes and owns that Christ is the Son of God—the Saviour of men.

"Upon this rock," says the Lord, "I will 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." We must pause here for a moment, for some fancy theories have been built on the words spoken by our Lord. Some say that the "church" mentioned here is not the Church of God, of which Paul speaks as "the body of Christ." This is supposed to be the "Messianic" church. They say this is that which was born at Pentecost, and is equivalent to the Kingdom which the apostles preached at Pentecost and after. Not till the end of the Book of Acts was this "Jewish" church set aside and did the Church, as we know it now, begin. Such say that the Kingdom was offered to Israel at Pentecost and afterwards, and its preaching was like to that given in the great commission of Matthew 28. Since baptism was given in connection with that commission, therefore baptism does not have any place today, since it has no connection with the Church.

In reply to this theory, I would say, first of all, there is not a semblance of suggestion anywhere in Scripture of two different churches in all of the New Testament. There is no such thing as a "Messianic church." The truth is that the Kingdom of Heaven—the keys of which were given to Peter—does not precede the Church and then cease, but that it runs concurrently with the Church all throughout this dispensation.

When the Lord gave Peter the keys of the Kingdom, this had no reference to the Kingdom in its visible, political form. The simple proof of that is that the visible kingdom had already been refused and in Matthew 13 had been superseded by Christ's spiritual kingdom. All the parables of Matthew 13 and further on show that this Kingdom continues throughout this whole present

period, from the cross to Christ's glorious Coming and that it is propagated by the sowing of the gospel seed.

It is not true that Peter offered the Kingdom to Israel on the day of Pentecost; in fact, the chapter teaches the very opposite. As we have seen before, there is no offer of the Kingdom to Israel *after* Matthew 10, until the future tribulation time. The Lord gave Peter the keys to His spiritual kingdom, which today is composed of either real or false believers; such are the fruit of the sowing of the gospel seed. Instead of Peter's offering the Kingdom at Pentecost, he plainly said there that Christ was to be in Heaven until His foes were to be made His footstool (Acts 2:35). Instead of offering the Kingdom to Israel, he tells his hearers to save themselves "from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). And in Acts 3, he says nothing whatever about Jesus' coming back again *right then*, as is claimed, "if they had received Christ." Nay, Peter says the very reverse, for he preaches that the Heaven must receive Christ until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:20-21). What did all the Old Testament prophets speak about—Christ's Coming back at Pentecost, or His Coming in the future millennial day? The latter, of course, and Peter plainly tells them Christ would stay in Heaven till that coming day.

The simple truth is that Israel was set aside by their rejection of Christ, and now the spiritual Kingdom and the Church run side by side in this age.

The Kingdom of Heaven, of which Peter was given the keys, is simply the sphere of religious profession, and covers the whole present period. So does the Church.

Every true believer today is seen in Scripture as both in the Kingdom and in the Church (see 1 Corinthians 6:10; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9 etc.). The Kingdom of Heaven expresses the larger sphere; the Church the narrower. The Kingdom has to do with our place of subjection to Christ here on earth; the Church our connection with Heaven. In the Church our privileges loom large; in the Kingdom our responsibilities. While I am a heavenly citizen, I am nevertheless here on this cold, hard earth, and am to be an obedient subject of Christ in His Kingdom below. Paul in his letters unfolds the precious truths of the Church as a heavenly body, a stranger here on earth; Peter speaks of the Kingdom and the believer's place in it. Both apply equally to Christians of this age.

Much is made of the fact that Paul had not been sent to baptize. Of course not, because baptism has nothing to do with the Church as such; it has to do with the Kingdom which is the sphere of external profession; and since that Kingdom exists now in spiritual reality, baptism has its place there; baptism is simply the badge of discipleship—the mark of obedience to the new-found King. The rather humorous thing is that while they say Paul was not sent to baptize, yet he is the only one of all the apostles of whom we read that he did baptize; there is no indication that any of the twelve ever did so after the death of Christ, with Christian baptism.

Much is also made of the fact that Paul went to the uncircumcision and the others to the circumcision, yet all throughout the Book of Acts Paul constantly goes to the synagogues and preaches to the Jew first, while Peter and John, who are supposed to limit themselves to the cir-

cumcision, are seen going to the Gentiles, both in Acts 8 and Acts 10. The whole truth is, there is nothing to these fancy notions. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, freely and consistently preached to the Jews; the twelve as freely preached to the Gentiles. Why? Because they all were in the Kingdom of Heaven, and they all were members of the Church, which is His body—the only Church the Bible knows anything about, composed of all believers from Pentecost till today.

Peter then is given the keys and told: "Whatsoever *thou* shalt bind on earth," etc. But in chapter 18, where the "Church" is in view, the same words are spoken to all the disciples. Peter was used by the Lord to introduce this new ministry on the day of Pentecost; now the whole Church carries it on, according to Matthew 18. The binding and loosing undoubtedly has reference to governmental dealing in the Church, as Matthew 18 indicates. It refers to discipline exercised within the Church by believers gathered together. It has nothing to do with preaching forgiveness of sins in gospel ministry; nor does it, of course, as Rome distorts a similar passage in John 20:23, have any allusion to one human being forgiving another sinner, for eternity.

Christ is now (in Matthew 16) openly confessed as the Christ, though Israel has refused Him. He now takes the place of rejection very frankly; and for the first time in Matthew (verse 21). He has reached the peak in Peter's confession of Him and in the revelation of the "Church," and now starts on the descent that ends at Calvary's dark cross.

As Jesus speaks in the plainest of terms of His impending death, Peter rebukes Him, saying: "Be it far from

Thee, Lord." Literally he says: "Be propitiated to thyself, Lord." Instead of going to the cross to have mercy on others, says Peter, have mercy on Thyself. The Lord answers the temptation with the stunning words: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." The same Peter who, a few moments before, was the mouthpiece of God the Father, is now being used by the devil. How weak is man without the sustaining grace and wisdom of God!

Twice our Lord bids Satan get to heel. Once, when in the mountain, Satan offers Him all the glory of the world; here, when he tempts the Saviour to flee the shame of the cross. Either one would have suited Satan well. The Lord recognized the temptations for what they were, and indignantly spurned them. But how readily even we Christians accept the world's praise and shun the shame of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings.

For the second time in this Gospel the Lord bids men to take up the cross and follow Him. The cross is something one does not *have* to bear; it must be taken up, and it can be laid down again. It implies deliberate, voluntary fellowship in His sufferings. To do so costs much; it may mean losing, as it were, one's life here—giving up everything for His sake, but finding life again in richer measure when this world is done.

This full chapter closes with the intimation of Christ's transformation on the Mount of Transfiguration. Before the dark hour of the cross would arrive, God would give the disciples a preview of Christ's coming glory.

*The Top of the Mount and the Descent
to Calvary*

MATTHEW 17

WE READ in Luke 9:51 that, after the Lord had been transfigured on the Mount, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." So it is here. We see our blessed Lord, at the opening of this chapter, transfigured, His face shining with the glory of the noonday sun. He might have gone home to Heaven thence, with perfect right to do so, but instead He turns His back on that inviting prospect and eventually does go Home, but by the way of the cross. From here on He speaks again and again of the shame and death that await Him, as in verses 22-23 of this chapter.

After mentioning that which awaits Him at Jerusalem (16:21), He encourages the hearts of His own by giving them a glimpse of the majesty and glory that shall be His in the day of His Coming. Those few on the mount saw the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom, as Peter assures us in his second Epistle, saying it was a preview of the power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel 7:13-14 had foretold the same event. The vision no doubt was given the disciples to strengthen them in view of the persecution and even martyrdom that faced so many of them. And it is written for our benefit that we might be content to suffer with Him now, that by-and-by we might also reign with Him. His face shone

like the Sun, and we shall shine like Him—like the son—in the Kingdom of our Father (Matthew 13:43).

The Lord comes down from the Mount of glory to find Satan active in the valley of this world, down where His people are to be a witness to His grace and power, here where by prayer and fasting we are to prove that the power of God is superior to all the devil's wickedness.

Now the Lord speaks again of His coming death, exhibition as it is from the human angle of man's wickedness. He is rejected by His people, while even those dear and near to Him fail really to appreciate who He is. Simon Peter admits that Jesus pays tribute (verses 24-27), seemingly ignorant of the truth that He is the Master of all, and that tribute should be paid to Him. But the Lord, in consistency with the place of shame He is to take, accepts the humble place, not insisting on His rights. So He pays, not only for Himself but for Peter, too. So He, who never owed anyone anything, came to pay the price of our redemption, that we might be forever free. All glory to His Name!

*Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit;
Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven*

MATTHEW 18

THE THREE SUBJECTS that occupy this beautiful chapter will be considered under other headings. As we take a bird's-eye view, we are impressed that the beatitude of chapter 5:3 fits here to a T. Greatness in the Kingdom is determined by lowliness of spirit here, whether that kingdom be that of its present form of spiritual life, or its future form of earthly grandeur under the sway of Christ. And He who is the King of that Kingdom, Himself set the example, as He took the place of least of all and lowest of all.

Would you be great in the kingdom? "Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (verse 4). "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Other signs of a truly lowly spirit are seeking the restoration of an erring brother or sister, as described in verses 15-20; and forgiving those who have sinned against us, even until seventy times seven. The latter truth is illustrated by our Lord in the closing parable of the chapter. A forgiven one should certainly have mercy on another who sins against him. Christ's Kingdom is not only a kingdom of greatness, but also of littleness; not only of might, but also of meekness; not only outward and majestic, but inward and merciful.

The Rules and Rewards of the Kingdom of Heaven

MATTHEW 19

IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (5:32), the Lord spoke out very strongly on the matter of "divorce." The Pharisees probably had heard His revolutionary words; so now, tempting Him, they challenge Him on that subject. The Lord in His reply shows them that away back in the garden of Eden a principle was established (verses 4-5), which nothing ever sets aside. In Christ's Kingdom natural relationships obtain, and divorce (except for fornication) is a violation of the command and will of God. In that case, say the disciples, it is better not to marry at all, if you can't have another wife whenever you please. The Lord replies that many go through life without ever marrying at all (verse 12) and, which interests us especially, some remain single for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. In order that they may be able to serve the Lord without distraction, some deny themselves the joys and comforts of married life, as did Paul and many others. The Lord will richly reward them in that eternal day.

Then there are the little children (verses 13-14) who without reserve trust and love the Lord; they do not feel it is any self-denial to love and follow Him; of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Next comes the story of the young ruler who was not in the Kingdom of Heaven, because he was not prepared

to deny himself. How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom.

Fourthly, the Lord declares there is a reward in the coming day for every bit of sacrifice for the sake of Him who bids us follow Him. "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (verse 29). Do you remember that the young ruler wanted to inherit everlasting life? This is the way to do it. This does not mean that one can be saved by this method, of course. Salvation is by grace alone; it is the gift of God and is not of works; it cannot be earned. But if we, as Christians, live for Him down here, we shall inherit eternal life up there—we shall enjoy it in all its fulness. The Apostle Paul in his writings frequently speaks of eternal life in glory as the fruit of service down here, as in Romans 6:22 and Galatians 6:8. We shall consider the two chief subjects of this chapter elsewhere.

The Last Shall Be First—in the Kingdom

MATTHEW 20

THE OPENING PARABLE of this chapter once more impresses the lesson that the place of prominence goes to the lowliest—the last of all shall be first of all. So im-

portant is this lesson that it is driven home twice, at the beginning and at the end of this parable (19:30 and 20:16).

Immediately following this, the Lord again mentions His betrayal, scourging, and crucifixion; here, for the first time in Matthew, stating the actual mode of His death—by crucifixion. Truly *He* took the lowliest place, pattern for all His people to imitate. But He would rise again. He who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, was to be highly exalted and given a Name above every name. How comforting to read that every time the Lord speaks of His death He always adds the glorious, comforting truth of His resurrection. How dull the disciples must have been, since they utterly failed to understand that He would rise again. Nay, though the Lord had just spoken of His cross, yet James and John (two of the brightest of Jesus' disciples) were thinking of a place of glory for themselves, rather than trying to apprehend the shame and sorrow that awaited their Lord. Jesus shows them that the baptism of judgment and the cup of sorrow must precede the throne and the crown.

The closing incident of this chapter—the opening of the eyes of the two blind men—links itself with the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, which follows. They acknowledge Christ as Son of David, as Israel shall in the future day, when her blindness shall have been healed, to recognize Christ as her King. Then shall Israel truly see Him and hail Him as King, when He comes, not riding on an ass' colt, but riding in power and victory on a great white horse.

The King Rejected; the Kingdom Lost to Israel

MATTHEW 21

THE ENTRY into Jerusalem is anything but a triumphant one. In fact, the shadow of humiliation, rather than of victory, lies plainly upon it. Israel did not want a King who came riding on an ass. She failed to recognize Him, in spite of the temporary enthusiasm with which the multitudes accompany Him. When He does enter the city, they don't even know who He is, and the reply of the crowd is that "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Not the "King" who is to reign in mighty power, but the humble prophet from the little despicable village of Nazareth. The whole incident but emphasizes His rejection by the nation, rather than His acceptance. The Lord evidently took it so when He cleansed the Temple for the second time, calling the traffickers a band of robbers. The wise and prudent were blind; He got praise out of the mouths of babes (just as today the humble still worship and follow Him).

The "cursing" of the fig tree falls right in line, for it pictures the casting off of Israel as God's people. The leaders will not own His claims but demand to know His authority for doing the things He did. The Lord refuses to satisfy their demand, simply because they were not honest, a fact He proves to them by their attitude toward John the Baptist. In the parable following (verses 28-31), Jesus tells them that they, by their sin and pride,

shut themselves out from the Kingdom, into which the publicans and harlots would enter.

The chapter closes with the well-known parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen. They, once God's earthly people, were to climax their fearful guilt of centuries by the murder of God's Son and Heir, and the Kingdom would be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The whole chapter unfolds Israel's rejection of her King, and the King's rejection of Israel, as a direct result.

What Think Ye of Christ?

MATTHEW 22

ONCE MORE we have the same theme—Israel's rejection of Christ, in the opening parable of this chapter, followed by God's judgment on the nation—in A.D. 70—and ending with the King coming again someday, to execute judgment on those who refused His mercy. The parable gives us Israel's past, present, and future, in a wonderful way.

In the next story—of paying tribute to Caesar—the Lord shows that Israel's sufferings under Gentile oppression are due to their failure to render God His due. At the time Jesus spoke, all during the present age, and

again as Israel shall suffer so fearfully during the tribulation under Gentile oppression, the same holds true. All of it is attributable to disobedience to God, to turning from Him who would have blessed them and who would have been their King as, praise God, He yet shall be.

In the story which follows, of the woman who had had seven husbands, the Lord touches upon the spiritual departure from God into which many among the people had sunk. Thus the Sadducees—the modernists of that day—were put to silence.

Then the Pharisees—the orthodox fundamentalists—propounded a question as to which was the great commandment of the law. The answer came: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” How completely they—and how completely every other human being that ever lived—failed to live up to that demand. Blessing does not come through keeping the law. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

And now we come to the intensely vital question, on which man’s destiny for eternity hangs: “What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?” The Pharisees know the answer to that one readily, for they were learned theologians. “The son of David,” say they without hesitation. Says our blessed Lord: “How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?”

That is the poser (and it is put in manifold ways in Scripture) which every Christ-rejecting unbeliever finds

it impossible to answer. To the Jews their Messiah was a mere man—not the Son of God eternal. But, if this were so, said the Lord, how then could David call the Messiah his *Lord*? And, if He is David's Lord, how could He be David's son at the same time? To every humble, Bible-believing Christian the solution to this riddle is simplicity itself. Christ is David's son after the flesh, as the genealogy of the first chapter of Matthew so clearly demonstrated. But He is more than man, as the same chapter further reveals. He is God—Emmanuel—*God with us*. He is God *and* Man in one blessed Person; God manifest in flesh. That is the *only* possible answer to this puzzle; the recognition of this immense truth explains the problem our Lord put to those proud enemies of His.

A most interesting point is that the Jews eventually sentenced Christ to death because He, being a man, made Himself God (John 10:33; Matthew 26:63–65). Yet that is the very thing they themselves were doing right here. For they said that the Messiah was merely the son of David (and in saying so as our Lord shows here, they meant He was a “man” and nothing more); yet Scripture showed this son of David was Lord; therefore the Pharisees were making a mere man God.

Praise His name, the exact reverse is the truth. Christ is not a man who made Himself God, but He is God, who in matchless grace became Man, to redeem poor guilty sinners. On that fundamental truth of the Christian faith rests all our blessing now and for all eternity.

The Great Denunciation

MATTHEW 23

MARK DEVOTES only three verses to this denunciation; Luke mentions about four of the woes found in this chapter, while Matthew has seven of them. Verse 14 is omitted by most editors, while it is found in both Mark and Luke. Matthew's account is by far the most elaborate, which is in perfect keeping with the theme of his Gospel. Israel is in view here, and thus her fearful guilt, as manifest so flagrantly in her leaders, is scathingly portrayed. Here is the final break—full and final—as the closing verses of the chapter tell us. "Your house [no longer called the Father's house, as it previously was called] is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Right here begins the present dispensation of grace, which shall end in that still future day when Israel shall welcome Christ as her King.

How fearful indeed the spiritual condition of that people, to call forth those seven "woes" from the lips of Him who ordinarily spoke such gracious, tender words. Never are common sinners addressed thus by our Lord; these words are suited only to the hypocritical, Christ-rejecting Pharisees whether living then or now.

These Jewish leaders sat in Moses' seat, as the givers of the law. But rabbinism had placed the ordinances of human tradition above the commands of the law, and

had laid grievous burdens on the shoulders of men. What they preached to others, they utterly failed to practise for themselves, which, alas, is nothing new even in the days in which we live.

They sought places for themselves, craving prestige and power. They made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments, to make them more conspicuous. These phylacteries were square capsules, covered with leather, containing—on small rolls of parchment—four sections of the law (Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:12-21). These phylacteries were fastened by leather straps to the forehead and round the left upper arm. Borders to the garments were prescribed by God (see Numbers 15:38), but these enlarged them, to make them more noticeable. All was for outward display, while their hearts were far from God.

The Lord tells them it is wrong to be called Rabbi (verse 8), Father (verse 9), Master (verse 10). Here we have divine warning against assuming titles in the case of a Jew, Catholic, or Protestant.

Now we come to these seven woes:

1. The Jewish leaders opposed Christ and sought to hinder men from owning Him as King; from receiving the message that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand—in the Person of the King then among them.
2. Refusing Christ's claims, they sought to propagate their own beliefs and views. They wanted proselytes to follow them; and, alas, they wanted to ensnare them into their own doom. These first two woes have a remarkable resemblance to the first two parables of chapter 13. In the first

Satan catches away the true seed; in the second he sows false seed, seeking to win converts to his false, devilish teachings. So here.

3. The Lord speaks of the Temple, the altar, and the throne. In a separate article under the heading "Expository Glimpses," I want to show that these three refer to Christ in incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation; the Pharisees spoke lightly of all three. Thus this third woe stresses Christ's rejection and His death by these envious leaders.
- 4-5-6. These three woes all focus attention on the same trait—the true Pharisaic trait of making much of the outside—much of little things—while ignoring the vital issues of life. Outwardly clean and beautiful—inwardly dirty, rotten, dead. That is religion, then and now; God hates it.
7. Verses 29-36. Stephen tells us that all the prophets had been subjects of Israel's persecution, and many paid for their faithfulness with their blood (Acts 7:52). These Pharisees had built imposing tombs and had beautified the sepulchers of those martyrs, pretending and saying that they were not of the same murderous mind as their ancestors had been. But the Lord, in accents of awful import, calls them serpents, a generation of vipers, who cannot escape the damnation of hell. Those very men were planning to kill Him who surpasses in glory all those prophets of old. They were to kill and persecute the apostles and prophets who would speak to them after the

Lord Himself had been crucified by them; all these things shall come, said He, upon this generation.

Upon the Pharisees would come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom *ye* slew between the Temple and the altar. This Zacharias had been murdered some 400 years previously, yet the Lord tells these wicked Pharisees that "*ye*" slew Him. Since they were of the same mind as all the religious persecutors throughout all ages from Abel down, therefore they were as guilty as they. Even so, today, the soul that rejects Christ as Saviour is as guilty of His death as if the act of killing Him had been done by his own hands. That is what our Lord's words here imply. What a solemn thought!

With his heart bursting with sorrow and with longing our blessed Lord laments over that favored city, Jerusalem. In Luke 19:41 it says that He wept over it, and that word implies "uncontrollable sobbing." "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" All God's dealings and pleadings with His chosen people were answered by their final rejection of Him—His death on Calvary. He now takes that stand, saying "*your* house is left unto you desolate." God has withdrawn Himself from it, and shall never return till that day when Christ shall come to reign. All they had left was a religion without God; even as so much of the religion of today.

"Ye shall not see Me until . . ." says our Lord. The last that Israel and this world saw of Christ was when He

was hanging naked and bleeding and thorn crowned on a criminal's cross; the next time men shall see Him will be when He comes from Heaven like the lightning shining across the sky; when He shall sit on the throne of His glory. In between the cross and the glory Israel is through as God's people; the offer of salvation goes out now to the whole world, making its appeal to individual sinners, whether Jew or Gentile.

*The Future of Israel, Christendom,
and the Gentile Nations*

MATTHEW 24-25

THESE TWO CHAPTERS contain the second Sermon on the Mount, and, like the first one of chapters five to seven, in a far more elaborate fulness than either in Mark or Luke. We know this as the Olivet Discourse, which we will consider under a separate heading.

Just a general view here.

Mark confines himself in his account entirely to Israel (see chapter 13). Luke mentions first the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 (see Luke 21: 20-24) which Matthew merely hints at in verse 2 of chapter 24, though he does comment on that historical fact quite clearly in his parable of the marriage of the King's Son (22:7). Luke then goes on to speak of Israel's future, as Matthew does here.

Matthew's account is by far the fullest, including the parable of the virgins and the judgment of the sheep and the goats. This is in full agreement with Matthew's theme—Israel and God's dealings with them and the Gentile nations.

In this discourse that which applies to the Church (or Christendom) is given in parabolic form, which once more emphasizes the fact that Israel is the special theme.

The three divisions are as follows:

Israel's future—24: 1-41

Christendom—24: 42-25: 30

The Gentiles—25: 31-46

In the parable (for that is what it really is) of the faithful and wise servant (24: 43-51) and also that of the virgins (25: 1-13) and of the talents (25: 14-30), we have a description of the present day of grace. It is noticeable that in this portion there are no more references to the Book of Daniel or to other Old Testament prophecy, as in the first portion of the Olivet Discourse. This again shows that Israel is not in view here, but rather the period of time known as the "Kingdom of Heaven"—in its mystery form—the truths of which, as Jesus taught in Matthew 13, were completely unknown in the Old Testament, and which have no special connection with Israel, as such.

In each of these three stories in this second section the Coming of the Lord is brought in, as of One who had gone into a far country (into Heaven—see 25: 14) and who shall some day return. It is hardly necessary to say that Israel is not looking for Christ to come from Heaven (as One who once was here below), but the Church is. These parables, then, apply to the present day. After

Christ comes for His own, Israel shall again be taken up, many of them going forth to preach the gospel to the nations of the world (24:14), and the results of that seed-sowing come before us in the closing part of this wonderful portion of God's Word. All is in beautiful, consistent, and consecutive order.

Man on Trial—in the Presence of the King

MATTHEW 26

MATTHEW 26 AND MARK 14 are much alike, giving practically the same details of these last hours, prior to our precious Saviour's death. Throughout it all, in spite of the humiliation so patent, He stands forth in majesty and power—Master over all. Really it is man who is on trial here; not the Son of God. And no one took His life from Him; He laid it down of Himself.

The Lord announces the day of His death, at which His enemies immediately begin to plot. Their spirit of hatred and murder finds its brightest contrast in the love Mary portrays as she pours her worship on His head, which in turn is followed by Judas' fearful treachery, as he bargains with the priests, and sells his Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

Then comes the last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper; then Peter's boast, sleep, and denial—

all this added to the terrible agony of Gethsemane, as our Saviour anticipates the cross, with its fathomless woe.

We intend to look at these throbbing scenes under other headings, but will close this brief view of chapter 26 with a look at our Lord's trial before Caiaphas, the high priest. Little did that man realize that in truth *he* was on trial before the Son of God, convicted—both in God's sight and in the sight of all right-thinking people—of the monstrous crime of the murder of the Son of God.

First comes the trial before the ecclesiastical, then before the civil court; first before Caiaphas, then before Pilate. In the one case the charge is blasphemy; in the other, rebellion or treason. In both the verdict was unjust, for this Man had done nothing amiss.

False witnesses are brought to accuse Him, but Jesus ignores their lies and holds His peace. But when the question is raised as to "who" He is, He speaks out in no uncertain tones. "Tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." The answer comes: "Indeed I am; and hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Those men well knew the quotation came from the prophet Daniel (7:13), and that it embodied our Lord's claim to deity. He was telling Caiaphas that the Son of Man and the Son of God are one and the same; that He, who ever was with the Father, in infinite grace had become Man. They may crucify Him (and praise God for that wondrous cross) but He would rise again; then His humiliation would evermore be at an end; He would sit on the right hand of power (which He is doing now all through the Christian age), and He would come some

day in the clouds of Heaven, which will take place at His appearing, when He comes to reign.

But now matchless grace and love, that brought Him down to earth, is met by the vicious hatred of the human heart, and they spit in His face and beat Him with the rods in their hands. *They* said: "He is guilty of death"; *we* say: "He is worthy by all to be adored."

It is most interesting to study in this chapter the various reactions toward the Person and Presence of Christ. Truly, what men think of Christ colors all their ways. As Simeon told Mary long ago: "Through Him the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed." Here we find the bitter hatred of the leaders of Israel; the burning love of Mary; the coldblooded cupidity of Judas; the boast of Peter and his sad denial of Christ; the dark unbelief and blindness of the high priest. All these are the direct outcome of man's attitude to Christ. And in the midst of all these stands One, in perfect love treading the path that leads to the cross; and thence to the throne. "My Jesus, I love Thee."

Condemned and Crucified

MATTHEW 27

IN THE EARLY MORNING our blessed Lord is now brought to Pilate's judgment hall, where they vehemently accuse Him. But God has His witnesses to the character of His

beloved Son. Matthew records three testimonies not found elsewhere, which all emphatically declare the innocence of the Holy One. Judas: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood"; Pilate's wife: "Have thou nothing to do with that *just* man"; Pilate himself, as he washes his hands of the whole thing before the multitude: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."

The Lord confesses to be the King of the Jews, but to all the false accusations raised against Him He deigns no reply, so that Pilate marveled. The Lord did the same when standing before Caiaphas. So we, too, should always contend for the truth, especially when it concerns the Person and Work of Christ our Lord, but it is not our business to refute lies told about us personally. We must not allow anything to be said derogatory of Christ; we must suffer anything whatever said about ourselves.

They had a prisoner named Barabbas, strikingly, in every way, a comparison and contrast with Christ. His name means "son of the father." Mark and Luke tell us he had been cast into prison for sedition, the very charge leveled by the Jews against the Lord. Barabbas also was a thief and a murderer. What a contrast! A thief versus the Giver of every blessing; a murderer versus the Prince of Life. A wicked sinner over against the holy Son of God. A son of a human father (if not of his father the devil, which I am sure is the picture here), in contrast with the Son of God His Father in Heaven. The Jews make their choice; not only the leaders now, but the whole mob. They say: "Give us Barabbas!" Ever since, this world has had the thief and the murderer.

Pilate says: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is

called Christ?" Again he leaves the choice to the mob. How dreadful and how utterly foolish! No one can shift the personal responsibility that is his to the shoulders of others; especially when it concerns the Lord Jesus Christ. One cannot wash away in a basin of water the stains of a crime like the rejection of Christ.

The leaders in their blindness and hatred shout: "His blood be on us, and on our children." They got their wish; they have been stained by that blood ever since. For every drop of blood shed by Christ, rivers of their blood have flowed. What have *you* done with Jesus? He has been crucified; He died upon the cross to pay for *your* sins; have *you* bowed at His feet and owned Him adoringly as *your* Saviour and Lord? If you haven't till now, why not trust Him as your Saviour today?

Now the soldiers take Him, scourged and bleeding, and gather the band to mock Him. They put on Him a royal robe, a mock crown—of thorns—and a reed for a scepter; bowing the knee in scorn, they spit in His face, smite Him on the head with the reed, and hail Him in derision as the "King of the Jews." Little did they know, as they thus vomited out their vileness, that since that day millions have been moved to tears, bowing in adoring wonder, before Him who once wore the crown of thorns. His suffering and shame make Him all the more attractive in our eyes. All that man can do, as he manifests the fearful corruption of the human heart, only enhances the grace and glory of that precious, holy One. How His beauties stand forth on the dark background of hateful priests, screaming mob, vile Barabbas, wretched Pilate, and cruel soldiery!

"There is none, Lord Jesus; there is none like Thee."

The cross is carried by a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Is this to remind us that another Simon, who should have been here, had denied his Lord? If one is not true to Christ, God will find another to fill his place.

Now we come to Calvary—the place of a skull—for the Cross truly is the end of all human wisdom; its preaching is to them that perish foolishness, but to us it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

There they crucified Him. And then, sitting down, they watched Him there (verse 36). How often have we done so since; not in mockery or indifference, but with lips overflowing with His praise, and with hearts truly melted to tears.

They that passed by reviled and mocked Him, saying: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." Never were truer words spoken, or words more comprehensively glorious.

Himself He could not save, He on the Cross must die,

Or mercy cannot come to ruined sinners nigh;

Yes, Christ the Son of God must bleed

That sinners might from sin be freed.

Beware lest forever in hell you be made to wail, "Myself He cannot save." Had He come down from the cross, then believing on Him would have been utterly in vain. It is because He *did* die there, under the weight of our guilt, that faith in Him can save the soul. Ah! it was not the nails that held Him there; only His great love to God and man. All glory to His name!

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." Man had done his worst, and now he is through. The Son of God is now shut in, in the deep darkness, alone with God as the fearful prob-

lem of sin is settled before God. All man's awful guilt is borne by love divine. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." And from that darkness comes that solemn cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That question did not ring out, nor was it wrung out, from our Saviour's very soul, for His sake. He knew He was forsaken of God because God is holy. His cry had been answered long ago in prophecy, in the Twenty-second Psalm. A holy God must turn away from sin; and when His own dear Son came before Him, laden down with sins (praise God, they were *my* sins, not His own) God must turn His face from Him. Jesus knew what it was to be forsaken. Members of His earthly family had left Him; the nation had rejected Him; His own disciples had fled. But, as He said in John 16:32, He was not alone, for His Father was with Him. But in that hour of supreme dread, God Himself forsook His only Son. As a blessed result, those who trust in Him for salvation shall never be forsaken—now or forever. Praise His Name!

There are three unique things in this cry:

1. It is the only time, as far as we know, during His entire life below, that Jesus ever addressed God as "My God." On earth He always spoke to God as "Father," which, as the Jews said in John 5:18, was Christ's claim to *deity*. Hence, when on the cross He cried, "My God," it demonstrates Christ's claim to perfect *humanity*. Only as Man could He truly be said to have a "God." On the cross He took my place, man's place and so addressed God as His "God," and not as "Father." There on Calvary He took the guilty sinner's

place, my place, and so was forsaken of God as He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

2. It is the only time the Lord ever asked "why" in regard to Himself. He never needed to ask why, because, as Peter so well said: "Thou knowest all things." On the cross Jesus asked "why," not because He did not know, but that we might never forget why He was forsaken there. It was because He took our—the guilty sinner's—place.
3. It is the only time anyone ever has been forsaken of God this side of eternity. Hereafter the sinner shall hear those solemn words: "Depart *from Me*, ye cursed," but not on this side of the grave. He was forsaken that we might never be; He died that we might live.

Now the Lord cries with a loud voice—indicating He did not die from exhaustion, but that He truly laid down His life—and then He (as the force of the expression is) dismissed His spirit. His death is a triumph, not a tragedy. The Gentile centurion acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God. This is also given in Mark and Luke, but the significant thought is added here that "they which were with him" did so as well. This is in conformity with all of Matthew, where again and again, as we have seen, the blessing passes from the Jew to the Gentile. If Israel has rejected Him, then God will see to it that the Gentiles shall own Him as the Son of God.

"They made His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death" (Isaiah 53:9). The moment Jesus died, all humiliation stopped instantly. No unclean hands touched Him; He was laid in a new tomb, never before used. As has been well said, He came into the

world by a virgin womb; He left it in a virgin tomb. He received a millionaire's funeral. All the Gospels tell how Joseph of Arimathea came forward and claimed the Lord's body, while John informs us that Nicodemus joined him in his tender and loving service. Christ is no longer numbered with transgressors, but loving hands prepare the body for entombment. And, to the shame of the apostles be it said, many "women" were there beholding afar off, while Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (no doubt the mother of the Lord) ventured close to the sepulcher, with deep interest watching the burial of that One so dear to them. How often do the sisters put the brothers to shame!

Matthew records something not found elsewhere—the sealing of the stone and the setting of a watch. His enemies said: "We remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." What the disciples had completely failed to take in had left its impression on the minds of these wicked men. They would make sure that He could not come forth from the tomb. They did not believe He could rise miraculously (or, at least, they persuaded themselves that He couldn't), but His disciples might come and steal Him away by night. So . . . they sealed the stone and set a watch of soldiers; and in doing so, forever made both fraud and illusion as to the glorious resurrection of Christ an impossibility. By doing so, they certified His resurrection. Had they *not* sealed the stone or set the watch, they might then, with some semblance of truth, have claimed that the disciples had stolen Him away. Truly He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him!

His Triumphant Resurrection

MATTHEW 28

MATTHEW ALONE mentions the earthquake and the angel of the Lord descending from Heaven, rolling back the stone from the door and sitting upon it. Since this Gospel presents Christ as King, it is suitable that these manifestations of divine power and grandeur should accompany the resurrection here.

The details in connection with this event are of the briefest nature here. Of the manifestations of Christ to His disciples at Jerusalem, only that of the women visiting the sepulcher is given (verses 9-10). Jesus, in speaking to them (as did also the angel) talks of meeting His own in Galilee. Jerusalem is entirely passed over. It is in Galilee the Lord gives his disciples the message in regard to the propagation of the *Kingdom*—which is the theme of Matthew's Gospel.

The connection with Galilee, seen so frequently in Matthew, was from the very first the token of His rejection by Israel. At His birth Jerusalem turned from Him and Jesus went with His parents into Egypt—a Gentile country. Returning thence, He lived in Nazareth—away from Judea; and upon the entrance into His public ministry He moved to Capernaum, called in Matthew 4:15 Galilee of the Gentiles. We see Him leave the "house" at the close of chapter 12 and go to sit by the seaside—typical of the Gentile nations, to whom the gospel of the Kingdom goes forth, as the parables of chap-

ter 13 and those after so clearly prove. While Luke shows Him to be in Jerusalem as He ascends from Bethany to Heaven, here in Matthew Jerusalem is completely left out. The last we see of Him is when He meets with His disciples in Galilee. This bypassing of Jerusalem—the center of Judaism—is therefore truly significant of the world-wide aspect of the Kingdom which is now being proclaimed, as taught in the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven throughout this account by Matthew.

The women held Him by the feet, while in John's Gospel Mary is told not to touch Him. In our comments on the Gospel of John we noticed that Mary was touching the Lord, for the construction of the phrase suggests this. The Lord was literally saying to Mary, "Do not continue holding Me." That incident there and this one here bring out to perfection the intricate beauty of the Word of God. In John, Christ is seen as the Heavenly One, and as such He could not be kept down here, for He was to go to Heaven, there to intercede for His Church. In Matthew, on the contrary, He is presented as King over Israel, in the future day to reign over them and the world; and as such He will reign here upon the earth. Hence the women hold Him here; Mary is told not to do so there. All is exquisitely beautiful and perfect. So also His ascension is omitted here, for as King He reigns over the earth. In John, He is seen as Head of His Church, which is a heavenly body; here as King over Israel, which is His earthly people.

Another incident peculiar to Matthew now follows (verses 11-15). The chief priests bribed the soldiers heavily to say the Lord's disciples came by night and

stole Him away while they slept. The lie is upon the face of this farce, for they could not possibly know what had happened while they were sleeping. But alas, man easily believes the lie, rather than the truth. Even the disciples find it difficult to believe the wondrous fact that Jesus had indeed risen, as verse 17 shows, for "some doubted." But he showed them, by infallible proofs, that He was the same Jesus, alive. Only one of those proofs is recorded in Matthew's account.

The gospel closes with what is known as "the great commission," which we shall briefly consider at the end of this book.

PART FOUR

Thirteen Parables of the “Kingdom of Heaven”

* THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

* THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

* THE WOMAN MIXING THE LEAVEN IN
THE MEAL

THE TREASURE HID IN THE FIELD

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

THE NET CAST INTO THE SEA

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING
SERVANT

All these parables are found only in Matthew's Gospel,
except those marked *

THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE
VINEYARD

THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

The Parable of the Sower

MATTHEW 13:1-9; 18-43

WE LEARN IMMEDIATELY that the sowing of the gospel seed was not going to be an unqualified success. The Kingdom in its present form is composed of true and false professors. There is nothing wrong with the sower of the seed, but there is with the soil of the human heart. And there are three great forces which hinder—since man is what he is—the Word of God from bearing fruit as it can. Our Lord interprets both the first and the second parables in this great chapter, thus giving us a key to understanding them all.

In this parable of the sower, the first Sower was the Son of Man (Hebrews 2:3), for the gospel began to be spoken by the Lord, and next by His people, to whom comes the command to preach the gospel to every creature. The seed is the Word, called here in Matthew the word of “the Kingdom” (verse 19), for these parables set forth the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom in the hearts of men.

Then there is the soil—and here the problem comes. Our Lord describes four kinds of soil, four conditions of the heart of man, of which only one is really productive of good results. The word each time is sown “in the heart” (verse 19), not merely in the mind. It is not refused alone intellectually, but man’s whole being (for out of the heart come the issues of life) rejects God’s truth, His way of salvation.

The seed sown by the wayside falls on hard soil and shows how the sin-hardened hearts of men are indifferent to the truth of God. Satan readily snatches away such seed, lest, as we read in Luke 8:12, such "should believe and be saved."

Seed sown in stony places presents God's Word received with joy, as with the superficial class of sinners, whose emotions are easily aroused and who enthusiastically make a profession of faith in Christ. There is no real conviction of sin, but all is on the surface. It is little more than the ebullition of the flesh. Let the faith of such be tested by adverse influences, as persecutions and trials, and it proves to be but a flash in the pan. It does not cost much, in this favored land of ours, to make a religious profession; and it is not worth much either, as a rule.

Some seed fell among thorns, and our Lord interprets this to point out those who make a profession; but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, so there is no fruit. Often the rich allow the world's cares to crowd out the vital concerns of the soul; while the poor, craving wealth, are stumbled by the deceitfulness of riches. Of how many it is true that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9).

Note that in the first of these three classes the *devil* is the villain; in the second the *flesh* is the hindrance; and in the third the *world* exerts its baneful influence.

Only one class is really fruitful—those who receive the Word, as Luke 8:15 puts it, in "an honest and good heart." In other words, those who do not receive the

gospel by faith and are saved by God's grace in Christ, are said here not to be really "honest." Such are neither honest with themselves, for they certainly know they have sinned and need a Saviour; nor are they honest with God, for they do not own His rightful claims upon them. Even from the good soil fruit is borne in various degrees, for not every believer responds to the love of God in the same measure. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit" (John 15:8).

The Wheat and the Tares

MATTHEW 13:24-30; 34-43

IN THIS SECOND PARABLE, instead of Satan's catching away the true seed, as seen in the parable of the sower, he is presented as sowing a "false seed" of his own. This is indeed so true to what we know today; after the preaching of the gospel and since the true Word of God has been put into writing, the devil has flooded the world with false doctrines of almost every description, with their resultant fearful fruit of apostates, so scathingly called here "children of the devil."

We find that Satan has been the more successful because so often the people of God have gone to sleep, as to their privileges and responsibilities, while Satan, the

archenemy, came and sowed his tares, as they slept (verse 25). It seems that the devil never sleeps; he and his emissaries put real believers to shame by their unbounded zeal and energy.

In the parable our Lord says that a man sowed good seed in his field and then went to sleep. But we learn even from nature that useful plants always need looking after, need cultivating and watering. So it is with God's truth; it will not bear fruit unless painstakingly nourished, watched, and prayed over. But false seed—like weeds—will grow no matter how bad the soil, or how poor the care taken of it.

Satan sowed a kind of false wheat—a wild grain—black and bitter, called tares. Outwardly it looked much like real grain, even as false teaching always has considerable resemblance to truth in some ways, for the devil is a clever imitator. But it soon manifests its real character, for even in the early history of the Church, many false doctrines made their appearance, against which we are warned in the Scriptures. When the servants inquire what they are to do with these tares—whether to tear them up or not—the Lord bids them to leave them alone. Let both wheat and tares grow together until the harvest and then the reapers will do the separating.

In the interpretation, Jesus tells His disciples briefly that the field is the world; the fruits of the sowing of the good seed are the children of the kingdom; and the tares are the children of the wicked one—the devil. The enemy that sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. At the end of the age, the angels shall take out the tares—the chil-

dren of the devil—and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.

Some have argued that our Lord is teaching here that believers and unbelievers are to stay together in the Church, but He is saying nothing of the kind. The New Testament teaches distinctly that believers are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers in Christian fellowship. Jesus here was speaking of the world (verse 38), and in this world (not in the church) all are together, of course. Rome tried to root the heretics out of the world by murdering them by the millions, and in doing so they did the very thing our blessed Lord warns against here: i.e., they rooted up the real people of God. They martyred far more believers than they did heretics. We are not to persecute or execute judgment; that is our Lord's prerogative. It is when He comes that the wicked shall be taken out and put in hell. This will be at the "end of the age," which will be at the close of the tribulation period—at Christ's great Second Coming. Before that, the Church will have been caught up to glory, and this is clearly suggested in verse 43, where we read, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The "rapture" is also suggested in verse 30, where the tares are seen gathered and bound for the burning, for we know that actually the believers will be caught up to Heaven before the wicked are judged, and this is implied by the wheat being gathered into the garner. When Christ comes at the end of the age, we shall come with Him (Colossians 3:4). It is then we shall shine like the "Sun," for we shall be like Him, who is God's glorious Son. Notice that the rapture is thus indicated here, though not mentioned, for

the perfectly good reason that Matthew deals with the truth of the Kingdom, and that Kingdom reaches its climax not at the rapture, but at the end of the age—at Christ's public appearing.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

MATTHEW 13:31-32

THE FIRST TWO PARABLES gave us the individuals in the kingdom; these next two deal with the "mass" view. The many seeds here become one seed; the many tares become leaven.

The seed, small as a grain of mustard seed, suggests how, from the humble beginning—a despised crucified man of Nazareth who as a grain of wheat fell into the ground and died—there has grown this mighty plant of renown. Our blessed Lord is the seed that fell into the ground and died, and from the preaching of that truth has come this tremendous development of Christendom throughout the world.

It is called the "least of all seeds," for such a low place our holy Saviour took. He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, became the least of all and the last of all. Who would ever have expected anything to come out of Nazareth? And from a naked, bleeding victim hanging on a criminal's cross?

The tiny seed has grown till it has become a tree, with multitudinous branches. Millions have been the fruit of the sowing of that one seed; millions have been saved by His wondrous grace.

But—a truth that has become to us familiar history—Satan, when he found he could not destroy the Church by persecution, became a professing Christian, as it were. From a persecutor he became an imitator. Christianity has become Christendom, and religion has taken the place of Christ with so many. The devil has taken up his abode in the Kingdom of Heaven; the birds of the air lodge in the branches of this great tree, and our Lord has already told us that these birds picture Satan and his minions (verses 4, 19). At the beginning, when the gospel was first preached, only true believers were together; now the professing Church (or the Kingdom of Heaven, for it covers the same period of time) is a perfect mass and mess of spiritual and often moral depravity, with God's true saints sighing and crying because of all the abominations done in the midst thereof. It is this our Lord is picturing in the parable of the mustard seed.

The Woman Mixing the Leaven in the Meal

MATTHEW 13:33

WHILE IN THE PREVIOUS PARABLE we have the external view of the Kingdom of Heaven, in this one of the woman mixing the leaven we see the internal side of the truth. In the mustard seed the quantity stood out; here the quality, and it is none of the best. In this fourth parable of chapter 13 is set forth the same sad fact as seen in the fourth church of Revelation 2. Both in Thyatira and here we see a woman engaged in nefarious practice. There the woman teaches and seduces by false doctrines; the woman mixing leaven in the meal symbolically presents the same idea. Evil doctrine is here pictured by leaven, which introduces corrupting falsehood into the food of God's people.

This parable is often explained as the gospel, like leaven, permeating till the whole world has been affected by its influence, for it is said, is not leaven, which produces bread, a good thing? However, turning to Scripture, we find leaven is always found there with an evil connotation. In Matthew 16:12 the Lord bids them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees; Luke 12:1 speaks of the leaven of hypocrisy; 1 Corinthians 5:8 of the leaven of malice and wickedness. It is true that leaven makes delicious bread when put into the flour, but only when it is put into the oven and its action is stayed by the heat of the fire. Leaven, unless checked by fire, would turn the dough sour and spoil it. In the Bible it

pictures evil—whether moral or doctrinal—and only when such evil is passed through the fire—of divine judgment—does it produce good results. It has been argued that leaven in Scripture cannot always signify evil, for in Leviticus 23:16-18 we read that the two wave loaves were offered there with leaven, as a sweet savor offering unto the Lord. But only remember that these loaves were *baken* with leaven, and this argument fails. The fire of judgment had stopped the action of leaven in those loaves. Those two loaves—offered on the fiftieth day, typical of the day of Pentecost—represent the Church of God, composed of two (Jew and Gentile). And God's people, though they still have sin in them, are very precious and acceptable to God because their sin has passed through God's judgment when Christ died for them on Calvary; their leaven has been baked in the fire, as it were.

This truth can easily be grasped by one who knows the process of bread baking. The yeast causes the dough to rise out of all proportion to its original size; it swells up, speaking typically of pride, for pride puffs up man. You pound the dough down before you put it in the pans to rise once more. So, when pride and disobedience makes child or man rise beyond his natural size, the rod must be used and the sinner be brought down to his proper stature. But dough will rise again and again, and eventually the whole mass turn sour and useless. So, what do you do? You put it in the oven; you bake it, and the power of the leaven is ended. That is what God did in relation to man. You and I, in the blessed Substitute for our Saviour, are put into the fire of divine judgment, and thus God, by way of the fire of the

cross, has brought good out of evil. If you want to know the difference between "before and after," just smell the sourish, sickish scent of dough and then the sweet, lovely odor of freshly baked bread. That is the difference between the obnoxious condition of a wretched sinner and the sweet odor (in God's nostrils) of one saved by divine grace—grace made good to the soul because Christ in his behalf passed through the fire of God's judgment on the Cross.

The mixing of the leaven is being done here by a "woman." The woman in Scripture stands for the "Church"; in this case, for the false church, for this woman is engaged in an evil practice. The greatest, most Satanic system on earth is seen in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation under that "woman Jezebel." It is the boast of that system that men must believe what the "church" teaches. But God's Word refutes that idea; the Church is not to teach at all, but to be taught. God has given gifts to the Church (Ephesians 4:11-12), and those men—evangelists, pastors, and teachers—are to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ, which is the Church. The woman in Scripture is always given the place of submission, never of leadership. The Church, like Mary, should sit at Jesus' feet and hear His Word.

The result of the reversion of God's order is that the professing church has become afflicted with myriads of false beliefs. According to the parable, the whole shall be leavened. This shall not be true till after the Church is caught up to glory at the Coming of our blessed Lord. After that, God shall send men a strong delusion till all shall believe the lie; then the false church shall be com-

pletely leavened by Satanic falsehood, and the Lord shall spue it out of His mouth at His appearing to judge the world.

Since the woman mixing the leaven speaks of the professing church introducing evil teachings into the truth of God and so pervert it; and since the Church was not formed till Pentecost (after sin had passed through the fire of God's judgment on the cross), pictured in the baking of the leaven, one can see the awful wickedness suggested in our parable. For this woman is mixing leaven into the meal *after* the fire, baking the bread, had already done its work on the cross. In other words, by mixing the leaven now, the woman is setting aside the work of the cross—the precious death of Christ, by which sin was judged. The cross was to be the end of leaven, yet here the woman is introducing it again. This involves therefore the denial of the sacrificial, atoning death of our blessed Lord. And that is exactly what all false teaching does; it all denies the infinite worth of Christ's atoning death, whether the leaven is that of Roman Catholicism, or Christian Science so-called, or Spiritism, or New Thought, etc. It is most significant that almost all false cults were originated by women, the very ones forbidden by God to meddle in the teaching of God's Word. Just remember Jezebel, Mrs. Eddy, the Fox sisters, Mrs. Besant, Mrs. White, etc., etc.

This parable is also spoken of the Kingdom of God—in Luke. Not only false professors, but oftentimes, alas, true saints have been led astray by false teachings. First Corinthians deals with the leaven of moral evil as seen even in believers; Galatians deals with the leaven of evil doctrine.

The Treasure Hid in the Field

MATTHEW 13:44

AS WE MENTIONED BEFORE, the first four parables of chapter 13, which we have now considered in some detail, were spoken by the Lord in the presence of the multitudes, inasmuch as they give us rather the outward, visible aspect of the Kingdom in this present age. But the next three unfold an intensive view of things, so they were given to the disciples alone, in the privacy of the "house" (verse 36). I would suggest that, as the "house" of verse 1 of Matthew 13 speaks of Israel, upon which the Lord turned His back, so the "house" of verse 36 typifies the "Church" to whom the secrets of the next three parables are revealed. In each of the first four parables we saw Satanic energy at work; in these three the work of God is stressed. They give us a divine intimation of the work the Spirit of God is accomplishing in this age; they picture how Israel, the Church, and the Gentile nations will be won for Christ.

A popular interpretation with many is that the first two of these parables picture the sinner seeking the Saviour. Christ is said to be the pearl of great price, and the sinner sells all he has to obtain Christ and His salvation. The rich young ruler, being told to sell all he had and to follow the Lord, is cited as an illustration of that idea. But this is quite impossible. What has man got so valuable that he could purchase therewith God's eternal blessing, or purchase Christ as the pearl of great

price? Necessarily the price paid must be equivalent in value to the thing purchased; so what does man have measurable with the infinite worth of Christ? No, salvation is without money and without price.

Christ is the Seeker in both parables. For myself, I am strongly of the opinion that the treasure hid in the field speaks of the salvation of the Jew, while the pearl pictures the redemption of the Church. Let us look at them.

Christ is the Seeker. He sold all that He had. He laid His glory by, took upon Himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He, who was rich, for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich. He bought us with an exceeding great price; He laid down His life for us.

The treasure was hid in the field, which is, as the Lord said in verse 38, the "world." Israel was called God's treasure in the Old Testament, as in Exodus 19:5. When the Lord, as the Seeker, came to earth, He found this treasure hid in the world, for Israel very largely had been scattered world-wide (see 1 Peter 1:1). The Lord hid them again, for in A.D. 70 the rest of the nation was driven out of the land of Israel into the whole world. This parable is the only one written in the present tense. The others look back—or forward, or both—but not this one. At the time Matthew wrote, it all was happening then, ending at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; and so it is presented here as presently taking place.

The Lord Jesus bought the field—the world; it does not say that He bought the treasure. Satan offered the

Lord Jesus the world and its glory, if He would fall down and worship him. Jesus refused it but later bought the world with His own precious blood on the cross.

Christ bought the world for a specific purpose. Since He bought it, He bought everything that is in it, including all men. God in His infinitely wise purpose intends this world as a home for His people Israel, to be shared by the Gentile nations, yet to be won through the gospel in the future day (as set forth in the seventh parable of this series). So He is going to take out of His property everybody else. Neither you nor I are going to live down here; Christ is going to remove us from this property which He bought at Calvary. Believers are going to be taken home to Heaven above; unbelievers are going to be put in hell. Then Israel, God's earthly people, shall inherit the earth, as they were promised so often by their great prophets of old.

Christ bought the world; hence He bought you. That is what Scripture tells us. 2 Peter 2:1 shows that even sinners have been bought by Him. Have you ever owned His claims upon you? Have you bowed your knees before Him? If you do so, He will not only have bought you, but He will redeem you—set you free—from sin and death and hell.

The Pearl of Great Price

MATTHEW 13:45-46

IN THE PEARL we see the "Church." The pearl comes out of the sea, and the sea in Scripture typifies the peoples of the world. The Church is composed of precious souls redeemed out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. The treasure of the previous parable may have consisted of many individual pieces, but a pearl is "one," for the Church of God is One Body.

A pearl is the only jewel which is the product of a living thing. It is produced by pain, as the Church owes its birth to the agonies our blessed Lord endured on the cross. Some tiny foreign substance, like a grain of sand perhaps, finds its way inside the shell and irritates the oyster. In order to ease this, the creature envelops the offending object with a layer of what is known as "mother of pearl." The offending substance becomes, through the work of the injured one, a lovely gem, clothed with a beauty not its own. The size and brilliance of the pearl depends, not on the little grain of sand that started the pearl's formation, but on the number of layers with which the oyster covers it. So the Church's beauty is not the product of its own works but is due entirely to the matchless grace that has covered all our sin. Our beauty flows from the grace that brought Him from the glory to die for us, and upon the grace upon grace bestowed upon us every day of our lives.

A pearl, unlike a diamond, is spoiled if a tool touches

it. Our blessing is entirely the fruit of His work; not ours. It is formed down there in the darkness of the deep, as the Church was conceived and then born in the awful darkness of Calvary. Can any picture be more striking or more true to life than this?

A pearl is meant for personal adornment—to focus attention upon the wearer thereof. So the Church shall be forever for the display of the grace and glory of her Saviour, for whose adornment she was bought and is brought to glory. "In that day He shall be glorified in His saints and be admired in all them that believe."

The Net Cast into the Sea

MATTHEW 13:47-51

AGAIN, as in the pearl, we have the sea, indicating the Gentile nations. We know from the Word that the blessing of Israel and the Church is to be followed by the gospel of the Kingdom going forth to the Gentile nations throughout the world—after the Church is raptured to Heaven. Many Old Testament passages speak of this (Deuteronomy 32:43; Isaiah 49:6; 60:3; etc.).

This parable is identical with the picture of John 21, where the net is cast into the sea and drawn to shore, full of great fishes. Both these tell the same story of the

gospel reaching the nations during the tribulation period. Isaiah 66:19-20 is another passage in point. It will be "net" fishing; not with a hook and line, as is so largely true today. Millions will turn to the Lord in that short time. But again there will be false mixed with the real, and so our Lord tells the disciples that the wicked shall be separated from the just. This separation is actually described in detail in Matthew 25:31-46, in the judgment of the sheep and the goats. The sheep are the believers among the Gentile nations during that time; the goats those who are lost because of the rejection of God's message; the "brethren" are the Lord's Jewish brethren, who will be the preachers in that day. The wicked are taken out from among the just; not, as at the rapture, the just from among the wicked. When we go home to glory, the Lord calls His saints out and leaves sinners here on earth; when He comes at His glorious appearing, the order will be the reverse. Then He will take the wicked out (and put them into the furnace of fire—verse 42), and leave His saints here on earth—to enter the millennial Kingdom.

"Have ye understood all these things?" (verse 51). These are truly wondrous truths, and a clear understanding of them casts the most blessed light on all the Scriptures of truth. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" (13:11).

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

MATTHEW 18:23-35

THERE NOW FOLLOW six parables, as illustrative of the Kingdom of Heaven. In each of these the day of reckoning at the end is given, the day when the Lord shall come to reward or to execute judgment. Since the Kingdom always has Israel specially in view (though in its present spiritual form applying to all), each of these parables carries on beyond the coming of Christ for His Church to His coming to judge and to reign. As with so much of Scripture, there is a direct interpretation to Israel, but also a legitimate application to us in this present age. The moral and spiritual lessons apply in any age and to any class.

For a clear understanding of these parables it is needful to realize that they are spoken, not as things actually are, but rather the way men look at them; they are written looking at things from the human point of view. There is, as in this present parable, no such thing as a person being forgiven and yet later on having that forgiveness rescinded. Our Lord pictures what man thinks, what he takes for granted. Many a soul claims to be forgiven, claims to have been saved, when in reality he has never truly humbled himself before God. Many a person thinks he is serving God, when in reality he is not a servant of Christ, for God does not accept the service of an unsaved soul. It is thus from the viewpoint of profession (often false) that our Lord speaks in all

these parables. Keep this in mind, and all becomes clear.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who would take account of his servants. God, of course, is pictured in this king. It does not say he *did* take account, but he *would*. If it actually had been the day of reckoning, then this man could not have gone forth to threaten his fellowservant, for after the judgment seat the day of opportunity is over. No, the "would" is used here to remind the one who professes to be a servant of Christ that the day of reckoning is coming. In view of this we must ever order our lives. Have you anything to offer to Him or are you hopelessly in debt? This man owed 10,000 talents, estimated as something like \$150,000,000. He had nothing to pay; even as the sinner cannot possibly pay the fearful debt of sin against God. But the king was merciful and forgave him freely. So God offers to forgive any sinner freely, for Christ's sake, for Jesus paid all our debt upon the cross.

This man goes out, finds a fellowservant who owed him a hundred pence (about \$15), and without any mercy whatever had him thrown into debtor's prison till he produced the money. How this revealing act proves that he himself had never taken in the wondrous words of forgiveness spoken to him by his lord. The compassion of the lord had been wasted on his hard heart; his own unforgiving attitude evidenced he had never felt his own need, had never accepted the salvation that had been offered him. That is the moral of this parable. Those who truly, with a sense of their sinfulness, have taken in, by faith, God's great mercy towards them, would prove this by being kind and forgiving to others. Failing this, they but advertise themselves to be hypo-

crites. Alas, in the professing church of God there be many such. True believers take heed to that precious exhortation in Ephesians 4:32: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

This man had no sense of his lost condition, for he said: "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all." He did not beg for pardon; only for patience. He did not look to another to pay for him; he was going to pay his own way. But the real believer rests in the blessed fact that "Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe." The debtor should have known it was an impossibility for him to pay off a debt of 150 million dollars. Yet that is less impossible than for a sinner to pay the debt he owes to God. The sinner can only look to God for pardon; there is redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

His fellowservant used the same language as he had done, asking for patience till he could pay his debt. Now, *he* might have been able to do so, for it is possible to pay one's debt to one's neighbor, since it is only \$15. He himself owed the lord ten thousand times as much as his fellowservant owed him. That is something like the difference between what man owes to God and what he owes to his fellowman. No one ever yet loved his neighbor as himself (in other words, no one ever yet paid the \$15 debt); then how can one discharge his obligation Godward? But with God there is forgiveness; praise His Name.

All my sins, so great, so many,
In His blood are washed away.

If we really take in the marvelous grace showed to us, we will go forth with compassion in our hearts, ready to preach and practise forgiveness to sinners and saints. May we profit by this important lesson.

Dispensationally this parable pictures Israel's attitude to the Gentiles. Though in the Old Testament having divine forgiveness preached to them, the immensely greater part of them refused God's mercy. And when Christ came to bless them, they crucified Him, rejecting the mercy so richly proffered them. Then the gospel went forth to the Gentiles. Israel manifested its own rejection of God's forgiveness by resenting the going forth of the message to the Gentiles, even as the servant here grabbed his fellowservant by the throat. Paul speaks of this attitude of theirs in first Thessalonians 2:15-16: "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." How graphically that last phrase agrees with verse 34 of our text.

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

MATTHEW 20:1-16

GOD MADE A COVENANT, or treaty, with Israel, when the law was given. The people promised to do God's will and in return God promised to give them life, promised they would be His people (Exodus 19:5-8). Israel replied: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." The bargain was made, and they went to work in His vineyard, as the first verse of this parable states. Man was not willing to rely on the grace of God, but wanted to work for what he got. Man has been working to earn God's salvation ever since. These servants hire out to this householder. As a matter of fact God does not hire His servants. He makes us His own by grace divine, and then liberally rewards every little thing done out of love to Christ. But these did not know Him, so they did not trust Him. In this parable the others are all sent into the vineyard without any agreement as to what they are to receive, even those who come at the eleventh hour; all these are ready to trust in the justice and the mercy of the one who employed them.

When evening comes and the hour of reckoning arrives, those who were the first murmur against the Lord. The murmurers of this parable are of the same class as the unforgiving servant of the previous one; both picture Israel in its unconverted state. They got what they bargained for, so they had no reason to protest. If men today got what they bargain for, they would

get nothing else and nothing less than eternal perdition, for that is all a guilty sinner deserves at the hands of his Lord. Israel prided herself, as do mere professors these days, on all they did for God; but God finds His delight in those who trust in His mercy, who rest in what He does. In fact, twice over we read (19:30 and 20:16) that the last shall be first. The Gentiles of this day, though they came after Israel, are much more wonderfully blessed than Israel shall ever be; in God's own wisdom and perfect love He has given us the highest place of glory in His scheme of redemption.

The laborers spoke of the length of time they had served, but with God it is not time or amount, but quality that counts. It is faithfulness and trust that shall be rewarded in that day; not ability, type of service, length of service, nor even results.

These hired out. We only hire those who are not our own, so God does not hire His own children. We are His slaves, but slaves of love; for we are bought with a price.

I would not work my soul to save,
For that my Lord hath done;
But I would work like any slave,
From love to God's dear Son.

Some were standing about idle. If we realized a little of the marvelous love bestowed upon us in Christ, we would never be idle, but would be ever busy in our Master's service.

How good to read that even those who came at the eleventh hour were richly rewarded. Perhaps someone is saved at the very close of life, but if the little that is

left is lived for His glory, the reward shall be as great as that of any other.

The first laborers murmured because the Lord had made the others equal to them (verse 12). Praise His name, that is what His marvelous grace does; it truly equalizes men. It levels all distinctions and bestows its blessings freely on all alike. Those who truly do His will, instead of murmuring, shall eternally sound His praises, whose rich grace has blessed them so infinitely more than they could ever have imagined.

The Parable of the Householder

MATTHEW 21:33-46

THE HOUSEHOLDER WENT into a far country (verse 33), even as the nobleman did in Luke 19:12; both speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ having gone into Heaven, and returning some day (verse 40). In Luke 19 this going into a far country plainly has in view the Ascension of Christ for we read they sent a message after Him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us"; and that is exactly what Israel did say about their Messiah. But in this chapter the whole of Israel's history is taken in, from the time they were planted as God's vine in the

land of Canaan (see Isaiah 5) to the future return of their Lord. Of course, away back, the Lord did not actually go to the far country—that is, to Heaven—as our parable puts it; but the Lord Jesus puts it so, because that was Israel's attitude even then. For remember, even then they had rejected Jehovah (see 1 Samuel 8:7) and God, as it were, took His rejected place in Heaven, while Israel here on earth refused allegiance to God's will, and departed from obedience to Him. Exactly the same sentiment animated Israel then, as it did when Christ actually came to them.

Jehovah planted a vineyard, and put Israel therein, to bear fruit for His glory. Asaph described that act when he said: "Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparest room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land" (Psalm 80:8-9).

Israel was merely a tenant on God's property, for we read that Jehovah "let it out" to husbandmen, who were to render Him the fruit. So it is with men still. The earth is the Lord's, and we must give account to Him of our stewardship. The Lord sent servants—the prophets of old—to Israel to present and urge His divine claims. How had they treated them? Ah, they had stoned, beaten, and killed them. Then at last God sent unto them His Son, saying: "They will reverence My Son." Yet, even while the Lord spoke those words, He knew they would not, for He goes on to say that they caught the beloved Son, cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him. Jesus prophesies His death at the hands of that guilty nation. As Stephen charged them, in Acts 7:52: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed

before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

They say: "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance." They do not say: "Who is this?" but "This is the Heir." This seems to suggest that in some measure they did realize that they were rejecting One whose claims were true; that they were crucifying the Son of God. Instead, however, of getting their inheritance that way, they lost it; for because of the murder of Christ, Israel was driven out of the land for these many centuries. And yet, so marvelous is God's grace, eventually Israel shall truly inherit the land—to be their eternal home—as the direct result of their crucifixion of Christ, for through His sacrifice alone all blessing comes. In the meantime, as Jesus tells them (verse 43) "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This nation of the future here mentioned is not the Church, but the redeemed nation of Israel of the future day, as numberless Old Testament passages so clearly declare, and as promised by God in the New Covenant made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

In the meantime the judgment of God was to fall on Israel, according to verse 41: God "will miserably destroy those wicked men," which fearful retribution took place in A.D. 70. Then He will give the vineyard to others, who will render Him the fruits in their seasons. I take it this applies to the whole present day of grace, as the saints of this age seek to serve the Lord, living their lives to bear fruit for His glory, as John 15 so beautifully unfolds.

The very One whom Israel rejected, God has highly exalted. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." First Peter 2:4 applies this to Christ as the Head of the Church today. And He is also the cornerstone of the foundation (1 Peter 2:6), over which every sinner that refuses Christ stumbles. Israel stumbled so signally over this lowly One who died upon a cross; had He come in power and glory to reign, they would have accepted Him with joy. So to sinners today, the preaching of the cross is foolishness; such, too, stumble over it into eternal perdition. And then, in the Day of Judgment, the Stone shall fall on sinners, as they now fall over it. Daniel speaks of that day when the great Stone shall smite the image and grind it to powder. It is the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy of this parable. This sinful world shall be smashed beneath the crushing wrath of Him who once bore sin's judgment for the guilty race of men.

They cast Him out—verse 39; but none that come to Him will He ever cast out—John 6:37

They slew Him—verse 39; He offers life eternal to all.

They refused to render Him what was rightfully His—verses 34-35; He offers us all He has and is. They killed the Heir—verse 38; He makes us heirs of God.

The Marriage of the King's Son

MATTHEW 22:1-14

IN THE PREVIOUS STORY men are seen as "tenants"; here as "guests." There they fail to produce; here to receive. There they ignore His rights; here they despise His grace. There we read of a Son that is slain; here of a Son who is to reign.

As in the last parable, so here the blessing is first of all seen belonging to Israel. But, unlike in the previous case, the story here begins with the gospel message going forth, beginning, I take it, with the preaching of it by our Lord Himself.

The call to the marriage went out to Israel. The idea of marriage as a divine relationship of Jehovah and His people Israel was well known in the Old Testament Scriptures, and thus easily understood by the Jews to whom He spoke. But the interesting thing is that they were invited as "guests" to this wedding; and guests, of course, are not the bride. This intimates plainly that, in the very issuing of this invitation, the knowledge that it would be refused is inherent, for in the day to come Israel shall not be the guests, but shall be the "bride" of Jehovah (see Isaiah 54:5-6, etc.). The Lord knew Israel would reject the invitation, as the previous parable also clearly teaches.

First of all, the call went forth to those who already had been bidden. This can only refer to Israel as such, for they alone were God's people nominally—the Gen-

tiles were without hope and without God in the world.

Again (verse 4) other servants are sent forth, this time with another message: "Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." This evidently implies the death of Christ—in the suggestion of "death" in connection with the feast. After the death of Christ the gospel again went forth first to the Jews, as it did before His crucifixion. We know it did so as we read the Book of Acts, as also Romans 1:16 teaches. But again Israel made light of it, while taking the servants of God, maltreating them and slaying some, of whom Stephen was the proto-martyr.

"When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." Again we have the fearful destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, with the added information that the city itself was to be burned, a fact which later on was fully verified.

And now once more the gospel goes forth; this time to the whole world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Gather them all—bad and good, as the old hymn says: "Just as I am, without one plea." Come to Christ in all your sin and shame. He will make you fit for the wedding. He provides the needed garment for the wedding: He provides the garment of salvation; He clothes the sinner with the robe of divine righteousness.

When the king came in He saw there a man without a wedding garment. "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."

He pictures a soul who thinks he is good enough to go to Heaven the way he is; he does not need the salvation which the Lord provides. Ah, all man's righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight; everyone needs the robe of divine perfection to cover his sinful nakedness. He was cast out where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Four classes of people are presented in this striking story:

1. Those who would not come—deliberate rejectors of Christ.
2. Those who made light of it—the careless neglectors.
3. The haters and murderers of verse 7.
4. Those without a wedding garment—the religious professors.

"Friend," said the king. This word "friend" is found just three times in the New Testament. It means "companion." Each time it is used it refers to what we would call an empty professor of religion. We find it here, in Matthew 20:3, and in Matthew 26:50. In the latter case it was used by our blessed Lord in relation to Judas, when he betrayed Christ. He had been the companion of Christ for years; often had sat next to Him, no doubt, or perhaps slept side-by-side with Him; he had heard Jesus' wonderful ministry and had seen His amazing miracles; in fact, he had done some preaching himself and performed miracles; yet he went on to eternal perdition. So near, and yet so far. Even so may you be a companion of Christians, even preach the Word and yet be eternally lost. How fearful the thought!

The Wise and Foolish Virgins

MATTHEW 25:1-13

HERE DOUBTLESS, as in the previous parable, the unmentioned "bride" must be Israel, and the bridegroom our Lord Himself. It could not be otherwise here, for those to whom He spoke these parables knew nothing whatever of the Church as the Bride of Christ, but Jehovah's relationship to Israel as her Bridegroom was well known in the Old Testament, as in Isaiah 61:10 and many other places. Therefore, if the bride here is Israel, it seems illogical to think of the virgins (who were evidently the bridesmaids) as also representing Israel. I am strongly of the opinion that the virgins represent the professing church of this age, or, if you will, the "Kingdom of Heaven," and we have seen already, over and over, that this consists today of both true and false. Hence there are foolish as well as wise virgins here, true as well as pretended believers.

I understand that the illustration our Lord employs here shows the custom of that day. The bridesmaids, with burning lamps, would sally forth to meet the bridegroom and join with him as together they proceeded to the home of the bride, where the wedding ceremony would take place. This is a graphic and scripturally accurate view of how believers (and, professedly, unbelievers too) are on their way to meet the Lord. When He comes, those who are truly His, seen in the wise virgins, go in with Him and are present when He is

united to Israel as to His bride in Israel's day of future blessing. Scripture clearly shows that we shall be with the Lord when He comes to earth to make Israel His earthly bride (see Colossians 3:4).

We must remember that in these parables, to which we have called attention before, the Lord pictures things not necessarily as they are, but as men from their attitude, think they are. In that of the king's son, we know, of course, that no unsaved soul will get to the wedding feast, yet he is presented as doing so. The idea is that the professor thinks he will get to Heaven just as well as a true believer. Those who are called servants are not necessarily true servants of God, but they take that place by profession. So here these virgins are not all really virgins—that is, pure ones—but they take that stand by Christian profession. Millions today claim to be believers yet they are not. They claim to be bearing a testimony for God, to have the Holy Spirit—typified here by the oil—indwelling. These all carried lamps; all looked like virgins. Outwardly there was no difference to be seen between them. But God can see beyond the external; He can read the heart. There was a difference here, though not apparent to the eye. God can see through brass, and He saw that some of those brazen vessels were empty, while others had oil in them. He could tell us that five of these virgins were wise and five were foolish. *They* realized the difference when the hour of crisis arrived.

While life goes on daily, all seems well. People are satisfied with an empty profession, as these virgins were with empty vessels. Remember that in the Bible the vessel speaks of the body; thus these foolish ones did not

have the oil—the Holy Spirit—within; in other words, they were not true believers in Jesus. All the ten went to sleep. Ten in the Bible is the number signifying responsibility. Yes, as to living up to our responsibility, alas, believers too, have gone to sleep, as we saw also in 13:25. The announcement of the coming of the Bridegroom awakes them. Now the difference between real and unreal comes to the fore. “Give us of your oil,” say the foolish. But that is impossible. No one can impart the Spirit of God to others. Each one must secure it for himself. God alone can give life eternal, impart the Holy Spirit.

The wise trim their lamps. With them there is plenty of oil in the vessel, for a believer has the fulness of the indwelling power of God. But oh, how feebly the light has often shined. In view of that cry of the approach of the Bridegroom, in view of the blessed hope of His return, well may the believer let his or her light shine brightly. “Yet a little while and He that shall come will come.” While the foolish went to buy, the bridegroom came and those that were ready went in with him, and the door was shut. The foolish must have lingered by the way, for there was plenty of time to have gotten the oil and be back on time. How do I know? Because the wonderful truth of the imminent return of Christ has been preached now for many years. You and millions more have had plenty of time to be saved, and so to be ready when He comes. But perhaps, like so many more, you have lingered, till perhaps someday it will be eternally too late.

I believe, in the wise virgins meeting the bridegroom, we have a brief hint of the rapture of the Church. The

foolish came later, but they came too late; when this day of grace is over, it will be too late to be saved for those who have heard the gospel and refused it now. Their judgment shall fall when the Lord Jesus comes again in power and glory. So the parable ends with a warning to that effect: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." While it will be too late for the virgins to be saved, Israel in the tribulation will have her opportunity to turn to the Lord, and thus to be ready when her Messiah—the Son of Man—comes back to reign.

The Parable of the Talents

MATTHEW 25:14-30

AGAIN the termini in this parable are the Ascension of our Lord 1,900 years ago, and His return in power in the future (verses 14 and 19). The "long time" of verse 19 covers the age from the cross to His Second Coming.

As "testimony" is prominent in the story of the virgins, so "service" is stressed here. When our Lord went to Heaven, He delivered talents to His servants to use for Him. We are the stewards of Christ, both in material and in spiritual matters (see Luke 16:9 and 1 Peter 4:10). As in all these parables, Israel is largely in

view here too, beginning with the ministry committed to them (as to the twelve apostles) and ending with Israel in the tribulation to come. However, spiritually the truth applies with equal force to the service of believers in this day.

Each receives talents according to his particular ability. A talent was a considerable fortune, and five of them a very great fortune indeed, suggesting that much has been entrusted to the believer to use in God's service. To you and me today have been committed the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Lord knows each saint's individual capacity, so He gives gifts accordingly. The more ability one has, the greater the responsibility, for to whom much is given, of him the more will be required.

The lord eventually returns and reckons with his servants. In our case, this takes place at the judgment seat of Christ. It is well for us never to forget that we must give account of everything done or said. The reward in the case of the first two servants is identically the same: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." I wonder just what that last expression may mean? Surely something wonderful indeed!

How sweet to notice that the Lord rewards them not for their success or ability or cleverness, but for faithfulness. Both receive the same reward, though one had much greater store to work with than the other. Even so, the least of His saints shall receive as great reward as the greatest, if faithfulness has been alike with both.

The judgment on the unfaithful servant will take

place at Christ's appearing, as we have had before in chapter 13 and elsewhere. He did *not* use his talent. He is condemned not for what he did, but for what he *did not* do. The same obtains in the case of the foolish virgins and the goats on the left hand. The damning sin is the sin of omission; he that believeth *not* shall be damned.

The slothful servant hid his talent in the earth, as men do so often, leaving heavenly things out of their reckoning. He said he knew the lord and so was afraid. He said the lord was an hard man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed. Yet a moment later, when he returned the talent, he said: "Lo, there thou hast that is thine." The lord did sow, then, for he gave him the talent. Yes, God gives me everything, and has a right to expect returns. I was afraid, the servant said, and went and hid, which is exactly what Adam did, and what man has been doing ever since. Man thinks of God as a hard Master, which is truly a Satan-inspired lie. In reality, He is a God of love and infinite tenderness. Oh, that sinners would only trust in Him!

You should have put my money to the exchangers—into the bank, says Luke. Yes, we believers should do so, too. If we can't do the Lord's work ourselves, or even if we can, we should give of our money. Let others do the work and we shall reap the interest on our investment; God's work pays tremendous dividends.

PART FIVE

Other Parables

OLD GARMENTS AND OLD BOTTLES

THAT WHICH COMES OUT DEFILES A MAN

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Old Garments and Old Bottles

MATTHEW 9:16-17

THIS "old and new" makes the diligent student think immediately of the Old Testament age of law and the New Testament day of grace. All through Matthew and in the parables of the Kingdom, there is the setting aside of the "old" and the bringing in of the "new." Christianity is not a patch upon Judaism, but something entirely different and new. Man's robe of self-righteousness is a wornout garment; it is worthless. As Hebrews 8:13 declares: "That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." All man's righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). What is the sense in seeking to mend rags? It is no use to put a piece of new cloth upon an old garment. This is put even stronger in Luke's Gospel by speaking of the folly of putting a piece of a new "garment" on an old. The new garment is Christ—He is the robe of divine perfection in which the believer is clothed; the believer is accepted in the Beloved. What folly to try to take a piece of Christ and with that to mend one's own self-righteousness! Yet that is just exactly the religion of the day. Law is patched with grace; salvation is made to consist of faith in God grafted like a patch onto man's own sinful works. But it will not work; the rent is but made worse. Praise God, there is no need for patching; God offers every poor sinner an absolute, divine, eternal salvation, based on the perfect, finished redemptive work of Christ on the cross. "Sal-

vation is not of works, lest any man should boast."

Not only is there the new garment to cover the naked sinner without; there is the new wine to fill the soul within—a joy that will, like new wine, flow over in effervescent fulness to all around, for the believer's cup runneth over. The old garment speaks of man's human works, which are no good in God's sight; Scripture declares that there is none that doeth good; no, not one. The bottles speak of what we are and they are no good, either; not only what man does is no good, but he himself is sinful and corrupt; there *is* none righteous; no, not one. It needs a new bottle to contain the new wine. A new creature in Christ Jesus, born again by the Spirit of God, alone is fit to contain the living force of the new wine—the joy of God's great salvation. In Christ all is new and is unfolded to us in the wonderful ministry of the New Testament.

That Which Comes Out Defiles a Man

MATTHEW 15:10-20

WHAT VITAL TRUTH is unfolded here! It is so evident, yet so unpalatable to the natural man. Defilement does not come from without; its source is within—in the human heart. The material cannot defile; only the moral and

spiritual. Yet how persistently the blind ritualist imputes moral qualities to material things. He will give value to material and physical forms, such as water baptism, partaking of the Mass, or the laying on of hands, or any number of other religious performances, such as eating or not eating certain foods, fasting on holy days, etc. None of them have the slightest merit in any spiritual way, unless where so ordered by God and practised by those who know and love the Lord and walk in obedience to His Word.

Material food does not affect the soul in any manner whatsoever. What does make all the difference is the spiritual food one takes in; better make sure it is the precious, unerring Word of God. For man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The Lord rebukes His disciples for not understanding this parable. Yet it is clear that what comes out of the mouth comes forth from the heart. Out of the heart are the issues of life; and the natural heart of man is a cesspool of iniquity. The Lord here enunciates the weighty truth that man himself is responsible for the sins he practises. How man loves to blame his sin on his circumstances, environment, or upbringing; but that is not the answer. Never had people a more perfect setting for obedience and loyalty to God than did our first parents in Eden, but they sinned just the same. They proved, as James says, that when man is tempted, he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. The seat and source of all evil is within. The human heart needs to be purified by faith. As the saving, cleansing Word of God is taken into the heart by faith—for with the heart man believeth

unto righteousness—the fruits of the Spirit find their home there, in place of the thoughts and deeds of the flesh; and the mouth will become a wellspring of life and love. As we take in the words from God's mouth, they will be reproduced and come forth in turn from our mouths.

The Parable of the Two Sons

MATTHEW 21:28-32

THIS STORY is simple enough, but as we wish to cover all the parables of Matthew, we look at it for a moment. Just before, the Pharisees had refused to answer the question as to the validity of John's baptism. Apparently they stifled the voice of their own conscience, so the Lord bluntly convicts them of their willful guilt, their deliberate disobedience to God's command. The publicans and harlots never had said that they would obey God, but the Pharisees, the proud leaders of the people, made a pretence of religious conformity with the will of God. But it was all a sham; they said they would, but they didn't, as the Lord says in chapter 23:3: "the Pharisees . . . say, and do not."

When John the Baptist came with his stirring call, the publicans and others repented and were baptized by

him; the Pharisees refused to repent and failed to believe the truth which John brought to bear upon them.

How graphic a description of the condition of things throughout these last nineteen centuries! Self-righteous, religious man claims to be subject to God, yet in pride refuses to bow before a greater than John the Baptist; refuses to accept God's blessed, simple way of salvation through Jesus' blood. But those whom they look upon with contempt—the immoral, the outcast, the poor—these turn to God in repentance and are saved by grace divine.

That class, as in this parable, may also suggest the Gentiles who are blessed, while the proud Jew still rejects the Christ of God.

PART SIX

Miracles Recorded by Matthew

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW CURED

THE STORM ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE

THE TWO POSSESSED WITH DEMONS

THE SICK OF THE PALSY

THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD
AND JAIRUS' DAUGHTER RAISED FROM
THE DEAD

* THE TWO BLIND MEN HEALED

THE DUMB MAN CURED

THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND

The miracles marked * are found only in this Gospel.

* THE BLIND AND DUMB, POSSESSED OF A
DEMON

THE FEEDING OF THE 5000

THE SYROPHENICIAN'S DAUGHTER

THE FEEDING OF THE 4000

THE CURE OF THE LUNATIC SON

* THE PIECE OF SILVER IN THE FISH'S
MOUTH

THE EYES OF THE TWO BLIND MEN
OPENED

* THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE

The Cleansing of the Leper

MATTHEW 8: 1-4

THE FIRST MIRACLE in this Gospel is the cleansing of the leper. Leprosy was considered the most hopeless affliction in that day, with no record heretofore, as far as we know, of any Israelite ever having been cured. So hopeless was it, in fact, that the Bible speaks of it as a "living death" (Numbers 12:12). To touch a leper had been forbidden and would result in moral, if not actual physical defilement. How wonderful, then, to see here that, when Jesus touched him, the defiled was cleansed, instead of the clean one becoming defiled. Grace reversed law. His blessed touch still means life; His holiness cleanses our filthiness. He Himself is untouched by sin, but sin flees at His touch. Wonderful Saviour!

What a thrill it must have been to this poor soul to feel that gentle, loving touch! Still today there is nothing that equals the personal touch to reach the most depraved sinner; to break down the hardest heart.

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst." Praise God, He both could and He would. Power and love in Him combine.

Jesus bids the leper to tell no one, but to go to the priest—to the constituted authority, for a testimony to him. He should have certified this amazing miracle—besides Miriam's perhaps the first one in Israel's history—

followed by ever so many more in Christ's ministry of love. The priest should have proclaimed the wonder and should have come to see this One who could cure leprosy. But there is no response from that quarter. Israel would have none of Him; they refused to heed either His words, His works, or His ways. Such is religious, sinful man!

The Centurion's Servant

MATTHEW 8:5-13

IF ISRAEL HAD NO FAITH, this incident shows that God's grace would flow forth to the Gentiles. In the next miracle, where Peter's mother-in-law is relieved, and the miracle just looked at, the Lord each time touches the victim. But this present one is by remote control, illustrating how in this age, as the gospel goes forth to the Gentiles, our Lord is not on earth, but blessing is entirely on the basis of faith. The Lord marvels at this faith, saying: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Luke, too, records this miracle but, quite significantly, leaves out the remark of our Lord about many coming "from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of

heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." In accordance with the theme of Matthew, this gives the story a distinct dispensational character. Proud Israel is rejected, while the believing Gentile is brought into blessing.

We see the happy reverse in this Gentile soldier. He confesses his unworthiness, taking a place of the deepest humility. That is still the way to blessing. Humbleness and faith are inseparable. Israel, instead of being humbled by God's mercies, interpreted them as meaning that they were better than the rest of mankind, since God picked them out as His people. They were lifted up with pride, and pride is the assassin of faith; it occupies with self, instead of magnifying the grace and kindness of God.

How delighted our Lord was to see this unfeigned faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God."

In Luke we find that this centurion sent the elders of the Jews to Jesus to plead his cause, and later on still sent friends; but here it reads as if he dealt directly with the Lord Himself. Here details are left out, putting the emphasis entirely on his humility and his faith, in sharp contrast to Israel's pride and unbelief.

Peter's Mother-in-Law Cured

MATTHEW 8:14-15

THE HEALING by a touch here once more asserts God's dealing with Israel upon earth, hence the Jewish relationship is given—she is Simon Peter's wife's mother—for Simon was peculiarly the apostle to the circumcision. Being performed in the "house" further strengthens the Jewish dispensational view. This is all in line with Matthew's theme.

Fever is an apt picture of the restlessness of man. It comes from the same root as the word for "fire," and well represents both the wretchedness that sin brings, and the fire of judgment that is its just due. Fever brings on great restlessness usually, and in hell "there is no rest day nor night for ever and ever"; eternally there is that feverish tossing of the soul in ceaseless suffering.

He touched her and the fever left immediately. He brings peace and rest to the weary, thirsty soul of man. "Come unto Me," says He, "and I will give you rest."

She immediately arose and ministered unto them. Normally, after a severe fever, the patient is extremely weak for days to come, but not so here. When Christ heals, He heals instantly and completely. Immediately the saved soul is ready to serve Him and others. What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is!

The Storm on the Lake of Galilee

MATTHEW 8:23-27

MARK, in his account in chapter 4 of his Gospel, gives some interesting details omitted here. The storm on the sea pictures Israel's experiences through life, till they shall in some future day reach the shore once more, when they dwell in their own land, and the storms of persecution shall be over forever. I believe that is the dispensational aspect of this incident, while of course it has precious practical lessons for each believer in Jesus.

Satan raised the storm; otherwise the Lord would not have rebuked the winds and the sea. Perhaps, who knows, there was the vain attempt on the devil's part to drown the Lord and thus prevent Him from finishing the work He had come to do. Jesus was asleep. As perfect Man He rested confidently in His Father's care. What an example for us to follow, when trials and persecutions beset us here.

"Lord, save us: we perish," say His disciples. How foolish! How could they perish when He was with them? He has said: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

No water can swallow the ship where lies,
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.

He arose, rebuked the winds and sea, and there was a great calm. A far more fearful storm was to rage shortly on Calvary's cross. And again He arose (from the

dead, then) and spoke peace to the troubled waves, for He has made peace through the blood of His cross.

He was asleep. This is the only time we read of our blessed Lord asleep. Sleeping, in a violent storm on a tiny, tiny boat! So should we rest, even if the gales of affliction or adversity blow; we, too, as He, are in our Heavenly Father's care.

He arose and rebuked . . . the disciples? Oh no . . . the sea! He chided them for their little faith afterwards; not for disturbing His rest, but for being disturbed themselves.

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Stilling the storm in a human soul is a thousand times more wonderful than to calm the troubled sea. He can do both. He is God, who controls the creation He has made; He is Man, too, resting in God His Father's care and touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And He is our Saviour, our High Priest and Advocate. "Lord, increase our faith!"

One could take a wide view of this miracle and note seven facts, giving us a picture of conditions as they obtain in this age in which we live:

1. *World conditions.* A great tempest in the sea. Today the sea and the waves are roaring and men's hearts fail them for fear (Luke 21:25-26). He will some day usher in His eternal reign of peace for this so-troubled world.
2. *Church conditions.* The ship was covered with the waves. Paul's experience as recorded in Acts 27 is a striking picture of the Church's course. There, in verse 15, we read that the ship could not bear up into the wind, so they let her drive,

suggesting how the Church failed to buck the persecution of its early history and so united with the world, driven by Satan, till it has become the nominal Christendom we know today. They lightened the ship (verses 18-19), casting out the wheat (typical of the food of God's people—the Word of God). There was to be no loss of life (verse 44) for every truly saved soul shall reach Heaven's shore. They wished for the day (verse 29) even as true believers long for the rapture, for the dawning of their day of joy. The ship was smashed eventually, but those aboard got to shore, as did these disciples in the miracle we are looking at, and as the Church will, when Christ raptures her home.

3. *The silence of God.* Jesus was asleep. So it seems today as if God were asleep, too. Men ask why God allows this or that; why the fearful wars, crimes, etc? As Sir Robert Anderson points out in his great book, *The Silence of God*, God did speak in His Son, when Jesus lived and died, and we have the Scriptures with that Voice in our hands. He will not speak again till He speaks in judgment; then God will speak once more (Hebrews 12:26-27).
4. *The unbelief of the disciples.* How greatly the Church has had to bewail her lack of faith. Just in one feature, for instance: There are millions of believers who think they can be saved and then lost again. Such ought to listen to Jesus' words in verse 26 of this miracle.
5. *Christ arose* (verse 26). He sits on the right hand

of the Majesty on high till His enemies are made His footstool. He will arise from that throne to take His Church home to glory; then to execute judgment on this world.

6. *The judgment of the world.* Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea. The sea in Scripture speaks of the nations of the world; Satan stirs them up in rebellion against Christ (see Revelation 19:19-21) even as the wind here aroused the sea to fury. All those shall be judged at the appearing of Christ.
7. *There was a great calm.* After the fearful storm of the tribulation, followed by Christ's judgment of the world at His Coming, there will come the great calm of the millennial reign of Christ; when the Prince of Peace shall sit upon the throne of His glory.

So this miracle covers the whole of God's dealings with the world during this age, from Christ's first coming to His millennial glory.

The Two Possessed with Demons

MATTHEW 8:28-34

MATTHEW FREQUENTLY HAS "two" where other Gospels mention only "one" sufferer. Two being the number of competent witness in Scripture, this may mean that here the emphasis is on a complete testimony being borne to Christ's power, seeing He is King in this Gospel. For this reason also Matthew omits minor details, focusing thus all our attention on the act and the fact of the miracle itself, instead of diverting the attention to things of minor import. Matthew writes to show the authority of this King: authority over demons, disease, death, and the devil.

These evil spirits recognize Christ as *Son of God*, which is striking indeed since Israel utterly refused Him as such. They also own Him as their Judge, but remind Him that the day of their judgment has not arrived as yet.

Today we do not see anything of this type of demon possession in this civilized land in which we live, but Satan has other ways of controlling the minds and bodies of men. All false cults are exponents of demon influence—Satan controlling the mind so that any kind of foolish and vicious belief is swallowed, and the professors of it are often known for their violence when their lies are opposed. These demons, in His presence, were forced to acknowledge Him as the Son of God,

as shall all demon-possessed apostates in the day of judgment, when they have to stand before Him. Before Him every knee shall bow.

Two thousand swine could not put up with these demons, committing suicide as they did. How fearfully man can fall when he can suffer such domination; how powerful must be Satan's hold over human minds, in the light of this incident. How we may thank God that our once darkened minds have been renewed and enlightened by the mighty grace of God.

Matthew, unlike Mark, says nothing about these delivered men, but does intimate, as so often in his Gospel, the ultimate rejection of our blessed Lord. The whole city comes out and adopts the prayer of those demons as their own. The demons asked that they might go away from Jesus; these men ask that Jesus might go away from them. And He yielded to their desire. How awfully solemn! Someday He will tell them to depart from Him into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and those very demons of this chapter. But now He bids sinners come to Him, in all their sin and shame. Have you come to Christ?

The Sick of the Palsy

MATTHEW 9:1-8

THIS MIRACLE is unique since it is the only one where our Lord utters those precious words: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Paralysis is but the outward symptom of an inward state. Man cannot do right because he is not right. He cannot walk to God's glory because he is a sinner.

So our Lord speaks to this man first of all that message of pardon: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." This is one of the three occasions where the Lord Jesus strikes that happy note:

Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid—14:27

Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world—

John 16:33

Thus is the good cheer of His pardon, His presence, and His power.

Jesus' critics in their hearts charge Him with blasphemy, saying: "Who can forgive sins but God only?" And that was right; it is God's prerogative, entirely reserved to Himself. Ah, they did not know the Speaker in their midst was indeed their God.

They might have thought that it was easy enough to say those words of forgiveness; anyone of them might say as much. But what proof was there that His words had power back of them? One cannot see sins or see

their forgiveness. And so our Lord gives them something to *see*. Says He: "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," [to the palsied man] "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." And he did just that. The proof that a soul is forgiven is still the walk—the new life; such a saved soul lives, something he never could do before. It also demonstrated that Christ was indeed the Son of God; that His words were words of divine power. Every believer to-day glorifies Christ therefore when he walks to God's glory.

Only on two occasions those words, "thy sins be forgiven," are recorded in the Gospels, here, and in Luke 7. There her *love* proved the reality of her forgiveness; here his *life* proved it.

"Which is easier," said our Lord, "to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" I suppose those enemies of Christ would have said the former was the easier, for it took real power to enable one, who had never walked before, to walk. But if they thought so, they were mistaken. Christ, who is the Creator of men, could heal them as easily as once He made man. But, in order to forgive sins, He must go to Calvary's cross, there to suffer all the fearful horror of judgment at the hands of a thrice-holy God. It is well to remember this. The healing of the body does not necessitate the death of Christ, but the salvation of the soul does. Those who make so much of the healing of the body leave out therefore the necessity for the cross of Christ.

The Son of Man, said Jesus, has power *on earth* to forgive sins. In Heaven there will be no need for for-

givenness; in hell there will be no possibility of it. Forgiveness is only while man is on earth. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

*The Woman with the Issue of Blood and
Jairus' Daughter Raised from the Dead*

MATTHEW 9:18-26

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT of these interwoven miracles is again much shorter than Mark's. Much detail is left out, including that of the woman's being forced to come forward and confess how Jesus healed her; also that of Jesus' taking the three disciples with Him into the ruler's house. Matthew calls attention to the miracle-worker rather than to the miracle; he emphasizes the power and the pity of our Lord.

The dispensational lessons are beautiful. The dead daughter pictures Israel in its present spiritual death. The Lord comes to bless, as He will come back to Israel; but on the way He is stopped by a woman who touches Him, by wonderful faith. Being a "woman" may well suggest how the Church today reaches Christ by faith, while Israel's blessing must wait. Israel's blessing is retarded, as it were, by this very fact; we know today

Israel's blessing is put off while the believers of this day of grace are saved as they touch Christ by faith. Then at last Jesus comes to the ruler's house, as Christ shall come to restore dead Israel back to spiritual life.

There are lovely spiritual lessons here:

The girl is dead, as sinners are dead spiritually (Ephesians 2:1); she is unable to do anything for herself. The action is all on the part of the Lord Jesus.

But the woman is alive, though slowly dying, even as the sinner is, in another way. In her case, *she* does something by exercising faith in Christ. This presents the human side of salvation, as the other does the divine.

Jesus touched the girl; the woman touched Him.

The girl lived 12 years, then died. The woman had been dying 12 years, then lived.

In the girl we see passivity; in the woman the activity of faith.

In the one, God's sovereignty shines forth; in the other, man's responsibility.

The Two Blind Men Healed

MATTHEW 9:27-31

THEY OWN Christ as Son of David, intimating He was King. Since the opening of Matthew, when the wise men acknowledged Christ as King, no one had confessed Him either as King or as Son of David. The Father is the first to name Him the Son of God. Afterwards John the Baptist did (John 1:33-34), though Matthew omits this. Of Himself, the Lord had spoken constantly as the "Son of Man," a truly comprehensive title.

Christ Himself so far has not openly claimed to be Israel's King. He seems to wait for man to recognize Him so, and later on asks the disciples whom they say He is. Peter confesses Him as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). In none of the Synoptic Gospels does a confession come prior to this. The Lord waits for faith to confess Him as King, and in connection with the Kingdom, His divine Sonship is the foremost question.

So the Lord must have been delighted when these blind men called Him the Son of David. Apparently they had faith in Him as being God, for no mere man ever opened the eyes of the blind. And so the Lord accepts their homage and rewards their faith. They were in this unlike Israel's leaders, who thought of the Messiah as the son of David, but considered Him but a mere man (see 22:41-45).

This miracle occurs only in Matthew. A similar one is found in chapter 20, which evidently agrees with that

given in Mark 10, and in Luke 18. The cure here is made dependent on these men's faith, which is not usual in Christ's miracles. When faith is thus stressed, it is safe to assume the miracle has a dispensational aspect. These two blind men give us Israel's present spiritual, blinded condition; and Israel's blindness, as Romans 11:23, 25 clearly proves, is due to their unbelief. When Israel in faith turns to Christ, as they shall in the day to come, their blind eyes shall be opened.

The Dumb Man Cured

MATTHEW 9:32-33

LUKE 11:14-15 also gives this incident. In thought it compares with the healing just looked at. Israel is not only blind, but dumb as well, possessed of an evil spirit. This will be peculiarly so in the future when that unhappy nation shall be led astray by Satanic deception to worship the Antichrist.

But God's mercy shall reach many in that day, for Israel is beloved for the fathers' sake. Dumbness and blindness in Scripture are both seen to be results of unbelief. John the Baptist's father is a clear example of the numbing and dumbing effect of unbelief.

The prophet speaks of the day of Israel's glory when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap

as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isaiah 35:5-6).

The Man with the Withered Hand

MATTHEW 12:10-13

THE SON OF MAN is Lord of the Sabbath (verse 8), and now He proves it by healing this man with the withered hand on that day. God had given Israel the Sabbath for a day of rest; the Pharisees turned its keeping into a burden, when it had been intended for a day of relief from burden—a day of rest. What could be done better than to bring relief and joy to a burdened soul; to bring rest to the weary?

This afflicted man has not been able to do any real work on weekdays, nor get rest on the Sabbath. Jesus provided both.

So the soul saved by divine grace is able to work for the Lord, and at the same time to find rest and peace for his soul.

The Blind and Dumb, Possessed of a Demon

MATTHEW 12:22-30

IN MATTHEW the crisis is reached between Israel and their Messiah; His rejection by them is final. In the very heart of this chapter we find His warning against the committal of the unpardonable sin. Israel refused their God in the Old Testament; they consistently rejected His Son; and now they also despise the witness of the Holy Spirit. The testimony of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is utterly contemned by them. Hence for unbelieving Israel there is no other sign but that which speaks of the death and resurrection of their Messiah, as seen in the type of Jonah. Let men reject that sign, and there remains nothing but a fearful awaiting of judgment that shall devour the adversaries.

Matthew closes here with Christ's refusal to recognize His relationship to Israel in a natural way; henceforth only those who do the will of His Father are linked with Him. There is a clear-cut break between Christ and Israel.

In the very midst lies this miracle of the healing of the blind man, who is also dumb. We have just considered two other miracles like it (see 9:27-31 and 9:32-33); the latter was also possessed of a demon. In this one, presented only by Matthew, the three sad conditions are found together in one man—blindness, dumbness, and demon possession. His case emphasizes and centralizes Israel's sad plight in that day when the Messiah was in

their midst. They knew Him not; His glory was unseen by them; His praise lay unuttered, and their heart was filled with Satanic hatred toward Him. Yet our blessed Lord healed this man, even as in future Israel shall have their eyes opened to look on Him whom they pierced, shall some day shout His praise, and shall be set free from Satan's power and deception, for the Holy Spirit shall then be poured out on all flesh.

But right there and then, instead of these leaders bowing in wonder at His feet, they attributed the miracle to the influence of Satanic power; they blasphemed against the Holy Ghost; they committed the unpardonable sin. They refused the Holy Spirit's witness as seen in Christ's power. That rejection of the Spirit's testimony continues today in Israel's case (and alas, so much also on the part of apostate Christendom). The nation pronounced and sealed its doom. Yet even still, in His marvelous grace, God has not given up Israel permanently; some happy day her eyes shall be opened. The miracle recorded here is God's promise of mercy to that disobedient and gainsaying people.

The Feeding of the 5000

MATTHEW 14:15-21

LITTLE NEED BE SAID HERE. As we all know, this is the only miracle Jesus performed which is found in all the Gospels. It is presented very similarly in the Synoptics, with but slight variations. But John's account, which is the fullest, introduces two thoughts not mentioned elsewhere. He alone reveals the source of the five loaves and the two fishes, for he mentions the little lad. John alone presents Jesus as taking the initiative in regard to the feeding of the multitude; He raises the question as to what to do in regard to this vast, hungry crowd. In the other Gospels the disciples, in each case, are concerned about the need of the people, which is as it should be, too. Our blessed Lord took care of the situation when He was here, in all the plenitude of His power. Now, as each of the Synoptics states, He tells *us*: "Give *ye* them to eat." We, His servants, must look today in compassion on the vast multitudes that need the Bread of Life; we must bring the Word of God's salvation to them. Of course we bring our little to Him, and, with His blessing enriching and enlarging it, its reach is truly unlimited. Alas, how often we try to minister the Word in our own strength, counting on our resources instead of on His, and thus we accomplish so little. He alone can multiply five loaves to feed five thousand. "Little is much when God is in it." Jesus looked down on the crowd in its need; then He looked up to Heaven for blessing. May we do the same!

The Syrophenician's Daughter

MATTHEW 15:21-28

OUR LORD had spoken of Tyre and Sidon, as seen in Matthew 11. Those two cities were known as monuments of God's judgment among the Gentiles. A woman seeks Him out here, not only being in that region so reminiscent of judgment, but she herself is actually a Canaanite—of a nation destined to total destruction (Deuteronomy 7:2). On such grounds, how could this woman possibly expect mercy at the hands of the Lord? But, "where sin abounds, grace does much more abound."

She begs for mercy, calling upon Him as the "son of David." She committed a double error: because she had no link with Israel whatever; and because, if she had, she still would have been without hope, for Israel had forfeited all right to God's blessing; Lo-ammi had been written over them, as we have so often noticed already. Sinners alone now have a claim on Christ; the Jews were lost sheep as well as the Gentiles, as Jesus tells her. Matthew alone includes this in his account, which again is in alignment with his presentation of Christ, Israel's Messiah.

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," says He. If this sounds discouraging on the one hand, it offers bright hope on the other. For surely, if Israel also is lost, if the proud Pharisee needs mercy too, then surely there is hope for others. He may be *sent*

only to the lost sheep of Israel, but that does not prevent any lost soul from *coming* to Him.

And so she comes. In lowly humility she takes the place of a dog under the table, glad of the crumbs that might fall. So every sinner who will take the place of unworthiness in His sight shall be lifted to sit at the table with Him; and, instead of eating the crumbs under the table, shall feast on the whole loaf on the table.

"Great is thy faith," is His commendation of her. He said this same on another occasion; both times to a Gentile. God hath included Israel "in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." And through their unbelief we have obtained mercy (Romans 11:30-31).

The Lord returns now to the land of Israel, and as vast multitudes come to Him, He heals them all. This will be true of Israel when the Messiah returns to them in future—after the Gentiles have been reached and blessed.

The Feeding of the 4000

MATTHEW 15:32-39

IN THE FEEDING of the 4000 we see once more the day when Israel shall be blessed, not only spiritually, but also physically. Israel shall then be fed, both physically and spiritually. The feeding of these 4000 pictures

Israel's millennial blessing. I believe certain expressions in the text prove this:

1. The Lord says that He will not send them away fasting. In the case of the 5000 being fed, the disciples wanted to send them away; here the Lord takes the initiative and says He will *not* do so. So when Christ comes to Israel, it will be our Lord Himself who will bless His people; no longer the disciples to whom He gave that responsibility for this day.
2. Jesus said: "They continue with Me now three days." This is reminiscent of something we read in Hosea 6. That prophet foretells Israel's millennial blessing and says in verse 2: "After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." The third day is the day of resurrection, the day when Israel shall be blessed in the hour of her awakening from death into spiritual life. This third day is found, with exactly the same thought in view, in John 2:1. Here it is bread; there it is wine. Israel shall be fed with spiritual food; they shall be filled with the joy of His salvation. These take place on the third day, as does this miracle.
3. He feeds 4000 here. Four is the number of the world, for in that day Israel, a people that shall live in this world, shall be saved. And the whole world shall be blessed with them, too. The world now waits for that day of redemption (Romans 8:19-21).
4. Jesus uses seven loaves here and there are seven basketsful of fragments at the close of the feast,

while with the 5000 there were five loaves and 12 basketsful left. Seven is the number of perfection and suggests that perfection will be reached when Israel is eternally blessed by mighty grace and power; when Christ returns.

Let us not despise these little touches, which are recorded for a purpose; they all attest the infinite wisdom of God, and speak of the divine perfection of God's Word.

The Cure of the Lunatic Son

MATTHEW 17:14-21

AS THE LORD comes down from the Mount, where He was displayed in the glory of His coming Kingdom, Satan at its foot manifests his power. He is still afflicting the sons of men. But some day our Lord shall descend from on high (as here), and then Satan's power shall be broken, as seen in this miracle, and the devil himself shall be locked up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. This miracle suggests that future conquest of Christ.

This poor lad had fallen into the fire, then again into the water; certainly two extremes, showing how Satan goes to extremes to trouble men, to control the sinner by

his wiles and his power. The disciples want to know why they could not cast out the demon and are told that it was because of their unbelief. Oh, unbelief, wretched unbelief. It is the cause of the sinner's doom and the Christian's dullness. Unbelief lies at the root of all our troubles, for Satan has absolutely no power over those who have faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes. Our Lord assures His disciples that the smallest amount of faith in a great God can overcome the mightiest difficulties. "Lord, increase our faith."

This kind of Satanic evil, says the Lord, will yield only to the twin forces of prayer and fasting. In fact, I am sure it is true that the exercise of these two insures spiritual victory at any time. Prayer—that is the hand upon God; fasting—that is the hand on self. Prayer brings God in; fasting puts self out. Prayer lays hold on divine resources; fasting cancels human resources.

Of course, the Lord was not speaking of fasting in a literal, physical sense by abstaining from all or certain foods. He was referring to its spiritual meaning—the denial of selfish desires and lusts in every form. Notice Jesus mentions prayer first. By laying hold upon God, we will turn away from self. Divine power banishes all need for human strength. Turning *to* God, the believer will readily turn *away* from things—from self—from sin.

The Piece of Silver in the Fish's Mouth

MATTHEW 17:24-27

MATTHEW ALONE gives us this. How it portrays our holy Lord, in His grace and majesty. It reveals Him as the Creator, for even the fishes are subject unto Him. It sets Him forth as the Redeemer, for He pays, as He said, "for Me and thee." It tells out His wondrous grace, for *He* pays; He who never owed anyone anything, but to whom all things rightly belong. He, the Creator and Redeemer of all, humbly paid the tax, lest He should offend them. He takes the humble place, veiling His glory under the guise of humility. What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is!

This tax was the temple tax of half a shekel. Peter, as usual, speaking before he thinks, really replies to their query as to whether Jesus paid tax, saying, "Yes." In doing so, Peter took the Jewish position. But Jesus had long ere this dissociated Himself from any connection with Israel, as we have seen. He and Peter belonged to the children (of God) and tax was paid only by strangers. Israel by their rejection of Christ had been cast off and were no longer God's people, but strangers and outcasts. If Jesus and Peter were free, this could be only in one way, for redemption is only through the cross. Jesus was free because of who He was; Peter because of what grace had made him (in view of redemption's work, so soon to be completed by the Lord). Jesus therefore was thinking of the cross, where freedom was to be pro-

cured; where sinners were to be made God's children. This takes men, of course, out of Judaism and thus sets them free from the need to "pay." Why? Ah, glory to His name—because *Jesus paid it all*. Our Lord goes on to demonstrate this tremendous truth by paying the tax, as He says to Peter, for "Me and thee." Oh, how wondrous the grace here intimated; He takes the place as if *He* needed to pay; and that is exactly what He did at Calvary. He took my place; He paid as if He, and not I, were the sinner. He died for me; all glory to His name. Oh, how matchless the grace that makes Him associate me with Himself, as He says: "for Me *and* thee." Poor worthless *me* in the same clause with the blessed Son of God! Yes, divine grace links me with Christ. But I am deeply conscious that He comes first—"Me" and then "thee." So should it, so shall it ever be!

It is interesting to note that the word "custom" (verse 25) and the word "pay" (verse 24), are the same word in Greek; the one a noun, the other a verb. Both are the same word uttered by our Saviour in His triumphal shout on the cross: "It is finished." Yes, when Jesus finished the work there, it was because He paid the price of our salvation; when He paid, it was then He finished the work. The noun is most often translated "end" and tells us that when He paid for our sins, He saves us to the uttermost—to the very end.

The miraculous manner in which the Lord paid once more repeats the story of His death and resurrection. "Go to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money." The depth of the sea speaks to us of the depth of suffering to which

our Saviour went at Calvary, when all God's waves and billows rolled over Him. But He arose, for note carefully that Peter was not told to open the mouth of the first fish he *caught*, but of the fish that "cometh up." The fish came to the surface of its own accord voluntarily, even as our blessed Lord rose from the dead by His own power. In its mouth was the price of the tribute money; even as when Christ arose, He opened His mouth and declared that the work of redemption had been accomplished, telling His disciples to go and preach that message to all the world. We have a message—a piece of money—to pay every debt; it is the price Jesus paid for the salvation of mankind. May we carry it everywhere, and in some measure pay the debt we owe to Him and which we owe to man as well (Romans 1:14).

The Eyes of the Two Blind Men Opened

MATTHEW 20:30-34

THE HEALING of the blind men of chapter 9 took place much earlier in Jesus' ministry, and is found only in Matthew. This one is the same as that of Mark 10 and Luke 18, for in each Gospel it occurred just before our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem which strikingly took place on what is now The Lord's Day—the first day of

the week. Its happening at this time is highly significant, for this Jerusalem-entrance prefigures Christ's coming to Israel by-and-by, when He shall be owned as King. And we know, from Romans 11:25-26, that just before His coming to Israel her veil of blindness shall be removed. When Israel turns to the Lord, the veil of blindness is then taken away (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). So, connecting the close of Matthew 20 with the opening of chapter 21, we have a perfect dispensational picture of Israel's acknowledgment of Christ as King, as it shall be in the future day.

Here in Matthew we see how Israel remained blind all during Christ's ministry among them. The blind men of chapter 9 are succeeded by these of chapter 20. How striking that, though the seeing leaders rejected Christ, these blind men own Him as Son of David. The seeing ones were made blind (John 9:39), while the blind were made to see.

Notice that these blind men actively called upon the Lord. When the Lord heals the blind man of John 9 it was He (and not the sufferer) who saw and called and took the lead. All this but sets forth the perfection of Scripture, for in Matthew Israel is in view and in their case, *they* must call on Him, and they *will* call on Him in a day yet to come. It is when Israel turns to the Lord that she shall be blessed; not when the Lord turns to Israel. But in John 9 the idea of Christ's coming in grace to redeem man is in view; and there He came and had compassion.

The miracle took place at Jericho—the place of the curse. Israel has indeed been under the curse all these years because of her refusal of the Saviour; but when

she turns to God, as here with these two blind men, the curse shall be lifted and turned into a blessing. It is ever so, in the case of all sinners, who turn to the Lord.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

MATTHEW 21:17-22

THIS is the only time our Lord ever cursed instead of blessed, and then the object of the curse was a tree, not a man. And even then, it does not say that He cursed the fig tree; it is Simon Peter who says so (see Mark 11:21). The Lord pronounced judgment; the curse men heap on themselves.

The fig tree typifies Israel again, which was meant to bring forth fruit for God, but failed to do so. There were leaves but no figs; profession galore but no reality. I understand that a fig tree should bear fruit before the leaves come out, just as there should be fruit for God as the basis for Christian profession. The outer life should be the witness there is real fruit there.

Luke 13:6-9 shows that Israel failed to meet God's claims. I believe the three years there mentioned refer to the three years of our Lord's ministry on earth. There was no response on the part of the nation as such to His grace. The final year—the fourth—was allowed them

and after that the judgment was to fall. Even so, here the Lord finally pronounces judgment. The tree withers and eventually was cut down, when Israel was driven out of the land in A.D. 70. As our Lord suggests in verse 21 of our text, the mountain would be removed and cast into the sea, even as Israel was cast into the sea of nations—swallowed up and trodden down of the Gentiles.

On the old stock no fruit would grow any more forever. But there shall be an Israel in the future; the fig tree shall live again; there shall be a national new birth, a spiritual awakening of the nation, and then there shall be seen fruit, for His glory. Mark tells us (chapter 13) that when He comes in the clouds of Heaven, Israel shall be blessed. When we see the fig tree putting forth leaves, we may know that Israel's eternal summer is nigh. The blossoming of the fig tree is not the *national* resurrection of Israel (as today she is again in the land) but her *spiritual* awakening, and of this at the present time there is precious little evidence.

When the Jew turns to Christ in repentance, then this time of her blessing is at the doors (Mark 13:27-29). Each one shall sit then under his own vine and fig tree.

PART SEVEN

Thoughts for Quiet Moments

OUR LORD'S TEMPTATION

HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES

FOLLOWING HIM

THE CALL OF MATTHEW AND THE FEAST
HE MADE

JOHN THE BAPTIST DOUBTS

JESUS' WONDROUS INVITATION

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?

EXCEPT YE BECOME AS A LITTLE CHILD

THE YOUNG RULER

PAYING TRIBUTE TO CAESAR

CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

THREE ESTIMATES

JUDAS' BARGAIN, BETRAYAL, AND SUICIDE

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

THREE RENTS

PETER'S BOAST, SLEEP, AND DENIAL

THE DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE

THE WATCH SET AT THE SEPULCHER

THE RESURRECTION MORNING

Our Lord's Temptation

MATTHEW 4: 1-11

SATAN IS UNMASKED HERE, and our blessed Lord revealed in the perfection of His manhood. And, incidentally, believers are shown the way of victory over the devil.

"Behold our Champion": the greater than David versus a greater than Goliath. Like David, the Lord Jesus went after His adversary. Satan would have avoided the contest, for he never meets his victims in person. Jesus is the only One the devil ever faced outright, and the war ended in Satan's ignominious defeat.

Our Lord beat the devil as a "man," and as a man in the position of absolute weakness: in the wilderness, where there was nothing to draw upon; and after being hungry through forty days of fasting. Weakness, when relying on almighty strength, is stronger than all the forces of evil, wiser than all the wiles of this fearful foe—Satan. The devil is conquered here; later he was condemned at the cross (John 12:31) and he shall be finally consigned to eternal doom at the Lord's return.

When was our Lord tempted? After taking His place in baptism with sinners; and after the Holy Spirit had come upon Him. Now He is about to prove that He is truly fit for the tremendous task of redeeming man from sin and Satan's domination. The place is a desert. Adam was tried in a garden of delight, and he failed; Christ in an empty desert, and He won. The children of Israel all

through the wilderness journey murmured for forty years in sad unbelief; Christ for forty days in another wilderness walked in perfect obedience to and in perfect fellowship with God His Father, and He triumphed.

In Eden we see a man God-made; here the Man God-begotten.

The devil challenged the first man; the second Man challenged the devil.

The devil ruined the first man; the second Man spoiled—stripped—the devil (Colossians 2:15).

The first Adam involved the human race in his defeat; the last Adam included it in His victory.

Luke presents these three tests in their moral order; Matthew in their dispensational, as he presents the truth so consistently in that manner. First the forty days in the wilderness, answerable to Israel's forty years in the desert; then on the pinnacle of the Temple, as Israel in the land reached the very height of her glory and might during Solomon's reign when the Temple was also built; lastly, Satan's attempt to have the Lord worship him, which failed, but which Israel shall do so sadly in the future, when the apostate part of the nation shall worship Satan in his Antichrist. Thus in these three tests we see Israel in her history from Egypt to her yet-future day, when Jesus shall come; when unbelieving Israel shall worship the false Christ. Israel's is a history of failure; Christ's one of unqualified success.

During the forty days of fasting, while communing with God, the Lord did not feel the pangs of hunger, for it says that "afterward" He hungered. Paul had that experience when caught up to the third heaven, for he did not know whether he was in the body or out. We,

too, may be so engaged with Christ that we are lifted out of self altogether. Satan immediately appealed to our Lord's hunger—to His physical need. He did the same with Eve. Satan ever magnifies the physical over the spiritual. The Lord refutes that false concept by saying that man is not to live by that which goes into *his* mouth, but by what comes out of *God's* mouth—by God's precious Word. Our Lord enunciated the same vital truth in John 6:27.

"Command," said Satan, "that these stones be made bread." But the Lord—as Man—had come to obey; not to command. It is not man's prerogative to assert any rights, but to wait upon God and to walk in obedience to God's will. The devil wanted Christ to make bread from stones, but the true Bread comes from above; not from beneath. God would have man to look up to Him for food; not down to earth, as alas, man so consistently does. Bread is not to be made out of stones; God cares for His own not in the spectacular but in the commonplace.

In the first test Satan sought to trap our blessed Lord Jesus into undertrust of God; in the second test into overtrust. Now he seeks to have Jesus presume a false trust; in the first temptation, to refuse a true trust. First Christ foiled his attempt by quoting from God's Word; now Satan quotes Scripture for himself; only, as his emissaries generally do also, he quoted it incorrectly.

The Lord has perfect confidence in His Father. The evil one suggests that trust in God is shown by doing something unusual. Display what you can do—he says—God will take care of you. Not so, answers our Lord. By casting Himself down, He would actually be prac-

tising distrust of God. It is only when we are doubtful of something or someone that we make experiments. "What sign showest Thou?" said the Jewish leaders to Christ on one occasion. His answer: "Except ye see signs, and wonders, ye will not believe." To demand signs, or to perform them for display, is a sign of unbelief. To tempt God is to reveal the very death of trust.

Satan quoted a passage out of its setting and left out some important words—"to keep Thee in all Thy ways." The devil's ways were not *God's* ways, nor should they be ours. All heresies are due to the false use of Scripture; oftentimes they are due to taking right passages out of their proper setting.

In the third temptation Satan suggests that devotion to God is too expensive. He throws everything into the scale and seeks to turn the Lord from the path altogether. He seeks to keep the Lord Jesus from going to the cross by offering Him this world's glory in an easier way; "Just worship me and all is yours," says the devil. How many have fallen here, by accepting present ease or fame in place of a path of suffering now, instead of waiting for the glory by-and-by.

"Worship," says Satan. "*And* serve," answers the Lord. Satan left the latter word out of his quotation. Worship always leads to service. Satan realized in a measure, I believe, that the cross would mean his complete defeat, so he sought to keep Christ from going on to the cross. Those who doubt the infinite worth of the work of Calvary should read the writing here. But how puny was the devil's thinking. He offered the Lord the world and its glory, if He would only turn from His path. Did he not know that *one soul* is worth more to

Christ than all the world's glory? Jesus knew it and so He died for us—to prove it is indeed so.

Notice the “downs” in these three trials. The devil bade the Lord to look down at the stones; to cast Himself down; to fall down and worship. Satan took the Lord up first; then urged the downward course. Praise God, with God the call to the sinner is to come down first; then in grace God lifts the soul to the highest pinnacle of bliss. The Lord refused the world's glory at Satan's hands; accepted the shame of the cross at His Father's hands.

Satan tempted the Lord as to His physical need first; then as to trust in God; and, finally, as to worship; or—in the realm of body, soul, and spirit, in that order. The Lord answers him from Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; and 6:13. Note that these passages come in the reverse numerical order—from chapter 8 to chapter 6. That is how they are meant to come, for with God the spirit is most important, then the soul, then the body. But the devil, as one colored pastor once put it, is “well-reversed in the Scriptures.”

Three times our Champion routs the devil by saying: “It is written.” He had the authority and the power to tell Satan to leave, but instead He employed the written Word of God. As Man He was showing how we too may be victorious in the hour of temptation. An absolute reliance on God's precious Word; an acquaintance with its priceless verities, will assure victory to the weakest saint. The sword of the Spirit will rout the boldest enemy. May we learn to use it effectively!

Himself Took Our Infirmities

MATTHEW 8:16-17

WE NOTICE these verses because wrong conclusions have been based on these words. Those who stress so-called "faith healing" will tell you that on the cross Christ died for our sicknesses and deformities as well as for our sins. Healing is in the atonement as well as redemption from sin, say such, and they quote this passage of the Word to confirm that idea.

But surely, nothing could be plainer than the truth stated here. Verse 17, quoted from Isaiah 53:4, states clearly that its fulfillment took place not in Christ's death, but in His life upon earth. It is when He healed that this Scripture was fulfilled. It simply means that our blessed Lord entered fully into the sorrows and griefs and pains of those whom He restored; He did so in perfect compassion. Here on earth, as well as now in Heaven, He was touched with the feeling of their infirmities. It has nothing whatever to do with the sacrifice offered on Calvary. It is perfectly true, of course, since Christ died for our sins, that our bodies as well as our souls shall experience Calvary's redemptive power. But for the physical effect we must wait till Christ comes again; we are "waiting for . . . the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). In this present age, believers are no more exempt from bodily ailments or accidents or death than any others on the face of the earth. To teach otherwise is to teach a lie.

Coming back to the real meaning of this text, how thrilling to know we have One who can bear upon His heart the sorrows and troubles of the millions of His dear saints. Most of us can hardly carry our own burdens without collapsing under them; He bears us all upon His heart, and invites us to cast our cares upon Him. Oh, what a wonderful Saviour He is!

Following Him

MATTHEW 8:18-22

IN LUKE'S GOSPEL this incident follows the transfiguration (9:57-62). Here it is recorded very much earlier in Jesus' life. It follows the quotation from Isaiah 53:4, which in turn is followed by the suggestion of Christ's rejection by Israel (see Isaiah 53:2-3). That is why this incident finds its place here in Matthew, for our Saviour, as early as this, already knew Israel had refused Him. He has no place where to lay His head; He came to His own, and His own received Him not. There was room for the creatures He had made, but no room for Him. Now, for the first time in Matthew, Jesus takes that marvelous title, "Son of Man." It is His title as the rejected Saviour and also as the glorified Saviour in Heaven. It goes far beyond His relation to Israel; it em-

braces in its scope the whole world. That is why it states (in verse 18) that they went to the "other side." It pictures Christ leaving Israel and earth, and going to Heaven, to the other shore. Now it becomes a question of individual faith in Him; of you and I—each following Him, wherever His path may lead.

A certain scribe is ready enough to go. "I will follow Thee anywhere," says he, but the Lord discourages him. Then one of His own disciples, who hesitates to follow, Jesus encourages to do so.

The first was an unbeliever (or at least he pictures one); the other a believer. The unbeliever was ready enough to go, as the natural man makes a profession readily enough, often, not counting the cost. But a real believer realizes in some measure the tremendous price to be paid if one is to be a true follower of Christ; and so he hesitates. The first, who is ready enough to come, is urged not to do so; the second, who lingers, is urged to come.

The disciple is shown that devotion to Christ cancels this "me first" attitude; that Christ comes first. He does the leading; I am to follow. Not I, but He, first. Christian life consists in following a living Saviour, not in burying dead people. The believer is not in the undertaking business, but in bringing and living the message of eternal life before men. This man would allow natural relationship to hinder his absolute surrender to Christ, which, alas, so often is the case with us, too, more than we realize. May we have our eyes fixed upon Jesus, and follow Him, at whatever the cost.

The Call of Matthew and the Feast He Made

MATTHEW 9:9-13

ISRAEL MAY REJECT HIM, but He will still show grace. In the healing of the palsied man and Matthew's call, the grace of God towards Israel is set forth, typical of their blessing and conversion in the future day. Hence, in verse 13, Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," a passage that had Israel's conversion in view. Matthew's call beautifully illustrates this. It is as "sinners" that the Jews will be blessed in that day; not because of their sacrificing, but because of the mercy flowing from His perfect Sacrifice. Had Israel only believed this then, how much sorrow would she have been spared.

Jesus sees and calls Matthew—not vice versa. Israel, ever through the ages, like Matthew, had been sitting at the receipt of custom, and will be doing the same when God calls them again after the Church's history on earth is complete. Money has been their God, as it has been of so many others, too.

Matthew hears the call, and makes a threefold move. He arose; he left all; he followed Jesus. Three great truths are suggested here:

1. He arose, even as the believer receives a new, risen life in Christ and rises up from his spiritual death.
2. Leaving all, as we turn our back upon the past, denying self for His sake.

3. Followed Him—the lifelong path of obedience and faithfulness to Christ.

He made a “great” feast (Luke 5:29) and invited many of his old friends to meet and hear his new-found Lord. No doubt they too, he hoped, might come to know and follow Him. The natural Jew or Gentile seeks only his own interests or pleasure, but when saved by divine grace, his heart goes out to others, and he becomes a missionary of the cross, seeking to bring others to Christ. The Jew, like Matthew here, in the future day also will go forth with the message of the gospel, when he himself has heard the Saviour’s call. In the past Israel never was a missionary people, but the saved remnant of the tribulation will be. Matthew typifies them.

John the Baptist Doubts

MATTHEW 11:1-19

JOHN THE BAPTIST was tempted on at least three distinct occasions:

1. To *pride*. They asked him: “Who are thou?” (John 1:19). Here was an opportunity to strut and boast, as, alas, so many a servant has done through the ages, forgetting that Christ is to be seen—not the preacher. But John humbly de-

clares himself to be only a *voice*; to be heard and not seen. A voice is heard and then is silent, while the Word it speaks—Christ—remains.

2. To *envy*. This same Jesus, to whom you bare witness, He baptizes, too, and all men flock to Him. But John had come to point men to Christ; not to win disciples to himself. "He must increase," says he, "and I must decrease."
3. To *doubt*, or discouragement. Here he fails. And who has not often failed, likewise, among God's people and especially among the ministers of Christ? Discouragement is Satan's sharpest tool, the one he uses the most. "Art Thou He that should come," asks John, "or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3). It is easy for us to criticize him, but let us not forget that John, like all those who looked for the Messiah, expected Him to set up His kingdom and reign. Yet now John himself was in prison, he who had come to herald the coming of the King. He could not understand it at all, and so his faith wavered. The Lord calls his attention to the things ye "hear and see" (verse 4). The words of Christ and the works of Christ tell us who He is.

Note that hearing is mentioned first; seeing later. Unless we hear by faith, the things we see never produce any beneficial effects. Works appeal only to the senses; His words appeal to the conscience and to the heart. His words call for faith on the part of the hearer; works call only for sight. The one reaches the inner man; the other is outward. So many even today are taken up with miracles, failing to realize that, with God, faith in His

precious Word and the obtaining of spiritual blessings are of prime importance. In the Lord's day many saw His miracles but they did *not* believe in Him.

Pointing John to His miracles, the Lord mentions the opening of blind eyes first. Isaiah 35:5 gives that miracle as *the* evidence of divine power, for no one had ever opened blind eyes before Jesus came. He therefore was the Messiah Isaiah 35 had foretold would come. Yes, John, He is the Christ; yes, doubting soul, He is your Saviour and Lord. His words and His works prove it beyond all doubt.

Though John failed for a moment to bear witness to Christ, Christ in infinite tenderness bears witness to John. He sends John a private rebuke for his lack of trust, but follows this with a public vindication of His herald—before the multitudes. It is something like the judgment seat of Christ for the believer in the day to come. The rebuke for failure shall be between the believer and his Lord; the reward and crown shall be displayed before wondering worlds. How full of mercy and compassion He is!

John was not only a prophet, but the Old Testament prophets prophesied of him. He was truly great—the immediate forerunner of our Lord. Unlike the other prophets of Israel, John not merely spoke of Christ, but he saw Him and pointed men to Him, the Lamb of God—the Sinbearer of the world.

Jesus' Wondrous Invitation

MATTHEW 11:25-30

"AT THAT TIME"—when Israel had made their choice, refusing their Messiah; "at that time"—when He had pronounced judgment upon them for their unbelief; then He rejoiced that, though the wise and prudent were blinded in unbelief, yet the simple and humble would heed His call. To them He holds out His arms and utters those precious words that have proven a balm to millions: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

At that time Jesus *answered* and said (verse 25). That word "answered" indicates that the Father had just spoken to Him in that dark hour of Israel's hardness; perhaps spoken to Him words somewhat like those of Isaiah 49:5-6: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. . . . It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob. . . . I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth."

The One who here offers rest is He that:

Knows everything; *possesses* everything (verse 27). He speaks to the *Father*—thus "love" is suggested. All things are delivered to Him; thus "power" is His. He knows the Father and reveals Him—thus "wisdom" is His, too.

Power, love, and wisdom in Him combine.

His offer of rest comes to the laboring class—those who labor.

It comes to the heavy-laden—the burdened and sorrowing.

It appeals to the babes, thus to the old and infirm (the heavy-laden); to the middle-aged (those who labor); to the young—even the babes. That offer of rest holds good for all—from the cradle to the grave.

Babes need rest; they get tired and sleepy. How confidently a little child goes to sleep in the arms that cuddle it; how it enjoys its rest. So should a sinful soul rest in childlike trust on the everlasting arms of Christ; find rest from sin in Him.

The laborer needs rest. Tired from work, he may go to the blessed Saviour for rest. Isn't it odd that when a soul becomes aware of his sinfulness and need of salvation, he starts to do something; to think that salvation is procured by human effort? But surely, rest cannot be obtained by working. The way to rest is to do *nothing*; so may a weary soul find rest in Christ. The work that needed to be done for our salvation was done by Him upon the Cross. He said, "It is finished"; Jesus paid it all.

The heavy-laden need rest. How many are borne down by life's heavy cares and sorrows; especially those older in years. They, too, may find rest in Him. He will *give* rest. Only God can give anyone rest; it is His prerogative.

Having obtained rest of conscience from the load of sin, through faith in Christ as Saviour, the believer may then walk with Him and learn of Him, and so secure rest

of soul in daily fellowship with Him, while waiting for the rest of body that awaits when we reach the glory above (Hebrews 4:9).

What Shall It Profit a Man?

MATTHEW 16:21-28

JESUS NOW SPOKE of His coming suffering and death and Peter began to rebuke Him. He said, as the Greek shows, "Be propitiated to Thyself, Lord." Peter anticipated the setting up of Christ's Kingdom, and could not understand His going to the "cross." The publican of Luke 18 prayed that God might be propitiated towards him. Both could not be. If God's claims were to be met, then our blessed Lord could have no pity on Himself. He must die for us. Peter's remonstrance, therefore, though well meant by him, was actually inspired by Satan. Both here and in the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, our Lord spoke those scathing words: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." There the devil sought to keep the Lord from going to Calvary by dangling before Him the glitter of the world; here by reminding Him of the suffering that lay ahead. Praise His name; neither could make Him forego His purpose. In that path of suffering He now bids the believer follow, though only in a minor measure.

Deny yourself; take up the cross; follow Him. Not deny things alone, which is comparatively easy, but deny "self," which can only be done through divine power. By surrendering our own life and now living for Him, inspired by the example He set us, true life is really found; rich experience of His sustaining grace is gained (verse 25).

Even from a standpoint of personal advantage—what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?—the soul is worth more than all the world. Jesus not only said so, but He proved it, for He refused the world to save even one soul.

Life should be profitable; there should be something over and above. In the Christian life there indeed is, for where sin abounded grace does much more abound.

Note, it says that a sinner will lose his soul; not that it shall "*be* lost." The sinner is lost to begin with, but not yet eternally lost. By living only for this world, he deliberately loses his own soul, and loses it for eternity. Is it profitable to know Christ as one's Saviour and to live for Him? Ask Paul! He says: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

Remember that, once having lost your soul, you can never regain it, for "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In the first clause of verse 26, the Lord speaks of the present life, when a sinner may be saved and thus not lose his soul; in the second clause, He refers to the future, beyond this world, when it is forever too late to be saved. To lose one's soul means forever to lose

the capacity or opportunity to enjoy, to know, to live. It means eternal loss, eternal woe.

Add up the balance sheet. Realize that only with Christ as yours and as the Lord of your life shall there ever be anything to be put down on the "credit" side of your life's ledger.

Except Ye Become as a Little Child

MATTHEW 18:1-14

THE LORD SETS a little child in the midst of the disciples as an object lesson on the subject of humility. And, incidentally, He reveals some precious truths in regard to "little children."

The Lord speaks of the cutting off of hands and feet; of plucking out eyes; of tying a millstone around one's neck and drowning; about hell fire and perdition. These are all pretty strong terms, applying to older men and women. Such could have no place in a child's experience. Alas, how often people are saved only as derelicts, as wrecks of humanity, as our Lord's words suggest. How much better to be saved as a little child, and then to live a humble life. When children are saved, accident prevention is included among the many benefits they receive. They are saved "whole"; body as well as soul.

What an incentive to reach the young for Christ; how much more vital than to have to try and save the sin-marred old in years. As has been well said: "It is much better to put a fence at the top of a cliff, than an ambulance at the bottom."

The Lord Jesus speaks of three classes of souls here:

1. *Infants who are too young to believe.* Such are saved through the merits of the work of Calvary, for, as verse 11 states, the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. As so many have noticed, in Luke 19:10 the word "seek" is included. There all men are in view, and sinners who have gone astray from God need to be sought. But infants have not strayed, and such are saved by the very fact that Christ died for them. Many other passages of Scripture teach the salvation of little ones. Many passages prove that a soul is lost only by *refusing* God's mercy (see John 3:18) and that charge cannot be laid to a child.
2. There are little ones *who do believe* (verse 6). What a glorious reason for winning the young for Christ. Little children just drink in the appealing story of Jesus' love; they artlessly trust the Saviour. Work among children is almost 100 per cent successful in bringing them to a saving knowledge of Christ.
3. There are those who *don't or won't believe*. They are urged here better to come as wrecks than not to come at all; better to come halt or maimed, than to be cast into everlasting fire. Happy indeed are we who come to Christ in early days. How much sorrow and regret are we

spared. To be the greatest, one must take the place of the least. How blessedly our Lord exemplified this; He humbled Himself to the death of the cross and now is highly exalted.

One more thought we should notice, as the question is so often raised (see verse 10). In what way do the angels of little children always behold the face of God the Father in Heaven? Some think that each child has a guardian angel to look after its welfare. This is, of course, a lovely thought, though I am not aware that Scripture elsewhere suggests this. Others believe it refers to the spirits of children who have died and who now, of course, are in Heaven till the day of resurrection of all the saints. I would not think this latter interpretation is correct, for this verse connects these angels or spirits directly with little children living upon earth. Personally I lean to the thought that little children are so dear to God (just as our little ones in our homes here on earth are the special objects of our love and care), that, as it were, He has them ever before His face—His heart goes out to them. I believe it is in a spiritual sense that their *spirits* (the word is *spirits* rather than *angels*) are ever prominently upon His heart. Whatever it actually may mean, one thing is sure: little children are said to be very precious to Him. He loves, as we do, their trustfulness, humility, and attractiveness. So much of that is spoiled when people grow up. God's redeemed children should again manifest these lovely childlike characteristics.

The Young Ruler

MATTHEW 19:16-26

MARK AND LUKE also report this event, in much the same way. "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Scripture tells us now in no uncertain terms that eternal life is the *gift* of God; it cannot be purchased with paying or doing.

The Lord does not promise this man *eternal* life by keeping the commandments, but tells him he will enter into "life" by doing so. By living a moral, upright life one does indeed in a measure enjoy life, but that is down here, and now. For entrance into Heaven there is only one way; the way of the cross. It is only through His precious blood that one can enter the holiest of all (Hebrews 10:19).

The Lord cites only the latter part of the decalogue; only those commandments that evince one's love to one's neighbor. He knew that the young man never had kept the command to love the Lord God with all his heart. This seeker was truly a splendid type of manhood. He could say (and no doubt sincerely so, as far as he knew himself) that he had kept them all. Yet he realized there was something lacking. In Mark, Jesus told him: "One thing thou lackest." He lacked what he felt he lacked—the real thing. Call it what you like—eternal life, eternal love, peace, etc. Or, why not sum it all up in one word? He lacked Christ. For His sake alone is it possible to sell everything, take up the cross, and follow the path He

trod. The one that does so will have treasure in Heaven. Note, the Lord did not tell him that by doing so he **would earn eternal life**. Only those who have eternal life can follow Him. Such, by a life of self-denial will lay up treasures in Heaven; will hear Him say "well done," in that day.

The young man went away. He turned his back on Christ, He valued earth's possessions higher than the unsearchable riches of Christ. He went away sorrowful, though very rich. The believer is happy, though he may be poor.

How difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Even the sphere of mere profession seldom appeals to the very rich. It is impossible (not merely difficult) for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of *God*, which is the sphere of reality, where only true born-again ones have a place. Say the disciples: "Who then can be saved?" Said our Lord: "With men this is impossible, but not with God." Jesus did not say possible *to* God, but *with* God. Let the sinner but yield himself to God and the impossible becomes a blest reality.

Paying Tribute to Caesar

MATTHEW 22:15-22

THE PHARISEES tempt the Lord and join the Herodians with them, for this temptation had a political as well as a religious portent. If Jesus in his reply had urged them to pay tribute to Caesar, He would have gone against all their hopes and longings as a nation; had He said not to pay, He would have been open to a charge of treason against Rome. Our Lord's amazing reply was truly sensational. In one simple sentence He not only confounded all their scheming, but lay bare their hypocrisy and sinfulness, and searched their guilty consciences.

"Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription is this?" The answer: Caesar's. Then render to Caesar the things that are his; and to God (they had left God out) the things that are God's. Surely they must have been touched to the quick by this answer. How did they happen to be under Caesar's sway? It was because of their sin and departure from God. Had they been subject to God, then had they been free from the Roman yoke. Through their sinfulness they had fallen from their high estate as the chosen people of God to be the chattels of a cruel Gentile power. And now they were planning the destruction of the very One who had come to save them from their sins. For us, too, there is a message here. As the penny bore Caesar's stamp, so do we bear the image of God, for man was made in His image. This marks us out as belonging to Him by right; there-

fore we must render ourselves and all we have in obedience to His demand and command. Caesar gave a little, in governing the people, by providing protection, roads, etc., and he wanted only a little in return; God has given us everything, and so He demands all.

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our soul, our life, our all.

They said: "Shall we give to Caesar?" In His reply the Lord said: "*Render to Caesar and to God.*" To *render* means to give in return for what is first given to us. In giving Christ, God gave us His all; surely we should henceforth not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. We must also pay our just dues to the government under which we live.

Concerning the Resurrection

MATTHEW 22:23-33

THE SADDUCEES were the modernists of that day. They did not believe in the resurrection and so propounded to the Lord a hypothetical case of a woman who had been married to seven husbands and had died without a child—dying without fruit. Without realizing it, these cavillers were confessing Israel's total failure, for Israel,

too, brought forth no fruit for God. As Romans 7:4 shows, under the law (the first husband there) no fruit for God was produced, but under grace the believer, who has died with Christ and is now "married" to Him as his risen Lord, brings forth fruit for God. Instead of seven husbands, there are really only two—the law in Israel; grace in Christ today. In a human life there can be fruit only through union with a risen Christ.

These Sadducees advanced this problem to make the idea of a resurrection seem ridiculous. What a problem a wife with seven husbands would create in Heaven, say they. Our Lord in His reply disposes, first, of their imaginary difficulty by showing that in the resurrection all natural relationships cease; no more marriage up there. There all is spiritual; there Christ is all; His glory and His grace fill the soul of the believer with perfect bliss.

As to the resurrection itself, if they question that, it only betrays their ignorance both of God and of His Word. "Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead?" He is the God of resurrection; that is His glory. As Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life." God wants all men to know the greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

To prove the resurrection, the Lord quotes a statement found often in the Old Testament but which, I am sure, none of us ever would have employed in this way: He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This proves, says Jesus, that those men live, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. What a demonstration that all Scripture is full of meaning; what an

intimation of what is in store for us in the day when our blessed Lord shall show us in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Three Estimates

MATTHEW 26:1-13

MATTHEW PRESENTS Christ's death under the figure of the trespass offering—the payment of sin's debt. Here He tells His disciples that in two days is the feast of the Passover and He is going to the cross. He, as it were, Himself sets the time, for in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The Jews said: "Not on the feast day" (verse 5); yet that is the very day He did die. He set the time; not they. He paid the debt when in God's estimate it had become due.

I think of this portion as containing three great "estimates":

1. Our Lord estimated the tremendous indebtedness of man to God, and in wondrous love paid that debt in full. His death is the payment of the debt; His burial is its cancellation; His resurrection is the receipt in full. Of that blessed sacrifice He has left a blessed memorial in the bread and wine, by which we remember Him.

2. Then there is Mary's estimate of His worth. Of that too, says our Lord, is there a memorial wherever the gospel is preached through the whole world (verse 13). The Lord paid what we owed. Mary realizes there is something she owes. She saved up, for years perhaps, all her money to purchase this box of ointment at fabulous cost. Judas estimated its value at 300 pence, according to John 12:5. Since a penny was then a man's wages for a day, at present equivalent values it was worth three thousand dollars or so. She poured her all out upon Him—in adoring worship. That was her estimate of His worth. The others murmured, considering her sacrifice a waste, when it might have been bestowed on the poor. It is still so, for many think that praise and worship given to Him are a waste of time when such time might be spent in activity and service. But He values our praise above all else.

Matthew and Mark say His head was thus anointed; John speaks of the feet. The first two Gospels see Jesus in His official capacity as "Head"; John, in His moral beauty—showing the eternal God walking in lowly grace here among men—hence the anointing of those feet that walked this lonely way.

3. Judas' estimate of Christ. Instead of bringing Him anything, he thought of making money through his betrayal of Christ. He estimated the Lord's worth at 30 pieces of silver—to himself. His love of money was the cause of his doom.

Judas' Bargain, Betrayal, and Suicide

MATTHEW 26:14-16, 24-25, 47-50; 27:3-10

AS JOHN TELLS US, Judas was a thief; he had the bag and bare away what was put therein. The love of money was his consuming passion. He sold the Lord for the price of a slave (Exodus 21:32). How sad that one could walk with the Lord of glory for years; hear His wonderful ministry; view His perfect life of purity and grace; yea, even go forth himself to preach and work miracles; yet be totally lost all the while. What a warning to mere Christ-professors who are not Christ-possessioners; so near to Him, yet so far. How deceitful and desperately wicked is the human heart. "Good were it for that man," said our Lord, "if he had not been born."

"Then Judas . . . when he saw that Jesus was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver . . . Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (27:3-4). This indicates that Judas never thought that his betrayal of Christ would lead to His death. He had seen the Lord Jesus escape out of the hands of His enemies many times, and no doubt thought, "I will get my money for delivering Him; He will just escape again, as before, so what will it matter?" He did not truly repent of his deed, for it was only when he *saw* Jesus was condemned that he returned the money. He repented of the consequences of his crime; not of the crime itself. His was but a fruitless remorse; a false repentance. What a tragedy! In reality he did not sell the Lord for those 30 pieces of silver; he sold

Him for nothing, for he returned the money; yea, he really sold himself—for nothing—into eternal perdition. That is all any soul will ever get for the rejection of the Lord Jesus—nothing here and eternal doom hereafter. Judas receives no pity from the guilty elders and priests, and goes out to commit suicide. He “went and hanged himself.” Acts 1:18 reveals that he fell headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. Apparently the rope broke and he crashed down to a wretched death.

This same verse in Acts 1 tells us that he purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, called the “field of blood.” In Matthew we read the Jewish leaders bought that field; in Zechariah 11:13, that the prophet did it on God’s behalf; in Acts, that Judas did so. It is attributed to all three. They bought this field known as the potter’s field—“to bury strangers in.” How significant this is! Note the following comparisons:

Both Christ and Judas bought a field—Matthew 13:44; Acts 1:18.

Both bought it with the price of Jesus’ blood.

Judas bought it with the reward of his—his own—iniquity; Christ bought it with the reward of our iniquity—He bought the world when on the cross He paid for our sins.

Christ was hanged upon a tree; Judas hanged himself.

The one died for his own sins; our blessed Lord died for the sins of others.

With this blood-money the Jews bought the potter’s field. God is the Potter; Israel was the clay (Isaiah 64:8). That potter’s field bought with Jesus’ blood represents

this world, and, in a narrower sense, the land of Israel. Some day God will remake Israel from that marred clay, and restore them to their own land (Jeremiah 18:1-6). This field was bought "to bury strangers in." How striking, for ever since the crucifixion of Christ the scattered people of Israel, as strangers, have been buried in this world, driven out of their land, because of their rejection of Christ. Their land has truly been a field of blood.

There are three prominent fields of blood in Scripture, all presenting the same spiritual lesson:

1. Cain slew Abel in the field—Genesis 4:8; and 1 John 3 tells us this typifies the death of Christ.
2. The one found slain in the field—Deuteronomy 21:1. There the elders disclaim any responsibility for this death, saying: "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. . . . Lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge (verses 7-8). Israel cannot say so now. They did shed innocent blood, as Judas confessed. Some day Israel shall plead guilty to the crucifixion of her Messiah, and be redeemed then.
3. The field of blood in our text—Matthew 27. All three have direct connection with this world as stained with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Judas fell headlong and went to perdition. Oh, that men would fall down headlong before Him and be saved by His grace! Judas' bowels gushed out when he died; our bowels should gush forth in praise and love to Christ during our life.

Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss. That kiss must burn on his lips in hell forever.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

MATTHEW 26:26-30

MATTHEW AND MARK are very brief. Only Luke tells us this supper is to be celebrated in "remembrance of Him." In Matthew, the emphasis is on His death for the remission of sins (on His body given) because both Matthew and Mark view Christ's death as the Sin-offering. So also here we read that His blood is shed for "many," while Luke says for "you." As so consistently in Matthew, the efficacy of the work of Christ is seen to go beyond Israel, taking in the "many"—the Gentiles.

It is the blood of the "new testament," which embodies truly some precious thoughts. The blood poured forth in such unending streams in the Old Testament never put away sins; it was the emphasizing of human guilt rather than of divine grace. But this blood makes available all the infinite resources of the New Testament; it is the passport to all the wealth of divine grace, made good to the heirs of God. For it is through the death of Christ that the provisions of the New Testament are made valid, and made good to the saints of God (Hebrews 9:15).

During our Lord's absence in Heaven, His people are to remember Him down here, in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine. We are to do it—as often as we can—till He come. The disciples, as Scripture intimates, came together for that purpose every first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Our Lord Himself (verse 29) will not drink of it until the Father's kingdom is set up—at His return. Then He will share with His people Israel in their millennial joy.

Three Rents

MATTHEW 26:63-65; 27:50-53

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE and the rocks were rent, as recorded in chapter 27; the high priest's robe, in chapter 26.

The veil was rent from the top to the bottom. That is, the suggestion is that the hand of God rent it, for it was done from the top. Yet the rending speaks of the marring, beating, and bruising of Christ's body, for the veil is His flesh (Hebrews 10:20). Now this was in reality done from beneath, for man did it; yet Scripture states it was done from the top. Ah, in wondrous grace God shows that while men actually did the shameful deed, yet God purposed it so. He used man's wickedness to fulfill His own purposes of love; man's vileness enabled God to open the way for sinful man into Heaven itself, through that rent veil. How marvelous this is!

The graves were opened. When Jesus died, man was enabled to come forth out of death and enter into life,

as seen in the rent veil. The earth opened its doors and Heaven's door was opened. The bodies came forth out of death, while the spirit and soul enter into life—into the very presence of God Himself.

These saints came out of their graves *after* His resurrection. This would indicate, in my judgment, that they, too, received at that time their glorified bodies and never died again, while those raised from the dead before Christ's resurrection (like Lazarus and others) did die again. Christ must be the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23); hence the emphasis on these coming forth *after* His resurrection. The fact that they "appeared" unto many (the same expression as to our Lord's appearances after His resurrection) further makes me believe that these saints rose from the dead with glorified bodies and ascended to Heaven—the firstfruits (after Christ) of redemption's triumph.

The scene in Matthew 26:63-64 is truly dramatic. Two high priests face each other. One the earthly high priest after the order of Aaron; the other about to assume His place as the heavenly High Priest after a new order—the order of Melchisedec. When our Lord confesses Himself to be the Son of God, Caiaphas, in mock horror, rent his clothes. This was a most significant act on his part, for Leviticus 21:10 shows that on no account was a high priest in Israel ever to rend his garments. To do so automatically put him out of office. Ah, Caiaphas did not realize it, but he was indeed forfeiting his office, for the Man standing before him was the new High Priest. The Aaronic priesthood ended when Christ died; our great High Priest was about to take His heavenly office as our great High Priest. A new priesthood was

about to be established, for every believer is now a priest, a member of the holy and royal priesthood, with Jesus the Son of God our High Priest in the heavens (1 Peter 2:5, 9). The way into Heaven stands open. May each of us enjoy our high privilege of drawing near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; with Jesus as the High Priest over the house of God.

Peter's Boast, Sleep, and Denial

MATTHEW 26:31-46, 69-75

WHAT A LESSON Peter's fall has been to us; how we can thank God for its solemn warning! His fall no doubt has been the means for the rising of many; his restoration has brought many a like-failing believer back to the Lord.

The path of self-confidence must always end at the place of self-judgment. Peter did not know his own weakness. Jesus prayed for him (Luke 22:32). Had Peter prayed for himself, how much grief would have been spared him. But when Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, Simon Peter slept. So, when the hour of trial came, the Lord Jesus conquered and Peter was sadly defeated.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” If we but realized this, we should then be strong, for then we would lay hold on God for the needed help and grace (Hebrews 4:16).

Peter’s downward steps have often been noted. He boasted; then he slept; he used the sword instead of following the Lord’s example of submission; he followed afar off; he sat with the servants and warmed himself at their fire; finally he denied his Lord; he cursed and swore. But, praise God, unlike Judas, he truly repented and was restored to full fellowship with his Lord—and to full service for Him.

He could die with Christ, but he could not face a young woman with a sneer of derision on her lips. It does not take very much to knock us over; how we need His supporting hand!

Luke tells us that Jesus looked upon Peter and Peter wept. This means, of course, that Peter had looked at Jesus, too, or he could not have seen the Lord looking at him. This reveals Peter’s true status. He immediately was concerned about the Lord’s opinion of him, and so he looked at Jesus. A true believer cares about His judgment; not so much the judgment of others. I am sure Peter must have read infinite compassion and tenderness in the eyes of his Lord; he saw a look that melted, humbled, cleansed, and restored him. He knows our feeble frame; He remembers that we are dust. He is full of mercy and grace. Peter never forgot that experience, we may be sure.

The Dream of Pilate's Wife

MATTHEW 27:19

WE ARE NOTICING this because only Matthew has it. When Pilate shall stand one day before the judgment throne of Him who now stood before him, his own wife shall be an added witness against him. Christ's majestic bearing and evident holiness, Pilate's own inner conviction, his wife's impassioned plea—they all combine to stop him—if possible—from committing the crime of ages; but in vain; and no amount of water can wash clean the guilty hands stained with the innocent blood he shed. *What a snare the fear of man bringeth!*

How remarkable that God should speak to Pilate's wife by a dream; that she, too, should proclaim Him innocent—a verdict which her husband agrees with (verse 24); how sad that all is in vain. And yet, so it must be, for the Son of God must die; the cup cannot pass from Him and yet man be saved. Praise His name, all the way to Calvary He went for me.

The Watch Set at the Sepulcher

MATTHEW 27:62-66; 28:11-15

THE ENEMIES of the Lord remembered He had said that He would rise from the dead; His own disciples did not remember this till after His resurrection (John 2:22). This can probably be accounted for by the fact that this and other truths which Jesus spoke had been hid from them (see Luke 18:34); I take it that not till the Holy Spirit came to indwell them were they to know these things; the hiding of these precious truths was deliberate on God's part.

They said Jesus was to rise *after* three days; yet they wanted to make the sepulcher sure *until* the *third* day. This indicates that the term "three days and three nights," as used by our Lord in Matthew 12:40 does not mean necessarily three full periods of 24 hours each, but any part of such days, for He rose the third day. Had He been in the grave three full days, He could not have risen then on the third day, but it would have had to be on the *fourth* day.

Lest the disciples steal Him away, they made the sepulcher sure, sealed the stone, and set a watch. A Roman seal and a Jewish watch; so Jew and Gentile united to prevent the mighty resurrection of the Son of God, even as they united in His crucifixion; the whole human race is alike guilty. But how vain all this! How Satan sometimes outwits himself! Had they *not* set the

watch, then they might have claimed with some semblance of sense that He had been taken out of the tomb. But now this had become impossible, and so they spread the ridiculous lie that His disciples came by night and stole Him away, "*while we slept.*" How could they know what happened while they were asleep? Hallelujah; Christ arose!

The Resurrection Morning

MATTHEW 28:1-10

THE CENTRAL VERSE is verse 6: "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

He is not here. Now He is neither in the tomb, nor on earth. He is in Heaven, to give repentance and remission of sins (Acts 5:31). Why isn't He here? Because the world rejected and crucified Him (Acts 5:30).

There were mighty earthquakes at His death and now again at His resurrection. Both these events are truly earth-shaking in their import; may they yet shake many a soul awake, and make them quake before Him. He is risen. No event in history is better authenticated than this.

"Come see the place where the Lord lay." The stone is

rolled away from the door. Not to let the Lord out, but to let man look in. "Come see the place where the Lord lay." Over every grave in the world there might well be written the words: "Here *lies*"; over His tomb alone the epitaph: "Here *lay*." It is an empty tomb.

"See the place where He lay." Humiliating is the posture of lying down. It makes one seem so insignificant. It levels all men to about the same size. Our Lord took that lowly place, both in His life, as He rested in sleep; in death, as He lay in the tomb. He came down to our level, knowing all the trials and burdens of life, for He was in all points tempted as we are; and in death He lay down, taking the full measure of sin's woe. But, praise God, now we can only see where the Lord "lay." He is not lying down any more, nor ever shall do so again. Now the place of might and glory and of service is His. Now we see Him *sitting* at God's right hand in glory; we see Him *standing* to receive the first martyr of the Church home to glory (Acts 7:56); we see Him *walking* in the midst of the churches (Revelation 2:1); we see Him *flying* in the clouds of Heaven as He comes to take His saints home to glory (1 Thessalonians 4:17); and we see Him *riding* on a white horse when He comes to judge the world (Revelation 19:11). But nevermore do we see Him "lying down." The glory is His now; the shame is over forever.

The women were the first at the tomb (how often the sisters put the men to shame); and after the angel has assured them that their Saviour is risen, they run and are graciously met by the Lord Himself. They hold Him by the feet and worship Him. This is again in consistency with Matthew's Gospel, for Israel shall some

day bow before Him and worship at His feet. They hold Him, for Israel shall have Christ as their Lord to reign over them here upon the earth.

The first two recorded words of the Lord are interesting and full of instruction: "All hail" (verse 9); "go tell" (verse 10). *Rejoice* (as the words "all hail" mean) and *tell*. Worship and service. Well may we triumph in His triumph and, everywhere we go, tell the story of Him Who died and rose again.

PART EIGHT

Expository Glimpses

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

CHRIST GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE OR
THE SABBATH

JONAH A SIGN

HEROD'S BIRTHDAY; JOHN'S DEATHDAY
BID ME COME

THE FOURTH WATCH

THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

THE CHURCH AND ITS ORDER

DIVORCE

A PLACE OF HONOR IN THE KINGDOM

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

THREE THINGS MEN SWEAR BY

Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus

MATTHEW 1:21

"How SWEET the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear."

His is the Name above every name, suggesting God *and* man in One. Jehovah-Saviour is its meaning, combining the old with the new, for it is, as it were, Hebrew and Greek in its composition. In Him Jew and Gentile are united.

It is the first name of seven in the first chapter of Luke.

It is the last name of seven in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation.

It is the first name of the first book of the New Testament—Matthew 1:1; it is the last name of the last book—Revelation 22:21.

The last name in the last book, the last chapter on the last page is "Jesus." He is truly the First and the Last; the Alpha and Omega; the Beginning and the End.

His name, Jesus, is found some 700 times in the New Testament.

Jesus is His personal Name. All others are titles.

Jesus is the name bespeaking His lowliness and humiliation; the name associated with His life down here and His death upon the cross. That is why "Jesus" is very prominent in the Gospels; "Christ" very prominent in the Epistles. The one speaks of His sojourn here, the other of His exaltation up there (Acts 2:36). When-

ever the name Jesus is mentioned in the Epistles, there is the suggestion of His lowly grace, still serving us there, as He did here. In that way He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

That precious Name suggests:

1. That He is Saviour. He came to save us from our sins.
2. The exclusiveness of His salvation, for in the Greek the emphasis in verse 21 is on the pronoun "He." He is the Saviour; beside Him there is none else.
3. It suggests the limit of His Saviourhood, for He shall save His *people*. All men shall not be saved, though truly they might be, but many will not come to Him that they might have life.
4. The depth and breadth of salvation, for He saves from sins; not from their consequences merely. He saves from sin's guilt; from its bondage; from its power; from its very consciousness. Thus in saving, He provides sanctification as well as justification—both to be consummated in our ultimate glorification.

What a Saviour Jesus is!

The Baptism of Our Lord

MATTHEW 3:7-17

JOHN THE BAPTIST used the ax, laying it to the root of the trees. For 1,650 years, while man was under the law, the ax had been applied to the "branches," lopping off this sin and that, as we see so clearly in the Ten Commandments. This only proved, as Romans 3:10, 12 shows, that man not only did no good, but he *did* no good because he *was* no good. The fruit tree was a failure, so John lays the ax to the root of it; no longer merely to the branches. Man, as he is naturally, is fit only for the fire of divine judgment. The cross of Christ is the end of man as such; there God's judgment was pronounced on the world (John 12:31). John had come to prepare the way for the Saviour who would die for our sins. As a result of His cross, He would baptize with the Holy Spirit those who trust Him as Saviour and own Him as Lord; burn with unquenchable fire those who reject Him. The Holy Spirit's baptism took place at Pentecost; the baptism with the fire of judgment will take place when Christ comes again, which, at the time John spoke those words, was more than 1,900 years in the future, but which now is drawing very near.

That was John's message. Having delivered it, He of whom John spake came to the Jordan, where John was baptizing, with the astounding request that He might be baptized of John. John, of course, remonstrated with his Lord, who bids him, for the time being, to bow to His

will, for it becomes "us," says Jesus, thus to fulfill all righteousness. John and Jesus are the "us" of this statement. John fulfilled all righteousness in a twofold way, as every preacher of the gospel does still. He preached that man is a lost sinner, in need of repentance, and He pointed to the Saviour as God's remedy for sin, as in John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John pointed man to his sinfulness; then pointed him to the Saviour.

And the Lord fulfills all righteousness, too, for the time being doing so in symbolic way. In baptism He took His place with sinners, as though He Himself were a sinner, too (the very reason John objected to baptizing the Lord). This baptism is a prefigure of the baptism of judgment Christ was to endure at Calvary, of which He spoke later, saying: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." It is the baptism of sin's judgment the Psalmist mentioned when he spoke of all the "waves and billows" that poured over him. There indeed He took the sinner's place—yours and mine. He died for me, as though He were the guilty one. Praise His holy Name!

Then it says (verse 16) that He came up "straightway out of the water." Of Jesus alone is this ever stated, though many others were baptized. It suggests His resurrection, for of His own accord He came forth from the baptism of judgment of the cross. Next the Spirit descends, which indeed followed upon Christ's resurrection and ascension—on the day of Pentecost.

And now there is a voice from Heaven, declaring Him to be the Father's beloved Son. The heavens were opened unto Him ere either of these two events took

place, for Christ ascended into the opened heavens; then the Spirit descended; then the Word of God came. Here it came in an audible voice; now we have that same voice speaking to us from the pages of God's written Word, ever calling our attention to Christ—as the Father's voice did here—for He is the theme of all Scripture.

How beautiful to see the Father at this moment attesting the perfection of His dear Son. As He took His place in baptism, men might have been led to think that He was a sinner like the rest; so God carefully guards against such a fearful misapprehension. No, He was baptized here (as later He went under the awful baptism of judgment on the cross) not because He was a sinner, but because we were; He had come to take our place. All glory to His Name!

Note that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all present on this historic occasion, even as they were on that infinitely more profound, awful hour of His death on Calvary, for there He—*the Son*—offered Himself, through the eternal *Spirit*, without spot to *God*.

Well may our hearts bow before Him, as we ever:

Fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with Thy beauty occupied
We elsewhere none may see.

Christ Greater Than the Temple or the Sabbath

MATTHEW 12:1-8

JESUS REMINDS these Pharisees of a similar incident in David's history. As David and his men were hungry, so Jesus and His disciples were. As David, Israel's anointed king was a rejected and persecuted man, so great David's greater Son also. The application, if these persecutors of Christ were not totally blind, was inescapable.

The quotation about David is not an exact parallel to the case at hand. In David's day no Sabbath was in question. The Lord is not calling attention to the day, but to the deed. He calls attention to **Himself**—the rejected King, their great King, yet reduced to eating corn by the wayside, when He should have been given the throne to sit upon. Their sin in rejecting their Messiah had broken every link between God and them; it had nullified the sign of the Sabbath, once given as such as a covenant between Himself and the children of Israel (Exodus 31:16-17).

The Lord adds the remark concerning the priests in the Temple working on the Sabbath and profaning the Temple thus (this latter point is found only in Matthew). Both times the Lord stresses their sinful condition; for it was Israel's sin that made their true King a fugitive, as they were refusing the greater than David. So it was their sins that called for sacrifices on the Sabbath or any other day. The Sabbath "rest" was broken because of their sins; eternal rest became an impossibility

for them through their rejection of their Saviour. The Sabbath had been given to Israel because God rested on the Sabbath when His work was done (Genesis 2:2); and man, too, could rest only when the work was done. Man never did the will of God, though, and so the Sabbath had become a mere form and farce. Christ proclaimed Himself greater than both the Temple and the Sabbath. The Temple refers to His Person (John 2:21); the Sabbath pointed on to a finished work. In His Person and His Work Christ is greater than all. Only for those who trust in Him can there ever be a keeping of the Sabbath in truth (Hebrews 4:9).

In this chapter Christ is seen as greater than the Sabbath; than the Temple; than Jonah; than Solomon.

Jonah a Sign

MATTHEW 12:38-40

THE LORD unqualifiedly sets His stamp of approval on the story of Jonah and the great fish; a story full of spiritual meaning. Jonah, thrown overboard, is, on the one hand, a type of the nation of Israel, cast out because of their rejection of Christ, but to be restored again to their land on the third day—the day of their spiritual resurrection in the glorious time yet future, of which all

the Old Testament prophets spoke so much. On the other hand, as our blessed Lord here shows, Jonah was a type of Christ Himself, who rose (though cast out by men) on the third day in triumphant power. This is the "sign" given to unbelieving Israel; to the unbelieving world. Christ's resurrection is the very basis for Israel's national resurrection in the day to come; it is the basis for all blessing to men anywhere.

This sign of Jonah is one of five signs in Scripture touching the Person and Work of our blessed Lord:

1. The sign in connection with His incarnation—
Luke 2:12
2. The sign referring to His sufferings during His
life—Luke 2:34
3. The sign of His death and burial—Matthew 12:
39
4. The sign of His resurrection—John 2:18-21
5. The sign of His coming in glory—Matthew 24:
30

Herod's Birthday; John's Deathday

MATTHEW 14:3-12

HEROD *and* PILATE: weaklings both. Pilate feared the people; Herod feared John, feared the multitude, feared

his wife. The one permitted his lack of courage to murder the forerunner; the other to condemn the King Himself to death. What is man, without the sustaining grace and power of God?

Mark, giving more detail, shows that Herod's conscience had been pricked by the Baptist's faithful preaching. He hated John while yet he respected him; he recognized the truth yet refused to bow to it. Such men are ready tools of the devil.

Satan found an opportunity to vent his malice on Herod's birthday. Recklessly this unhappy king promises the dancing girl anything she asks, and has not the moral courage to go back on his wild oath when she shocks him with her demand for the head of his famous prisoner. The king was sorry; alas, as with millions besides Herod, it was a sorrow that did not lead to repentance. The world goes on in its mirth, while the saints of God throughout the centuries have tasted its sorrows. When apprised of John's death, our precious Saviour goes forth and tenderly ministers to the multitudes that throng Him. So should we reply to the world's disdain or hatred with the ministry of divine grace. It is a privilege—so little valued by us often—to share in His sufferings now, as we shall share His glory by-and-by.

Bid Me Come

MATTHEW 14:22-33

THE DISCIPLES WERE out upon the sea while Jesus went up on high. So, now, our Lord is in Heaven interceding for us, while we His people are crossing life's stormy sea—to the other shore. These men had a rough time, for John's Gospel reveals that they had only made about three to four miles after having struggled all night. Yet they never turned back, though this would have been much easier. Even so, we believers are not of those who draw back, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Hebrews 10:39). The wind is often contrary for us; God has not promised us an easy path; quite the contrary. But Jesus saw them all the time—up there from the heights, even as His eyes are ever upon His ransomed saints below.

Jesus came to them in the fourth watch, walking upon the sea. The fourth watch is the darkest hour of the night. Christ always comes to us when it seems we just cannot go on. He seemed a "spirit" to the disciples. So Peter tested the "spirit," as we are told to do in 1 John 4:1. For Satan also often comes to people in the dark hours; ever so many have been led astray by false teachings when under physical, mental, or financial strain. Jesus had spoken the words: "Be of good cheer; It is I; be not afraid." No doubt amidst the noise of the roaring waves and wind, they were not sure who it was that spoke. So Peter tests Him, saying as it were: "Lord,

speak again; let us hear your voice once more." Jesus had said: "It is I"; but then, who is *I*? It could be one of millions. Someone knocks at your door late at night and upon your inquiry, "Who is there?" answers: "It's *me*." How do you know who "*me*" is? You know it, of course, by the sound of the voice, if you have heard that voice before. Peter listened carefully to the reply. It came in one word: "Come." Now he recognized the voice. For does not the Scripture say, "My sheep hear My voice"? Once we know the true Shepherd's voice, we will know also the voice of strangers. We shall be safeguarded from evil doctrine and evil ways. The more we hear His voice, the more readily will we recognize it, and the more easily will we know every false voice. All the believer needs to do is to listen often to the voice of Christ (in the reading, meditation, and study of the Word of God, of course) and he shall be safe from evil.

Look at Peter's threefold challenge:

1. "Bid me come." The Lord calls each of us individually to walk with Him. Peter did not say: "Bid *us* come." The others may have resented his speaking for himself alone, but our blessed Lord deeply values our desire for a personal, closer walk with Him. And we must only go or come when *He* bids us.
2. "Unto Thee." The other disciples might have thought that Peter wanted to get out and walk because it was easier than rowing; or that he wanted to show off; but Peter refutes such misconceptions (if they entertained them) by adding "unto Thee." His desire was to get close

to the Lord, and as quickly as possible. May that be our desire too!

3. "On the water." What splendid faith! Peter said as it were: "Lord, if Thou canst walk on water, I can do it, too." And he was right. For Scripture says we "ought so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). If the others thought it was easy to walk on water, they were mistaken. In fact, it is impossible for men to do so. Faith in God alone furnishes the enablement, through the operation of divine power supplied by God. Peter had nothing to hold on to; nothing stable under his feet either; his dependence was upon the power of Christ alone. So would God have us walk our spiritual life; looking by faith off unto Jesus. Not relying on life's fluctuating circumstances, nor clinging to human props, but walking by faith. Not under, but above the unsure circumstances of this stormy life.

Peter did well until he saw the wind boisterous. He saw what cannot be seen, for wind is invisible. When the eye of faith is off the Lord, it is amazing how many things we see that are not visible. Look at 1 Kings 19:3: with his eyes off the Lord, Elijah *saw* what a woman *said*. Did you ever see words? Peter saw wind; Elijah saw words. These two were very much alike, for Jezebel's words were nothing more than wind, as with so many loudmouthed folk.

Of course, it literally means that Peter saw the *waves* boisterous, yet the Word does not say that. Peter made the astounding mistake of thinking that he could walk on water while it was smooth, but not when it was

rough. As a matter of fact, it is equally impossible to do either; man cannot walk on water at all; but he *can* walk on any surface when supported by the mighty power of God. Even so, we think we get along all right when life is smooth and pleasant; then we don't feel we need God. But when in distress—when we see life's sea violent—then we begin to sink. Shame on us! We need our Lord in the sunshine as much as we do in the dark; in peace, as well as in the storm. May we learn that vital lesson!

Peter cried for help, and immediately Jesus reached out and lifted him up. He did not rebuke Peter for walking on the water; only for his failure to continue doing so. Yet Peter's failure gave him a wonderful experience. For now he walked arm in arm with his Lord, back to the boat. Thus we see here three ways the believer may go through life:

1. In the boat with others, struggling and making but little headway. This is the experience of many believers.
2. Walking life's sea by faith, with the eye looking unto Jesus; doing what to the natural man is impossible.
3. Walking with Jesus in fellowship with Him. Both the latter two should be the believer's joy here below.

The Fourth Watch

MATTHEW 14:25

ACCORDING to Mark 13:35 this present age (from Christ's First to His Second Coming) is divided into four watches. This age is frequently spoken of in the New Testament as the "night" (of His absence), as in Romans 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2. The second and third watch are mentioned only by Luke (12:38). The omission of the first and the fourth watches there would indicate that the Lord's Coming was not to be as early as impatience might require, nor as late as carelessness would suppose.

In Scripture the first definite warning of His Coming is given at the end of the second, and the beginning of the third watch—at midnight (Matthew 25:6). Jesus *wakes up* His saints at the end of the second watch; He *takes up* His saints at the end of the third watch, as I believe the Bible plainly indicates elsewhere.

The end of the third watch, as Mark 13:35 shows, is at the "cockcrowling"—quite significant, certainly reminiscent of Peter's denial of his Lord. For when the Lord Jesus comes, the professing Church will have sunk very far into denial of the Person and Work of Christ. First, when He comes, He will take His real saints home to glory.

The Bible teaches that Christ's Coming is in two distinct phases; at two distinct times. First, He will come for His Church and will also at that time raise all the

saints who have died throughout the ages (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We speak of this Coming as the "rapture," a word which simply means the "being caught up." That Coming is likened to the rising of the "morning star" (see Revelation 22:16). The morning star rises around 3 A.M. (that is, at the end of the third watch; in other words, before Christ's coming to Israel, which in Scripture is associated with the "rising of the sun," which comes later on in the day—see Malachi 4:2; 2 Samuel 23:4; etc.) Hence, while it says in Luke 12:38, "if" He come in the second or third watch, there is no such "if" in connection with the fourth watch; we are told He is coming in that fourth watch. As to the rapture, the Scriptures never set a date, it was always left uncertain; but as to His coming to judge the world, we are told many, many times that this shall take place at the conclusion of Israel's great tribulation. Needless to say, there must be (and there is) a definite lapse of time between the rapture and Christ's public coming, even as there is between the rising of the morning star and that of the sun; even as there is between the third and the fourth watch.

To Israel Christ comes in the fourth watch, as stated here in Matthew 14:25, and in Mark 6:48. These two Gospels are particularly Jewish in their outlook; hence they alone mention this "fourth" watch. In Matthew 14 this ship out on the stormy sea is the Jewish ship of state. When they were halfway across (see John 6:19) Jesus revealed Himself to them, as Christ will reveal Himself to the remnant in Israel's future day, when they are halfway across that terrible period of seven years, pictured so clearly in the Book of Revelation. When He

finally comes to them, they are immediately on the other side, for when Christ comes to Israel, their tribulation will have reached its end, and they will be blessed and in their own land. That will be the glorious morning many Old Testament prophets have spoken of, as in Psalm 30:5; 130:6; and particularly in that matchless passage in 2 Samuel 23:4: "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." It is the "morning" for Israel, as in Malachi 4:2; the "morning" pictured in John 21:4, when Jesus stood on the shore to welcome His own.

The third watch is when the Lord Jesus comes to take His Bride home to Heaven (John 14:3); the fourth watch when He comes for Israel to make them His earthly people forever. All is divinely consistent in this picture of Matthew 14.

The Mount of Transfiguration

MATTHEW 17:1-8

THE WONDROUS SCENE on this "mount" is not a preview of His coming "Kingdom," but rather a portrayal of the glory of the coming "King," as Jesus said in Matthew 16:28; *not* "ye shall see the coming kingdom," but ye

shall "*see the Son of Man* coming in His kingdom." All the attention is directed to Himself—"hear ye Him." "And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save *Jesus only*." They saw and were to hear Him only. Oh, that man would lift his eyes and see the once-crucified Jesus now seated on the throne of God, and would listen to His Word.

On three occasions these same three disciples were taken aside to view their Lord: in His saving power; in His suffering in Gethsemane; and in His shining glory on the Mount. Those who walk close to Him see wonders of which others do not even dream.

Here they saw God the Son transformed; they heard the Father speak, and were enveloped by the Shekinah cloud of glory, a type, I believe, of the presence of God the Spirit. The Spirit (as portrayed in the "cloud") removed Moses and Elias and left them "*Jesus only*." And they hear the Father's voice: "This is My beloved Son . . . hear ye Him." The voice did not say, "This is your Messiah," but "This is My Son." Attention is called to who He is in His heavenly glory, to His universal title as Son of God—the Saviour not only of the Jew but the Saviour of the whole world (John 3:16). Moses and Elias disappear and Christ alone fills the scene; He alone is to be heard. What startling news to a Jew, yet how true! Moses and Elias have finished their work—they pointed on to Christ, both in their lives, as types of Christ, and in their ministry. Now that Christ has come, He alone must fill the scene. Jesus "*only*." He is God's *only Son*—God's unique Son as the French so beautifully puts it (John 3:16); He is the *only Saviour*; He is the *only Lord God* (Jude 25).

The story of grace and glory is told out in the very setting and scenery here:

1. He was seen on a *high* mountain, speaking of the eternal heights of glory whence He came to earth, and whither He returned after His death and resurrection.
2. There was the holiest of all, as in the Temple of old, for the cloud of the Shekinah glory, typical of the divine presence, enfolded the disciples.
3. According to Luke, they spoke of His death on Calvary—His exodus—telling us of the cross to which He went.
4. He was on the Mount, transfigured, intimating His subsequent resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the glory.
5. His raiment became dazzlingly white, reminiscent of His present ministry as our High Priest, as the Old Testament high priest was dressed in white garments while ministering in the holiest of all.
6. His transfiguration, which spoke of His future glorious Coming and reign. Thus we trace the whole story, from the throne in Heaven to the throne by way of the cross, and the glory that is His because of His death on Calvary.

No wonder Peter said it was good to be there. Praise His Name; some day we shall be there, by His side, to share His glory, Who bore our sin and shame. Hallelujah!

The Church and Its Order

MATTHEW 18:15-20

JOHN IN HIS GOSPEL presents almost every phase of "Church truth," such as worship being in spirit and in truth; that of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the oneness of believers in Christ; etc., etc. But Matthew alone employs the word "Church." As we saw in Chapter 16, our Lord taught that the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church run concurrently in this present age. The one presents the sphere of professed subjection to Christ whether real or false; the other speaks of the great New Testament truth that during this age God is gathering out of the world a people for Christ's name, to be specially close to Him throughout all eternity as His Body—His Bride.

Notice that in chapter 16 the binding and loosing is in connection with the Kingdom of Heaven; in our text it is in connection with the Church. There this authority was put in the hands of Peter personally, and undoubtedly was used by him when opening the door of faith to the Jews on Pentecost and to the Gentiles—as in Acts 10. But in our chapter this authority is given to all God's people. There were keys to the Kingdom of Heaven; there are no keys to the Church, for the Lord alone can add to that (Acts 2:47). In the Kingdom, Peter could act independently of others, so to speak, but in the Church—the assembly of the saints—disciplinary action is corporate. Our Lord teaches so by showing that if

there is any personal grievance between brethren, one should go and see the other with a view to reconciliation. If unsuccessful, he should take several others with him; if that does not bring satisfactory results, he should bring the matter to the whole Church. Their decision would be final, and it is in connection with this that the Lord says such action would be either binding the sin upon the guilty party, or loosing it if there is true repentance. In other words, the passage refers to assembly discipline and has nothing to do with eternal forgiveness of sins, as Rome so falsely claims. 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 gives, in the Church at Corinth, a clear example of such discipline, and instead of its having anything to do with the salvation of the *soul*, it is only for the destruction of the *flesh* in one who is already a believer in Jesus.

The authority for church discipline rests in the truth that the Lord Himself is in the midst of His own when they gather (verse 20): "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." In this verse are seven great truths in relation to Christian—i.e., to Church—fellowship:

1. The *Place*—"where." No longer, as Jesus told the woman of John 4, in the Temple at Jerusalem or in any other religious center, but simply where saints meet in His name; that is where He delights to be. People speak of a building as the "house of God," but there is no such thing. The believers themselves form the house of God; they are God's building.

Worship is now in spirit and in truth; no longer in a ritualistic way.

2. The *Number*—"two or three." One cannot meet

with less than two. I believe that the happiest times of fellowship ever enjoyed are when just a few are present. The current craving for crowds is abnormal and unhealthy. It is His presence that counts; not the presence of others.

3. The *time*—"are" gathered. Now is the time. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.
4. The *fellowship*—"gathered together." That word "together" is not necessary to make sense, yet how often the spirit employs it in the inspired Word. It is possible to be gathered with a vast crowd of people, yet be thousands of miles apart as far as harmony or aim is concerned. But the redeemed of God, as they meet, are of one heart and with one mouth they glorify God.
5. The *authority*—"in My name." When we do something in a person's name, it suggests he has authorized us to do so. We—His Church—represent Christ down here; and as a happy group of saints we should be a wonderful advertisement for the grace of God and the glory of Christ.
6. His *presence*—"there am I." While "unto His name" suggests His absence, this speaks of His presence. He is absent from us in body; He is present when His people meet—in spirit. How often have we felt the thrill of His presence as we gathered together to worship Him, or to hear Christ-exalting ministry.
7. The *Object*—"in the midst." He is ever seen in Scripture in the "midst"; now and by-and-by. Every eye is to be fixed on Jesus. He is the

central attraction. Alas, in many so-called churches He is not only not in the midst; He is standing without and knocking for admission, as pictured in the Church of Laodicea. May we see to it that we meet with those who gather around Himself—Jesus only; Jesus our All.

Divorce

MATTHEW 19:1-15

ONE NEED SAY but little here. It seems to be abundantly clear that our Lord allows one ground—and one only—for divorce (see verse 9), though some disagree with this. The present-day wicked disregard of God's order, instituted at Creation itself and which never has been abrogated, should be shunned with horror by God's redeemed people.

The disciples even thought that having to stick to one wife for life was asking a little too much, for they said: "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." They flatly contradicted God's Word, for He had said that it "was not good for the man to be alone." Anyone can readily see the great wisdom of God in restricting married life to one wife—to the woman being bound to her husband as long as he or she

lives. If easy divorce were permissible, neither mate would really try to make a go of married life; the slightest disagreement would lead to separation, as today is so fearfully true. But if one must live his or her whole life with a partner, then every effort would be made to make the marital relationship a success; thus developing true consideration for each other; developing a humble, patient spirit, bearing with one another's faults; in short, such a life breeds true character—kindness, tenderness, love, patience, purity. Normal married life provides a marvelous education in moral and spiritual development.

Our Lord shows His disciples that it is not necessary to be married; to some it is given even to be eunuchs for the Kingdom's sake; in other words, like Paul for instance, to deny oneself the joys and privileges of married life, in order to serve God more effectively.

Children are now brought to the Lord, and it has been thought that perhaps this is recorded here to suggest that in the case of divorce children are the worst sufferers—the innocent sufferers for others' guilt. They are precious to Christ; may they be very precious to parents, too, as they seek together to bring up their little ones to come to know the Lord.

A Place of Honor in the Kingdom

MATTHEW 20:20-28

JESUS HAD JUST BEEN SPEAKING of His suffering and crucifixion, and now two of His disciples come, seeking their own glory. Here, unlike in Mark, the mother of James and John makes this appeal. A doting mother naturally seeks the highest place for her own, and apparently her sons readily fall in with this selfish scheme. Again, as so often with the Jews, the thought of Christ's Kingdom and glory is before these; they did not understand that His sufferings must come first. We are all so ready to want to be spectators of His glory, rather than participators in His sufferings.

Jesus speaks to them of His cup and His baptism, which refer respectively to His inward suffering of soul and His outward suffering of body at the hands of men. Both have to do with these sufferings during Christ's life, for the disciples could not possibly share in Christ's atoning suffering upon the cross, though they would drink of the cup of suffering on earth and be baptized with the baptism of man's hatred and persecution. They ask for glory; Jesus promises them shame. The glory must be earned by way of the shame; the way to the throne runs by the cross. The one who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Says Jesus: "He among you that wants to be great, let him be your minister; he who would be chief, let him be

your servant." The first word is the Greek word for servant; the second is the word "slave." To be great one must serve; to be the *greatest* one must come lower still. Our blessed Lord Himself set the example when He took upon Himself the form of a slave (Philippians 2:7). He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

The Entry into Jerusalem

MATTHEW 21:1-16

JESUS CAME to the Mount of Olives. Zechariah 14:4-5 connects His entrance into Jerusalem on this occasion with His future coming to Israel to reign. His entry into Jerusalem as told forth there is a foreshadow of that happy day for Israel, as told in Zechariah 9:9-10. Alas, Israel as a nation here rejected Him; only a few hailed Him as Son of David. Before His glory comes His suffering, which is also connected in Scripture with the Mount of Olives. When David fled from Absalom as the king rejected by the people, he passed over the brook Kidron (2 Samuel 15:30), even as Jesus was shortly to do on the way to dark Gethsemane (see John 18:1). Thus Olivet, as foreshadowed in 2 Samuel 15 and Zechariah 9, and fulfilled in Matthew 21 and John 18:1, is connected both

with the rejection and with the future acceptance of Christ as King.

Matthew alone mentions the ass *and* her colt (verse 5), as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9. This again agrees with Matthew's portrayal of Christ as King of Israel—as once refused and someday to be acknowledged. The ass speaks of Israel in the past—the old nation, which in its self-will cast Him out, saying: “We will not have this Man to reign over us”; the colt pictures Israel of the future—the new nation, submitting to the rule of Christ, even as here He rode *not* the ass, but the colt. The ass, according to the law, was an unclean animal, but the foal of an ass could be redeemed, as Israel shall be God's redeemed people in that future day of blessing.

Israel should have recognized, from the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, that this was indeed their Messiah as He rode into the city on the colt. But they did not; but crucified Him. Hence, though Zechariah adds the words that this King was “just and having salvation,” these words are left out when Jesus entered the city, for, since they rejected Him, there was no salvation for Israel then. They put off their salvation for more than 1,900 years. He came in lowliness, riding on an ass' colt; someday He'll come in power and majesty, riding on a white horse (Revelation 19).

Though hailed by some and acknowledged as Son of David, yet they do not know Him, but say He is Jesus of Nazareth. They give Him the very title written over Him on the cross, with the addition then that He was the King of the Jews.

When He enters Jerusalem, He cleanses the temple, as He will do when He returns from glory at His future

appearing. Israel's worship of God shall then be pure; their King shall be in their midst. Following upon this He heals the blind and the lame, so typical of Israel's present spiritual state. This shall be remedied when Jesus comes to them by-and-by (Isaiah 35:5-6).

How this entry into the city sets forth His glories:

1. As Creator, He has absolute control over the creatures He has made. The wild, untamed colt submitted to His authority.
2. As King He comes in, fulfilling the prophecies concerning Himself.
3. As Judge He cleanses the Temple and punishes the wicked.
4. As Saviour He cures sin-blinded and sin-lamed Israel.
5. As Lord of all He accepts the praises the children sing. Someday, every mouth shall utter His praise.

Three Things Men Swear By

MATTHEW 23:16-22

AS THIS CHAPTER SHOWS, Phariseeism ever substitutes formality for reality; loves to decorate the outward, no matter how corrupt is the inward; makes great pretense

of devotion while actually filled with hatred of God and His servants. Religion still is noted for those very same ills.

Phariseeism also makes much of little trifles, while despising the vital things. Our text bears on that subject. And underneath all this, on the surface perhaps looking trivial, lies the basic sin of man's hatred of God and of His Christ. The above verses are a striking commentary on that fact.

These hypocrites argued it was all right to swear by the Temple or the altar or the throne, but all wrong to do so by the gold of the Temple, the sacrifice on the altar, or the throne in Heaven.

The Lord rebukes them and shows them that the Temple is greater than the gold, the altar than the gift upon it, and the throne of God greater than Heaven. These three—the Temple, the altar, and the throne—all speak in Scripture of Christ Himself. The one of Christ in His incarnation, for Jesus says that the Temple pictured His body (John 2:21); the altar of Christ in His crucifixion, even as the Jewish altar of old, like all the vessels of the Tabernacle, was a direct type of the Lord Himself in connection with His death at Calvary; and the throne, of course, speaks of Christ in His exaltation. Thus, by swearing by these, they were, little though they realized it, speaking lightly and contemptuously of the Christ of God in His lowly humanity, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His future glory. The very same three great facts the modernistic Pharisee of today despises.

They said it was all right to swear by the Temple but not by the gold of the Temple. The Temple within was

covered with fine gold, to which these men had reference. But, says our Lord, the only sacred value this gold possessed was that it was on the Temple walls. It is the Temple that sanctified the gold—that set it apart in a special way. In other words, gold only has real value when in association with Christ, whether that gold be taken literally or, as Scripture teaches, as symbolic of spiritual glory.

Christ sanctifies the gold. Apart from Him, it has no real worth. It cannot purchase salvation, for this is not purchasable with silver or gold. Instead of its having any pure value, the Bible calls it filthy lucre. A man may gather millions, but if he dies without Christ, that gold will but turn to dust. But the moment a soul is saved by God's grace, his gold, when used in Christ's service, assumes true value. For the believer, by spending his money here, can lay up treasures in Heaven. It is Christ who sanctifies the gold, and transmutes it from filthy lucre into coin that passes in the realm of God.

Gold in Scripture speaks of divine glory. In that way, too, the Temple sanctifies the gold, for what is honor or glory, apart from Christ? The Bible says the glory of man is as the flower of the grass (1 Peter 1:24). But the believer is blessed with the glory that is eternal (2 Timothy 2:10); his light affliction brings with it an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17); he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:4). It is only because the believer is Christ's that such glory shall be his. Truly it is the Temple that sanctifies the gold.

The Lord says also that the altar sanctifies the gift. Christ is the altar (Hebrews 13:10), and only a sacrifice

or gift that is offered upon that altar is acceptable to God. Men like to boast of their giving and their sacrifices, but if offered apart from Christ and the motive of love to Christ, such gifts are not only not acceptable to God, they are actually an abomination to Him (Proverbs 21:27).

For the believer the precious truth that Christ, as the altar, sanctifies his gifts becomes a blest reality. It does so in at least a threefold way:

1. God accepts a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17), for the human heart is broken only through the mighty love told forth and made good at Calvary. God wants the heart that is won by Christ's precious death.
2. God accepts the daily gift of a surrendered life; of a body yielded to His service (see Romans 12:1); because it is by His mercies that a Christian is constrained to do so. The love of Christ, so marvelously shown at Calvary, *on the altar*, constrains the believer henceforth not to live unto himself, but unto Him who died for him and rose again.
3. God accepts the sacrifice of praise from a believer—the fruit of his lips (Hebrews 13:15), for we praise God for what Christ has done for us; it is the cross that is ever the basis for all our adoration. In each case, the heart, the body, the lips, are given to Him as gifts because God's love in Christ has won them; thus it is the altar that sanctifies those gifts. Apart from Him, service or praise are not acceptable to God.

The Jews also would swear by Heaven, but not by

the throne. They made light of Heaven, but thought highly of the throne. Israel ever craved power, and the reason they rejected Christ is because He came in weakness instead of in power. In the future day they shall worship the Antichrist in order to gain the power they crave. They rejected Heaven's throne by saying of Him whose right it is to reign: "We will not have this Man to reign over us." But, says Jesus, if you speak lightly of Heaven, you do so by the throne of God and by Him that sits thereon. It is Heaven that sanctifies the throne. His throne is the throne of the God of Heaven. All power is His, and He whom ye now refuse shall yet reign from pole to pole; only when He reigns shall justice and judgment prevail upon this earth.

PART NINE

The Sermon on the Mount

THE BE-ATTITUDES

SALT AND LIGHT

THE LAW APPLIED TO THE INWARD
PARTS

ALMS—PRAYER—FASTING

THE LORD'S PRAYER

LAY UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN

THE LIGHT OF THE BODY IS THE EYE

ONE CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW

JUDGE NOT

CASTING PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

ASK—SEEK—KNOCK

THREE SETS OF TWINS

The Be-attitudes

MATTHEW 5:1-12

THIS GREAT SERMON was given by the Lord to His disciples (verse 1). Many talk about believing in the Sermon on the Mount, in the golden rule, little realizing that the carrying out of its provisions is impossible to the natural man. Only those who possess eternal life can live the eternal life suggested in these tremendous truths unfolded here. One must "be" before one can "do." All the thoughts here advanced by our Lord are meant for believers in Him only. The great King sets forth the laws of His kingdom and, as suits a spiritual kingdom, these laws apply not merely to outward conduct, but to inward character.

Our blessed Master begins His message with the famous nine "blesseds." The number nine is itself significant, for it is composed of 3 times 3, suggesting the fullness of the Godhead is revealed here; 3 being the number of the triune God. These are familiarly known as the Beatitudes, a word which we might appropriately divide into two parts and call them "be-attitudes," for they tell us what a Christian's attitude ought to be. And if we be what we should be, then alone can we do what we ought to do. For the lack of space we must confine ourselves to a brief meditation on each of these nine:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the king-

dom of heaven." This Kingdom of Heaven, as said before, is God's kingdom here on earth ruled over by the heavenly King, Christ Jesus. Someday there will be a political kingdom on earth with Israel as the central nation, but at present this kingdom is entirely of a spiritual nature, composed of those in whose hearts and lives Christ reigns. Colossians 1:13 tells us so, for instance. James tells us that God hath "chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (James 2:5). There it refers to such as are poor in goods; here to those poor in spirit. A man rich in material wealth might well be, and should be, poor in spirit. That word "poor" is the very word for a beggar. Yes, those who take the place of beggars before God, no matter what their status in this world might be, have offered to them the exhaustless riches of God's spiritual realm. Hannah put to music that great thought when she sang: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2:8). He that humbles himself and becomes as a little child, which is exactly what being poor in spirit means, the same shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the reverse of the spirit of aggressiveness and self-seeking so prevalent in this wicked world.

It is worthy of note that the eighth Beatitude, in verse 10 of this chapter, also promises the Kingdom. The first note, with the eighth note, complete an octave of music. The eighth note is the same as the first, only higher up the scale. Being in the Kingdom not only implies rich

blessings, but also exposes one to the world's hatred and scorn. Christ's Kingdom is yet rejected by the world and it is the privilege of the believer not alone to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for His sake. The cross and then the crown.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." For themselves, Christians should only and always rejoice in the Lord. I take it that the mourning mentioned here is rather because of concern for others. As we see souls going on to perdition, we mourn, for we go forth weeping, bearing precious seed. As we see believers often living careless, cold lives, we mourn, as Paul did for the Corinthians, writing to them out of anguish of heart and many tears.

It may also be that we mourn often over our own lack of devotion to Christ, our own feeble response to His love. If so, we shall be comforted. Paul was comforted over the Corinthians when he heard of their repentance; and a believer is comforted when he sees precious souls saved. The Comforter is the Holy Spirit, sent from God—the God of all comfort—to comfort us, that we might in turn comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort wherewith we ourselves were comforted of God. And then, of course, there is the eternal comfort that awaits the believer in Heaven, with Christ.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." A Beatitude like this proves that, while these precious words have their spiritual force for us believers today, they look forward, in their full interpretation, to Israel's

future day. For Israel shall inherit the *earth*, as the Old Testament so often promises them (five times in Psalm 37 alone), while the Church shall be with Christ in her heavenly home.

But we may apply this Beatitude to ourselves today, for in a certain sense it is true of us, too. 1 Corinthians 3:21 shows that right now all things are ours—the world included. By gaining the world the sinner loses his own soul; but being saved, the believer does not lose the world, for 1 Corinthians 3:21 says that the world is his. And the Christian is to *use* this world, but not to abuse it. While on the way to his heavenly home, no one enjoys this earth like the Christian does. All its wonderful beauty in scenery, its marvelous resources, the human love and family bliss, are far more keenly enjoyed by a believer than by the worldling. Praise God, the poor and the meek are not only the heirs of glory to come, but of grace that is!

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

The first eight Beatitudes all have a reward attached to them. Of these eight, the first and the last promise a present blessing, while those in between all use the future “shall.” Largely there the reward is in view of the future, when Christ shall reign.

Though our blessed Lord is not mentioned here (for He utters these sayings Himself) yet we know that He alone fully exhibited the matchless traits set forth. He was truly poor in spirit, for He humbled Himself, even to the death of the cross. He indeed mourned, for He

was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and now He is comforted as well as the Comforter of His saints. None ever so meek as He; may we learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. He never thirsted after fame or wealth or glory; He found His food and drink in ministering to the needs of others. How great was His mercy; how pure in heart, how pure in life was He! We are told to purify ourselves, even as He is pure.

And truly, He is the Peacemaker. He made peace; not peace at any price, but peace at one price only—peace through the blood of His cross. Others are peace-breakers, or peace fakirs, and we His saints are peace-takers, but He is the Peacemaker. Yes, all these great virtues, recorded in this portion, were seen in their perfection in Christ, the Saviour of sinners. He left us an example that we should follow His steps.

One thing is sure—this world is not hungering and thirsting after righteousness; it is a crooked and perverse generation. Only a sin-weary soul yearns after being right—with God. First of all, to be right with God for himself, which he may be through the atoning sacrifice of Christ; secondly, he craves to see righteousness prevail in this world. When he turns to Christ, his personal need is met; someday he shall see his Lord reign in universal righteousness; not till then shall the believer's thirst after righteousness be fully satisfied. The word "filled" means "satisfied." Yes, we shall be satisfied when He shall reign; we are satisfied to a degree now as Christ reigns in our hearts.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Mercy follows righteousness, which is God's order. God's mercy to the sinner can only flow when based on divine righteousness. In fact, mercy is a form of righteousness, for, if we have obtained God's salvation through faith in Christ, it is only right that we should grant mercy to others. If we have been forgiven, we must forgive others. The Christian must practice mercy if he is to obtain mercy. 2 Timothy 1:18 shows that we need mercy even in that day when the Lord shall reward us for service done as unto Him. The more tenderly we deal with others, the more graciously the Lord will view and review our lives, and the more liberal our reward at His hand shall be.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Ephesians 1:18 tells us that the eyes of faith are in the heart. Therefore, if the heart is pure, we shall see Him aright. Even now, the believer sees the Lord only when his heart is right. If he has ulterior motives or divided desires, he sees others, or his own selfish interests and wants, and thus fails to have the eye fixed on Him. Paul's heart was pure when he said: "One thing I do; I press toward the mark." Looking off unto Jesus, we must run the race set before us, with the eye single for His glory.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Our Lord was the true Peacemaker, yet on account of Him more strife and division have come into the world than one can grasp, which is so because the natural man rejects God's peace. Believers, too, often are considered troublemakers, as the

servants of God were in Acts 16:20; yet in reality we are the true peacemakers. We bring the peace of God to sinners; the God of peace to saints. Let us never be troublemakers in the assembly of God's people, as, alas, so often is the case. The sons of God are to be like their holy Lord.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." In this world ye shall have tribulation, said our blessed Lord. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Verse 10 speaks of persecution for righteousness' sake; verse 11 of persecution for Christ's sake. The Christian suffers both ways. The second kind is the most severe and vital. For this reason the Lord, the only time in these Beatitudes, instead of speaking in the third person, speaks directly to such persecuted ones, saying: "Blessed are ye"; up till now it was ever "they" of whom He spoke. When saints are persecuted for His sake, He draws very near to them and assures them of "great" reward (verse 10). The highest honor will go to those who suffered because of their fidelity to Christ and His Word.

A believer suffers for righteousness' sake in his daily work or business, for as a Christian he must do honest business, while his worldly rivals have no such scruples. However, even unsaved people are often honest, and so they, too, suffer for righteousness' sake. But only a true believer can suffer for Christ's sake, as he speaks of his

Lord; as he maintains God's truth at all cost, even sometimes to the extent of martyrdom.

"Rejoice," says our Lord, "and be exceeding glad." Suffering and joy are ever entwined in Scripture. Leap for joy in the day ye suffer for His sake. Your light affliction works for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It is a privilege to know the fellowship of His sufferings.

Salt and Light

MATTHEW 5:13-16

"YE ARE the salt of the earth . . . the light of the world," said the Lord to His disciples. This was true, or rather was meant to have been true, of Israel of old. Salt suggests the life lived; light the testimony borne. In both, Israel failed terribly. Salt can become "good for nothing," only fit "to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men," even as happened to Israel a few years after these very words were spoken; Israel was cast out of her land and for nineteen centuries has truly been trodden under foot by the nations of the world. Once Israel was the light of the world, a city set on a hill, in more ways than one, whence God's Name and His truth

were to be heralded world-wide. His house was to have been a house of prayer for all nations. Less than forty years later that Temple was destroyed and the city burned to the ground.

This double witness of salt and light has now been committed to the Church. She too has sadly failed, as we all know, and as the Bible foretold she would. Nevertheless, the light of the gospel has shone into millions of hearts and lives. Notice that the "ye" is in the plural, with the word "light" in the singular. The Church as a corporate body presents Christ down here, and is now the world's light, as once He was down here (John 9:5). Individually each believer shines as a light in the world (Philippians 2:15); the word is "light-giver," for Christ alone is really the *Light*.

Salt is what I am; light is what people see me to be.

Salt is not to be seen; light is. What I am must precede what I do.

Salt, having a preservative quality, rather intimates a life of righteousness; light suggests a message and ministry of grace. Salt, as we all know, has at least three outstanding qualities:

1. It preserves things from corruption.
2. It gives taste to the things we eat.
3. It creates thirst.

Yes, the believer's presence in this world prevents corruption; all civil and social benefits are the direct results of Christian influence. The moment the Church is raptured home to glory, as Scripture shows, political and moral collapse will engulf this world.

Yes, the believer's presence down here gives taste to things. The worldling does not realize how much he

owes to God's people, yet the slightest thought should make him realize that the tremendous difference between dark heathenism and the numerous comforts and blessings enjoyed in a land like ours is due entirely to Christianity's revelation of truth and purity.

And the believer creates thirst in human hearts, for many learn to yearn after the joy and peace that so evidently are his, and many turn to Christ to find that thirst satisfied, for He ever satisfieth the longing soul.

The Church is the light of the world, set on a hill. That hill is the New Jerusalem—our heavenly home, from whence, since we are a heavenly people, shines the glorious light of God's love, beckoning sinners to come to Christ, to make that Heaven their home. We view this "light" here in a three-fold way:

1. The Church corporately is the light of the world.
2. Each separate Christian is to let his light shine in the house. This house may refer to the need to bear witness for the Lord in our own homes; or, as so often in Scripture, may speak of the local assembly of believers where we meet, and where our light should shine also.
3. We must let our light shine before men; that is, it must be seen in the world among the unsaved with whom we come in contact daily.

As a Christian I must let my light shine in the dark corner where the Lord has seen fit to put me. I must not hide it under a bed (under a life of ease); nor under a bushel (under the pressure of business). The light, or lamp, must be put on a lampstand, where even a tiny light can perform wonders. An ordinary oil lamp can be

seen for ten miles or more at sea and guide many a vessel safe to port. So too can the light even the feeblest believer sheds abroad.

When our light shines, men will see our good works. They will see our works in the light of the Christlike life we live; they will recognize that we do what we do because we are His by redeeming grace. And so they will glorify our Father in Heaven, instead of praising you or me. Works done by the mere natural man always lead to self-praise; works done out of love to Christ, by a believer whose godly life bears a right testimony, will bring honor to His Name.

The Law Applied to the Inward Parts

MATTHEW 5:17-48

THIS SERMON ON THE MOUNT presents some striking contrasts to the truths unveiled on Mount Sinai; its setting is so different, too.

At Sinai we see a mountain enveloped in clouds and smoke, the whole mountain shaking under the impact of a mighty earthquake, as a fearful storm raged. But at this mountain all signs of terror are absent. While our

Saviour speaks, we can, as it were, hear the birds singing, and see the sun shining brightly.

At Sinai the people were told to keep their distance, and anyone touching the mountain would be killed. Here the disciples cluster close around His feet. The wonder of it all is that the Speaker of Mount Sinai and the lowly Jesus of this Mount are one and the same person.

At Sinai the message was inscribed on stone by the mighty finger of God; here on Mount Hermon, the words were written on fleshly tables of the heart, finding a response in many an eager listener's soul.

At Sinai the law was concerned with what men ought to *do*; the law here with what man ought to *be*. The one concerned outward conduct; the other, inward motive.

At Sinai the curse was pronounced on those who failed; here the blessing of God is promised to those who succeed.

At Sinai the law was delivered through Moses—God's prime minister. Here the King of Kings Himself had come forth from His eternal throne to speak face to face with His creatures.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth subsist in Jesus Christ. These laws were given to His disciples, for only true believers can possibly live up to these tremendous spiritual standards. The Lord in this sermon laid down the laws of His spiritual kingdom, which in the future day shall apply to the nation of Israel, when it shall have been converted to God—when the law shall have been written in their hearts and minds, according to Hebrews 8:10-12. At the present time,

these spiritual laws have their message for us believers, for we are even now the subjects of His Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). In the Old Testament, the laws applied to outward conduct; now God looks for obedience from a loving heart.

Under the Mosaic law, to kill made one a murderer; under grace, even to want to do it makes one equally guilty (compare 1 John 3:15 with Matthew 5:21-22).

Under the Mosaic law, adultery was the result of a physical act; under Christ's spiritual reign even the wish or thought of such an act is adultery (verses 27-28).

When the Lord said: "It was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you" (5:27-28), He was not contradicting Moses; He was emphasizing the law and stressing it far beyond its original force. God now does not look upon the outward appearance, but on the heart. To be right with Him, the heart must be pure. The believer, possessing eternal life, is to imitate His Father in Heaven. He is holy and pure and gracious; the believer is to be perfect as His Father is perfect. God by His Spirit furnishes the power for such God-likeness.

Alms—Prayer—Fasting

MATTHEW 6: 1-18

LAW KEEPING always leads to self-glorification. Our Lord in these verses shows how God values reality. It is what He sees in secret that He shall reward openly. All display receives its reward here and now.

The life as it should be lived by a true believer is pictured under three kinds of activity: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

Alms are given to others, thus presenting life “manward.”

Prayer is towards God—thus the life “Godward.”

Fasting is in relation to one’s self—thus “selfward.”

In each of these three, the statement is made that God the Father seeth in secret; in each case, if these things are done as before Him and not to be seen of men, He will reward the doer openly.

1. Giving is a truly Christian virtue, for God so loved the world that He gave. That same love is shed abroad in the heart of the child of God, and so he becomes a giver, too. If giving is to be acceptable to God, others must not know about it; yea more, the giver himself or herself must not know about it either, for his right hand must not know what his left hand doeth. Giving like that is done, for example, by a mother who sacrifices all day long for her family, yet is never conscious of so doing. Love prompts her, and love is the most unselfish motive

in existence. If love for Christ animates us, we shall never be conscious of what we may do for His glory.

2. Prayer too is to be in secret. No need to use many words; we are not heard for our much speaking. God judges prayers not by their length but by their depth. We don't need to tell God everything; He knows it better than we do; all we need is to ask Him; no need to inform Him, unless we tell Him we love Him and worship Him.

3. Fasting. The Pharisee of Luke 18 fasted 104 times a year. The most fasts I can discover, as given to Israel, were 4 a year. This hypocrite was 25 times as pious as was called for. Fasting, in spiritual thought, presents the idea of self-denial, yet that hypocrite was boasting in *self*, utterly missing the meaning of fasting. I don't think there is any suggestion in Scripture that physical abstinence from food is meant to be practised in this day. Rather, says the Lord here, instead of fasting, do some feasting. Anoint thy head and wash thy face—which was done when folks went to a party. God does not want His people to go through the world with a long and sad face, but rather to radiate the joy of the Lord. Self-denial should be secret, inward; while outwardly we should rejoice in the Lord always.

God wants self-denial not so much in abstaining from food, as the kind described in Isaiah 58:5-7: "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness [in other words, to bring the gospel message to sinful

men], to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

The Lord's Prayer

MATTHEW 6:9-15

THIS PRAYER has been repeated parrotwise by millions, and it is still being done by so many. But our Lord did not give it for that purpose, but only as a sample prayer, for He said: "*After this manner* therefore pray ye."

It presents a perfect outline for true prayer. God is given the first place; then others; for when praying "thy Kingdom come," we are actually praying for the conversion of souls, since the Kingdom won't be established till the Church is complete; and lastly, the prayer is for self.

In John's Gospel our Lord clearly taught that in this day of grace He would send His Spirit into our hearts, enabling us to pray intelligently, in Jesus' name. (See John 16:23-24; 14:13.) Prayer by the Holy Spirit was

to be in Jesus' name, which is significantly left out in the so-called Lord's prayer. It is specially given by our Lord with Israel in view, and will be suited on their lips during the fearful days of tribulation yet to come. Of course, the spiritual thoughts it advances are applicable in any age. Perhaps one of the most vital points (and often the failure here is a terrible hindrance in prayer) is the exhortation to have a forgiving spirit towards others. At the conclusion of the prayer the Lord returns to this thought (in verses 14-15) showing that an unforgiving believer will find that his Father will not forgive him either, but that (as this statement intimates) such a one shall feel the disciplinary hand of the Father's chastisement upon him. Ephesians 4:32 is to be the true believer's attitude.

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

MATTHEW 6:19-21

FROM VERSE 19 on, this chapter is taken up with exhortations regarding the things of this life. The child of God should set his mind on things above, and the things of earth will be looked after for us by Him who knows and loves and cares.

First, He urges His children to lay up treasures in Heaven, instead of down here where you have to leave them when you die, if thieves have not robbed you of them before that. As Proverbs 23:5 states: "Riches make themselves wings, they fly away . . . *toward* heaven" (without, however, ever reaching there). We lay them up here by giving them away in the service of God.

Lay up *for yourselves*, says the Lord. Sounds rather selfish, doesn't it? Paul speaks likewise when he says by the Spirit: "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." Jesus gave the young ruler similar advice saying: "Sell all that you have, give to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven." Put your money in the bank, said He on another occasion, and at His Coming you shall draw the interest that has accumulated. A sinner only has access to earth's banks and investments, but the believer can lay up his wealth in a heavenly depository. Down here thieves may break through; and there is one thief who will rob every human being in the end—his name is "death."

Moth and rust corrupt down here. Both these do their evil work when things are *not* being used. Hence the believer must invest himself, his abilities, his money in Christ's service; thus keeping them for that eternal day, to find them laid up there, with their accumulated interest.

This does not apply only to those who are rich. Remember that the Lord declared the widow with the two mites had cast in more than all the others. Our blessed Lord counts the motive as well as the money; He judges

our giving not by what we give, but by what we have left.

Lay up treasures, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Note the change of the word *treasure* from the plural to the singular. I can't help thinking that this singular "treasure" should be spelled with a capital "T." He is our chief Treasure. We are to set our affection on things above, where Christ sits at God's right hand. If our heart is there, we will lay up our wealth there too. He delights in love's response to His demands. He does not need our gifts; He is keeping the treasures we lay up till we come home; He will give them to us then, together with the compound interest they have earned.

The Light of the Body Is the Eye

MATTHEW 6:22-23

THE BELIEVER needs to practice concentration, as Paul could say: "One thing I do." He is exhorted in this chapter to lay up treasures in Heaven—not here; next, to have a single eye—not a double one, with one eye fixed on Him and the other on the world. The believer should have one Master and one thought—seeking the Kingdom

of God and its righteousness. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

The eye in the body furnishes the light; it lets in all the beauties of nature about us. So the eye of faith fixed on Christ and His things fills the whole being with heavenly light.

Fix your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in His wonderful face;

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,

In the light of His glory and grace.

Our Lord suggests that when the eye is off Himself, spiritual darkness obtains. I take it this refers to the condition of the sinner—he dwells in spiritual darkness. Thus the last clause of verse 23 has reference to the one who has professed Christ as Saviour but turns away; this pictures an apostate. For a time such seem to shed abroad a measure of light, but the root of the matter is not in them. They sink into spiritual apostasy far worse than their once unregenerated state. Matthew 12:45 presents that idea, and there it is applied to Israel as a nation. Having rejected the Light—Jesus their Messiah who is the Light of the world—they have fallen into spiritual darkness, even as the professing Church of God will, too, in the end, as seen in the address to Laodicea in Revelation 3.

One Cannot Serve Two Masters

MATTHEW 6:24

WHAT A REMARKABLE CONCLUSION is reached at the close of this verse! Those who love money—called “mammon” here—*serve* it. They have become its abject slaves. Money is meant to serve man; alas, it becomes the miser’s cruel master.

Dug from the mountainside; washed in the glen,
Servant am I, or the Master of men;
Lie for me; die for me; earn me; or take me,
Angel or devil; I am what you make me.

How much better to serve Him; to keep what we have and are at His disposal. He is not a hard Master, even though we acknowledge ourselves to be His slaves. We are slaves of love.

Take No Thought for the Morrow

MATTHEW 6:25-34

“TAKE NO THOUGHT.” It means take no “anxious” thought; in present-day parlance: “don’t worry.” It is

the same word as in Philippians 4:6, where we are told to "be careful [full of care] for nothing," which is what Martha was in Luke 10:41.

Place God first (verse 33), and all other things will be taken care of in due time. If I am concerned about *His* interests, He will look after mine. Spiritual things are our prime responsibility; He charges Himself with looking after our material needs.

Take no thought for your life (i.e., "soul") nor for your "body." The soul is more important than food; the body than clothes. Our souls should crave spiritual food more than potatoes or meat. Our bodies should be used for more than a rack on which to hang clothes; they should be presented to God as a living sacrifice, acceptable to Him, which is our reasonable service. The unbeliever's soul lusts only after earth's things and his body is pampered for selfish display and self-gratification. The soul and body of the believer are to be wholly yielded to God's service and handled for His praise.

Who, by taking thought, can add to His stature one cubit? (verse 27). This word "stature" is rendered "age" elsewhere. Therefore one could say "yes" to the above question, for worrying certainly adds to your age; there is nothing like worry to put wrinkles in your face and gray hairs on your head. But worrying accomplishes nothing worthwhile. Worrying will make you look older and get feebler, but it won't make you more mature, or older, in Christian experience.

That word "stature" has the sense of spiritual growth and development, as in Ephesians 4:13—"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Can you, by worrying, add to your spiritual maturity? Here the answer

evidently is certainly "no." Worry is the result of lack of faith, and little faith never produces great results.

Consider the birds—God fills their stomachs.

Consider the lilies—God clothes them so beautifully.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow. . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Every day packs enough sin in itself; why add to it by the sin of fretting? For it *is* a sin; it impugns God's faithfulness; it casts a doubt upon His love.

Of course, it is understandable if you fret about things you *want*. He has never promised to supply our wants; only our *needs*.

The birds do not sow nor reap; the lilies do not spin. That is no reason, though, why we should not do so. If we do nothing, we must not expect God to feed us. If a man does not work, neither shall he eat. "Put your trust in God," Colonel Blacker told his troops a century ago, "and keep your powder dry." This is a weighty principle people often lose sight of in other connections. For instance, though God can heal miraculously, yet He has provided medicines to take in case of illness; though He gives a believer a gift, yet He expects him to cultivate it by study, labor, etc. It is a wide principle of far-reaching application.

Judge Not

MATTHEW 7:1-5

GENERALLY SPEAKING, in chapter 5 of this famous sermon we have the believer's relation to the world; in chapter 6, towards God; in chapter 7, towards his fellow-believers.

In chapter 5 we saw how the believer is to act in grace towards men of the world. But now, what if one who professes to belong to Christ should do us wrong, what then? First of all, the Lord warns against judging where we do not know; warns against imputing motives which we cannot see. Only God can judge the hidden things of darkness (1 Corinthians 4:5); *we* are to leave them alone. That does not mean we must not judge evil when it is clearly manifest. Scripture deals with that, as in 1 Corinthians 5; 6:1-5; and elsewhere. If a believer should be walking in evil paths, he could not hide behind the opening verse of this chapter, though it is often done. Evil that is known saints are to judge, though that too must be done in love and in the spirit of meekness, lest one be tempted himself.

In short, the Lord does not want us to surmise sin or to impugn motives. Those who are hard on other believers will inevitably be treated likewise sooner or later. A censorious spirit must be shunned like the plague. "Be merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful."

The Lord goes on to say that harshness towards others is but a flimsy effort to hide sin in one's own life; yea,

sin that often is far greater, even as a beam outweighs and outmeasures a mote. "Wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things." The Pharisees were like that, finding fault with others because they had failed to attend to the petty traditions they made so much of, while they themselves were known for their greed, pride, and vileness.

Begin with self-judgment, says our blessed Lord. Get the beam out of your eye; then you will see clearly to remove the mote out of your brother's eye. And if there is true judgment of oneself, most likely you will not see the mote in the other's eye any more; most likely what you saw was just a little splinter off your own beam.

In the Church of God, that wondrous body of which you and I form a part, each brother is set not to find fault with others, but to judge himself and be a helper of the other's faith, instead of a critic of his faults.

Casting Pearls Before Swine

MATTHEW 7:6

HAVING JUST SPOKEN of the *abuse of judgment* toward the believer, Jesus follows it with a warning in this verse (recorded only in this Gospel) against the *abuse of grace* towards the unbeliever.

He is not speaking, of course, in regard to the gospel going forth to the unsaved, for it is to such the wondrous love of God is preached. But the dogs and swine here have reference to the class mentioned in 2 Peter 2:20-22, where the same two similes are employed. Those were the apostates who turned away from the truth of God and went back into sin, rejecting the grace of God.

We must not speak of the precious things of Christ; we must not present the deeper truths of our Christian faith to those who despise them. The "pearls," compared with Matthew 13:45-46, might well have regard to the precious truth in connection with the Church of God and the glory of her risen Lord; such things are not for the ears of apostate rejectors of Him. In the religious world, for instance, truths in connection with divine life, or the thought of worship, are applied alike to all the congregation, with no distinction made between believers and unbelievers, though the majority knows nothing of Christ as Saviour; yea, many live in downright sin. That would be something like casting pearls before swine. The great and wondrous revelations of God's heart and mind are for God's people only. Present them to the religious mass of today and, instead of their being appreciated, you will be thought or called a fool. What is most precious to you is to such others a cause for derision and contempt. Swine like swill; dogs will eat anything; believers alone are particular about their diet. They thrive on the finest of the wheat, and are satisfied only with honey out of the rock.

Ask—Seek—Knock

MATTHEW 7:7-12

Ask—and it shall be given you.

Seek—and ye shall find.

Knock—and it shall be opened unto you.

Here are degrees of earnestness in prayer, and corresponding blessings will result. Asking can be done while sitting or lying down; seeking suggests energy and going forth; knocking brings one, as it were, right to God's door.

If we, as earthly parents, give to our children, how much more shall our Father in Heaven give to His children. Of course, He may not give us whatever we ask, but He will give wisely. He is not only the Giver of every gift, but He gives in a perfect way, as James 1:17 really reads. He knows how, when, and what to give.

The Lord sums up in verse 12 by saying we should always act towards others, *not* as they might do to us, but according to what we *would* they should do to us. In other words, we should act like our Father, for He is ever in grace ministering to us; we should so conduct ourselves towards others. This is the law and the prophets in their intent and purpose; law not as man failed to carry it out, but as God intended it should guide our every action. The believer carries out God's divine law by the power of love, for "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10).

Three Sets of Twins

MATTHEW 7:13-29

DURING this whole Sermon on the Mount our blessed Lord has spoken with the two classes of which the world is composed in view—those who are His, and those who are not, for there were present His disciples (5:1), *and* the multitudes (7:28). Now, at the close of this marvelous message, He drives home the application to His hearers, urging the unbelievers to be wise and heed His words. He sets before them the two roads with their two destinies; two kinds of trees; and two foundations. If one would enter into life and enjoy the blessing of God, it is necessary to choose, and that choice must be the right choice.

In verses 13-14 He tells His hearers that there are:

Two roads, with two gates at the entrance of them.

Two destinies—destruction and life.

Two numbers—the few entering the strait gate; the many the wide one.

The gates comes first; then the way. One is not saved, or knows one is saved, at the end of life, but at the start.

All of us are born in sin, but I take it that the entrance through the wide gate, which leads to the broad way, does not have reference to what takes place at birth, but to the path so many choose when they grow up; and they choose it because there are so many on it. It is the road the religious soul treads. He is "broadminded," he

says, and readily follows the crowd, little realizing that—in Scripture—the crowd is always in the wrong. Millions walk in this broad path where anything is tolerated—where Satan's lies are swallowed and believed—where Christ and His Cross are largely words.

However, souls are not saved in crowds, but one by one. Few go in through the strait gate, because it means separating from the crowd; it involves personal initiative; it requires a personal choice of Christ. Few find this way, not because it is not plainly marked (there is a cross at the entrance, for the way to salvation is through a crucified Saviour who died on the cross for the guilty sinner), but because men don't want that way. With one consent, sinners begin to make excuse when invited to come to Christ as poor guilty sinners. The gate is strait: because it admits only one at a time. Because you cannot take anything with you when you enter it. Your pride, your works, your friends, yea, praise God, your sins, too, must be left behind when you enter that gate. And, once having entered it, the path is narrow. That word "narrow" means afflicted or troubled, for the path of the believer is marked largely by trial and often persecution; but, praise God, it leads to life with Christ in glory. The other road leads to eternal destruction. I would rather go through the darkest alley on the way to a banquet, than through the most brightly lighted boulevard on the way to a scaffold.

The Lord immediately follows this invitation to tread the path that leads to glory with a warning against the voice of false prophets, evidently because these are the liars who entice souls to reject Christ and His great love. Such false servants are to be recognized by their fruits.

Such fruit is to be seen not in how such men live (for often they are most attractive in appearance) but by what they *say*, for the mark of a false prophet is a false *message*. Jesus illustrates this by saying they are like wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. They look like sheep (like true believers) outwardly. How do you know whether they are sheep or wolves? Not by how they look, evidently, for they look like sheep. You know it when they open their mouths, for a wolf cannot say "baa" like a sheep can. His speech betrays him. It is what apostates—known today as modernists—*say* that proves them to be false prophets. In fact, it is often what they *don't* say that manifests them, for if they leave out Christ and His precious atoning blood, they are wolves, come to destroy the flock, no matter what they may pretend to be. Beware of them! (Read 2 John 9-11.)

In the third picture Jesus shows that all men are building. Some build for eternity; others only to have everything destroyed. The test comes in the end, when the storm of divine judgment shall try everything. Oh, how many claim to be the Lord's now; they profess, but do not possess, and such shall hear those solemn words in that day: "Depart from Me, ye cursed." The end will tell. True believers build on the solid Rock, Christ Jesus, laid as an immoveable foundation on the cross of Calvary (1 Corinthians 3:11); others build on the shifting sands of human invention or devilish lie. They have a religion but no Christ. They reject the redeeming value of the blood of Christ; they are satisfied with an empty form without the power. May you be a wise man who builds his life on the rock Christ Jesus.

When the sermon was finished (verses 28-29) the peo-

ple discussed the preacher and His preaching, as men do still.

They were astonished at His message.

They were impressed with His matter—doctrine.

They recognized that His manner was unique—He spake with authority.

PART TEN

*The Second Sermon on the Mount
known as The Olivet Discourse*

THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

THE PRESENT DAY; A VIEW OF CHRISTEN-
DOM

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE NA-
TIONS

The Future of Israel

MATTHEW 24: 1-41

PROPHECY as to future events ever has to do with Israel or the Gentile nations; not with the Church. In this first section of the "Olivet Discourse" the future of *Israel* is the theme; the Lord speaks of events which were still to come at that time, and which still are in the future today. The disciples asked the Lord three questions:

1. When shall these things be? (referring to the destruction of the Temple)
2. What shall be the sign of Thy coming?
3. What about the end of the world-age?

The Lord did not answer their first question, either here or anywhere else in Scripture. In Matthew 22:7 He reveals that God would send *His* armies (called *His* armies, though they were actually the Roman hordes under Titus), and that they would burn the city and destroy the murderers of His Son. But He does not say "when" this would take place. We know now that it became historically true in the year A.D. 70; here it was prophesied by our Lord some 40 years before it happened.

The second question: "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" Here our Lord gives them quite a few signs, ending with the glorious return of the Son of Man (verse 30). The signs of verses 5 to 7 He calls the "be-

ginning of sorrows" (verse 8) and they refer to spiritual and political and physical upheavals immediately following the rapture of the Church to glory. The afflictions seen under the opening of the six seals in Revelation 6 are very similar and have reference to the exact same period of time—namely the first years of the future seven years of tribulation, before the "great" tribulation begins, in the midst of that "week of years," with the setting up of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. The word "sorrows" of verse 8 is "travail pains" as of childbearing, and is the very word employed in Isaiah 66:8 where it speaks of Israel's sufferings before that nation is born again in that future day of her conversion to God. What marvelous perfection is there in Isaiah 66! In verse 7 a manchild (Christ) was born *before* Israel travailed (for there was at Christ's birth no turning of Israel to God), but verse 8 shows that in the future Israel will pass through that hour of fearful birthpangs ere she herself is born again. Verse 7 refers thus to the past of the birth of Christ; verse 8 to the future birth of Israel as God's redeemed people. These signs of Matthew 24:5-7 have to do with that day; nothing whatever with the Church or with the present day of grace. There have been similar afflictions to these, of course, in this age, but these verses do not contemplate them. I take it that after the rapture of the Church all these signs will burst on the world in a greatly intensified form and number.

From verse 9 on to verse 30, the great tribulation is seen, beginning as it does, and as is shown so clearly in Daniel 9, with the setting up of idol worship in the Jewish temple (verse 15). Many among Israel shall be

deceived; shall be led into idolatry through the worship of the "beast" and the Antichrist. Jesus spoke of this in John 5:43: "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

However, many in Israel will turn to the Lord during that time of persecution and will flee, as they are exhorted to do, as in verses 16-21. Many will be killed (verse 9); and will form that martyr company seen in Revelation 15:2 and 20:4; others will pass alive through this great tribulation. This latter group is seen in Revelation 7 in the 144,000. Those are composed of Jews who pass unscathed through this time of sorrow; the very ones our Lord speaks of here (verse 13) as those that endure to the end. This has no reference to the end of an individual's life, but to the end of that time of unparalleled suffering. Needless to say, those foolish cults who claim to be *the* 144,000 are just blinded by their own wicked delusions.

As these Jews are scattered widely by the persecutions, they everywhere will carry with them the message that Christ is coming—that the hour of God's judgment is come. Revelation 11:3 shows they will prophesy for the three and a half years of the great tribulation. Isaiah 66:19 shows they shall declare God's glory among the Gentiles. Like Jonah (who at first was a failure as a witness, even as Israel failed to bear witness for God in their past history, but who later on went and preached to the Gentiles) so shall Israel do in that hour of her trouble. What the Church has failed to do in nineteen centuries of missionary enterprise the Jews will do apparently in three and a half years. There are Jews already now in every country under the sun, so that they

know the many languages of the nations. Hence, when their eyes are opened to see Christ as their Messiah, they will be able to spread the news far and wide without delay. The results of their witness is given in the judgment of the "sheep and the goats."

The elect of Israel are not to be deceived by false Christs and false prophets, many of whom shall show great miracles. These are seen to be satanic, as also in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. How often folks even today are deceived by impostors!

The third question: "What about the end of the age?"

Jesus shows that after the preaching of the Kingdom to the whole world, the end shall come (verse 14). That "end" coincides with the Coming of Christ in power and glory. When one compares Matthew 24 with Matthew 13 it will be noticed that it is at the end of the age (13:39) that Christ sends forth His angels, and that these angels do the gathering (13:41; 24:31). In Matthew 13, the angels gather the wicked for judgment; in Matthew 24 they gather the elect for blessing. Both of these take place at His Coming, said to be at the end of the age. Isaiah 11:12 shows these elect to be the redeemed people of Israel; then gathered back to their own land (Deuteronomy 30:5). Here Christ sends His angels to do the assembling; when the Church is raptured, He calls for her Himself.

In verses 32-41 our Lord gives words of comfort as well as words of warning in view of His return. When the Jews see the fig tree coming to life, they may know that Christ's coming is near. Their deliverance will then be at hand, as also the judgment of the world, as seen in

Noah's day. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

The Present Day—a View of Christendom

MATTHEW 24:42-25:30

THIS SECTION consists of three portions, considering the believer as one who serves his Master; as one who lets his light shine, and as one who trades with the talents committed to his care. Each of the three introduces the Coming of Christ, who reviews the life at His Coming. The last two, presented under the form of parables of the Kingdom of Heaven—that of the ten virgins and that of the talents—are dealt with under the section of the "Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven." We will take just a brief look at the first section—24:41-51.

That this portion of the discourse of our Lord looks at the Church in its professing character is evident from the fact that in all three cases there are found false professors, as well as the true saints of God; hence we have not Christianity, which is the pure thing, but professing Christendom. The Church's history ends at the rapture, but Christendom goes on till the end of the age; hence

the Lord's Coming at that time is the final hour seen in the judgment connected with these stories.

The believer is told to be ready, since the coming of the Son of Man will take place in an hour when "ye think *not*" (verse 44). The coming of the "Son of Man" ever has to do with Christ's appearing just prior to the millennium—at the close of the tribulation period. The believer today lives with that day in view as well as the day of his rapture to Heaven, for he ever considers that the end of all things is at hand (1 Peter 4:7); he loves his Lord's appearing. But the mere professor says, as it were: "Where is the promise of His coming?" and so he goes on in his sin and carelessness. To him the Coming of Christ will be the hour of judgment, and his destination that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (verses 50-51).

The Judgment of the Gentile Nations

MATTHEW 25:31-46

GREAT AND MIGHTY EVENTS are connected with Christ's glorious coming. We have seen already that then the wicked shall be gathered out and put into hell; the people of Israel shall be gathered together to their promised

land. Our text shows that then Christ will exercise discriminatory judgment over the nations of the world, while Revelation 19 and other portions show that the armies united against Christ shall be summarily destroyed. The latter two events are united in thought in Revelation 19:11, for Christ comes to "judge" and to "make war." The one is discriminatory, for He divides the saved from the lost and pronounces sentence according to the evidence, as any judge does when sitting on the bench; the other is the massacre of all who are gathered in open rebellion to make war against Him, as stated in Revelation 19:19-21. That judgment is the Armageddon of Revelation 16:16. That same double feature is suggested in Isaiah 66:16 where the Lord pleads with all flesh "by fire and by sword." The sword is seen in Revelation 19; the fire in this judgment of the sheep and the goats.

This scene of sheep and goats is foretold in Jeremiah 25:13. Also in Joel 3:2: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel; also Joel 3:12: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about." Also Zephaniah 3:8 and many other Old Testament prophecies.

This judgment takes place at the close of the tribulation, when Christ comes in power. The armies gathered against Him were seen slain in the massacre of Armageddon; now the nations are brought before Him to be judged (all the nations, of course, are not in the army;

hence this is the judgment of those millions who were not included in those armies of Revelation 19:19).

There are three classes mentioned here: the "brethren" of the Lord; the sheep; the goats. The brethren, as we have seen ere this, are the Jews who go forth with the message of the Kingdom throughout the tribulation period, to the utmost bounds of the earth. Here the result of their preaching is manifest. Those who received them and their message are the sheep; those who rejected are the goats. It is a judgment of living nations upon the earth; just as Revelation 20 presents the judgment of the dead at the great white throne. This is prior to the millennium; the other more than a thousand years later (Revelation 20:7, 11). This is of living people; that of those who have been raised from the dead. There is a resurrection in Revelation 20; there is none here, for these are people who have not died as yet. The judgment of the great white throne falls on all alike; here there are both saved and lost present, as is always true down here.

The unbelievers go away into everlasting punishment; the righteous into life eternal. Isaiah 24:21-23 tells us what happens to those "goats" of Matthew 25. They are locked up in prison (in Hades), and Revelation 20 reveals this will be so until the great white throne, when spirit, soul, and body shall be reunited at the resurrection of the wicked, and the lost shall hear those final words of doom, consigning them to the lake of fire. This will be followed by the bliss of the "sheep"—the saved ones who will enter Christ's glorious eternal reign upon this earth.

Let us look briefly at some of the solemn moral lessons conveyed in this climactic scene:

There is separation here. There is a division among men—because of Him.

He is in the midst, as once He was upon the cross. This time He is on a throne of glory; not a cross of shame. Not to be judged, but to judge. Not in weakness, but in power. The saved and the lost are on either side, as we see so graphically in the two thieves that hung on the cross by the side of our Lord.

He divides them as a “shepherd” divides his sheep from the goats. Though exercising judgment, yet it is not done by Christ as a “king,” but as a shepherd. A shepherd has real love for his flock; and is there not a suggestion that even in the hour of judgment our blessed Lord judges with a heart that fain would save even then; with a love that was scorned by these lost souls; now lost forever.

Love or lack of love to Christ is the test here. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.”

“Come, ye blessed of *My father*.” Jesus did not say to the goats “depart from Me, ye *cursed of my Father*.” If men are cursed, they heap that curse upon themselves: our gracious God is a God who delights to bless.

“Inherit the kingdom prepared for *you*.” But the lake of fire was not prepared for men, but “for the *devil and his angels*.” How sad that man should choose to share the devil’s fate, by listening to the devil’s deception.

They go away into punishment. It does not say that they were forced to go. God casts no one into hell; men make that dreadful choice for themselves. Oh, neglect not—Oh, reject not—so great Salvation!

The Great Commission

MATTHEW 28:18-20

A GREAT DEAL of difference of opinion exists in regard to the extent of this so-called "great commission." We have seen, I trust, in our study of this Gospel, that the "Kingdom" and the "Church" run concurrently. Matthew 13 alone provides overwhelming proof of that fact. In consistency with this, our Lord here claims all power in "Heaven" and on "earth" as His. 1 Peter 3:22 gives the one; 1 Cor. 15:24-25 the other. The one has especially the present session of Christ in Heaven in view; the other will be when the future day of glory comes. The one is now exercised in grace (John 17:2); the other shall be when He returns. The one is specially in connection with the Kingdom of Heaven in its present spiritual form as it runs side by side with the Church; the other is chiefly with Israel as the subjects. Today the Gentiles (the nations mentioned in our text) are saved as souls who turn to Christ in saving faith and thus, together with saved Jews, form the Church of God. In the tribulation period this gospel goes forth to the heathen nations of the world and the saved therefrom shall, with saved Israel, form Christ's kingdom here on earth. Hence this great commission applies to the gospel going forth in the present day of grace, while, after the Church is raptured, it will extend through the tribulation period on to Christ's visible appearance on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

There is no mention here of miracles or healing. It is most important that after the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, He never once sends His own out to do miracles or to heal the sick, while He did so frequently before the cross. To any believer subject to the truth, this is clear evidence that the working of miracles was not meant to continue during this age. Our Lord gave the twelve apostles power to heal when He sent them out before His death. But when He sends them forth to preach after that—as seen in Mark 16—no power to heal or to do miracles is given to them. For please notice that the healing and miracles there are given not to the preachers, but to those who believed their message. *They* were not sent to do miracles. Signs followed them that believed, and even that was only to confirm the Word preached. Now that we have the Word of God in our hands, such confirmation is not any longer needed, and so such miracle-working powers ceased. And they have ceased till today, needless to say.

Mark has “preach the gospel”; Matthew “teach” (or, as it actually says, “make disciples of”). Luke 24:47 shows that this making of disciples is done by means of repentance and remission of sins. Thus these disciples of Matthew 28 were not to be mere empty professors, but souls saved by faith in Christ. Matthew uses the word “disciples,” for all through his Gospel he stresses the idea of discipleship. Souls are not saved just to go to Heaven, but to live here upon earth in obedience to Christ—to follow Him. This obedience is first of all shown in the baptism of the convert, for baptism is the outward badge of discipleship. Next the disciple is taught to walk in obedience to Christ’s commands, as laid down in the

Word of God. The argument of some that this great commission is not for the present day, but has to with Israel only and that therefore water baptism does not apply now, is absolutely without any truth. I believe we have made it clear enough throughout this book that the Kingdom exists now in spiritual form; and baptism is the one visible step of obedience to Christ. In fact, I doubt whether any proof can be brought from Scripture that baptism will be practised when the gospel of the Kingdom is preached in the tribulation time. But it certainly is to be practised in this day.

"I am with you alway," says He, "unto the end of the age." We have seen elsewhere that this end of the age is reached when Christ comes in power and glory. The rapture will precede that coming by some years; hence this text shows that the gospel shall be preached after the Church is gone home. At that time (Matthew 24:14) it shall go forth to all nations, and then shall the end come. May we today be faithful in proclaiming this grace of God, while also pressing on those who do accept the message and are saved, the claims of Christ on the redeemed soul.

All power is given to Him in Heaven and on earth.

All nations form the parish of the servants of Christ.

All the truth is to be ministered—teaching them all things.

Always there is the blessed assurance of His presence and His power.

This Gospel that begins with the "Babe" lying helpless in a manger closes by showing Him sitting on the throne of glory.

He who came to obey, now demands obedience from His people.

He who came to serve, now commands the service of others.

The King of Israel has become the Sovereign of the world.

All hail the power of Jesus' Name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.