

The Gospel of Matthew

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(1983–1985 Study plus 1985, 1997, and 2001 Discourses)

The following notes on the Gospel of Matthew were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1983–1985. In addition, notes are included from three discourses: “Comparison of Parable of the Talents and Parable of the Pounds,” “Leading Characters in the Closing Events of Jesus’ Life,” and “Parable of the Penny.” The notes should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “Question”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study and the discourses, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1983-1985)

The Gospel of Matthew is not consecutive except for the last weeks of Jesus' ministry. In addition, Matthew followed the format of grouping items and/or events.

Matt. 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew's genealogy attests that Jesus was the "son" of two individuals: David and Abraham. This information is important because Messiah had to stem from the lineage of both. The Old Testament promises regarding Messiah's kingship were related to these two patriarchs.

Matt. 1:2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

Judas was Judah.

Matt. 1:3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

Matt. 1:4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

Matt. 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Matt. 1:6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

Some of the names are identical to their Old Testament counterparts and some are not, because spelling variations occurred in the process of time. Also, the New Testament was translated from Greek, whereas the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew. (Strictly speaking, parts of the New Testament were originally written in Aramaic, but these portions were translated into Greek so that our English version was rendered from the Greek.) In the Revised Standard Version, the names are a better or closer match with those in the Old Testament.

In verse 6, the mention of the fact that Solomon was begotten of David and the wife of Uriah (that is, Bath-sheba) shows the *honesty* of the Gospel account. If the Bible were a manufactured book, then such comments in both the Old and the New Testaments would have been omitted, and the various heroes and characters would have been portrayed as pure and sinless. The Bible presents *truth* by stating things *as they are*.

Another reason to mention "her that had been the wife of Urias" is that David had many wives, and this detail specified which wife. Also, Luke's genealogy is a little different, so this detail is important.

Matthew traced Jesus' lineage through the *males*. Of course Joseph was not Jesus' father but merely *adopted* him as his son. Jesus was begotten of God through Mary via the Holy Spirit—and thus was Mary's son.

Matt. 1:7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

Roboam is Rehoboam.

Matt. 1:8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;

Josaphat was Jehoshaphat, and Joram was Jehoram.

Matt. 1:9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;

Matt. 1:10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;

Matt. 1:11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

The lineage for verses 7-11 is as follows: Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijam (Abijah), Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jeconiah (Jehoiachin, Coniah).

The majority of Bible scholars believe a curse was put on Jeconiah so that his seed would not prosper. Then they reason that *if* Jesus had been the natural son of Joseph, he could not have been the Messiah because of this curse. However, if we go back to Jeremiah 22:24-30, we will see that the account does not really have that meaning, for the curse was *not* everlasting.

Jer. 22:24 - "As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

Jer. 22:25 - "And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

Jer. 22:26 - "And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

Jer. 22:27 - "But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

Jer. 22:28 - "Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

Jer. 22:29 - "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

Jer. 22:30 - "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

In verses 24 and 25 of the Jeremiah account, the pronoun "thee" refers to the people of Israel. Verse 26 has a personal application to Jeconiah and his mother, who were taken captive to Babylon along with others such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and the three Hebrews, and then Zedekiah was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar as a puppet king. Israel subsequently survived another 11 years before final destruction in 606 BC. It is clear that Zedekiah's lineage was broken off: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown" (Ezek. 21:26). Zedekiah's lineage was cast off forever *but not Jeconiah's*. Jeconiah appears directly in the Matthew lineage and also in the Luke lineage in another way.

Students of the Scriptures should understand (1) how the lineage went through Jeconiah and (2) what God meant by the statement in Jeremiah 22:24, "Though Coniah [Jeconiah] ... were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence." Jeconiah was not the "signet" at that time, but even if he were, he would have been plucked up. He was on the throne for only three months (Jeconiah and Jehoahaz had the shortest reigns), and the curse indicated God's

disapproval. Jeremiah later showed the rescinding of this curse and spoke favorably of Jeconiah, who had a change of heart. Thus the curse was not everlasting. Straightening out Jeconiah's lineage is complicated.

Even if Jeconiah had been the signet on God's right hand, he still would have been plucked up. Jeremiah was showing that the Babylonian captivity occurred for *another* reason. The captivity did not occur so much for Jeconiah's personal guilt because others were *very evil* kings for *much longer* (for example, Manasseh and Ahab), yet they were not punished in such a stern manner. The point was that it was time for Israel to go into captivity *regardless* of Jeconiah's character.

The majority of Bible scholars are confused on verse 11. The lineage does not just go from Josiah to Jeconiah to Salathiel, for a couple of generations intervened, and there are reasons for their omission. Jehoiakim was a predecessor of Jeconiah, between Josiah and Jeconiah, the lineage being Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah.

Matt. 1:12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

Notice that verse 11 says "And Josias [Josiah] begat Jechonias [Jeconiah] and his brethren, *about* the time they were carried away to Babylon." Then verse 12 states, "And *after* they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias [Jeconiah] begat Salathiel." The wording shows a period of time.

Matt. 1:13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

Matt. 1:14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

Matt. 1:15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

Matt. 1:16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Jesus was born of *Mary*. Joseph did not beget Jesus. The lineage of Matthew is traced through the father, while the lineage of Luke is traced through the mother, yet here the account is careful not to state that Jesus was begotten of Joseph. The "begats" are very prevalent in Matthew's genealogy but are not used in Luke. This difference is significant.

Matt. 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

If all the generations in the genealogy are counted, there will be one less than the 42 (14 x 3) that are mentioned here. Counting Abraham as No. 1, there are 14 generations to David (verses 1-6). From Jeconiah to Christ are another 14 generations (verses 12-16). However, the *middle* segment has only 13 generations because David and Jeconiah were previously counted; thus it is here that the generation is omitted. The problem exists in the genealogy from Josiah to Salathiel because Jehoiakim is not mentioned. He was omitted because he did wickedly before the Lord. In addition, the genealogy of Matthew contains three or four other gaps. Hence there were not technically or mathematically 42 generations, but the number was used as a Jewish technique to aid *memory*. Breaking the genealogy down into 14, 14, and 14 made memorization easier. Because of the scarcity of Bible manuscripts in the early Church, "memory assists" such as the 14, 14, and 14 were valuable.

The point is that Matthew *purposely* omitted Jehoiakim, who came between Josiah and Jeconiah. Interestingly, some translations include Jehoiakim in order to get a total of 14

generations in the middle segment.

Jeconiah was born a considerable time before the Babylonian captivity, but he was also involved in it. Hence one way of getting 14 generations for the middle and third segments is to count the Babylonian captivity as a generation and then to consider Jeconiah as No. 1 of the last 14 generations, especially since Jehoiakim came on the scene between Josiah and Jeconiah.

The breaking down of the genealogy into 14, 14, and 14 resulted in the mention of important personages (Abraham, David, and Christ) and an important event (the Babylonian captivity). Moreover, it emphasized the point made in verse 1 that Jesus Christ is the son of both Abraham and David, which was a requirement for Messiah.

It is significant that in Matthew's day, *none* of the Jews discredited his genealogy listing; this fact indicates its *accuracy*. Other facts that could not be disputed were the earthquake and the rending of the Temple veil on the afternoon Jesus died. Hence we know these events occurred.

The Apostle Matthew was formerly a tax collector. The Bible tells little about him other than the circumstances of his call, but we can learn about him from the way he wrote, why he wrote, and what he did. For example, in the genealogy listing, he used a method of rote teaching (14, 14, and 14). As a tax collector, he was mathematically inclined.

Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Mary was impregnated by a miraculous begetting, or power, of the Heavenly Father. *God* was the Father of Jesus; *He* begot Jesus through the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. God was responsible for Jesus' birth as a human, not Joseph, for Mary's pregnancy occurred "before they [Mary and Joseph] came together," that is, before she knew any man.

"Mary was espoused to Joseph." According to Jewish custom, they were married, but a process of time had to elapse before the marriage was consummated. It was like an engagement period, but the "engagement" was very *binding* so that a divorce would have been required in order to break it. Stated another way, the engagement was a binding contract that required a period of time prior to consummation. During this engagement period, Mary was found to be pregnant ("with child").

Matt. 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

In what way was Joseph "a just man"? He knew that according to Jewish law, he could divorce Mary ("put her away"). If all things had been equal, Joseph would have been thoroughly righteous and just to expose Mary publicly. Since she was pregnant and he knew he was not involved, he could have publicly shamed her for disloyalty. Technically, she should have been stoned to death. However, Joseph knew the law in Deuteronomy 24:1, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." If a Jew found that his wife was not a virgin, and he had married her thinking that she was, then he was to write her a bill of divorcement, cutting her off legally from the contract, and send her out of the house. However, she could go and remarry with this bill of divorcement. "And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife" (Deut. 24:2). The reason for this latter provision was that the loss of virginity could take place in a different way (that is, other than from fornication). For instance, the hymen could be broken accidentally, or it could be ruptured at birth. Nevertheless, the husband could be suspicious all his life; hence he had the privilege of

breaking the marriage contract, for the mathematical probability was greater that she had been unfaithful.

When Israel captured an enemy, the Lord sometimes permitted a tribe to take virgin daughters of the foe captive. How did the Jews know if they were virgins? They could tell by examination. An unbroken hymen was an absolute proof of virginity. However, even if the hymen was broken, the woman could still be a virgin.

If it were *certain* that a woman had committed adultery, she could not remarry under the Jewish law, but in this circumstance, she could remarry following her bill of divorcement. The responsibility was thus transferred to the woman. If she knew she had committed adultery, it was not right for her to remarry. The evidence of “uncleanness” was not proof of adultery; it merely meant that it *looked* as if she had been unfaithful. With adultery, a witness was required, and in the case with Mary, *no* witness was involved.

Joseph was “just” from the following standpoint. Mary had had a vision. When she became pregnant, she would have explained the circumstances to Joseph and defended herself, telling about the angel Gabriel’s informing her she would become pregnant by the mysterious power, the Holy Spirit. She would even have referred Joseph to Elisabeth, who had prophesied and verified that Mary had been impregnated by the Holy Spirit. In fact, Mary stayed with Elisabeth for three months around the time this had occurred. When Mary returned to Joseph, she was at least three months pregnant, having been away from him for that period of time. Naturally, Joseph was suspicious, yet Mary told of this unusual circumstance. Therefore, being “just,” Joseph was going to give her a divorce based on Deuteronomy 24:1 because there was no proof of adultery.

Of course Mary might have narrated the vision to Joseph before going to see Elisabeth. However, when she returned three months later and was obviously pregnant, he was uncertain as to the reason for her pregnancy, even though he no doubt knew of the prophecy that a virgin would conceive and have a child. Being unsure what to believe, he doubted, so to be fair, he intended to give her a bill of divorcement in a private (not a conspicuous) manner. His intention indicated some doubts, for if he had believed Mary’s explanation wholeheartedly, he would not have considered putting her away.

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

At this juncture, an angel appeared to Joseph and told him not to fear but to marry Mary, for she was telling the truth—the child had been miraculously conceived. Because there was a slight measure of doubt previously, Joseph had decided to divorce Mary privately rather than to shame her publicly. But after the angel appeared to him, he believed Mary. Joseph’s *own* personal experience convinced him.

A doubting conscience is dangerous. If Joseph’s conscience had given Mary the benefit of the doubt, he still could have maintained the marriage, even under Deuteronomy 24:1. But it would have been better to put Mary away than to have a doubting conscience. While Joseph was praying earnestly about the matter, he received the visitation from the angel, who quieted his troubled conscience.

Clues in Scripture show that Joseph was an exceptional man. Not only was he “just,” but he reacted with faith each time God warned him in a dream. However, of the two, the Scriptures highly commend Mary more than Joseph because when she received the original salutation from Gabriel, she accepted *with faith* the fact that God could give her a child through the Holy

Spirit (Luke 1:38). And later when Elisabeth prophesied through the Holy Spirit, she said, “Why should you come to me when *you* have in your womb one who is greater, the *Messiah*. God has richly blessed you because when the angel spoke to you, you reacted favorably” (Luke 1:42,43,45 paraphrase). Hence it was learned months later how much God appreciated Mary’s attitude. There was a *depth* of faith in Mary even more than in Joseph. However, both had faith and were reverential and were specially selected so that Jesus would be reared in a proper atmosphere.

Matt. 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The angel instructed Joseph that the child should be called “Jesus” because he would save his people from their sins. “Jesus” means “Savior.”

Matt. 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Matt. 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Matt. 1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

Matt. 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

It was important for Joseph to know not only that the child was conceived of the Holy Spirit and of God but also that he should not have intimacies since this “son” was the Messiah. Notice that Mary was considered his wife even prior to intimacy. The espousal, or betrothal, back there was synonymous with marriage; the contract had already been made, even though there were certain customs with the initial period. Joseph refrained from intimacies with Mary until after Jesus was born, but we know that the marriage was consummated after that event because Jesus had half brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:55).

How Jesus’ Lineage Went Through Jeconiah

Ezekiel 17:1-24 gives a parable of two great eagles, which is a story of the nation of Israel and two important captivities.

Ezek. 17:1 - “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 17:2 - “Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

Ezek. 17:3 - “And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

Ezek. 17:4 - “He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants.

Ezek. 17:5 - “He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree.

Ezek. 17:6 - “And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

Ezek. 17:7 - "There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

Ezek. 17:8 - "It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

Ezek. 17:9 - "Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

Ezek. 17:10 - "Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

Ezek. 17:11 - "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 17:12 - "Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

Ezek. 17:13 - "And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

Ezek. 17:14 - "That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

Ezek. 17:15 - "But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

Ezek. 17:16 - "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

Ezek. 17:17 - "Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons:

Ezek. 17:18 - "Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.

Ezek. 17:19 - "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

Ezek. 17:20 - "And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

Ezek. 17:21 - "And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

Ezek. 17:22 - "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent:

Ezek. 17:23 - "In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

Ezek. 17:24 - "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it."

The first eagle was King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and in the first captivity the top-most branch of the cedar, the king of Judah, Jeconiah, was lopped off. The other young twigs that were broken off were princes and family. The eagle also took hostages to Babylon of "the king's seed" and "the mighty of the land," the nobility (verse 13). Jehoiakim (Jeconiah's father) was slain, and Zedekiah was left in Judah. As long as Jeconiah and the others were obedient in Babylon, their lives would be preserved.

The second eagle was also Nebuchadnezzar. The word "second" was used because the reference was to his second coming to Israel, when he blinded Zedekiah, took him to Babylon, and slew him.

Calling Jeconiah the "highest branch of the high cedar" and referring to a "tender one" (verse 22) indicate prosperity; that is, God would select the highest one taken into captivity and give a promise that of him would come another tree (kingdom). We are reminded of Daniel 4, where a tree was cut down and then grew again—a promise of Messiah's Kingdom. In other words, from Jeconiah's lineage would come Messiah.

Jeconiah was taken captive in the first captivity; Zedekiah, in the second captivity (see Jer. 52:10,11). It was prophesied that the latter would not prosper, that his lineage would be cut off. Zedekiah's lineage is not in Messiah's genealogy because he was bypassed for Jeconiah. In other words, of the two kings, one would prosper and one would not. The first, Jeconiah, the highest cedar, would prosper.

1 Chronicles 3:15 lists Josiah's sons in order of birth: Johanan, Jehoiakim (Eliakim), Zedekiah (Mattaniah), and Shallum (Jehoahaz?). Jehoiakim and Zedekiah are familiar to us, but not Johanan and Shallum. Jehoahaz was either Johanan (who may have died prematurely) or Shallum; probably Jehoahaz was the latter. Hence three of Josiah's sons reigned.

The following Scriptures are helpful:

2 Kings 23:29 - Josiah was slain at Megiddo.

2 Kings 23:31 - Jehoahaz (Shallum) reigned three months.

2 Kings 23:36 - Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 11 years.

He was the predecessor of Jehoiachin.

2 Kings 24:8 - Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah) was 18 years old when he began to reign for a total of three months.

Zedekiah reigned for 11 years.

Jehoiachin was the grandson of Josiah and the son of Jehoiakim, yet Zedekiah reigned after Jehoiachin. Thus Zedekiah and Jehoiachin were contemporaries, although Zedekiah would have been a little older. Because of their very short reigns (less than half a year each), Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin are not normally listed in Judah's register of kings.

Jehoiakim's son sat on the throne for only three months, and these three months were already in progress when the pronouncement of disfavor in Jeremiah 36:30 was given. Jehoiakim was so evil that his dead body was dragged, and he did not get a decent burial. Even the people did not mourn for him. The account does not say that Jehoiachin would never have an offspring on the throne, but that henceforth in his lifetime, this would not occur. Jehoiachin was already on the throne but was subsequently removed. After being a captive in Babylon for many years, Jehoiachin was taken out of prison and elevated.

Thus Jeconiah did sit on the throne, but it was prophesied that he would not return to the throne or have a son on the throne *in his lifetime* (see Jer. 22:30 RSV). Hence Messiah is the “son” of Jeconiah according to Matthew’s Gospel. Therefore, favor did return to Jeconiah’s line.

Messiah’s lineage is traced through Adam’s race. Since *all* of Adam’s race bear the death sentence and are imperfect, *all* are unrighteous. Thus it should not be surprising that some evil ones were in the lineage. Moreover, Jesus was only the son-in-law or son-*by-law* of Joseph and not of his direct lineage. Joseph adopted Jesus.

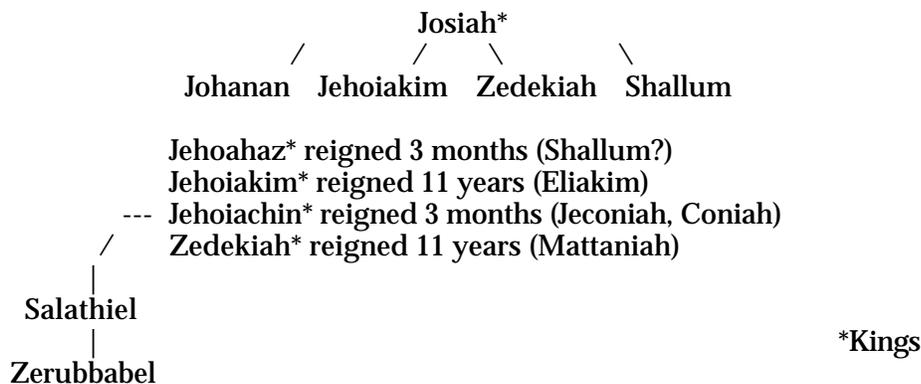
The Solomonic line was thus humiliated by being of Jesus’ lineage only in the Joseph line and not in Mary’s. And it was Mary who was honored with bearing Jesus. The Jewish nation, however, looked at Joseph’s line, and that is why Matthew took this slant.

Luke gave the more noble, actual *maternal* descent. Matthew gave the less noble *paternal* descent. Zerubbabel is common to both lineages but in a different way in Luke, that is, through his wife. The paternal descent is an in-law basis, whereas the maternal descent of Luke gives the husband of the mother, or Zerubbabel.

Jesus is the “international” Messiah because his descent is established both paternally and maternally. Some cultures and countries accept one lineage, and some accept the other.

“And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon” (Matt. 1:11). Josiah begat Jeconiah as a grandson. The “brethren” were Josiah’s sons, the missing generation in the lineage. (Jehoiakim was too evil to be mentioned in the lineage.) Hence the “brethren” generation is No. 14 in the second grouping, and Jeconiah is No. 1 in the third grouping of 14.

“Zerubbabel” comes from two words (*Zerub* and *babel*) meaning “the [Messiah] branch in Babylon.” Zerubbabel, the “son” of Jeconiah, was highly favored as his *grandson*—but not in Jeconiah’s lifetime. Zerubbabel was an important personage in the return to Israel in 536 BC, after the 70 years’ captivity. He was the branch developed in Babylon to go back to Israel after the captivity. In the restoring work of the Temple, he pictured the Messiah.



Matt. 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men came from the east and went first to Jerusalem. The Scriptures do not state the number of wise men, but it is assumed there were three based on the three gifts that were brought (verse 11) and tradition. The fact that the wise men came from the “east” indicates they saw the “star” rise in their home locality. The magi interpreted it as being the star of Messiah, spoken of by Balaam the prophet and perhaps also by Daniel.

The account does not state who the magi were. They could have been Jews or at least could have had some Jewish blood, for there were Jews in captivity and Daniel had been the chief of the magi, but we do not know for sure.

When the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy were seen to be not literal—not 490 days—then it was realized they were *symbolic* weeks, and those who were aware of this prophecy were watching for a fulfillment (Dan. 9:24). When the “star” arose at the time of expectation and near a meaningful constellation, it was recognized as being full of significance. Therefore, the *combination* of Daniel's 70-week prophecy, Balaam's prophecy, and zodiacal signs convinced the magi that this was the star of Messiah.

Herod had a winter palace at Masada and another one in his own land of Idumea. Coming originally from Idumea, he was called an Edomite. That is why, as king of the Jews, he was regarded as not a real Hebrew. Being related only through one of his ten wives, he was considered a half-breed, a half Jew, and was not accepted except for his architecture.

Matt. 2:2 **Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**

The wise men saw “his star” rising in Persia (“in the east”). How great must have been their faith to travel such a long distance with such expensive gifts! “Wise men” were counselors to kings and very wealthy people. Highly educated, especially in the sciences of that day, including astronomy, they were not astrologers as we have them today.

Just what constituted the “star”? The wise men saw the star rising in the east. When they were in Jerusalem some time later, they again saw the star; it “went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child [Jesus] was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (verses 2, 9, and 10). In other words, after seeing the star rise in the east and following it to Jerusalem, the wise men temporarily were unable to see it. Then the “star” reappeared and, in some way, directed their path to the house where Jesus was.

Evidently, the “star” was a *moving* phenomenon, and it had to be a *bright shining* for the wise men to follow it. Although there seems to have been an unusual conjunction of planets at the time Jesus was born and the star first appeared, the star itself was probably a comet and hence could be followed.

When the wise men were traveling to Jerusalem, the comet was high in the heavens so that even when they got to the city, it could not pinpoint a house. However, even though high in the heavens, the comet was sufficient to guide them to Israel. Then it was only natural that the wise men would go to the capital for information, for surely, they would think, the people of Israel and the king would be interested in their Messiah.

While the wise men were in Jerusalem, the weather, clouds, or some other condition intervened so that they could no longer see the star for a while. This natural phenomenon occurred at a unique time as a miraculous manifestation to obscure the comet. Then the wise men questioned King Herod about Jesus, asking where he was. When the star first arose, it signified Jesus' birth. Since it would have taken nearly a year for the wise men to come from Persia, Jesus was now a young child. Incidentally, this “Herod” was Herod the Great.

Matt. 2:3 **When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.**

“All Jerusalem” was troubled by the comet, the sign of Messiah's birth, when it could be seen overhead. Here is proof that it was easily visible.

Matt. 2:4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Matt. 2:5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

Matt. 2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Matt. 2:7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

Herod privately (“privily”) called in the wise men for a consultation. He was troubled that there was a contender for the rulership of Israel and that Messiah had been born in his domain. Thus he was trying to find out where this child was. After learning earlier from the scribes and chief priests that Christ had been born in Bethlehem, he now wanted more information: “*Exactly what time did you first see this star?*” he asked the wise men. He was trying to ascertain the age of Jesus so that he could then issue the decree for all male babies two years of age and under in Bethlehem and its suburbs to be put to death.

The King James marginal reference for “rule” in verse 6 is “*feed*” (in regard to power); that is, Jesus protects, consoles, builds up, and instructs. Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, means “house of bread.” Pharaoh gave Joseph, who typified Messiah, a special name that contained the word “bread.” Joseph fed Egypt, and Messiah is the counterpart of Joseph. Micah 5:2,4 speaks of Messiah feeding his people: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.... And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Matt. 2:8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

While having such a heinous ulterior motive, Herod had the *audacity* to *feign* the reason for his inquiry: “[so] that I may come and worship him also.” Although Herod was not a man of faith, he acted with a degree of willfulness and against a clear understanding of certain prophecies or light. However, he probably did not actually believe Jesus was the Messiah. Herod just did not want any opponents or rivals for him or his family (children), and he did not want his authority to be undermined.

Matt. 2:9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

Q: Was the comet close to the earth when it guided the wise men from Jerusalem to the house where young Jesus was at that time?

A: Yes. The comet’s disappearance was related to its circling downward in its orbit. The house was probably on a hill, and there was a perspective in the “star’s” orbital arc where it seemed to stand still for a time. It may even have shone brighter, illuminating the house.

Stated in other words, when the comet reappeared to the wise men’s vision, it approached close to earth and “stood over” the house where the “young child” Jesus was. The house was

probably situated on a hill so that the comet's trajectory made it *seem* to stand still. Also, it probably glowed brighter at that time. The fact that Jesus was called a "young child" here indicates he was at least a year old, not a babe, and a reasonable conclusion is 1 1/4 years old.

The people of Jerusalem were troubled when the magi came into the city reporting about the "star" and wanting to see the king to inquire about Messiah (verse 3). The report would have gone through the city like wildfire—"Wise men have traveled a *long, long* way from a foreign land to see the *Messiah!*" The inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been excited, and they probably also saw the sign in the heavens, although they would not have fully understood it.

"All Jerusalem" was troubled in another sense. The "star" indicated that Messiah was coming, and because the people had not been living up to the Law, their consciences bothered them. They felt unworthy. They were not ready for the Messiah.

In addition to those in Jerusalem, the nation of Israel was in expectation of Messiah and of his being born in Judea, as were some of the neighboring nations (Luke 3:15). However, with the delay in time from Jesus' birth (when Messiah was expected) to the beginning of his ministry at age 30, many people lost their expectation, thinking it was all a false report. The *initial* revealing of Messiah's coming *scared* the people. And when Herod ordered all the male children two years old and younger to be killed, some of the people would have thought that Herod had succeeded in killing the Messiah. Moreover, Joseph and Mary departed to Egypt *at night*, so the people did not see them leave. Therefore, the people had no knowledge that the Messiah had escaped.

Even though the shepherds announced Jesus' birth and the people's hopes were stirred up at first, nothing happened for a while until the wise men arrived. Shortly after that, Herod had the young children put to death, and the holy family went to Egypt for several years. While they were gone, there was just *silence* during which no one could furnish information on the Messiah. Initially, the people's hopes had been stirred up—some were awestruck and some were terror-stricken—but then there was silence, so many concluded everything had been a false alarm.

Matt. 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

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

The three gifts symbolically represent "gifts" we have to give to the Lord. *Frankincense* represents praise, reverence, prayers, and testimonies. *Myrrh* (meaning "bitter") signifies obedience leading to submission, including our hearts. *Gold* symbolizes possessions, talents, and influence to do good, etc.—hence all our "assets" with which we can serve the Lord. Just as the magi gave what gifts they could to Jesus, so we are to give what we can to the Lord.

"Frank" means "open, honest." Hence "frankincense" signifies free-burning incense, which symbolically would include public and private adoration, praise, prayer, etc. Frankincense is an herb, shrub, or wood growth that, when crumbled and burned, gives forth a more pungent fragrance. It will start to burn quickly and easily. With this inherent property, frankincense is a good symbol for praise that readily comes forth.

Myrrh was used as a burial preservative (to keep the bugs away), a cathartic or purgative, a preservative, and an incense when mixed with other ingredients. It was also used as a base for perfume.

From a practical standpoint, these gifts from the magi provided money for Joseph and Mary while in Egypt. By selling the gifts, they had money to live there.

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

Being warned in a dream, the magi “departed into their own country another way,” that is, by a *different* route (probably around the south end of the Dead Sea and up the King’s Highway) to evade Herod.

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

Matt. 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

Matt. 2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Matt. 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

When Herod told the magi to return to him with information on Jesus’ exact location, some time was involved, for Bethlehem was about seven miles from Jerusalem. Walking to and from Bethlehem, plus staying there for a while to worship, would take a little time, so Herod knew approximately when to expect the wise men. Consequently, when he had waited a sufficient length of time and the magi did not return, he knew they had disobeyed.

Matt. 2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

Matt. 2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Where was Rama? In Judea and Galilee, more than one town was called “Rama,” just as many states in the United States have towns or cities called “Washington.” This Rama was near Jerusalem and Bethlehem (it was in “the coasts” of Bethlehem—verse 16).

Israel was composed of three parts: Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Although the Bible does not say, John the Baptist probably came from Hebron, also a town in the “coasts” of Bethlehem. The Bible simply states that Mary went to the “hill country” to see her cousin Elisabeth (Luke 1:39). John’s father, Zacharias, was a priest, and Hebron was the chief city given to the Levites.

John the Baptist also had to be removed from the area so that he was not slaughtered by Herod’s order. (Since he was only six months older than Jesus, he fell into the age bracket of two years old and under.) John would have fled hastily into the desert, and there he remained until he announced Messiah many years later. John’s parents were both quite aged at the time he was sent in haste into the desert. (In Jesus’ case, Mary was young and Joseph was old.) Because of their age, John’s parents probably did not accompany him into the desert but perhaps in their panic hastily sent him out with a caravan under someone else’s custody. John had no more home life after that, for he remained in the desert until he died. At the time Herod slaughtered the babies, Jesus was probably 1 1/4 years old, and John was 1 3/4 years old.

John's background was unusual. Although he was born of a *priest* in a *prominent* town, he spent his life in the *desert*. After he returned, he baptized at both upper and lower Jordan, but he introduced Messiah at the lower part.

Jeremiah prophesied about the weeping in Rama (31:15). Incidentally, Rachel's tomb is about two miles outside Bethlehem in the area identified as "Ephratah," where Jesus' birth took place (Micah 5:2). *Ephratah* means "opening" or "expanse." That same word was uttered by Jesus when he used spittle to heal one who was deaf: "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened" (Mark 7:32-35).

Matt. 2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

Matt. 2:20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

Herod died about AD 4, and Jesus returned from Egypt the same year. Thus some time had elapsed until "they" (Herod and others) who had "sought the young child's life" were dead.

Matt. 2:21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Matt. 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

When Joseph and Mary returned to Israel (as per the angel's instructions) and found that Archelaus, one of the sons of Herod the Great, was malicious like his father, Joseph turned aside and went to Nazareth in Galilee. In addition, God warned him in a dream not to go to Judea (Bethlehem). No doubt Joseph had at first considered it propitious to go to the Bethlehem area because (1) that is where Jesus was born, (2) the prophecies said he would arise there as King and Governor, and (3) it would avoid a stigma in regard to Jesus' birth (in the Nazareth area, it would have been known—but not understood—about Mary's being pregnant prior to marriage).

Matt. 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Q: Where was it prophesied that Jesus would be called a Nazarene?

A: Although the pronunciation is a little different, the Hebrew words for "branch" and "Nazarene" are very similar. Isaiah 11:1 reads, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." "Branch" is *netser* or *netzer* in Hebrew, which is similar to the word for Nazarene.

In addition to this etymological relationship, there are other words for "branch," such as "olive leaf" (Gen. 8:11), which the dove returned with after the Flood, and "foot" and "sprig." All of these words are related in their reference to a "root" growing up, developing from a very small beginning into a large tree. Ezekiel 17:22-24 reads, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have

brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.” The uppermost tender twig that was taken into captivity in a foreign land would ultimately grow up into a great big tree under which all the fowl of heaven would be resident. This prophecy is a reference to Messiah’s Kingdom. From a *small* beginning of hope will develop the reality of an earth-embracing tree.

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets [plural], He shall be called a Nazarene.” Prophets spoke of Jesus as being a Nazarene. Hence Scriptures such as Zechariah 6:12, although having a different Hebrew word (not *netzer*), are also referred to here, conveying the thought of “The Branch.” “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.”

Matthew’s Gospel catered primarily to the Jews. He did this most effectively by tying in Old Testament prophecies about Jesus, such as here in verse 23.

Matt. 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

The setting of verses 1-12 is the ministry of John the Baptist shortly before Jesus came to him. In verse 1, John was preaching in the wilderness of Judea. Although he baptized along the length of the Jordan River, he was near the southern extremity, not too far from Jerusalem, in this instance.

Matt. 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

“Repent ... for the kingdom of heaven is *at hand* [present].” “At hand” does not mean near or close but *present*; that is, it had approached! This statement signified the opening of a *new era*. “The kingdom of heaven” is the high calling, not restitution. The gospel message and preparation of the Kingdom rulers (the kings and priests of the future) were under way. “The kingdom of heaven” would be the call of the Church.

Matt. 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Verse 3 is a quote from Isaiah 40:3. Here in Matthew 3:3, John the Baptist was “the voice.” John was baptizing on the banks of the river Jordan, which was called “the wilderness of Judea” (verse 1). John the Baptist was the voice/announcer/herald here at the First Advent. The message was, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord [Jesus], make his paths straight.” In other words, the New Testament application was to *Jesus* as “the Lord,” but Isaiah 40:3 refers to *Jehovah* (“LORD” in all capital letters). Trinitarians use these texts to prove that Jesus is God; however, many plain statements in the New Testament teach otherwise—that Jesus never claimed to be God but is His Son.

How can the two applications be harmonized? The context in Isaiah is a Kingdom picture, leading up to the end of the Millennium when the Kingdom will be turned over to the Father, whereas the context in Matthew is the First Advent. Many Old Testament Scriptures are quoted in the New Testament and applied to the Gospel Age as *partial* fulfillments or as *principles*.

From the standpoint of present truth, what gives us a satisfactory explanation for the variance in the Old Testament and the New Testament applications? The Pastor brought out a peculiar doctrine in his writings that helps to clarify the Isaiah 40 and Matthew 3 texts, but verse 4 should be considered first. Then verse 3 will be treated more fully.

Matt. 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

John the Baptist lived in the desert and ate locusts dipped in wild honey. According to Leviticus 11:21,22, locusts are edible, for they were regarded as clean food. In fact, locusts are eaten in India today. "Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind."

John's raiment was significant. He was clothed with camel's hair and a leather girdle. We are reminded of Elijah, who was "a hairy man" and had a leather girdle about his loins (2 Kings 1:8). In other words, Elijah had a very hairy torso plus a leather girdle. With the camel's hair, which was long and gave the effect of a hairy torso, John the Baptist providentially appeared very hairy, even though, by nature, he may not have been. Thus the camel's hair garment made John look like Elijah. That this similarity was intentionally arranged through Providence is proven by Jesus' identification of John the Baptist as being a fulfillment of the Elijah picture (Matt. 11:12-14; 17:10-12; Mark 9:11-13). In Old Testament times, *false* prophets sometimes wore *rough* (hairy) garments in order to deceive (Zech. 13:4). When uttering false prophecies, they tried to give the impression that they were the Prophet Elijah predicted to come—for God had said that before the last or "great and dreadful day of the LORD," He would send Elijah the prophet (Mal. 4:5). John the Baptist was a *partial* fulfillment in that he was doing a work of an Elijah nature.

Another similarity between John the Baptist and Elijah is that both had a background of wilderness living. Elijah lived in the wilderness for 3 1/2 years and then returned to Sinai later in life (1 Kings 17:1-7; James 5:17). John lived almost all of his life in the wilderness.

John the Baptist's preaching was forceful, and *many* were influenced by it. In the chapter "Elias Shall First Come" in the *Second Volume*, the Pastor showed that Elijah was a type of The Christ, Head and body. He also showed that John the Baptist represented Elijah. At the First Advent, Jesus pointed out John, saying, "This is Elias [Elijah], which was for to come" (Matt. 11:14). However, John the Baptist was only a *partial* fulfillment of "Elijah"; that is, his preaching was similar in character to the work that "Elijah" (the Church) would do.

What is the major difference between Elijah and John the Baptist as types? Elijah pictures the Church during *much* of the Gospel Age, from AD 539 on, as well as in the beginning of the Gospel Age. John the Baptist pictures the Church at the *end* of the Gospel Age rather than throughout the age. In the beginning of the age, John introduced Jesus, and Jesus identified John as (partially) the Elijah who was to come. Hence John the Baptist pictures a *portion* of Elijah's ministry and work. In other words, John is more *dispensational*, and Elijah is more *embracive* or *inclusive*.

There is another part of the Elijah type as well. Not only is Elijah a picture of the Church in the Gospel Age, but Matthew 17:11 indicates that the picture is larger: "Elias truly shall ... restore all things." In this work, Elijah first fails and then succeeds: "Elias truly shall *first come*, and [then, later, shall come to] restore all things." Malachi 4:5,6 reads, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." During the entire Gospel Age, a work of reform has been preached: "Repent, or else the great Time of Trouble will come." But since the Elijah class are not successful in converting the world during the Gospel Age, it is necessary for the Time of Trouble to introduce the Kingdom. And so Jesus said, "Elijah shall restore all things" but *in the Kingdom*. Thus those who are faithful practicing physicians in the Gospel Age will, in the next

age, be priests and kings; in that capacity, they will have the *authority* to accomplish the converting work.

Thus it can be seen that Elijah is a very comprehensive picture, for he represents The Christ not only in the flesh but also in *glory*, endued with *great power*. In the next age, Elijah will be successful in restoring “all things.” In the Gospel Age, the success of the Elijah class is merely in accomplishing a work of reformation in gathering the Kingdom heirs, the prospective Little Flock. Hence the Elijah work during the Gospel Age is not a total failure, even though it is not successful in converting the world.

Jesus is the Head of the Elijah class. When he started his ministry, he said the same thing John did: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). And he, too, is not successful during the Gospel Age except in finding those called to a superior nature.

Let us consider Isaiah 40:3 again: “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness.” The *full* application of that “voice” is The Christ, Head and body, preparing the way of Jehovah in the Kingdom, whereas John the Baptist was only a *partial* application. At his First Advent, Jesus preached in the “wilderness,” and throughout the Gospel Age, the Church has been preaching in the “wilderness,” for they are outcasts, not accepted in the orthodox mold. The voice of The Christ has been telling down through the Gospel Age of the coming age and saying, “Prepare the way of Jehovah,” and ultimately they will be successful in restoring all things. They will also be involved earlier in connection with the Time of Trouble.

Now we can see that in the New Testament, John the Baptist is only a partial picture. The Pastor emphasized the feet-member aspect, particularly in regard to John’s beheading. He likened the Church’s announcing the Second Presence to John’s announcing the First Presence, but of course it was the Pastor who publicly initiated a large-scale announcement of the presence.

As we view the whole Gospel Age, we can see that Jesus started a reform work that was only partially successful. The Church, following after him, did the same thing. Consequently, throughout the Gospel Age, there has been “the voice” from the wilderness of The Christ in the flesh announcing, “Prepare the way of Jehovah.”

Isaiah 40:4,5 reads, “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and *all* flesh shall see it *together*: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” This will happen in the Kingdom—*future*. To date, only a small segment of the human race has recognized Jehovah’s glory, but there will come a time when *all* will have a knowledge of the Lord. And what will happen? “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ... made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.” The physical terrain, the topography of the land, is used to show a *reversal* of the previous condition. Isaiah 40:4,5 is a *broad* description of society becoming *completely* restructured, realigned, and reorganized into *God’s Kingdom*, not man’s, and according to the plummet of truth and righteousness under *new* leadership (Jesus’ instead of Satan’s). Today all society is structured after Satan. The kingdoms of this world are his, for he is the “god of this world [age]” (2 Cor. 4:4), but the kingdoms of the next age will be the kingdoms of Christ.

Matt. 3:5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

“Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan” went out to John. This statement does not mean that all of the inhabitants went to be baptized, but it means that all in the area heard what John was doing, whether they lived in a village, a city, or the country.

From all of these areas, some came to be baptized; that is, *regionally*, some responded from all of these areas.

Matt. 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matt. 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Matt. 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Matt. 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

John the Baptist gave a stinging rebuke to the Pharisees and Sadducees: “O generation of vipers [venomous snakes].” He refused to baptize them as a class because they did not really want to repent and have their sins remitted. Their motives were wrong; they were acting out of expediency only and were not repenting. John told them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. They had a *poisonous* effect on the people. (Compare Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:15, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”) The Pharisees and Sadducees thought they were the children of Abraham because he was their “father,” but this alone was not sufficient to make them “children of promise” (Gal. 4:28). The heart condition was all important.

“Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” This question indicates that the Pharisees and Sadducees suspected the wrath, the trouble, would fall on their heads, and they were trying to escape it without real repentance. This principle refutes the idea of a deathbed repentance.

“Fruits meet for repentance” would be tears, remorse, humility, etc. If the Pharisees and Sadducees were truly repentant, even their facial expressions would reflect this. Hence there are outward visible manifestations of inner remorse and contrition. There should be an attempt to make a restitution of wrongs done as far as possible. For example, Zacchaeus said, “If I have defrauded any man, let me know, and I will pay him back with interest” (Luke 19:8 paraphrase). There should be some concrete evidence of inner remorse.

Verse 7 states that “many” of the Pharisees and Sadducees went to John. However, “many” does not mean a majority but an appreciable portion. For example, if a thousand were living in that area and 300 or 400 came, that would be a minority but “many” of them. These felt that *maybe* John was the one (the “Elijah”) predicted to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. If so, they wanted to accept him as soon as possible.

As time went on in John’s ministry, it would have been generally known that he had rebuked Herod. He preached for six months before Jesus came. He spoke with *power* and *authority*, and news of his ministry spread. Moreover, it would have been apparent that he was a godly man. At one time, even Herod was affected, being somewhat favorably disposed toward John in the sense that he did not want to kill him for prudence’ sake—just in case John was a true prophet—but Herodias trapped him.

“God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” God could *literally* have done this, just as He could *literally* make a camel go through the eye of a needle. If the people had not cried “Hosanna,” the stones would *literally* have cried out (Luke 19:40). The stones could *literally* have been converted to bread (Matt. 4:3). Stones are atoms, and so are people and food. Moreover, stones can have a “tape,” both being composed of atoms. The Scriptures tell of a

place where one was to speak to a stone, and the words were recorded in the stone as a memorial. We should not be surprised, for memory chips today store audible communications for later rebroadcasting.

Matt. 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

“The axe is laid unto the root of the trees.” The warning, which signified that the trouble was *imminent* but not yet, applied primarily to the religious element, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Verse 10 is a continuation of the lecture in verses 7-9. John the Baptist gave a *harsh* message of *judgment*, not one of peace and goodwill, because the religious element would feel the brunt of the trouble.

When a lumberjack is about to cut down a tree, before he gives the tree the first whack, he lays the blade to the point and adjusts himself according to where he will cut. A golfer reacts similarly; he does not just swing the club but first carefully measures the swing and positions himself to address the ball. All this is preparation; that is, in regard to John’s ministry, the “tree” would not be chopped down right away, but it was being measured and weighed. If conditions were not corrected quickly, the blade would cut and the tree would fall. John was saying that if there was no change, then later the axe would hit the tree and topple it—but not by John. John was merely calling attention to the coming trouble, but the one after him (Jesus) would do the work.

There is a vague reference here to Romans 11 and Israel’s being broken off from the Abrahamic root of promise. However, this picture is also more specific; namely, each tree, *each individual*, who did not measure up would feel the stroke of the axe. Although the branches or trees (individuals plural) would be broken off from the one Abrahamic root, the *primary* application here was the *personal* application of *each individual*. The point was for each to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance so that the coming judgment would be averted. Thus this is really a reference to *individual* character inspection and reformation.

Matt. 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

John referred to baptism with (1) the Holy Spirit and (2) “fire.” Baptism with “fire” did not refer to Pentecost when the tongues of fire came with the Holy Spirit. Baptism with the Holy Spirit meant that the Holy Spirit would come on those who repented properly, for they could enter into the new calling under the Sarah Covenant of grace. Those who did not repent would be cast into the “fire” (trouble) of AD 70. Hence the “Holy Spirit” referred to Pentecost and the “fire” to AD 70, when the nation was humiliated and the city and Temple were destroyed.

In referring to Messiah, John said humbly, “whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” Even though John spoke with power and authority, he had abject humility in comparing himself with Jesus. John had inherited this humility through his mother, Elisabeth. When Mary visited her and both were pregnant, Elisabeth asked, “What has the mother of my Lord to do with greeting me? I should be greeting you, for in your womb, you have my Lord” (Luke 1:43).

Matt. 3:12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The “fan” of verse 12 was a winnowing fork. When the wheat was thrown way up high into the air, the wind blew the chaff away, and the grain fell straight down. Hence there was a separation of the wheat and the chaff. The wheat was stored for preservation, and the chaff

was stored for destruction (burning).

There is a similarity of this illustration to the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Here the wheat was transferred into the Christian dispensation or Church (“garner”), whereas in the parable, the wheat was gathered into the heavenly garner beyond the veil. The chaff was burned in the “unquenchable fire” of trouble that came on the Jewish nation in AD 70. Thus the wheat and chaff picture applied to the end of the Jewish Age, whereas the wheat and tares of the parable apply to the end of the Gospel Age, “fire” being a symbol of the great Time of Trouble (Matt. 13:40).

“He will thoroughly purge his floor.” There were two stages to this purging. The purpose of the winnowing was to separate the worthy from the unworthy. The worthy were those of the Jewish nation who repented and received Jesus as Messiah and consecrated. Only those in the proper heart condition were taken into the new arrangement. John’s work was merely *preparatory* for Jesus, who later came and made the terms of consecration clear. Many went to Jesus out of curiosity, to be cured of sickness and disease, or to hear him condemn the scribes and Pharisees, but Jesus made it clear that to follow him meant sacrifice and never turning back. “Sit down and count the cost” was his advice. “Being my disciple is a narrow way. Few find and follow it.” Although not all would have made their calling and election sure, consecrations were sincere back there in the early Church (Ephesus means “pure”). Later on, the tares outnumbered the wheat but not originally.

Matt. 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Matt. 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

Matt. 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Matt. 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Matt. 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

John “forbad” Jesus to be baptized not because he recognized Jesus as the Messiah at this time but because his baptism was for repentance, and Jesus was already a Jew wholly devoted to doing God’s will. Being his cousin, John knew that Jesus had nothing to repent of. Also, John would have known that certain miraculous events had attended Jesus’ life. John did not know Jesus as the *Messiah* until the dove descended and the voice was heard, “This is my beloved Son” (John 1:31).

God had told John the Baptist that one day the Messiah would come to him and that John would be able to recognize the Messiah because a dove would descend on him. Hence the dove and the voice were for John’s benefit. Another proof they were for his benefit is the wording of the voice: “This is [not ‘You are’] my beloved Son.” John and Jesus both saw the dove and heard the voice but not the others who were present. Matthew’s Gospel is slanted to show John the Baptist’s standpoint and benefit, whereas Mark 1:11 gives Jesus’ standpoint. See also John 1:32,33 for proof that John saw the dove.

When Jesus was baptized, “the heavens were opened unto him”; that is, his mind was suddenly flooded with knowledge of his preexistence. Before that, as a natural man developing from the

womb, he did not have that knowledge. He now knew that he was born for a purpose. No wonder he had to go into the wilderness to methodically think things over—everything had opened up to him so suddenly!

Jesus said to John in verse 15, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” When Jesus asked to be baptized, John had to comply in order to fulfill God’s will and also to be obedient. Both factors were involved.

Despite John’s initial humility, when it was revealed to him that Jesus was the *Messiah*, it is to his credit that he immediately responded favorably. It is not easy to recognize greatness in one so close to us—in family relationships, for instance—for familiarity does tend to breed contempt. John and Jesus were cousins, yet John was deferential to Jesus, not only prior to knowing he was the Messiah but afterwards as well. Incidentally, the statement Jesus “went up straightway out of the water” proves a full immersion, a complete submersion, and not just a sprinkling.

Matt. 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

After Jesus was baptized, he was impelled of the Holy Spirit to seek isolation for meditation upon the Word of God and the instructions that were given to him from on high prior to his coming to earth. Jesus was now seeking instruction on how to go about his ministry. While in the wilderness, he was tempted of the Devil three times. Initially, Jesus was in the wilderness of Judea, but he worked his way northward at the end of the 40 days. Moses and Jesus both had experiences of being 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness.

Jesus’ new mind made him desire the solitude for meditation. Even as a child, he had wanted to do God’s will, but prior to his baptism and the heavens being opened to him, he had a relatively smaller understanding of God’s will for him. He knew about the unusual circumstances of his birth, for example, but knowledge of his preexistence was withheld from him until his baptism. As a child, he grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52). At age 30, he was “found in fashion as a man,” as an adult, when the heavens were opened to him at Jordan (Phil. 2:8). With this enlightenment, plus his previous disposition to do God’s will, he wanted to think matters out and not just precipitously begin to preach. An “added” part of the Holy Spirit came on him at his baptism—a different type of instruction and calling than was available to holy prophets and men of old.

Matt. 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

Jesus was not tempted by Satan until the end of the 40 days—at his *weakest* moment.

Matt. 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

The first and second temptations are usually given the wrong slant. “If you are the Son of God” implies that Satan was tempting Jesus as though he might not be the Son of God. However, Jesus had *no doubt* that he was the Son of God, for God Himself had said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), and the heavens had been opened to him. Instead the temptation was as follows: “Now you are the Son of God and have a great deal of authority, so why not change the stones into bread to satisfy your hunger?” (It would be like saying to a plumber, “If you are a plumber, fix this.”)

Moreover, Satan had no doubt that Jesus was the Son of God, for he had been watching the drama being enacted down here. Therefore, Satan was saying, “Since you are the Son of God,

why not do such and such?” Similarly, when Jesus was on the Cross, the tempters said, “If you are the Son of God, come down” (Matt. 27:40). Jesus knew he was the Son of God, but the tempters were trying to goad him into misusing miraculous divine power. Here, then, Satan was challenging or daring Jesus to command the stones to be made into bread. For Jesus to do so would have been an improper use of his prerogatives.

It should be noted, however, that it would not have been wrong for Jesus to work to get a meal after his baptism or to accept food offered by another. And it is not wrong for the consecrated to go to work to earn a living to feed themselves and their families. Working for that reason is not an illegal use of consecrated time. But it would have been wrong for Jesus to *miraculously* convert the stones into bread to satisfy his hunger.

Matt. 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Jesus answered that man is to live by every word that proceeds out of God’s mouth. In other words, everything Jesus did, first had to be questioned as to whether or not it was proper, whether or not it squared with the Word of God. In this case, changing the stones into bread would have been an improper use, so Jesus rebutted the Adversary.

When did Jesus get to eat? He received nourishment when the angels ministered to him following the three temptations (verse 11). He was truly hungry, and although he himself would not exercise miraculous power on his own behalf, he accepted that which the angels miraculously provided. It is interesting that Scriptures so close together (Matt. 3:9 and 4:3) show God’s power was *capable* of accomplishing great things with stone: (1) converting stones into “children unto Abraham” and (2) converting stones into bread.

For Jesus to miraculously feed the multitudes (*others*) later on was another matter, even though he probably partook too. Moreover, that was the *multiplication* of food, not the *origination* of it. Each time all of the circumstances have to be considered. For example, it was also a different matter for the *risen* Lord to provide food miraculously.

When suggestions come to us, we should analyze them to determine whether they are proper or improper for the new creature. Temptations can come from the Adversary himself or from one of his emissaries or even from a consecrated brother or sister. Consider how Satan used Peter to suggest to Jesus that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Therefore, we should weigh all suggestions and advice against the *Word of God*.

Matt. 4:5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

Matt. 4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Matt. 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Here was a *subtler* temptation: Satan challenged Jesus’ faith with a Scripture. Jesus had just replied that man was to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, and now Satan took some of those words but *misused* them. Satan is *wily*. Scriptures can be misused with us, too, as a temptation. Jesus was mentally taken to Jerusalem, not literally.

To avoid discouragement in trials, we should realize that if God allowed Satan to intrude upon the mind of Jesus, the beloved Son of God in his perfection, then of course we can have similar

trials. It is possible for us to receive suggestions from the Adversary direct, and if we do not understand the source, our conscience could bother us when it is not our fault. Jesus was completely innocent, yet these wrong thoughts came to him. Satan was allowed to intrude them into his mind.

We should not be overconfident in thinking we can set our minds and wills so firmly that we will be protected against evil powers at all times, for there may be *moments* of intrusion. Satan was not allowed to tempt Jesus during the 40 days, but he did tempt him at the end of that time. Even the most dedicated Christian can have a similar experience. If one does have such an experience, we should not regard it as a sign of weakness. Certainly we should not get an air of superiority and say, "Such thoughts should never have entered your mind." That would be improper judgment. Momentary intrusions are sometimes permitted.

The value of any meeting where Scriptures are discussed can be heightened by good questions. The frequency and quality of the questions raise the level of the meeting. To be quiet and just accept statements without questioning generally does not result in very profitable meetings. Even with Bible Students, Scriptures can frequently be used to teach wrong principles and to justify wrong deeds. For example, in a group of brethren, one might quote a Scripture to teach a wrong principle. In regard to one who misapplies Scripture, the Adversary may or may not be injecting the thought, for the thought could also be due to a temptation of the flesh or of the world. In verse 6, Satan quoted from Psalm 91, but this Psalm is usually applied to the feet members, especially at the *very end* of the age.

Many who have not given their wills over to occult powers are possessed of the Adversary in times of sickness. The Adversary takes advantage through their extremity of weakness. In using chemicals and/or improving nutrition, etc., many doctors raise the chemical balance of the human system to a level where the insanity leaves the patient. As a result, the doctors feel there is no such thing as fallen angels. They attribute the mental aberrations to a chemical imbalance or an attitude of heart or mind, that is, to a chemical imbalance of either mind or body. The trouble is that doctors do not see that a sick person can actually be possessed momentarily in his weakness. When the chemical level is raised and the person is stronger, he is able to repel the evil influence, since he never actually gave his will over to occult powers. When restored to health, the individual is not susceptible to possession. There is a definite relationship between weakness, sickness, and being possessed. However, in a case where one has given his will over to occult powers, correcting the chemical imbalance alone is not sufficient to overcome the possession. Giving the mind or will over, as in hypnosis, for example, is a more serious condition that requires a more radical treatment.

Satan quoted Psalm 91:11,12 to imply that the angels would catch Jesus ("bear thee up") and prevent him from falling to his hurt. Of course Satan misapplied the Scripture. Psalm 91 shows the *vehemence* with which Satan will beset the feet members. They will go through a *tremendous* experience, but they will be given special power. It will be like Elijah—the Spirit of God was in him when he folded up the mantle. Psalm 91 is a Psalm of solace to the feet members in the coming great pressure.

Matt. 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

Matt. 4:9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Matt. 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Again this was a *mental* temptation, for no mountain on earth is high enough to see “all the kingdoms of the world.” In this temptation, Satan showed Jesus an *easier* way to inherit the kingdoms. Jesus responded firmly, “*God only shalt thou serve.*” Jesus’ reply tied in with his response to the first temptation about living by every word of God. How quick and easy it would have been for Jesus to fall down and worship Satan, and thereby to *seemingly* accomplish God’s purpose! To repeat, Satan is *wily*.

In Luke’s Gospel, the order of temptations is different, but this one would be the last of the three because Jesus was brusque and final in his words, “Get thee hence, Satan.” At that point, when Jesus was mad, Satan saw it was hopeless to continue.

Matt. 4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The angels probably ministered food, water, and rest (sleep)—relief and comfort. No doubt the angels bring comfort many times to the consecrated Christian as well. This help may be visible or invisible; it may or may not be discerned.

Years ago Bro. Norby said that we do not realize what problems we can be to our guardian angels. At times, they have to be extremely active for our protection and our welfare. Only beyond the veil will we be able to get all of the details.

Matt. 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

Matt. 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

Matt. 4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Matt. 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

Matt. 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Matt. 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

John the Baptist was cast into prison way to the south, and Jesus moved from Nazareth, his hometown, to Capernaum, where he established a temporary headquarters, as it were. John’s imprisonment impressed upon Jesus more clearly that the prior Jewish dispensation was phasing out and that he should give his own ministry even more thrust. He used the same words as John: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This did not mark the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, but it did mark the beginning of a *ministry of continuity* in the *Galilee region*.

Meanwhile, John’s disciples continued to perform his baptism of repentance. Down through the age, many Christians have confused John’s and Jesus’ baptisms. Evidently, Divine Providence has allowed John’s baptism of repentance to be a confused matter. It depends on the maturity of the individual as to whether or not he will understand the distinction. In the Book of Hebrews, Paul said we should leave the baptism of repentance behind (Heb. 5:12–6:2). He did not mean to give it up, but once having repented and been baptized, we should go on to higher levels of development. Only babes stay on the first principles. We are to leave the first principles behind and go on to further development. While we are not to discard them, we

should not dwell on the first principles but go on to higher realms of thought. However, those who do not develop must retain those first principles to even remain Christians. To be of the Little Flock is another matter. The Great Company are Christians, and so are the Little Flock, but there is a wide difference between the foolish and the wise virgins.

John's disciples continued for a while to perform his baptism of repentance, but they should have seen the propriety of leaving him. John even encouraged his disciples to do this: "Behold, the Lamb of God [who is *greater* than me]" (John 1:35-37). "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Although John encouraged his disciples to leave him and follow Jesus, he did not command them. They had to leave of their own volition. Peter, Andrew, James, and John left very quickly to listen to Jesus and to ultimately become his disciples. Also, once the high calling was open, a Jew could go direct to Jesus and did not need John's baptism.

It is better for babes to remain babes than for them to go back into the world. The same was true in regard to John's disciples. It was better for them to remain his disciples than for them to go back to careless and willful sins. However, it is more desirable to leave the first principles and *go on*.

Matt. 4:18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

Matt. 4:19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matt. 4:20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

Matt. 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

Matt. 4:22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Verses 18-22 are an abbreviated account. More details are given elsewhere. Peter and Andrew would have been aware of Jesus' ministry and had some previous experience with him. Then when Jesus called them, as recorded here, they responded "straightway" with good heart attitudes.

Peter and Andrew were brothers and fishermen, and James and John were brothers and fishermen. Zebedee, the father of James and John, was also there in the boat, but he was not called. This selective calling indicates that *God* does the calling, and it is *specific*. However, Zebedee was agreeable to his sons' leaving immediately to follow Jesus. *Later* the Twelve were also called to *apostleship*.

John the Baptist spoke *considerably* about Jesus. That was his mission: to make straight the way for Jesus' ministry. John was greatly respected, so when he pointed out Jesus as the Messiah, his testimony carried weight.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John went from one fishing business to another. Jesus' words "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" were like saying, "This is a *higher* work of a somewhat similar nature."

Matt. 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

The fact that Jesus taught in the synagogues shows he was learned. The chief rulers of the synagogues were probably initially impressed by his great learning. After the reading, there were questions and comments.

Apparently, Joseph had died some years earlier, and Jesus supported his mother until age 30. While he was ministering, her other children no doubt supported her.

Matt. 4:24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Matt. 4:25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

Jesus' fame went throughout all Syria, a large area, plus the Decapolis (ten cities), Jerusalem, Judea, and "beyond Jordan." Decapolis was the upper area of Transjordan, and "beyond Jordan" was the lower area. Syria was in the direction of Iran, Iraq, and beyond Lebanon. The Jews came from all of these regions to Jesus to be healed of all manner of sickness and disease.

What is the difference between being "possessed with devils" and being "lunatic"? A person can be a "lunatic" because of a growth, pressure, or a birth defect. Although the term can include involvement with demons, it is not a willing possession; that is, the individual does not give his will over to occult powers.

"Torments" were deformities such as a club foot that dragged around. In those days, others looked down upon those with deformities, and there was much less sympathy than today.

Matthew was generalizing. Jesus healed *all* manner of infirmities, and Jews came from all over to be healed as news of his miraculous powers spread. And with every type of healing—whether mental or physical—virtue went out of Jesus; he expended some of his own energy (Luke 6:19). However, being a perfect man, he was rejuvenated following rest and sleep. Each day he was revitalized, only to be weakened again and again and again (Isa. 53:4).

Some even came from Jerusalem to be healed. The trip was a hardship for those who were so infirm, but there would have been great excitement in going to see the one they had heard about. Only for the feast days did Jesus go to Jerusalem, and then he was going to reverence Jehovah, not primarily to heal.

Matt. 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

In verses 1-12, Matthew gave his perspective of a portion of the Sermon on the Mount that was heard only by Jesus' disciples after they followed him up into a mountain in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. Luke showed that a number of the multitude heard some of the other portions of the "sermon" in Chapters 5-7 of Matthew when Jesus was in *another* area of the same mountain range.

Verse 1 tells that the disciples exerted the extra effort and made the sacrifice to follow Jesus up the climb into the mountain. "When he was set, his disciples came unto him." Notice that the disciples *waited* for Jesus to get ready; they did not press him. They knew that he had brought them there for a reason, and they waited until he was ready to give them instruction.

Matt. 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Verse 2 implies that the disciples had been *silent* while they waited for Jesus. They did not question or hurry him but gave him time to position himself. Following this period of no conversation, Jesus broke the silence (“opened his mouth”).

Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Verses 3-11 each begin with “Blessed,” there being nine in all. Each “Blessed” is a separate verse because of the overall importance, and attached to each characteristic is a *spiritual* reward. Even to “inherit the earth” (verse 5) is a spiritual reward because it pertains to rulership *from the heavens*. The beatitudes are directed to the *disciples*, not to the world in the Kingdom, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (verse 3). The mourners “shall be comforted” (verse 4) beyond the veil. Then will the *full* comfort and rest be realized by faithful Christians, although they do receive a partial consolation now. Since many of these rewards are *obviously* spiritual, it is safe, therefore, to assume that *all* of them are spiritual.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” To be “poor in spirit” is to be humble.

Matt. 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Although one does receive comfort in the present life, if he makes his calling and election sure, then any mourning that took place down here will be abundantly—superabundantly!—satisfied when he is rewarded in the next life. Such a one will consider his previous mourning as actually a blessing, for perhaps it initiated his response to the hope of the gospel in the first place. In retrospect, mourning will be seen as a stepping-stone to a wonderful inheritance. Hence to “be comforted” refers primarily to the next age.

“Mourning” is comprehensive. Some mourn when they look at the conditions of society today and see the degeneracy of mankind, sin, sickness, etc. This would be a higher form of mourning than the initial mourning that brings one to Christ. Some are very emotionally responsive to circumstances; in fact, they are so sympathetic that they can be physically affected. Thus the mourning embraces more than just the initial mourning. It includes a longing for better conditions and a sympathy for the problems of others—as well as perhaps some peculiar circumstances of their own. For instance, one might mourn because of disfigurement or an illness that entails a very *long* period of suffering and a very *long, enduring* test of patience for physical pain, shame, ignominy, and mental grief. Sometimes shame incurred through an experience that happened prior to consecration is not fully removed or compensated for after consecration. Although that would be a different type of mourning, it is still mourning.

Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The “meek” are the teachable.

Matt. 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

This “hunger and thirst after righteousness” is not just before consecration, for it should continue afterwards. For the rest of the Christian’s life, he should hunger and thirst for more and more. Thus verse 6 refers to more than just the initial “filling” and comforting at the time of consecration. The hymn says, “*Here is no rest, here is no rest.*” The real rest, comfort, and filling are beyond the veil. There is only a *partial* filling now.

Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Some feel that if the merciful will obtain mercy, then we should forgive everybody everything so that God will have mercy on us. However, there is a qualification; namely, we should be merciful *as God is merciful*. There are limitations to characteristics and attitudes such as mercifulness and meekness. Sometimes it is necessary to take a stand. For example, if a teacher is promoting complete error, we should not be meek (teachable, amenable to his instruction). It is to *Christ's* and *God's* law that we should be teachable.

It is significant that hungering and thirsting after righteousness (truth, justice) precede the characteristics of mercifulness and meekness. Matthew was comprehensive and orderly in his presentation of the beatitudes.

Matt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

In other words, “Blessed are those whose *motives* are pure and clean and holy.” Sincerity of intention and will is a prerequisite.

Matt. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Verse 9 does not mean that we should make peace at all times, for Jesus said, “I am come not to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34 paraphrase). Each circumstance must be weighed *separately* to determine what our attitude should be. The wisdom that comes from above is first pure, then peaceable (James 3:17). Other conditions are to precede peaceableness. We should not be more loving and peaceable than God (but neither should we be more just than He). It is the peace of *God*—what He would do and what Jesus would do—that we are to seek. The beatitudes list *general* attitudes; they do not cover every circumstance in life. Every experience we have does not call for peace and compromise. The Bible indicates we should be flexible: “Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Phil. 4:5). Our general attitude is to be one of *reasonableness*, but there are exceptions. The beatitudes are descriptions of everyday life, the *general* attitude of the Christian in his deeds, thinking, and teaching.

The promises in verses 1-12 are directed *specifically* to the Little Flock. However, the Great Company will receive a compensatory reward for their degree of faithfulness, so some of these promises will apply to them in the final analysis and some will not. For example, the Great Company will be “children of God” (verse 9), but only the Little Flock will be “the kingdom of heaven” (verse 3). Both classes will see God, however.

The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. It is true that both classes are likened unto the Kingdom of heaven, but the parable applies to the *present* life, during which all of the virgins are running for the *high* calling. *All* are called in the *one* hope of being of the Kingdom of heaven class. After the race is over is another matter, however. After the Gospel Age ends, the Kingdom of heaven (Little Flock) class will be the kings and priests, the rulership, and the Great Company will be messengers.

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

There is a contrast in verses 10 and 11. Being persecuted for righteousness' sake is different from being persecuted for Christ's sake. “For righteousness' sake,” one might not do certain things because of violating conscience and principle. Because of principle and conscience, one has to take a stand either against his own flesh or against the injustices and evil committed by others. “For Christ's sake” is more personal. One stands up for being a Christian or for the

cause of Christ or for Christianity.

The experiences are different depending on whether we suffer for righteousness' sake or for Christ's sake. Whether or not husband and wife are both consecrated, a Christian could be persecuted for righteousness' sake within his own family, but persecution for Christ's sake is more personal. The former is standing for principle; the latter, for a cause, as an ambassador for Christ. Suffering for Christ's sake is more easily seen as being related to Christianity and not just as an issue of right and wrong. Incidentally, *all* of the Little Flock must have *all* of the characteristics in verses 3-11.

Matt. 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The prophets were persecuted for righteousness' sake. If they are going to get a great reward and a better resurrection, then the reward of the Little Flock will be *exceedingly* great: the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6).

Matt. 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Matt. 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Matt. 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Matt. 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

There should not be a paragraph break at verse 13, for verses 13-16 are a *continuation* of verses 1-12. Jesus was continuing the same discourse at the same moment without respite or intermission. Verses 13-16 pertain to witnessing. There are two ways to witness: (1) by our walk or life and (2) by our doctrinal professions. The point is that we must both *act and speak* like a Christian. Both constitute letting our light shine—not just activities like giving out tracts but confession with the mouth and our life, our Christian walk. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

Verse 16 is the tenth beatitude: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Verse 16 embraces the thought of being the "salt of the earth." "Salt" *preserves* and flavors food; it is wholesome and good in its proper place. "Light" also has a purpose; it *enlightens* others in darkness. "Good works" include not only what is oral and written but also conduct.

We are not to keep the light under a bushel. The "bushel" is our own body, which is the vessel or *container*. We should not keep the light within (or to) ourselves but should let it shine out. The light is in the container (us); if the bushel is upside down, the light cannot shine out to others, for it is covered.

Verses 15 and 16 are a *generalization*, for the Bible also says that a fool tells all he knows (Prov. 29:11) and that sin is in a multitude of words (Prov. 10:19). If we talk too much, too long, too elaborately, or too readily, we may get ourselves in trouble because we are then apt to make misstatements. Therefore, it is better to speak only what we *really* know, or what we believe we really know, because we have taken time to consider the matter. Another Scripture tells us

not to cast our pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). The circumstances need to be considered, for there are moderating factors. For example, some put so much emphasis on witnessing that they lose their jobs. They spend too much of the employer's time palavering and witnessing, they put tracts on bulletin boards and areas meant for business purposes, etc. These things should be done with *discretion*. After one is known and has proved his work ability, certain liberties can be taken but not before. Tracts should not be given liberally to someone else's (the boss's) customers, for he may lose his customers and their business. We should speak "in season" and "out of season" with regard to ourselves, but with others, we should speak only when the time is convenient for them (2 Tim. 4:2). We are sacrificing if we witness when it is out of season for *ourselves*, for example, if we have a headache or are in ill health. Witnessing in season, when we have good health, is a delight.

Matt. 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Matt. 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The "law" is the Pentateuch, and the "prophets" are the rest of the Old Testament. Jesus will fulfill *all* of these. Of course not all things were fulfilled at the First Advent, but *all* must be accomplished sooner or later.

Verse 17 is a statement of fact that needs considerable elaboration. It is a summation of many succeeding verses, which amplify this deep statement. Jesus' teachings were based on the Law, but since they dealt with *motives*, they were *higher* than the Law. He gave legal precedents for Christians to use in their lives as various problems arise. Chapters 5-7 are lengthy, yet they are an abbreviation of what Jesus said to his disciples on this occasion of the Sermon on the Mount.

Verses 17 and 18 are really one unit, and verses 19 and 20 explain or reflect on verses 17 and 18. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the prophets, that is, the Old Testament. *All* prophecies, types, plans, and purposes of God will be fulfilled. The Law is an expression of the *mind of God*, and all of this thinking will be fulfilled. The time will come when everything God dislikes will pass away and everything He likes will prosper. Thus the *principles* enunciated in the types and shadows of the Law and in the prophets will also be fulfilled. Jesus was especially emphasizing the *principles* aspect of the Law and the prophets, called "commandments" in verse 19.

The gospel magnified the Law and the prophets. When Jesus preached after his baptism, the multitudes thought his doctrine (teaching) was different because it was a radical change from what the scribes and Pharisees taught. The people were puzzled by many of Jesus' statements, but they could find no flaw. Many thought his teaching was a breath of fresh air, for the Law stultified.

Consider the example of the rich, young ruler who wanted *life* (Luke 18:18-23). "What else must I do?" was his question. He had obeyed the Law and the prophets, he loved God, and he was disappointed in the results of the Law, so what more should he do? Jesus pointed out that riches were his problem and he would have to make riches secondary in his life. The rich, young ruler went away sad, unwilling to give them up. Peter also had to give up much, and he did. He was given a vision of a sheet of unclean animals from heaven (Acts 10:9-16). When he was told to eat them, he replied that he had never eaten any unclean animals. Upon awaking, he was given the instruction regarding Cornelius, and Peter obeyed. Both the rich, young ruler and Peter had tried to obey the Lord, but Peter gave up what he had and did obey and truly follow the Lord. The lesson is that it will cost us something to follow Jesus. We must change our sights.

Three different classes heard Jesus' message: (1) publicans and sinners, (2) rulers, and (3) scribes and Pharisees. The publicans and sinners knew they had not fully tried to obey the Law. Those who were rightly exercised saw Jesus' words as a way of hope and reinstatement to harmony with God. Others rejected the message, wanting to continue a life of sin.

The scribes and Pharisees were professors of truth, teachers of the Law, before the people. They knew that to respond to Jesus would mean giving up their honorable position and assuming the role of student instead of teacher. Honesty, humility, and hunger are all needed to respond to Jesus. The rich, young ruler had humility and honesty but not sufficient hunger for righteousness and truth. Peter had all three qualities.

Jesus said he had not come to destroy the Law and the prophets but to fulfil them. He spoke boldly, positively, and directly. Because of his background, he was familiar with God, and he had miraculous powers of healing. Moreover, his message was constructive and uplifting. He did not lower his standard to flatter people but was honest, open, and sincere and often pointed out faults. In order to help his disciples, he had to indoctrinate them so that they could answer critics. The day of the Sermon on the Mount was a *remarkable* day of deep teaching.

In verse 17, Jesus was telling his disciples to think about and reflect on him. He *obeyed* the Law as a Jew should. He did not deny the moral code but *upheld* that standard and in no way tried to undercut God's Law. The flaw was in the people, not in the Law, and he offered a way of escape while preserving the principles in the Law.

Jesus "fulfilled" the Law by *obeying* and *magnifying* it. The Law was a statement of outward acts, but Jesus showed that it was necessary to meditate on these things, for the motivation that produced a deed was important. He taught that one should deal with the motive *before* a wrong deed is committed. He also fulfilled the Law by fulfilling the types. His obedience to the Law led to the Cross.

In addition to not destroying the Law, Jesus did not destroy the prophets. But how did the nation view his ministry? The prophets had said the Kingdom would be centered in Jerusalem when Messiah came. Therefore, the people could not understand Jesus' humility, lack of military exploits, and the fact that he was not a political activist. He merely taught. He did not pick out the cream of the crop but taught sinners. Hence they thought he contradicted the promises of restitution, but those promises will be fulfilled at the Second Advent.

Matt. 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Verses 19 and 20 give a higher and/or additional lesson. Not only the Law and the prophets (the types and the prophecies) must be fulfilled but also the *principles* ("commandments"). Teachers of the Gospel Age must conform to the moral principles of the Word. Those who *break one of the least* of these commandments *and teach* others so, will be least in the Kingdom of heaven (the Little Flock)—if they even get in. Careless or negligent teaching on more important things rules one out of the Little Flock.

Breaking and teaching are coupled together. In other words, we all sin, we all fall down, we all break some commandment, for only Jesus could keep the Law perfectly, but the danger lies in breaking and *teaching*. There are different ways to teach. Of course the instructor teaches. In addition, the one being instructed can also teach by making comments in a study, teaching

privately, and the deeds of life (the Christian walk). One who breaks a “commandment” repeatedly and thus forms a habit or practice is also teaching, even though not a word may be uttered. It is like the heavens—they are silent, and yet they continually send forth a powerful sermon to all the earth of the glory of God. Therefore, we can teach by silent example. However, the greater penalty for breaking and teaching falls on the instructor.

Verse 19 shows the importance of Christ’s and God’s “commandments,” or principles. One is demoted to being *least* in the Kingdom of heaven for breaking just *one of the least* of these and *teaching* men so. Hence it is *dangerous* to teach principles from the platform unless one is sure he is teaching them correctly. Whether or not one realizes he is teaching wrong principles, whether or not the teaching is done in ignorance, he is just as culpable. Ignorance is no excuse. Lesson: We should be very careful in discussing principles, for we might encourage ourselves and others in a wrong course. A “secret” sin is different, for that is an individual problem one is trying to overcome (Psa. 19:12). A secret sin does not involve teaching others.

The tie-in of verse 19 with verses 17 and 18 is, in essence, that Jesus *in no way* destroyed the principles of the Old Testament; they were carried into the New Testament, and *all* of them still apply. The breaking of these principles results in a demotion depending on how many are broken and their gravity. In other words, Jesus was saying, “Do *not* think that I have come to nullify the Law.” Therefore, we, as Christians, should study the Old Testament, for the Law is the mind of God, and *His* principles are inculcated in it. Of course we are not justified by obedience to the letter of the Law because we are imperfect, but the Law is *very profitable* for the Christian to study. Although we are under grace and thus receive forgiveness based on mercy, grace, and the new arrangement, the Law is very important. Moreover, we are criticizing the *mind of God* if we say there can be no animal sacrifices in the future because they are bloody. After all, *God* decreed them in the past, and the Old Testament was *His* thinking. There is nothing wrong with animal sacrifices as set forth by God whether they were done in the past, whether they will be done in the Kingdom, or whether they will be done beyond the Millennium. There is *nothing wrong* with the principle.

The passing of the Law pertained to the Christian’s going to a *higher* condition and being judged on *another* basis, but there is nothing wrong with the Law or its principles. Jesus was doing honor to the Law; in fact, he made the Law *more intense* and *stricter* (see the rest of Chapter 5 plus Chapters 6 and 7). In other words, the “commandments” of verse 19 are those mentioned subsequently in Chapters 5 through 7 of Matthew’s Gospel.

Jesus came to fulfill both the letter of the Law and the principles of the Law. The letter of the Law is, “Do not do such and such.” The spirit of the Law is the *reason* for not doing such and such, that is, the principles. All can understand a commandment (“Thou shalt not”), but it is harder to discern the reason. *Why* God does this and that pertains to the reason, the philosophy, the motivation. A commandment is clear-cut and simple and should be easy to obey. Adam was told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but the reason why God said that—the permission of evil—is harder to understand.

Verse 20 is strong. Unless our righteousness *exceeds* that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will not even enter into the Kingdom of heaven. The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be *above average* in morals and conduct, but Christ’s disciples are to be *above* that. The scribes and Pharisees made long prayers and wore holy clothing, but that was not enough. Christians should be more holy and obedient. We cannot read the heart, but Jesus gave us much information on how to recognize hypocrites both in teaching and in living.

Matt. 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

“It was said by them of old time [in the Mosaic Law], Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.” There are different types of killing. In each case, the circumstances had to be investigated, for those who committed murder were liable to death under the Law. However, Jesus expects his disciples to live in a higher realm or condition than just merely the commandments. That is why he went further and started to discuss anger in the next few verses.

The thought in the Law was, “Thou shalt not *murder*,” yet there were times when the Israelites were told to kill unworthy ones whose iniquity had come to the full. In the same way, the electric chair or hanging of a *known* killer and hardened criminal is not murder. Capital punishment is taught in the Bible.

Matt. 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Jesus listed three conditions: anger, Raca, thou fool. And there is increasing responsibility with each successive condition, “Thou fool” being the most serious.

The phrase “without a cause” is omitted in the Greek, but it is a proper thought based on other Scriptures, for *righteous* indignation is indicated in certain unusual situations. The general rule, however, is that a Christian should not be angry. “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”; that is, in danger of some type of punishment, reprimand, withholding of grace, etc.

“Raca” is the puzzling term. “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council.” The translators are not sure what “Raca” means in Hebrew, so most leave it untranslated. Some translate it “Fool,” so that this term is used twice: “Raca” (Hebrew for “fool”) and “Thou fool” (Greek).

What is the difference between “Raca” and “Thou fool”? Why is there more culpability in the last category? Those who say “Raca” to their brother shall be in danger of the council, but those who say “Thou fool” shall be in danger of eternal death (Gehenna). Gehenna was the garbage dump outside Jerusalem that continually burned. What was cast into the Valley of Gehenna was *destroyed*, not tortured, so it is a fitting symbol for Second Death. In olden times, criminals were slain first and then thrown into the burning garbage dump, being denied a decent burial.

Many nationalities have colloquial expressions of *public* disapproval. “Raca” was probably such an expression used by Jews when they disagreed with someone to indicate “You are not in my favor.” A Christian should be mighty careful in using such a statement about a fellow Christian. This would be an *impulsive* statement, not a deliberate one. For instance, in a murder case, the judge wants to determine if the crime was one of passion, one of manslaughter, where the person did not intend to kill but did so accidentally without premeditation. The penalty depends on the circumstance. War is another situation in which killing occurs. Harbored, premeditated murder is the most serious. Impulsive murder due to passion involves hatred but does not demand as severe a penalty. In short, “Raca” is saying something unfavorable about a person on *impulse* but not in a lasting sense.

“Thou fool” is more *deliberate* and *personal*, as opposed to a spontaneous colloquial expression. “Thou fool” means “moron” (Greek *moros*). The crime is worse in this category because it is an *individualized* judgment. Judgment is passed in a very personalized sense. The contrast is on just “Raca,” a spontaneous outburst, versus “Thou fool,” a more deliberate and personal judgment.

When a person is angry with his brother, he is in danger of judgment, but the judgment is not a foregone conclusion, for the *cause* of that anger must be searched out. Is the anger righteous indignation, or is it improper and unjustified (as is *usually* the case)? When a person is angry, he will not necessarily be punished, but the point is that the anger should be carefully considered before it is harbored to *any* degree.

“Raca” is more serious than “anger” because the one who says this to his brother is in danger of the “council,” a collective body, a “jury.” The judgment of several people is needed in order to get a fair verdict. “Raca” is of a felonious nature, since one is in danger of being brought to trial. “Raca” is more than a dig or slam; it involves a court case.

“Thou fool” being the most serious, no council or “jury” is needed, for the act or attitude of heart manifests that the person may have committed the unpardonable sin. He is in danger of “hellfire” (Gehenna, Second Death). In other words, unless there are extenuating circumstances, the individual has committed the unpardonable sin. What would be some extenuating circumstances? Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees in very *strong* terms, calling them “whited sepulchres” and “fools” (Matt. 23:17), but he was not individualizing. Jesus was addressing a *class* in regard to a hypothetical situation—that if they behaved a certain way, they were hypocrites, etc. Jesus did not address a specific individual, but said, “One who thinks along a certain line evidences irrationality and thus is in danger of the utmost punishment.” On one occasion, it was said that those who felt they were justified by following the works of the Law—instead of justification through faith and grace—were fools. Jesus continued, “Those who disobey one part of the Law are guilty of all the Law and hence cannot get life through it”; that is, “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” because we are all imperfect (Rom. 3:20).

“Anger” is on the borderline of being judged. “Raca” is on the borderline of being brought up on charges before a jury. “Thou fool” is on the borderline of Second Death. Altogether, these show the seriousness with which anger should be considered.

Matt. 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

Matt. 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

“Thy gift” would include praise, prayer, money, service, etc. An error must be rectified before bringing to God our thanksgiving or other gift. *General* prayer can still be offered, but prayer for a way to serve the Lord is not acceptable until amends are made. The “altar” in this context is an altar of *heart devotion* and sacrifice to God, which is expressed in various ways such as sacrifice, praise, and service. These gifts are not acceptable at the altar if we are harboring a condition of heart not approved of God.

Verses 23 and 24 pertain to a situation where one has actually wronged his brother. This is not an imaginary or fancied wrong on the part of the other party. And it is not a case where a Christian has taken a stand for principle based on Scripture. Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). Hence there are times when the Christian is misunderstood but has committed no wrong and, therefore, cannot “soothe” the other party. The point is that if we know we have *wronged* someone, we *must* try to make amends before we offer gifts to the Lord. In 1 John 4:20, the apostle said, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.”

Matt. 5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer,

and thou be cast into prison.

“Thine adversary” is the one the Christian had the disagreement with, the one he wronged, the victim of unjust treatment. The one who committed the wrong has to make things right with the recipient of the mistreatment. The victim has *just* cause to find fault, for his reputation was damaged.

If we have personally wronged someone, we must make an agreement with that individual and do it *quickly* while we are “in the way with him”; that is, we must act immediately, while our conscience is pricked and we know we have done wrong. Otherwise, if we delay, the heart is deceitfully wicked, and we may rationalize the situation and end up never apologizing. The memory will fade if we parley over the matter or procrastinate or delay. Also, the victim may die if action is not taken quickly. In other words, we are to go quickly and make amends while the memory is fresh and the conscience is tender lest the victim die in the meantime. Principle: “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26). The quicker the amends are made, the better.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly ... lest ... the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.” Since a brother should not take a brother to court, the “judge” is *God*. When a wrong is done to us, we leave the matter in the Lord’s hands. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). If the matter goes to the judge (God), something has to be done to bring satisfaction for the injustice that was done. Of course, if a sincere apology is made, the victim should forgive from the heart. “And if he [thy brother] trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, *I repent*; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:4). Forgiveness is predicated on repentance. The Lord’s Prayer states, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Because we *ask* God to forgive us, we can be forgiven. Conversely, if we do not seek forgiveness, the trespass is charged against our account.

“Prison” is qualified by verse 26—it is possible to come out of this prison. “Prison” could be a buffeting by the Adversary so that, hopefully, the hard experiences will bring the errant one to his senses and to repentance. “Prison” could include a cutting off from fellowship until such time as there is repentance. It could be a curtailment of privileges or a loss of inner peace so that one is in a disturbed mental or emotional state where conscience is pricked. “Prison” could be a restriction of liberties along certain lines, or it could be experiencing God’s disfavor.

The “officer” (or jailer, as it were) is Satan or *any* instrument God uses to bring one to his senses. The consecrated one who commits certain sins is delivered “unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). In regard to the next age, the “officer” could be the one who will deal personally with a wrongdoer. With the Christian, the “officer” is usually Satan.

An ecclesia may determine that fellowship should be withheld. There are varying degrees: a partial disfellowshipping or full excommunication. In any event, “prison” is a restriction on the liberty of the individual who is responsible for the misdeed, the *perpetrator*.

From the opposite standpoint, Matthew 18:15-17 outlines the steps that the *victim* should take to rectify a misdeed. In Matthew 5:23-25, the victim is called the “adversary,” that is, the one who has suffered the injury unjustly.

Matt. 5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

The wrongdoer cannot come out of “prison” until he has “paid the uttermost farthing.” This

means it is technically possible for the wrongdoer to come out of prison *if* he pays the penalty. Otherwise, he will remain in the prison. For the Christian, the matter of “prison,” etc., would apply to the *present* life. A “farthing” is the second smallest coinage, that is, one fourth of a cent. The word “mite” is used in the parallel account in Luke; a mite is one eighth of a cent (Luke 12:59).

Ideally, the following steps should be taken. The wrongdoer leaves his gift at the altar and tries to be reconciled to his brother; he tries to make amends. But if this does not happen, the victim may take a stand. Hence it is important to not let the sun go down on wrath. One is to act quickly and beat the victim to the punch by asking for forgiveness.

Matt. 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Matt. 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Matt. 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Matt. 5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Verses 27-30 pertain to adultery. What is the difference between sinning with the hand and sinning with the eye? A sin with the eye is a sin in *thought*, a *wrong desire*. As Billy Graham said, “It is the looking *twice* that is dangerous.” Certain desires may be momentarily inflamed, but if they are pursued and not curbed immediately, they lead to committing the sin. A sin with the hand is a sin in deed, a *wrong deed*. If carried out, it leads to a habit—and to Second Death.

The right eye or the right hand should be plucked out, or cut off, lest the sin go further. Why did Jesus mention the “right” eye or hand? This would represent the *best* desire of the *old* man in an *unfavorable* sense. In other words, the developed weakness of the old creature must be dealt with radically.

There is a saying: “You can’t prevent the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building a nest in your hair.” Wrong thoughts may enter our minds, but we can reject and refuse to entertain them. Satan and the fallen angels can put evil thoughts and suggestions in our brain, but we must *oppose* them. Even the *perfect* Jesus had thoughts interjected into his mind by Satan.

The point is that if we have a wrong desire or commit a wrong deed, we must get rid of it *right* away, or a wrong pattern of behavior will develop that will lead to Second Death. Depending on *individual* weaknesses, one Christian might have to curb a liberty that another Christian could continue to exercise without danger. Thus we should be aware of our individual weaknesses so that we can avoid unnecessary temptation. The temptation will come in the “right” hand or eye area of the weakness of our old man. “Let your eye be single” is the principle (Matt. 6:22). The double-eyed, or double-minded, brother has a conflict of interest that is continually distressing.

The whole body being “cast into hell” would be Second Death. Plucking out the right eye or cutting off the right hand indicates a *drastic curtailment* of liberty. For instance, one brother could look at a woman and have no thoughts of lust, whereas another brother would be

tempted and have to strongly oppose the temptation.

If we have a wrong desire or commit a wrong deed, we are to treat it *radically* and get rid of it *right away*, or it will lead to Second Death. If we have a particular weakness, we should recognize it and beware lest it overtake us. We are to *destroy* the “right hand” or “right eye” of the *weakness*; that is, drastically curtail our liberty in the area of that weakness.

Matt. 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

Divorce was permitted in the Old Testament: a man could divorce his wife (see Deut. 24:1,2). Under the Law, a person could be divorced and remarry, and still not be culpable of a misdeed depending on the circumstances. If “uncleanness” was found in the wife, the husband could divorce her. Uncleanness was not unfaithfulness, for if the wife was unfaithful, she had to be put to death. Uncleanness could mean that the wife was found not to have the signs of virginity, that she had an objectionable issue of some sort from her body, or something else. In such cases, the husband could give her a bill of divorcement and set her aside. She was then free to remarry.

Matt. 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

But Jesus commented further, “The *only* reason you can put away your wife is fornication.” To repeat, fornication is the *only* grounds for divorce in the New Testament. The innocent party can procure a divorce (and is then free to remarry, as stated elsewhere).

In Mark 10:11,12, Jesus said, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” Jesus was saying that if a husband (or wife) puts away the respective partner and marries another, he (or she) commits adultery. In other words, divorcing for grounds other than fornication and marrying another would be committing adultery. Such guilty ones could not divorce their second spouse and remarry their first one in a third marriage.

In Matthew 19:9, the Master said, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” It is unscriptural to get a divorce where fornication is not a factor and to marry another. Luke 16:18 is similar, showing that the one who remarries commits adultery. And one who marries a divorced person (when the divorce was not obtained because of fornication) commits adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:10,11 reads, “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” This chapter discusses those who are single, widowed, equally yoked, or unequally yoked. If after one partner consecrates, the unconsecrated spouse wants to “depart” (that is, *separate*), let him. Also, if the consecrated wife finds the situation is unbearable and detrimental to the fulfilling of her vows, then she may have to separate in order to follow the truth. However, she would not be free to remarry because there was no fornication.

If a consecrated brother and sister found their marriage was detrimental to their consecrations because of personality problems, contention, etc., they could separate but not get a divorce or remarry, for fornication was *not* an issue. They could obtain a legal separation for tax purposes,

property settlement, etc., but they should not get a divorce. If they did go ahead and divorce, breaking their marital contract, it would not be proper for them to remarry each other, let alone to marry someone else.

Only for fornication should *brethren* get a divorce. Once the marriage contract is broken, remarriage, even to each other, is not proper. Incidentally, homosexuality is an example of fornication.

Marriage among brethren is a picture of Jesus and the Church. Hence marriage vows should not be taken lightly, and the contract should not be broken except for unusual extenuating circumstances, such as fornication.

In a consecrated marriage, if the wife or husband wants a child and sexual intimacy but did not discuss raising a family, etc., before marriage, and then finds out after marriage that the spouse is unwilling to fulfill the duty of a husband or wife, the court will annul the unconsummated marriage. This would be a case of fraud—and in the Lord's eyes also, this could be considered an unconsummated marriage. However, this is an entirely different situation from a “cooling off” and alienation years later. There should be a proper understanding in regard to physical intimacy and children *before* the marriage is contracted. It is fraud to marry but not intend to cohabit without telling the intended spouse beforehand. But if *both* partners agree *before* marriage not to cohabit, then fraud is not perpetrated. *Generally*, we marry for better or for worse, and we should accept the ensuing circumstances.

If a consecrated brother and sister get divorced and there is no fornication or remarriage to other parties, can they remarry one another according to the Scriptures if they so choose? No, because they *broke* the contract.

Consider a hypothetical situation. Suppose two consecrated ones are married and one institutes divorce proceedings for grounds other than fornication, but the court rejects the decision. Even though the divorce was refused, the other party could Scripturally get a divorce based on the previously expressed *intention and action* of the spouse. However, neither party could remarry. Forgiveness is always in order based on repentance, but remarriage is another matter—it should not occur after a divorce has been granted.

Hypothetical situation: If someone was divorced prior to consecration, would he or she have the privilege of remarriage if the divorce was not obtained on the grounds of fornication? Yes, *if* the party truly did not previously know the Lord's will in the matter.

In the Pastor's day, a murderer repented and consecrated. He felt so unworthy that he freely discussed his sinful background, but the Pastor advised him to say little, for such open confession would only damage his reputation unnecessarily. The Lord forgave the murderer when he consecrated, so he did not have to keep confessing his background. By continually telling of his past, he would prejudice the minds of some who would not be able to forget his past and would be afraid he would murder again.

The general law of the New Testament is that marriage is a strict contract with no divorce and no marrying of a divorced person—unless there is fornication. Then whether or not one was consecrated, whether the divorce occurred before or after consecration, etc., must be considered.

If a consecrated person divorces improperly, marries someone else, and then becomes repentant, he or she would have to depart from spouse No. 2 before forgiveness could be even contemplated by the Church. Marriage would have to be renounced altogether. If a consecrated party leaves spouse No. 1, lives with someone, and later marries him or her after

obtaining a divorce from spouse No. 1, the second marriage contract does not excuse the situation in the least. To take steps of repentance, the guilty party would first have to give up spouse No. 2.

Matt. 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

“Thou shalt not forswear thyself” means “thou shalt not perjure thyself.” Perjury is saying something that contradicts what was previously said—and thus making oneself culpable for judgment. Therefore, *false, insincere, or contradictory* testimony would constitute forswearing or perjuring oneself. Speaking too readily and/or too frequently often results in perjury.

There is a relationship between performing and forswearing: “*Perform* unto the Lord thine oaths.” One forswears himself by *not* performing that which he previously uttered under oath (or else, of course, the statement was untrue to start with).

Verse 33 is based on Leviticus 19:12, “Ye shall not swear by my name falsely ... I am the LORD.” It is one thing to take an oath, but to seal the oath with the Lord’s name, Jerusalem, the earth, etc., just adds to the injury (see verses 33-37). Incidentally, this prohibition does not prevent a Christian from taking an oath in court.

Deuteronomy 23:21 reads, “When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.” If one takes an oath, he should perform it. Otherwise, he is taking the oath falsely. This admonition would include vows of consecration. A consecration vow is a *most solemn* vow, and it *cannot* be assumed the Lord did not accept it. In fact, to do so would be presumptuous.

Leviticus 5:1 states, “If a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.” What is the “voice of swearing” wherein a soul can sin? The fifth chapter of Leviticus lists certain sins that can be forgiven if the proper steps are taken. Subsequent verses specify the offerings and conditions for one to be absolved of a particular violation. Leviticus 5:1 is not a reference to cursing, for under the Jewish Law, there was no sacrifice for the cursing of God. A secondary meaning for this verse is apparent in the King James Version; namely, if a person makes a vow and violates it, and we know of both the vow and the violation but remain silent, we are culpable too. For the *primary* meaning, see the Revised Standard Version and the Jerusalem Bible.

1. RSV—“If any one sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity.”

2. Jerusalem Bible—“If any one sins in any of these following cases, a man should have come forward to give evidence when he heard the formal adjuration, having seen the incident or known the facts; but he has not spoken out and so bears the consequences of his fault.”

If a court case involving life or death or some other serious issue was being publicly tried and the judge declared, “Is there anyone present who can provide information on this matter?” all those who had such information were obligated to disclose it; that is, they had to participate in the trial as either witnesses or spectators. This was a *formal* hearing. In the trial, a formal declaration was made—a formal adjuration—in which the party who was judging the case asked, “Is there anyone here who can shed light on the matter?” Anyone who had been an eyewitness or an “ear witness” was obligated to speak up. In other words, when a case was tried, all information was necessary to render a fair decision, a proper judgment. If an eyewitness or an ear witness remained silent and did not come forward, he was guilty. And

even if the information one had was only *secondhand*—for example, a rumor—he had to come forward. Under Jewish law, rumors had to be tracked down to the source. The individual had to give the name of the person he heard the rumor from. Then that person was interrogated, etc., etc., right back to the source, the eyewitness or the ear witness. Anyone who *withheld* information was guilty. If he later became aware that he had withheld information, he had to take steps for forgiveness, starting with his public confession (Lev. 5:5-19).

These stipulations would apply to any type of case, including property rights (boundary lines), for example. The “voice of adjuration” is a *formal declaration requesting information, an exhortation for evidence made in a formal manner*. Another example of a “voice of adjuration” takes place in a marriage ceremony when, prior to the taking of the marriage vows, it is asked if anyone present knows of any reason why the marriage should not take place; otherwise, he should “forever hold his peace.”

Q: Is 1 Kings 8:31,32 the same situation? “If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.”

A: No, for that text pertained to the dedication of Solomon’s Temple. The altar in the Temple (as well as in the Tabernacle) was like a “court of appeal” for those who were either formally or informally judged guilty of a crime. If such individuals could flee safely to the altar and grab hold of its horn(s), then before someone could slay him, the slayer would need very good grounds. Otherwise, the slayer would be slain in turn. Therefore, if someone was obviously guilty and there were no extenuating circumstances, yet he grabbed the horns of the altar, he would be slain anyway, and the slayer would not be punished. Grabbing the horns of the altar was, in effect, solemnly appealing to the Lord to hear the case. The point in connection with the dedication of the Temple was that the altar was a place of appeal for someone who felt he was being unrighteously judged. If there were valid extenuating circumstances, his case would be heard.

Although the 1 Kings 8:31,32 text tells of a more specific instance, the same principle applies; namely, the altar was a place of appeal. Sometimes in a case, a party is considered guilty, but because of extenuating circumstances, the individual tries to explain why the injury was done. (It should be kept in mind, however, that people frequently try to squirm out of a crime by bringing in extraneous information not pertinent to the case. Here the information is considered pertinent.) Those listening want to know, “Is the accused telling the truth?” Today we swear to tell the truth with our hand on the Bible. When *swearing* to tell the truth, a person is under *double* condemnation if he lies. Therefore, the altar back there was a place where one should not come hastily and swear and make an oath, for there was double condemnation for falsehood. However, if the matter was true, it was to be considered. One who lies under oath will have to answer to Almighty God Himself.

Leviticus 5:4 reads, “If a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these.” This verse, which pertains to a different case of swearing than Leviticus 5:1, is not a case of hearing the voice of adjuration. If a person solemnly swears with an oath to do something good or bad and does not do it, he is guilty. Then the steps are given for such a one to obtain forgiveness. The point is that we should *not speak hastily*—and especially with an oath—under emotion or otherwise. Some do this and then forget a day or two later that they uttered such words. Idle words spoken under oath in a solemn situation and then not performed are sinful. When such words are called to the attention of one who has forgotten them, he must follow the steps for forgiveness, or he will

remain under condemnation.

Q: In the case of a priest who, after much consideration, makes a vow of chastity, poverty, obedience, etc., before God to the Roman Catholic Church, is he responsible to abide by these vows to the end of his life, even if his eyes are opened?

A: That would depend on the circumstances. If one vowed to serve the Roman Catholic *Church* in the name of Jesus, then when he realized the Church was false, he could be released from his vows by accepting the truth. Vows should not be taken lightly. This hypothetical situation shows that there can be rare instances of change. Under the Law, a father could forgive an under-age daughter if she made a vow (Num. 30:3-5). The father pictured the Heavenly Father. The determining factor is the *degree of knowledge* one had when making the vow. A simple consecration vow to obey God is a bona fide vow one cannot be absolved from, for it is a vow to the true God, not to a priest, the Roman Catholic Church, etc. A consecration vow is made on a *personalized* basis, and it cannot be changed. However, a misunderstanding as to who God is and who represents Him is another matter.

Under the Old Testament law already referred to, a father could release a *young* daughter from vows made while still living *under his roof*, assuming such vows were made *hastily* and out of *immaturity*. However, to spiritualize this provision would entail different conditions.

Matt. 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Matt. 5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

When Jesus said, "Swear not at all," he was referring to common, ordinary things. The Christian is not to swear as a practice, habitually, in the way that some frequently exaggerate their words with expressions like "I will do this, *so help me God*" or "I swear to heaven I will do such and such."

Matt. 5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

To the Jew, the hair was a symbol of consecration in connection with the Nazarite vow. Jesus was addressing Jews, and they would have understood this. Swearing by the hairs of one's head, therefore, was a *solemn* vow, for it was a symbol of consecration. Today this expression would be more modified.

Matt. 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

The Christian is simply to say "yes, yes" and "no, no" and not bring in extraneous sayings, for the one who adds to words proportionately incurs responsibility and guilt. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19). The RSV renders this verse, "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is prudent."

If a person tends to be careless with words and then sprinkles in "I swear I will do this" and "I swear I will do that," the implication is that his "yes" and "no" are meaningless, that his simple word is not good enough. The implication is that this time he really intends to do what he says, whereas usually he does not. In other words, a *multitude of words* is evil.

Verse 37 is also a caution against elaborate marriage vows. Today there is a tendency for the

bride and groom, including the consecrated, to write their own vows, but added words mean increased responsibility. Marriage vows should just be a simple contract: “I do.” The promise is to be faithful unto death—what more can be added? Some even use ceremonies that amount to a form of entertainment, for example, Jesus and the Church in the Song of Solomon and the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. This leads to evil and should not be done, for the Lord is demeaned if anything goes wrong with the marriage; it is like a double condemnation.

Matt. 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

Matt. 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Jesus said that we should not try to resist evil by retaliating, by rendering evil for evil, and then he gave several illustrations: when smitten on the cheek, sued by law, and compelled to go an extra mile. These are *general* principles that do not apply in every instance. To turn the other cheek does not mean to literally turn the left cheek toward your foe and say, “Here, hit me.” The thought is, “*Do not demand your own rights. Be generally pliable.*” We are to consider the circumstance.

Acts 23:1-5 is a case of smiting in the New Testament. “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God’s high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” When Paul was smitten by the order of the high priest, he spoke up strongly, calling him a “whited wall.” But when Paul realized it was the high priest who had given the order, he was conscience-stricken for criticizing the office of the high priest. Such remorse was proper under that circumstance. In other words, Paul’s initial reaction was to protest his mistreatment, but when he saw that it was from the high priest, he apologized for criticizing the office. Under another circumstance, it would have been all right for Paul to speak up, for he was not guilty. In general, then, when Paul was “smitten on the cheek,” he did not give the other cheek—he simply did not retaliate and was *respectful to authority*. David manifested the same respect for the office with regard to Saul by not trying to hasten his own kingship.

Matt. 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

Verse 40 applies to a law case in which the judgment of the court is that one’s coat should be taken; that is, compensation is to be rendered. In such a situation, the Christian should obey the law—and not only obey ungrudgingly but be more than willing to abide by the decision in the lawsuit. Verse 40 does not mean that if someone comes to us and says, “I need a coat,” we are to take off our coat and give it to him. Jesus was not saying to arbitrarily give away our coat to spongers or to give the shirt off our back to just anybody who happens to ask.

Remember, Jesus was referring to a court of law here. This willingness to comply would apply whether one was guilty or innocent. We are to accept the verdict of the court as the Lord’s will, *even if it is unjust*.

Matt. 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

The Romans had mileposts on their roads. If Christians or Jews were traveling on a road and a Roman who had a burden asked them to carry it, they had to obey. A Roman citizen could

legally command others to assist him with his burden for one mile, no matter whether the others were Jews or Gentiles. The Roman government had this universal law of conscription for its citizens. If one so took advantage of a Christian, the Christian was not only to assist him cheerfully but also to help him for *two* miles. It was to be accepted as a divine experience, even though the command was unreasonable, for this was a *legal* action, as was the taking of the coat by *law*. In our day, to go two miles instead of one is *figurative* to show a *cheerful* attitude of heart.

A Christian who is a victim of fraud, for example, has the right to go to court (except against another Christian); however, he should accept the verdict cheerfully whether or not it is in his favor. Paul is an example of a Christian appealing to the law. He was legally taken as a prisoner in Judea, but he appealed to the emperor of Rome, for he wanted his case to be tried where it would not be prejudiced unfavorably. Therefore, if the facts have not been properly considered, a Christian can appeal to the courts. *Legal* actions, *statutes*, etc., are being discussed here. Jesus was not saying that Christians should be doormats for others.

Matt. 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

By the placement of verse 42 at the end of this series of verses, we get the right perspective. The other cases are given step by step. The premise has already been established for us to have the *disposition of giving* when someone asks, but *wisdom* must be used lest we be taken advantage of. Spongers are to be discouraged. In New Testament days, some took advantage of the hospitality of brethren by moving from city to city and accepting food and lodging and never working. It is *wrong* for brethren to do this to brethren. In short, the advice in verse 42 would apply where there is a *legitimacy* in asking.

As an aside, because 1914 has come and gone, the legal lease of power to the Gentiles having expired, the future smiting work and/or use of the penny by the feet members will not be a violation. The feet members will be condemning *systems*, not individuals. Prior to 1914, the requirement was to be obedient to the powers that be unless God's Word was directly contradicted. Now we have more liberty of disobedience.

When Paul was smitten unjustly by the high priest's command (Acts 23:1-5), he acted correctly in protesting his mistreatment, but then he thought of another law that superseded the first law and he apologized. However, Paul was not wrong to call the scribes and Pharisees "whited walls," for the system back there had already been cast off. (Jesus said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"—Matt. 23:38). Similarly, David cut off the bottom of Saul's robe and then was sorry for his action, for he had disfigured the robe of *office* for the king. However, his reason for the action was to give solid evidence to Saul that he could have slain him (1 Sam. 24:9-11). Just as with Paul, he did not really do wrong. First came the precipitous act, and subsequently came an apology after thinking the matter over.

When a person is in need, it is better to give a smaller *gift outright* than to give a large loan and expect it to be paid back. Some are prone to keep asking, to sponge, even today. In fact, it becomes a way of life. To keep them from coming back and asking a second time, it is better to give a smaller sum outright than to loan them money. The *initial* borrowing is one thing, but *chronic* asking and borrowing are another matter. We should not encourage chronic borrowing, where it becomes a *way of life*. Before giving money, we should use wisdom and consider our earthly mortgages.

Brethren who are eligible should apply for public assistance rather than depend on other brethren for financial and temporal needs on a long-term basis. Paul attached conditions to receiving regular financial help from the brethren: one had to be a "widow indeed" (1 Tim. 5:3).

Jesus said, “Ye have the poor always with you” (Matt. 26:11). Poverty conditions in the world are so extensive that until the Kingdom, they cannot be eliminated. Therefore, the Christian should not give indiscriminately to every appeal for money. Of course there is a difference between the world and the brotherhood itself. Also, before giving, we should find out if there is a *real* need. All kinds of factors have to be taken into consideration. Sometimes those brethren who have very little of this world’s goods do not use wisely what they do have.

Matt. 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

What is “hate thine enemy” based on? The answer to this question will entail a study on “hate.” There are *many* facets to both love and hate. Matthew 5 states *principles* in a succinct manner. These principles need to be studied in depth.

“Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever” (Deut. 23:6). This verse pertained to three classes: the Ammonite, the Moabite, and a bastard.

There is “a time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:8). Most people think of love and hate from an emotional standpoint and as a fixed point of explanation, but love and hate both have *many* facets. Scriptures on hate can be misunderstood if all are considered *only* in the most disagreeable aspect. When certain Scriptures seem to be incongruous, people tend to blot them out of their memory, but the texts should be harmonized, not ignored.

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). The Christian is expected to “hate” his natural family. This does not mean we are to have feelings of animosity, bitterness, or malice toward our parents, etc. Hence “love” and “hate” can be emotional but are not always thus. “Love less” is the thought here; this mental accommodation is proper in this instance. “Love less” is just *one* type of “hate,” one facet.

The following are examples of *two* facets of “love.” On the one hand, we are told to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). On the other hand, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). To directly equate these two Scriptures would be a contradiction. However, when we realize that the word “love” has *various* plateaus or meanings, there is no difficulty in harmonizing these two Scriptures. “Love” is *not* always emotional.

A slogan is often used as an accommodation: “We hate the sin but not the sinner.” Thus a distinction is made. It is one thing to hate the deed, the conduct, the violation of God’s principle, but a distinction is made with regard to the individual manifesting the conduct. *Generally* speaking, this accommodation would be proper. However, even this accommodation has to be considered, for the Scriptures also indicate that there are times when we must recognize those who have sinned the sin unto Second Death, and such we are not to pray for. When we mature in Christ, we come to a place where we can see that the sin has attached to the individual. At that point, the sin and the sinner are inseparable, for example, if one who consecrated later curses and denies God or calls Jesus the Antichrist.

“I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Psa. 139:22). There is such a thing as hating with a “perfect [*mature*] hatred.” If we are to be judges in the next life, we must develop *now* in our concepts of love and hate. We must *study* these subjects in the Scriptures. *Neither* concept is simple. *Maturity* is necessary to understand love and hate. To love like God and to actually *have* Godlikeness is one thing, but to just *think* we have love is quite a different matter. What we think love is may be only *one* facet of the subject. To be mature, we must

know *all* facets.

In other words, there is a time to love, and there is a time to hate—and there is such a thing as “perfect hatred.” One who is mature knows how to apply each facet. If a person does something terrible and *continues* to do it, we should not only hate the deed but also the individual *as long as he persists in that conduct*—but without saying he goes into Second Death unless, of course, he denies God or Jesus.

“And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I *hate*, saith the LORD” (Zech. 8:17). God hates evil surmising and false oaths. There are other Scriptures where God enumerates “this thing I hate” and “that thing I hate.” These things pertain to *conduct, deeds, and dangerous seed thoughts*, which can be very damaging, for such seed thoughts in the heart and mind can prosper.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Two conditions are mentioned. “Hate” is used here in an *accommodated* sense, for Christians sometimes try to serve *two* masters. They like the world, and they like Christ; hence they are double-minded. It is not that they hate one and love the other, for they love both, but they love one more than the other. They love both but *love one less*, which is one form of “hatred.” Or, if this is carried to the extreme, some *despise* the one master and highly regard the other. This would be *another* form of hatred, a more extreme form.

“Thou *lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness*” (Psa. 45:7). This text is a comparison of *extremes, opposites*. There is an emotional basis to this loving and hating; otherwise, one could not have both extremes. In other words, if we lukewarmly love righteousness, then we will lukewarmly hate iniquity. Christ was made the Head of the body because he *fervently loved* righteousness and *hated* iniquity. Here opposites are compared in the extreme, not in an accommodated sense. The point is that *each case has to be carefully considered in order to understand the degree and manner of application*, for “love” and “hate” are varied.

“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104). Many of us feel that by nature, we know what is right and what is wrong. While it may be true to a certain extent that our consciences can sense what is wrong, there is much right and wrong that we do not sense. Therefore, we must study *God’s Word, His precepts*, in order to properly regulate and educate conscience. A feeling or “sense” can sometimes alert us to a danger. If we sense something is wrong, we are more aware and wary. This is okay in itself, but we must not base judgment on a feeling or sense. Judgment must be based on *principles in the Word of God*, lest someone be unnecessarily injured.

“The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth” (Psa. 11:5). God hates those who love violence, and so should we. We should hate the *practice of wickedness as it is being done*.

“And Jehu ... said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD” (2 Chron. 19:2). Jehu asked this question on behalf of *God*, so it should be seriously considered. Some exercise mercy toward those who hate God, thinking they are manifesting benevolence and magnanimity, whereas actually they are encouraging the enemies of the Lord in their wrong course. Hatred of the Lord can be demonstrated by *persisting in a grossly sinful course after consecration*, as well as, of course, directly denying God or Jesus.

“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23). Many foolishly try a rescue work *without hating the garment*. They

befriend the sinning Christian and are solicitous, but they neglect to hate the garment. If a skunk saturated someone's clothing (spoiled a "garment"), we would despise the garment and remove it with disgust, for it would be a stench in our nostrils, and then we would try to help (wash) the individual. This kind of hatred has an emotional aspect in that the raiment is despised.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him" (Lev. 19:17). The "brother" and the "neighbour" are the *same* individual. The use of the two words is a reiteration, a clarification. Suppose someone has done a most dreadful deed and we rise up with righteous indignation and oppose him, speaking sternly. However, that action should be only *momentary*, for we must be careful lest we go beyond this afterward and harbor hatred, a grudge, in our heart. We were emotionally aroused at the moment of righteous indignation, but subsequently, the matter should be calmly and soberly weighed with no hate harbored.

God expects us to be indignant at times and not to speak so quietly and peacefully. We are to *rebuke* those who are forward and to withstand them *strongly*. To the strong, we are to be strong; to the weak, we speak tenderly and meekly. Our attitude depends on both the nature of the deed and the individual's temperament. The forward would override a gentle rebuke.

While Leviticus 19:17 is saying that we are not to hate our brother in our heart—we are not to condemn him as "thou fool"—we are to make it obvious that we do not like his conduct. We must not hate him in our heart, but we should *rebuke* him.

Everyone is our "neighbor" in one sense or another in *varying* degrees. "Love thy neighbor" applies to all, but nevertheless, we are to rebuke our neighbor and suffer him not to sin. If the rebuke is given quickly and abruptly, there is more chance the individual will stop, think, and, hopefully, not pursue the evil deed. This will be to the individual's good—and to our good for standing up for principle or truth.

The significance of Leviticus 19:17 is not to have a malicious intent. Those who, by nature, are cantankerous, faultfinding, and troublesome have a wrong heart condition. They are always looking for trouble where the Scriptures do not support it. Certain allowances are to be made depending on the circumstances; that is, there has to be some degree of flexibility. Those who are cantankerous by nature have a hatred in their heart, a root of bitterness, that is residual in them. However, those who are not cantankerous by nature, but who have been instructed of the Lord as to what is right and good, speak not according to what is normally residual in their heart but according to that which the circumstance gives sudden rise to. For example, if we see that our "neighbor" is about to sin, we should rebuke him sternly and quickly in order to try to stop him lest he damage his own destiny or perhaps the destiny of others—or lest we compromise in our own heart the principles of truth and righteousness.

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13; Mal. 1:2,3). In regard to the "hatred" of Esau, he did get a blessing eventually but along natural lines, whereas Jacob got a blessing along spiritual lines.

Now we can see that "love thy neighbour" and "hate thine enemy" are based on various Scriptures. Unfortunately, because of the Scriptures on hatred, some are prone to live a life of faultfinding and being hypercritical; they feel the Scriptures justify their attitude. But the Scriptures are balanced: there is a time to love and a time to hate. We must carefully regulate our attitude by God's Word and not go by our own inclinations. We should be neither too loving nor too hateful. Our conduct and conscience are to be regulated by God's Word, strictly speaking. This requires *much* effort and reflection.

Matt. 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Notice the emphasis on the pronouns *your* and *you*: “your enemies,” “curse you,” “hate you,” “despitefully use you,” and “persecute you.” These acts are done against a brother or sister as an *individual*, not against God or the Church. These are one’s *personal* enemies—they curse (speak evilly of), hate, despitefully use, and/or persecute a brother or sister. When something is done to us personally, we have the prerogative to forgive, generally speaking (although even that forgiveness has to be regulated by God’s Word). The point is that we have more options when the behavior is directed against us personally, but when either *God* or *others* are reviled, maligned, or mistreated, we must speak up. We cannot remain silent and think we are just innocent bystanders. Defending God or others develops strength of character. We should not “love” those who persecute others.

Matthew 18:15-18 applies to a trespass against us *personally*: “If thy brother shall trespass against *thee*.” This text does not apply to a trespass against God or another individual. If our own efforts fail following a trespass against us, we can take one or two witnesses to determine that this is a valid trespass and worthy of action. Matthew 18 is restricted to a trespass against an individual; it should *not* be used as a cliché or a rubber stamp for *all* situations.

As already mentioned, 2 Chronicles 19:2 asks the question “Do you manifest your love toward those who hate God?” (paraphrase). God despises such conduct, so we must be careful how we apply the principles on love and hate. “Love your enemies” is an accommodated love depending on the degree of responsibility the “enemy” has, that is, whether or not he is consecrated. Even for one who is worldly, we can manifest our displeasure at certain things he does, but *generally*, we overlook what is done to us personally. An extenuating circumstance could be that one is bigoted by his religion. In that case, his opposition toward us may be based on his religious background and training. Each case must be considered separately, but verse 44 is a good general rule.

“Pray for them which despitefully use you.” For example, we can pray that their eyes will be opened, or we can pray that they do not act with conscious understanding, for otherwise, they will incur great guilt according to the degree of light possessed.

We are to “roll with the punches,” as the saying goes, and not be given to retaliation. We should not render evil for evil but should submit to the experience. *Figuratively* speaking, if we are smitten on one cheek, we should turn the other cheek. This attitude indicates a disposition to accept the persecution as part of our Christian training. We need opposition in order to develop spiritual “muscles” (strength and character). Therefore, opposition can work out for our good as it did for Joseph. And it was “brethren” who schemed against Joseph.

Some in the world disobey and slander God (for example, by cursing Him and His restrictions; by mocking His Word in song parodies, titles, and words; by ridiculing His holy prophets of old, such as Moses; by using Scripture in titles of pornographic films; etc.). Those who do these things will be held accountable whether or not they know it. God can also be persecuted through the mistreatment of His representatives, that is, when the consecrated are maligned and persecuted. God said, “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his [my] eye[ball]” (Zech. 2:8). It is like putting a finger in *God’s* eye when one of His little ones is despitefully used. God is sensitive with regard to the treatment of His people, just as He was with His Son. Thus those who sin *with knowledge* have a *great* deal to account for. Those who are careless are also accountable but to a lesser degree. Those who *intentionally* belittle God’s Word, Jehovah Himself, the Christian, or even the Jew are *very* responsible. The degree of punishment will suit the degree of malicious intent.

Matt. 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Here is the reason we are to “love our enemies,” namely, so that we may be the children of our Father in heaven.

Jesus gave two illustrations of how God “loves” His enemies. He does not love the behavior of the world, for they are separated from Him by wicked works, but in view of their future opportunity for salvation—the long-range view—His benefits of nature are available to all. God makes His sun to shine and His rain to pour on *both* classes, the evil and the good. God loves His enemies in the sense that the benefits of nature are available to all (grass for cattle; oxygen in the air; food; different colors, fragrances, flavors; etc.). His magnanimity is great to all. And so we overlook many things that are done in the world. We are friendly along other lines to those who do not have God’s Spirit. However, we do make a distinction between the consecrated and the unconsecrated.

Although it is possible to carry loving our enemies too far, it is a general principle. Jesus was among sinners, and he came to save those who were lost. The sick, poor, and maimed responded to his message. The scribes and Pharisees criticized him for his association with publicans and sinners, but he kept separate and distinct and maintained an individuality. It is important to realize that publicans and sinners *came to him*—he did not go into the “slums,” as it were, and deliberately enter familiarly into the homes of the wicked. He spoke *publicly* and manifested a friendliness to others based on their degree of interest in and response to his message. Thus Jesus made “his sun” to shine on all during his ministry. He spread the good news to all who had a hearing ear, and he paid special attention to those who were truly interested. In this way, he was “loving his neighbor.”

We must not misapply the thought of “loving our neighbor.” If we fellowship unnecessarily with the ungodly, we ourselves become tainted. We are to have a measure of *reserve*. We have to work in the world and eat at the table with others, as it were, but we should not *linger* with the worldly. If we do linger, we will begin to copy their lifestyle, looks, verbal expressions, thoughts, etc.

Exodus 23:5 is a practical illustration. “If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.” This verse has far-reaching connotations in the sense that it teaches us how to discriminate. If a natural calamity occurs to an animal that belongs to an enemy, and the enemy is not strong enough to help the animal by himself, we should assist in freeing the animal on *humanitarian* grounds. To help on humanitarian grounds would not be encouraging the person in his wickedness. Similarly, helping a “drowning” individual as one human being to another has nothing to do with religious lines. We are to distinguish between duty and principle. It is our duty to help those who are overcome by a natural disaster, and such assistance does not pertain to principle.

Matt. 5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Matt. 5:47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Matt. 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Just as Psalm 139:22 says, “I hate them with [a] perfect hatred,” so we are to love with a “*perfect*” love like our Father in heaven. Verses 43-48 show that “love” and “hate” have various degrees of application. The *circumstance* determines how these qualities are or are not to be

exercised.

Misunderstanding the meaning of words can cause a problem. The only way to understand the Bible is to understand how *God* uses the words, not how we use them, not how *Webster's Dictionary* uses them, and sometimes not even how a concordance uses them. We must see the enactment of a principle and an example that God approves of in order to know the proper way to handle a certain circumstance. The pure etymology of the word itself is only *part* of the story at times.

Matt. 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 6:2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matt. 6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

Matt. 6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Verses 1-4 are *general* advice: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men.” *Occasionally* it is necessary, because of circumstances, for almsgiving to be known by others. The point being made here regarding the motivation is that *if possible*, we should give our alms quietly, unobservedly, and privately. Our motive should never be “to be seen” of men.

This is good advice for an ecclesia too. Wherever possible, almsgiving should be done secretly, but circumstances sometimes arise where it is encouraging to others if it is known that a class supports a certain work, for example. Verses 1-4 are a *general* rule of conduct, but exceptions do arise at times.

“Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” What is the analogy here? The “right hand” is the beneficent or helping hand. It is more emotional and responsive, more alert to do things. The “left hand” is the conservative sense or aspect; it is the restraining or rational quality that tries to make excuses for not giving.

Considered from another standpoint, verse 3 urges *utmost* secrecy. If the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, a person's actions are certainly *secret*. This is rather a witty manner of expression—it gets the point across nicely.

“Thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” In other words, God *knows*. He is aware of all almsgiving, no matter how secretly it is done. God has promised that almsgiving done in *secret* will be rewarded *openly*. If we are rewarded in the current life by being seen of men, we will not be rewarded for our almsgiving in the future life. It is better to trust God and do almsgiving quietly and secretly, for this is one way of laying up treasures in heaven.

Not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing can also mean that we are to react, give our alms quietly and quickly, and then not dwell on our good act. Otherwise, the danger in not forgetting the good deed but in pondering it can puff us up with pride. Then the next thing we know, we are telling about the deed in conversation, and we lose our reward. In such a case, we would be guilty of secret pride as our motivation.

Jesus was calling attention to a practice back there of giving contributions to the Temple in

Jerusalem (or to a synagogue in another city). A “trumpet” was figuratively blown so that almsgiving would be publicly noticed and observed. This practice shamed those who had lesser incomes and means; it humiliated those who were unable to give more. The Apostle Paul criticized a similar practice on the day of the Memorial, where some who had much of this world’s goods ate lavishly in front of others who had less, and then the Memorial was held immediately afterwards. This was sinning, for it brought the disparity of living standards into a serious and somber occasion. Almsgiving, then, can embarrass others. For some who are affluent to be openly generous makes others who are poor appear stingy.

The nominal Church practice of getting parishioners to make annual pledges violates the principle of secret almsgiving. At the very least, the financial stewardship committee would know what was pledged. And at other times, the names of generous donors are even published and/or proclaimed. Also, the passing of the collection plate shames those who are able to give only a small amount.

Q: Because of tax laws today, is it permissible to get receipts for large donations for religious purposes, or would this be letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing?

A: It is all right to obtain proof or written documentation. The real caution here is to have the proper motivation. We should not do things for vainglory, pride, and show. However, obtaining proof is merely prudent, all things being equal. Most brethren have smaller incomes and would not be concerned with this matter.

Matt. 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matt. 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matt. 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Matt. 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Matt. 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Matt. 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matt. 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Matt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matt. 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Verses 5-13 pertain to prayer. “They [hypocrites] love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.” This class wants to be noticed, to appear pious. Here the motive or intent is similar to those who openly give alms: to be “seen of men.” Superficial prayers get superficial rewards. Prayer and alms are both offerings that should generally be done in secret.

“They have their reward.” Being seen of men, getting honor from men in the present life, is the reward sought by those who habitually pray openly. And that is the *only* reward they get! Respect and recognition of *men* is what they receive *now*, instead of laying up treasures in heaven for a reward *later*.

Nathanael was a good example of praying secretly even though he was outdoors. He sought cover under a fig tree so that he would not be observed.

Whether one is offering alms or prayer, the proper motivation should be secrecy so that the reward will come from the Father, rather than from men. The question is, Would you rather be seen of men and be respected and honored accordingly *now*, or be rewarded openly later, in the *next life*, by the Heavenly Father? Those who obey by praying or giving alms secretly will be rewarded openly by the Father in due time. Although the deeds of the Little Flock will be edited according to what is most profitable for the human race in the Kingdom, they will be made known at that time. The deeds are being recorded and photographed now, in the present life, for viewing later.

In contrast, the deeds of the world of mankind will not necessarily be revealed openly in all cases. In some instances, an individual will have his or her deeds privately shown in order to give the reason for the judgment rendered and the retribution ordered. Regarding those who committed *numerous* brutalities in the present life, it will be necessary to refresh their minds with a cataloguing of their sins.

For secret prayer and almsgiving in the present life, the Heavenly Father can give some rewards now. In other words, there can be a *partial* compensation now in order to encourage and help the individual. Conversely, those who go into Second Death will, according to Scripture, be rewarded in the present life. When we consecrate in the Gospel Age, God has a contract to reward us according to our deeds. If He cannot fulfill the contract in the next life because one’s destiny is Second Death, He will do the “rewarding” now.

Verses 5 and 6 are *general* advice, for there are times when public prayer is in order. However, generally speaking, public prayers should be brief. “God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Eccl. 5:2). The exception would be when something unusual happens such as in a crucial and/or emergency circumstance; then long public prayers are proper. An example was Solomon’s public prayer at the dedication of the Temple.

Private prayers may be much longer. At times, we must importune like the importunate widow who was heard in her incessant, persistent beleaguering of the judge for consideration of her case (Luke 18:2-5). Finally, to stop her pestering, he answered her. Based on that Scriptural illustration, we know God is pleased with that type of private prayer. Repetitious earnest requests for things that are in harmony with God’s will are in order. However, agonizing prayer should be done for proper things (sometimes agonizing prayer is improper because it is the result of a lack of faith).

Generally speaking, private prayers can be as long as the burden of the heart. Normally, our private prayers are not too long because we get physically exhausted and mentally fatigued and distracted. We are usually unable to concentrate with intensity for very long. The urgency of a matter and the spirituality of the individual help to determine the length of private prayer. Prayer with emotion and understanding is ideal.

“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions.” The Rosary, Jewish prayer shawls, and similar concepts preceded Christianity and were prevalent in heathen religions. Prayer wheels and beads were used in Tibet, for example. Parts of prayers were inscribed in wood or metal and

then stroked or rubbed repeatedly. Beads were of different sizes and colors, each one representing a prayer or portion thereof. The beads were used ritualistically. Mentally, the beads represented certain statements, but such “vain repetitions” were (and are) meaningless; they are done mechanically and ritualistically, not from the heart.

The fact the word “vain” is inserted means repetition is all right under proper circumstances, but not *vain* repetition. Repetition per se is not obnoxious. For instance, God frequently used repetition in both the Old and New Testaments, and especially the Old. If it were up to us, we would probably have edited out the repetition, but it has a value—and is *not* vain.

“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” It is one thing to ask in regard to temporal needs, but we should not continually ask. With God, repetition is different, for He has definite, realistic, proper reasons for using it. Since God knows what our temporal needs are, we should simply call attention to the need or circumstance and the fact that He knows about it. God is pleased when we acknowledge that He knows about the matter. However, vain and improper repetition indicate that we do not have a proper understanding of His powers and omniscience. Verses 7 and 8 are tied together. The bulk of our prayers consist of asking for something: forgiveness, bread, relief from suffering, etc. Repetition on such matters is out of order if it is endless and needless.

The heathen “think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” We are reminded of Elijah and the false prophets of Baal. In the contest, the latter prayed for *hours*, whereas Elijah uttered a *short* and quiet prayer and got a *speedy* answer (1 Kings 18:25-39).

When asking for things, “after this manner therefore pray ye” (verses 9-13). The Lord’s Prayer is a model prayer to ask God for something. Decorum must come first. We are to recognize the propriety of the office of God—His honor, His character: “Our Father which art in heaven, *Hallowed* be thy name.” We should not just rush in with our burden but should first pay respect to God as our Heavenly Father, the great Creator, the Author of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” We should desire the Kingdom *above* our natural interests, for the Kingdom will benefit *all* mankind, not just self and self-interests. The Kingdom will bless *all* who love God in one manner or another, so our desire for the Kingdom should be a priority.

Now comes the asking aspect of prayer. To be heard of God, we should first hallow His name and pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done—and then ask. “Give us this day our daily bread.” Is this an asking for temporal bread or for spiritual bread? Today in this country, we live in an affluent society, whereas much of humanity is living at a starvation level. And down through the age, many Christians lived under “starvation” conditions at one time or another, so for them, this prayer certainly had a temporal aspect. However, if we have sufficient temporal daily bread, we would not be literally asking for this. Instead we express appreciation and thanks in saying grace before we partake of the food. Of course we need a sufficiency of food in order to feed our families and to concentrate on spiritual matters, so for one who is deprived, it is perfectly all right to ask for daily bread in a literal or temporal sense. Therefore, this Scripture has *both* applications—literal and spiritual—but *especially* the spiritual, for we are to search the Scriptures *daily*.

In times of deprivation, we certainly should pray for daily bread, even reminding God of the promise that our bread and water will be sure (Isa. 33:16), but we should not use vain repetition. For example, Paul asked three times that his eyesight be healed but then ceased to ask, for God’s grace was sufficient. Even if we get an affirmative answer, the answer may be delayed. The initial asking is one thing, but vain repetition is another. Faith must be exercised

after we ask once, twice, or three times. Then, if the answer is no, we should accept it. Remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was just laying down *general* rules of conduct.

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” This portion of the Lord’s Prayer can only apply from the natural standpoint, but the application is *mostly* spiritual. There is money indebtedness as well as indebtedness along other lines. We ask God to “forgive us our debts.” Although we do not actually owe God money in one sense, yet in another sense, we may, for all our substance is His, and we are to render up a stewardship with regard to the use and distribution of what He has given us. There is thus a material aspect to this request, as well as a spiritual aspect. When we violate or infract principles of God, we should be sorry and ask for forgiveness. In other words, we owe God an apology for certain wrong acts and misdeeds of life. The primary thrust of this verse is spiritual, pertaining to the Christian life, but the temporal aspect is included.

We should *always* have the *attitude* of forgiveness toward others, but the basis of forgiveness is *repentance* and the *asking* of forgiveness. In the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Matt. 18:23-35), both the one who owed 10,000 talents and the one who owed 100 pence asked for forgiveness, yet the one who was forgiven *much* manifested a *wrong* attitude because he could not forgive the other a little. The father who had the prodigal son did not pursue him into the foreign country and pull the son out of the swine yard or try to reason with him but waited (Luke 15:11-32). Meanwhile, the father had the attitude of forgiveness in that he kept watching, hoping, and longing for a reconciliation. When he saw the son coming on the horizon, he raced to meet him with joy, for he realized the prodigal son had come to his senses. Twice the son confessed his wrongdoing: first to God privately, and then to his father. Thus repentance is essential for forgiveness. And so we are *asking* in the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses.” God will freely forgive *if* we have the right attitude of forgiveness toward others and ask His forgiveness. We should want to forgive others if they ask.

The proper thought is not simply: “If we forgive the wrongs of others, God will forgive us”—period. How clever the *deceitful* heart could be with such reasoning! If we see someone sin and automatically forgive him, then we might reason that we could likewise sin and be forgiven. It is very convenient and easy to wink the eye at the wrongdoing of others so that God will overlook the things we do. This reasoning enables the Christian to have one foot in heaven and one foot in the world. The old nature is pleased.

“Lead us not into temptation” means “*Abandon us not* in temptation.” The Apostle James said that God tempts no man with evil (James 1:13), but on the other hand, God proves a person or tempts him in order to bring out the good qualities—to enhance, encourage, and develop the individual. God told Moses to stand aside and let Him blot out the Israelites, knowing that Moses would respond by offering his own life for the life of the people. God had offered to make of Moses a great nation, but instead Moses offered to lay down his life for the nation. Metal is put in a fire to get red hot and is then plunged into cold water—two *opposite* extremes that prove the metal and temper the steel. The actual composition of the metal is changed by these opposite experiences—the metal is hardened. Likewise, the Lord sometimes allows Satan, the world, or the flesh to tempt us under certain circumstances to prove us, but in these matters, God is not morally responsible any more than He is with the permission of evil.

Thus the prayer of verse 13 applies to times when we get into a situation beyond our control. Then we plead for God to step in and help us out of that particular situation, which is too strong for us to endure in our own strength. The proper thought is *in between* the two thoughts: “Bring us not into temptation” and “Abandon us not in temptation.”

Sometimes God *permits* a situation or trial to develop us or to point out a shortcoming that already exists or to give us the opportunity of overcoming the shortcoming. God knows the

Adversary will try to make us fall. No doubt, however, God often intervenes so that an unnecessary trial will not take place. We are unaware of all these deliverances. At other times, Divine Providence permits the testing. God permits it but is *not morally responsible*.

“But deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” Although this second part of verse 13 is spurious, the thought is Scriptural, as shown by 1 Chronicles 29:11: “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” The addition in Matthew 6:13 was probably a marginal note because of the parallelism, and inadvertently it was incorporated into the text in later renderings.

Matt. 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Matt. 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This statement of Jesus is unqualified. No strings are attached to forgiveness, but this statement must be balanced with other statements in the Word of God. Luke 17:3 reads, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke* him; and *if he repent*, forgive him.” Of course this text refers to *larger* trespasses, not little slights and digs that are unintentional. Since we are in the flesh and fallen in nature, unintentional spur-of-the-moment things are done that should be overlooked. But something that is done with some premeditation, deliberation, and malice is not only more than just a momentary stirring up of the old nature but also a manifestation of something that has been brewing, and it should be handled in a different light. A rebuke is necessary. In contrast, *trivial* matters should be forgiven unconditionally, and no rebuke should be given.

Matt. 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matt. 6:17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

Matt. 6:18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Verses 16-18 pertain to proper and improper fasting. “They disfigure their faces.” Ashes or some other sign of grief was used to announce that one was fasting, in addition to having a “sad countenance.” As with praying and almsgiving, if fasting is done with the motivation of being seen of men, “they have their reward [already, that is, in the present life]” (Matt. 6:2). The *future* reward is what we should desire.

The principle is that we should appear as we normally do so that others will be unaware of our fasting. Generally speaking, fasting is a matter between the individual and the Lord. Then the fasting is done solely for the Lord and not for recognition by others.

“Anoint thine head.” Back there a little oil was used on the hair for grooming purposes. The oil kept the hair and scalp from drying out in the wind and sun.

“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” Similar phrasing is used in regard to praying and almsgiving. The Father assures us that in the future, it will be made known who did these

things in secret. The rewards *will come*. In fact, not merely will there be a compensatory reward of some nature, but others will be made aware of the diligence and degree of one's faithfulness. Good deeds previously done by the Little Flock will be revealed in the future. Incidentally, an example of secret prayer is that Jesus prayed to the Father many times out of hearing range of the disciples.

Notice the pronoun "thy" in verses 4, 6, and 18: "*thy* Father." Jesus wants his followers to realize the *intimacy* they have with the Father in doing secret deeds such as praying and fasting. "Thy Father is cognizant" is the thought, which shows endearment and tenderness.

It is better to accept the account as it is written rather than to try to broaden it to include other facets of our consecrated life as a blanket statement, for if we are faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, certain things will happen and will be noticed by others in the present life. For example, we should appear to others like "fish out of water" as "squares." It should be obvious that we do not smoke or drink or pursue worldly goals, aims, and ambitions. If we work, it should be realized that we ask the Lord's blessing when we eat, perhaps devote some lunch hours to Bible study, etc. Moreover, if we are faithful, we *will suffer persecution* (2 Tim. 3:12). Prayer, almsgiving, and fasting pertain to *deeds* done over *short* periods of time. As much as possible, these should be hidden from men but not our consecration. Others should see that we go regularly to meetings, are always interested in religious subjects, etc. Consecration is a *total* way of life.

However, the *principle* enunciated here can apply to other aspects of our consecration. We should generally be cheerful regarding the things that we sacrifice for the Lord and not boast to others about how much we are giving up.

"Alms" can include more than just money. For example, the term embraces food and clothing given to others. Remember that our Lord was giving *general* advice in the Sermon on the Mount. There is a time for private prayer and a time for group prayer. There is a time to weep and a time to laugh. There is a time to manifest almsgiving and a time not to, and so forth.

If a trial becomes too overbearing, we should disclose it to others, rather than pine away and die, spiritually speaking. If we have prayed and fasted and the trial continues to press us down, let it be known to others. However, we *usually* do not relate all of our little trials and testings to others.

The same *general* guidelines apply to judging. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1), yet there are matters we should judge. The point is not to be of a critical disposition, always ready to find fault.

"Fasting" can mean *no* food or water, although self-denials of any kind are proper. Instead of abstaining totally from all food and water, one can go on a light or plain diet for a specified period of time. For example, just bread and water might be used for a while. In other words, there are variations of deprivation depending on one's health and/or physical status. Each individual should determine his own level and degree of fasting. Depending on what medication is required, water may be a necessity. The point is that if common sense is ignored and an adverse reaction occurs, the meaning of the fast is destroyed. The purpose of fasting is to come into closer communication with God, and if by extreme fasting, one's mind becomes more troubled, the objective is lost.

When Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and nights, he neither ate nor drank water. Moses did the same. After such a lengthy fast, one would take food first, for water would cause vomiting. After a long fast, water must be taken little by little.

The nominal Church practice of Lent with ashes put on the forehead and/or certain things given up but with others knowing what is happening would be disapproved according to verses 16-18. "Showmanship" prayer before a large audience is also proscribed. As brethren, we should make our public prayers reasonably brief.

Matt. 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matt. 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Verses 19-23 are a summary of verses 1-18. We lay up treasures in heaven if our prayers, almsgivings, and fastings are done in secret in the *present* life. The *future* reward is secure and will be made manifest, all other things being equal (for example, the person must be faithful).

A moth devours clothing. Rust corrupts metals. Thieves steal tangible goods. In other words, we are not to set our hopes on things that will not last. We should not have an undue fear of the future. We should not put our confidence in monetary assets (although, of course, it is all right to make some provision for the future). The general rule of life is not to hoard for the future with any degree of undue anxiety, but a *limited* amount of saving is permissible and wise for the Christian to do.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If our "treasure" is the hope of the heavenly Kingdom, all our energies (except for the necessities of life) will be expended in that direction and to that end. Proverbs 16:16 reads, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!" The wisdom of God and His Word is not to be compared with the riches of this present evil world. If our thoughts are on the accumulation of riches, they are not on the Lord.

If we become too comfortable here on earth with our nice homes, clothing, cars, food, health, etc., there is a temptation to not look with sufficient desire and longing for our heavenly home. If we truly desire to be with the Lord, heaven will be our "true home," and the present life is merely a transition as we roam as pilgrims and strangers down here. If we are "at home in the body" (content with present surroundings), we are "absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6). Our highest desire should be to see the Father beyond the veil, then Jesus, then the apostles, etc.

The advice in the Sermon on the Mount helps us to avoid pitfalls and the waste of our consecrated time. We are guided into a proper priority of values. Earth's treasures are transitory and fleeting; heaven's treasures are real and lasting. We bring nothing into this world when we are born and take nothing out when we die, but we will, if faithful, get real "treasure" in heaven.

Matt. 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

The eye, out of which we see, is the light (the window) of the body (the soul). What we desire, what we spend time thinking about and trying to achieve, reflects the degree of dedication of our Christian walk. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). To the extent we have the mind of Christ, we approach things as he would have done.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." The Christian is to have *singleness* of purpose. As Paul said, "This *one* thing I do" (Phil. 3:13). The single purpose should be to serve the Lord.

Matt. 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

If both eyes are concentrated on *one* thing, they are considered *single*—a single eye, a single purpose, whether for good or for evil. Here “thine eye” (that is, *both* eyes) is evil; both eyes are concentrated on evil. A singleness of purpose for evil would constitute a very serious and dangerous condition. In contradistinction, “double-mindedness” consists of one eye being good and one eye being evil.

Thus there are three conditions, two of which are treated in verses 22 and 23:

1. Both eyes are concentrated on a single purpose for good (verse 22).
2. One eye is concentrated on good and one eye on evil, resulting in a double-minded condition.
3. Both eyes are concentrated on a single purpose for evil (verse 23). This condition merits the full penalty: Second Death.

We should have a singleness of purpose *for the Lord*.

If one’s “eye be[comes] evil,” it is usually apparent to others that the individual has become spiritually, mentally, and/or morally blind. This condition happens over a period of time and finally manifests itself in utter darkness. Verse 24 explains this condition further. Both eyes should focus on the same purpose or goal so that they will be *single*, or become as *one*. We are to walk in the *narrow way*, go in a *straight path*, and *not deviate*.

Matt. 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

If one tries to serve two masters at the same time, he has one eye on *each* instead of both eyes on just the one master; that is, he is double-minded and hence unstable in all his ways (James 1:8; 4:8). Lukewarmness is a condition the Lord considers obnoxious. Individuals in this condition are indifferent, neglectful, indolent, etc., as regards spiritual matters. Jesus was giving good general advice here. It is helpful to be forewarned at the beginning of our Christian walk, as well as to be reminded from time to time, that we cannot please two parties (God and mammon) at the same time.

“Mammon” could be considered in a broad sense as anything that pulls us away from the Lord. God and mammon are opposites. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise [disregard, neglect] the other. Ye cannot serve [both] God and mammon.” “Hate” means “love less.” However, as time goes on, the “loving less” can develop into hatred. We should choose the One we want to serve (God) and rigidly adhere to our decision. “Double-mindedness” is dangerous in that it can lead, if not corrected, to hatred of the good, thus jeopardizing one’s eternal welfare.

We can circumvent many trials and avoid many pitfalls if we make a firm decision to serve God and stick to that decision. That way we will not be double-minded with split desires. Many sorrows attend a double-minded condition, and there is always the danger of falling further into the Second Death condition.

In this Laodicean period, the world has entered the Church and created a widespread lukewarm, double-minded condition. If the Lord spews out in disgust nominal Christendom, who are *tares* (unconsecrated), what will he do with a lukewarm *Christian*? A lukewarm Christian will fail *utterly* (Second Death) if he does not warm up. Hard trials in the future will arouse the Great Company out of their drowsy condition. But if Christians live and die in a lukewarm condition, they will be spewed out utterly; that is, they will not even be part of the

Great Company. Fortunately, the Lord is patient in His dealings with the Christian, and many do eventually come to their senses through much grief. They may lose out on the high calling, but they do make the Great Company.

A Christian cannot serve both God and mammon. Eventually he must make a decision. He will get life, or he will get death. However, some are rejects without knowing it, and they go on in their Christian walk oblivious of their condition and feeling secure.

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” One cannot stay in this condition and be pleasing to the Lord. In the final analysis, the Christian must end up either on God’s side or on mammon’s side (the world) and thus go into Second Death.

Moreover, the Scriptures show that to be a faithful Christian, we *must* suffer persecution and chastisement. Otherwise, we are a “bastard” and hence nothing in the Lord’s sight. A reject Christian would not come to the point of receiving persecution. Therefore, if we do not receive persecution, there is something wrong with our Christian walk.

Some Christians live in a “stupor,” as it were, but then the Lord shakes them up because he is still dealing with them. However, others are rejects and the Lord ceases to deal with these. Moreover, these may not outwardly be visible as rejects. We should each ask ourselves, “Am I being persecuted for righteousness’ sake?” “Am I being persecuted for Christ’s sake?” If the answers are no, something is wrong.

There are two kinds of chastening: (1) for disobedience and (2) for obedience. Those who receive correction quickly will get additional trials to test their obedience and endurance of persecution rather than trials for disobedience and willfulness. We *must* all have persecution. In fact, the Little Flock might receive the most severe persecution, while they need only the “wink of the eye” in regard to being obedient to the Lord’s will and Word. Persecution is for righteousness’ or Christ’s sake, whereas Peter said that if we do something wrong and suffer for it, such suffering is not specially commendable—it is not a victory.

The overall principle of verses 19-34 is to keep temporal matters in the proper perspective, subordinate to the spiritual. We are not to have anxiety regarding temporal matters but are to have complete faith and trust in God. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Master gave his longest dissertation on this subject and/or principle. Verse 19 gives the first premise: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.” Then a description of these “treasures” follows. They are not always dollars and cents, particularly when past ages are considered, from the time our Lord spoke to the present.

The fact that this doctrine or principle of laying up treasures is the longest tells us that it is more subtle, more difficult to perceive, than the other principles given in the Sermon on the Mount. For example, anger, adultery, the taking of oaths, etc., are more specific.

Consider again the statement “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Here is a contrast between two ideals: (1) the worship of God and (2) the worship of mammon. “Mammon” is not a personality or an idol. Rather, it represents everything involved in laying up for *self*. In other words, mammon is identified with self. In worshipping mammon, one uses temporal things for his own security or welfare. He is laying up treasures on earth for self and family. We are cautioned that our eye should be single toward God. Then we will be looking out for what *He* wants us to do. Laying up treasures in heaven is our real security for the next life.

Matt. 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

“Take no *anxious* thought for your *present* life and your *present* body” is the thought. Instead we should take thought for the *future* life and the *spirit* body. We should be laying up treasures for our ultimate destiny, for our ultimate hope, home, and security; then the temporal things of the present life will be seen in the proper perspective, focus, and/or relationship. *Some* attention must be given to eating, drinking, and wearing clothes, but these things should be kept in the proper perspective.

Jesus cautioned us not to pay too much attention to the present life and the present body. We are to pay *more* attention to the *future* life and the *future* body. The insertion of “present” and “future” clarify the thought. Otherwise, the verse might seem to contradict. Jesus made many sharp statements of contrast, and as we mature, we begin to grasp the lesson he was trying to drive home. The Sermon on the Mount is like the “Ten Commandments” for the Christian.

Matt. 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Jesus called attention to the fact that the fowls of the air do not sow (plant), reap, and gather (store up). All of these activities involve thought, planning, deliberation, and preparation. On the other hand, the birds live from hand to mouth. Each day they scrounge for food, not laying up for the future. In this connection, Jesus gave his summary at the end of the chapter (verse 34): “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” The Christian should consider each day as a *separate* unit of time.

However, verse 26 does not mean that the Christian farmer is literally not to do any sowing or that the Christian is to live from day to day without any regard for the future. The thought is, “Take no *anxious* or *worried* thought for the morrow.” We must take *some* thought, or we would be living like beggars, making no preparations. The point is that the “ideal” Christian, like Jesus, has no earthly attachments. He did not sow, reap, or gather; he had no job to support himself but fully trusted in God; he had no home, no wife, etc. Jesus went from day to day and trusted that his needs would be supplied. He was the ideal, but we cannot all be like him and live up to that strict ideal. Being imperfect, we cannot live exactly that way, generally speaking. Paul gave us another example to follow, for he worked making tents.

Moreover, in prior times, the Israelites were expected to leave some of their crops unharvested so that the poor could glean in the fields. Leviticus 25:4-7 applied only to a seventh or *sabbath* year. “But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat.” Sowing and reaping were forbidden; no work of this nature could be done.

However, some crops grew naturally by themselves. Of these, the Israelites had to live from hand to mouth day by day. They could eat just what they needed at the moment. They could not pick or sickle extra or lay up additional food for the morrow, even though it was their own property. Moreover, during the sabbath year, privately owned land was considered everybody’s; all could eat from the land—the family itself, maids, servants, strangers, cattle, etc. All could eat to their heart’s desire but not reap and store up extra. The Lord assured there would be a sufficiency under these conditions. This was a real test of *faith*, for some might fear the animals would consume all the food. Thus the principle of the *testing of faith* applied to the Jewish Age as well as to the Gospel Age. This test, which applied after the Israelites entered the Promised Land, was similar to the test of faith in the Wilderness of Sinai regarding the daily supply of manna.

Deuteronomy 24:19-22 treats harvesting in an *ordinary* year. “When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.” Notice, God *commanded* this procedure. It was obligatory. Grain, grapes, and olives were to be harvested *only once* so that some would remain for the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. Since the owners knew that they could harvest only once and not go back over the field, vine, or tree, they made sure their servants did a good job. (This did not mean that harvesting had to be completed in a 24-hour period, but whatever they started to harvest—for example, one acre out of ten—could only be harvested once.) To get a maximum crop, the owners also made sure that the crop was ripe and mature before the olive tree was beaten, the grapes were gathered, and the wheat was cut and sheaved. What remained was for the unfortunate. A “stranger” was a traveler, Gentile or otherwise depending on context.

Leviticus 19:9 states that when a field was harvested, the reapers were not to go into every little nook and cranny, but were to round the corners and leave the corner pockets untouched for the fatherless, widows, etc., who were deprived of the wage earner. Of course the widow had to do the work, but food was provided. Incidentally, Jesus did not break the sabbath when gathering wheat. He was just living hand to mouth according to the Law.

The Apostle Paul, who could have followed this procedure antitypically, accepting food from the brethren, worked making tents. “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn” (1 Cor. 9:9). Just as the ox that plows the field has a right to eat and should not be muzzled, so the one engaging in gospel service has a right to expect provision for his natural needs. However, lest reproach be brought on the gospel, and in order to further the gospel, it is advisable for brethren, such as Paul, to work and provide for their temporal needs. That way no one could accuse them of sponging.

Matt. 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

By worrying, we cannot add a cubit to our height or prolong our life (see other translations). The word “stature,” which can be more embracing than just height, includes the thoughts of building up the body (appearance) and increasing or decreasing age. For example, a woman wearing very high heels is conscious of her stature and wants to appear more imposing. Undue attention to diet and bodily exercise can profit to some extent but not to the degree of adding “one cubit.” Thus diet and physical exercise can be carried too far.

Matt. 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Matt. 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Matt. 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

We are not to worry about raiment. The lilies of the field neither toil nor spin, yet they are beautiful. We can take *some* thought for our clothing but not excessive thought. Jesus sometimes uttered exaggerated statements to get a point across—and to get our thoughts *off*

self in this case. The whole world is consumed with thoughts of self, and we must fight this tendency (for example, being diet conscious, health conscious, clothing conscious, appearance conscious, etc.) and gravitate upward, not downward. Jesus' statements make us sit up and take notice. He was saying, "Wake up! *You* can carry things too far. *God* will supply your needs."

"Lilies of the field" are wild flowers, actually a more beautiful form of grass. "Lilies" and grass grow *naturally*. "Toiling" and "spinning" refer to weaving fabric and hence apply to raiment. In other words, as the lilies do not use needles and thread, weave, etc., so we should not do this to excess. The grasses and the lilies, no matter how beautiful, all die. If God so clothes them, how much more He will supply our needs, even in the *present* life. We will receive a *sufficiency*. And if we are faithful *now*, how much better we will be clothed in the *future* life beyond the veil! *God* will do that clothing.

"O ye of little faith." We are to *have faith* with regard to *temporal* matters. We should not be sensitive and offended by this expression.

Matt. 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

After the long explanation, Jesus returned to the thought expressed in verse 25: "Take no thought for your food, drink, or clothing." It is as if he were saying, "Now do not lose sight of the main theme, which I am still discussing."

Matt. 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Matt. 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Verse 33 gives the proper emphasis. If we seek *first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, then the temporal things will be added or furnished, for God knows our need for these (verse 32).

In the Parable of the Unjust Steward, the statement is made, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke 16:9). The implication is that the mammon of unrighteousness is not thoroughly evil, for the Christian has, and must use, some of it. The thought is similar to the statement that Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus was not a sinner, but when he came to earth, he assumed the body and nature of humanity, which is presently fallen. Luke was talking about the present mammon during the period of unrighteousness. Mammon pertains to *self* in the present life, under the conditions of the reign of sin and death. The Christian is to use temporal things of the present life with tact, wisdom, and discrimination in an *unselfish* manner to gain friends. We are to pay some attention to self. We are to work out our *own* salvation with fear and trembling, and this is a personal matter with each Christian (Phil. 2:12).

"(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)." In other words, whereas the world, the unconsecrated, seek these things, the Christian should not. As Christians, we should seek first (chiefly) the Kingdom of God. If we do this, the *necessities* of life will be supplied. Our "bread and water" will be sure, although we might have temporary deprivation as a part of our testing and development of faith (Isa. 33:16). As Paul said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound" in matters of food, clothing, etc., and in matters of esteem by others (Phil. 4:12).

Matt. 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow.” This is an axiom of great wisdom. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” is like a grand climax to this great and long theme. The *Diaglott* states simply, “Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.”

Matt. 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

“Judge not” is the message in the context of verses 1-5. What other Scriptures support this thought or slant?

Romans 14:10-13 - “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.”

Luke 6:37 - “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Romans 2:1 - “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”

James 4:11 - “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.”

1 Corinthians 4:5 - “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

These Scriptures *seem* to close the door with finality on the subject of judging—as if to say there is no other perspective. But we should consider Matthew 7:1-5 from a practical standpoint as a *general* rule. In other words, we should be *very careful* and *very slow* in speaking anything that would cast an aspersion on another because of the possibility of bringing disastrous results to ourselves as well as to the individual himself. Thus Matthew 7:1-5 is a general rule of conduct, but there are *exceptions*.

For example, the Law sometimes makes statements that must be considered in context. In the case of murder, the wrongdoer merits the death penalty, but the same Law allows for the extenuating circumstance of a *nonpremeditated* murder. Was the crime one of passion, was it due to an accident—or was it premeditated? If the latter, then the principle of an eye for an eye, a life for a life, applied. If the crime was an accident, compensatory value was required but not the full penalty that would apply to a deliberate crime.

We are living in an unusual age. Down through the centuries, one was put in a dungeon for stealing a loaf of bread. Today is a peculiar time; the pendulum has swung the other way to being extremely liberal, so that the criminal, not the victim, gets the benefit of the judgment. Other than perhaps the last 100 years, the rest of the Gospel Age (approximately 1,900 years) was strict and puritanical and/or cruel and inflexible. Those who were religious tended to exact “just” penalties, and the nonreligious element was cruel and implacable, with no allowances

being made. Therefore, down through the Gospel Age, this “judge not” advice was helpful to counteract the harsh and cruel attitudes and practices. However, since we are currently living in an age of great liberality, bordering on license, there is a tendency to read Matthew 7:1-5 as if there are *no* exceptions.

In verse 1, it is not helpful to consider the root meaning of “judge” (Greek *krino*), for *context* is the determining factor. The problem with considering the word derivation is that, depending on the “prejudice” of the person, the meaning of the word can be slanted in different ways. Generally speaking, context is more important than the root meaning of a word. However, sometimes the immediate context is not sufficient to get a rounded-out understanding (as here in Matthew 7:1-5), for only one standpoint is treated. In such a case, in order to get the full meaning, the context of other pertinent Scriptures must be considered. Thus there are two ways to understand a Scripture: (1) contextual evidence of the Scripture actually being studied and (2) contextual evidence of all Scriptures bearing on the subject—comparing Scripture with Scripture. Dictionary definitions *alone* are not reliable. Only after analyzing the context can a root meaning be narrowed down, generally speaking. “Judge” in verse 1 means condemn or sentence in regard to one’s final destiny, one’s *eternal* destiny.

Matt. 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Matt. 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

A “mote” is a tiny speck of dust; a “beam” is a plank. Verse 3 does not necessarily mean that when we see a fault in another, we have more faults than he does. But if we are hypercritical—always faultfinding—then even if we find a legitimate fault or wrong in another person, we have a plank in our eye, not on that point but on other points where our disposition has been one of faultfinding. We are to beware of a disposition that always condemns and is hypercritical. Again Jesus was giving good advice, but there are exceptions here too.

Matt. 7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Matt. 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.

Notice that one who sees the mote in his brother’s eye and desires to extract it is called a “hypocrite.” A hypocrite has a habitual faultfinding, hypercritical disposition. But if a brother commits a real sin and we remain silent and do not correct him, then we are guilty of what he is doing. There are circumstances where it is necessary to point out one’s conduct as being wrong, injurious to the truth and to himself and to his influence upon others. This would be true in matters of doctrine, too, if of a fundamental nature.

Being a faultfinder by nature is a serious condition for a brother or sister. Even when we see this manifested in the world, we get incensed, let alone in the brotherhood. Such individuals create an atmosphere of suspicion. If we regularly give ear to those who are hypercritical, we may develop this tendency ourselves. There is a great difference between pointing out a legitimate fault and being habitually hypercritical. Faultfinders rarely, if ever, have anything good or constructive to say about others.

Jesus’ words “Thou hypocrite, first cast ... the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast ... the mote out of thy brother’s eye” suggest the *possibility* that the mote can be taken out of a brother’s eye, although the negative frame of reference shows the possibility

to be a small one indeed. The reason is that those who have the beam in their own eye rarely are able or *willing* to remove it.

Verse 5 is not saying, “You can never judge a brother at any time under any circumstances because there is no hope of retrieval.” The context must be understood. Jesus was talking about those who have a faultfinding disposition as a cardinal attribute of character.

In Jesus’ day, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees all tended to have a hypercritical attitude toward publicans, sinners, and Samaritans. By studying Jesus’ conduct, these faultfinders should have seen that he made exceptions (the Syrophenician woman, for example).

Now let’s consider Scriptures that say we are to judge.

1 Corinthians 11:28,31,32 - “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.... For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” We are to judge ourselves: our conduct, our thinking, our whole mode of life. If we are lax in doing this judging, then God will chasten us along other lines for wrongdoing. We can also be judged or chastened by the Lord for not being active in His service; this would be failing to properly handle our stewardship. Thus there are sins of omission (failing to do something) and sins of commission (doing wrong); we should judge ourselves in *both* respects. Depending on the degree to which one is negligent in judging himself, he will need stripes, lessons, and hard experiences that would have been unnecessary if he had properly judged himself and thus been obedient.

1 Corinthians 6:2,3 - “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”

1 Corinthians 5:12 - “For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?” Brethren should judge under certain circumstances. For example, we judge when we elect elders and deacons by deciding whether it is advisable to cast a vote.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 - “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” There are times when we must withdraw and/or withhold the right hand of fellowship.

Acts 20:28-30 - “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” We must exercise judgment in order to recognize wolves in sheep’s clothing. We do not look for trouble, but we must keep awake.

Philippians 3:2 - “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” Dogs can be dangerous and vicious.

Romans 16:17 - “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

Matthew 7:15 - “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” We must watch in order to detect a false prophet.

Matthew 7:16 - "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" To "know" individuals "by their fruits" constitutes judging. We are to judge a tree by its fruits. If an apostle were in our midst today, he would find fault with many things. He would not just speak on love and how wonderful the truth is. If we did not know such a one was a messenger of the Lord, how would we discern this? We can discern a false prophet from a true one by summing up the individual's general life and teaching and by observing him, his works, his conduct, etc. We should also ask, Is his overall ministry constructive? Are the faults he points out valid? Does he have constructive suggestions? Is he trying to get people to love God and Jesus more than to be obedient to him; that is, does he really point people to the Lord? These are things we must judge.

Each one of us should know the Scriptures as well as possible in order to discern between good and evil, and to know when and what to judge, and when not and what not to judge. We can judge wrong behavior and deeds without judging the individual's heart condition and the degree of his culpability for wrongdoing. However, in rare instances, we must even judge the individual when he has clearly sinned the sin unto Second Death. For such a one, we do not pray (1 John 5:16). For example, if one who is consecrated denounces the Lord, we realize he cannot be recovered. Some would *improperly* rationalize even this sin and say, "Maybe he was not Spirit-begotten." Those who have tasted of the life to come and then so grossly sin are inexcusable. One cannot consecrate and then later change his mind. We consecrate unto death.

Rejecting the Lord's teachings is also a serious matter. We view different circumstances differently. Some individuals have manifestly committed the sin unto Second Death. We regard others as strangers. With some, we show a measure of reserve. We are to discriminate in regard to false prophets and wolves in sheep's clothing. The latter can be brothers or *sisters*; they *devour* sheep with their faultfinding nature, always downgrading.

Pride should not prevent *impartial* judgment in respect to the conduct of members of our own family. We should *love* righteousness and *hate* iniquity regardless of any kinship involved.

When it is necessary to disfellowship someone because of conduct, this action is very difficult to take because so many brethren criticize our stand. And to make it harder, we often are not at liberty to disclose all of the reasons for taking such an action. When questioned, we sometimes have to say, "Brother, you will just have to accept my integrity." We cannot be too sensitive to criticism by the brethren; otherwise, we would get discouraged again and again. We must go ahead and act as we determine the Lord would have us do and then leave the results with Him.

When we consider the Sermon on the Mount *as a whole*, Jesus gave a *rounded-out* opinion on the subject of judging (Matthew 5-7). By studying the whole, we know how much emphasis to put on each part. Jesus said, "Cut off your arm or pluck out your eye if it offends you." He said we are to judge, and he said we are not to judge. Therefore, we must study the entire sermon and *balance* the statements to get a proper understanding. Extracting just one segment on judgment can warp our understanding.

James 4:11,12 reads, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" This text is in the same category as Matthew 7:1-5; that is, "*Judge not.*" Faultfinders by nature habitually destroy one another by evil speaking, and James condemned this poisonous disposition. However, if one teaches error that can subvert the soul of another person, such a one should be exposed as being dangerous. That is not evil speaking. For instance, if one teaches from the platform or otherwise that we are under the Law, we must discredit this *doctrinal* error by judging it. Paul named six individuals that he found fault with, John named a couple, and even the Pastor called

attention—and strongly, too, in some cases—to certain ones by name. This was done to correct those individuals as well as those under their influence.

If in the early, formative years of one's consecrated walk, a faultfinder is properly advised and rebuked, he probably will change, but the chances of change after years and years of being hypercritical are practically nil. In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul was talking to Jewish and Gentile Christians in the class who could not get together in harmony because of different backgrounds. The Jews were trying to force the Gentiles to be under the Law, and Paul told them they were wrong. He addressed the Jews in the class as "Thou art inexcusable, O man" (Rom. 2:1). In Romans, Paul alternated, being both favorable and critical of the Jewish Christians, and both favorable and critical of the Gentile Christians. In the final analysis, however, *few* benefited.

James 4:11,12 pertains to judging *final* destiny. Because we cannot read the heart, our judgments would not be correct. The only exceptions—those cases where we can and must judge—are spelled out in the Scriptures. In other words, in little things, we really cannot judge because we do not know what struggles a brother is going through or what his heart condition is under any circumstance, barring a manifest Second Death condition.

The habitual faultfinder does a destroying work. If he persists in this course, he will merit Second Death. Diotrefes is one example (3 John 9-11). He found fault with the Apostle John, speaking evil against him constantly. This faultfinding disposition had so crystallized in him that he did not see what his conduct was leading to. He was trying to eliminate John's influence and draw away followers unto himself. Therefore, as the faultfinding influence crystallizes, it becomes more and more hopelessly irretrievable. The final destiny of such individuals is not only destruction to themselves but also the destruction of the ministry of the object of their attack, if it is in their power to do so.

We could find fault with everyone, for all are imperfect. However, we should weigh a person's *overall* conduct and influence. The hypercritical person constantly condemns and does not view matters as a whole. If something disturbs us, depending on what it is, it can be a matter of prayer and waiting to see if an opportunity to speak to the party is opened up. If we are hypercritical full-time policemen, we will fail.

We cannot judge the heart, but we should judge conduct, and where the Scriptures specifically tell us to do so, we are *obligated* to judge and take a stand of opposition. This type of judging is quite different from being a chronic faultfinder.

Matt. 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Notice that verse 6 is a *separate* paragraph all by itself. And this verse is a form of *judging*, for we have to judge in order to distinguish "dogs" and "swine." We must notice the behavior and conduct of other individuals to see if they are a dog or a swine by nature. We should not speak of the glories, beauties, and intricacies of truth to such a class. To them, we would give only the absolute basics, and if they obey, then we would tell them more. "Swine" and "dogs" in *this* context are unconsecrated. If a person shows a spirit of enmity, we would not witness further. Also, a person may have a hearing ear, but if he were drunk, we would not speak truth to him.

When Jesus appeared to Saul (Paul), he did not philosophize on truth. Jesus just asked a simple question: "Why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Sometimes *direct* statements are appropriate for enemies and opposers.

What do the terms "dog" and "swine" signify? To the Jew, a "dog" was a Gentile and hence

unclean. As *unclean* meat, “swine” were prohibited from the Jewish diet. Therefore, in the context of verse 6, “dogs” and “swine” are both unconsecrated and unclean in a *gross* manner. Swine grovel in the mud, so they picture those grossly indoctrinated in sin. Their behavior, odor, and eating habits are obnoxious. If some hear a *little* of the basic truths of Christianity but continue to grovel in the mire of sin without showing any response, they are dogs and swine.

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” “Pearls” and “that which is holy” have value.

“Lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” To obey Jesus’ instruction and to avoid being trampled underfoot, we have to observe and judge behavior as being that of a “dog” or a “swine.” Some think they can convert almost anybody. They have such confidence in their own logic and capability that they think they can handle anyone who opposes them. However, such an attitude does an injustice to the truth. The “holiness” and the “pearls” do not convert in and of themselves those who are beyond help at that particular time. Such individuals are not in a disposition to be converted at that moment. Sometimes later on, a person is crushed by some experience in life and then is amenable to the truth.

Matt. 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Matt. 7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

The important lesson is that the individual himself must first be motivated to “ask,” “seek,” and “knock.” Bro. Magnuson used to say, “It is a matter not of outward persuasion but of inward conviction.” *Self*-motivation is necessary in order to receive these blessings.

Some things are locked and then unlocked, and some things are lost and then found. This verse, therefore, pertains not just to things that others understand but to what *we* as individuals *desire* to understand. The principle of asking applies not only to doctrinal matters but also to providences and experiences—as to what their meaning should be to *us* as individuals. This attitude is necessary in order to be a recipient of God’s blessing, for “every one that asketh receiveth.” Sometimes the answer to a prayer is no, but we do get an answer. Either a matter opens up to us, or we are informed in one way or another that we are not ready for it or that it is not ready for us (in the sense that God deems it more expedient to disclose the matter at a future date). The “knocking” is not just a gentle tap but a *pounding*, like the importunate widow who was so persistent that the judge had to give in to her.

Matt. 7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Matt. 7:10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

There is an emotional aspect here. Imagine a father’s attitude toward a son who is requesting something. It is rather touching that the son even asks. If a Christian is a parent, wouldn’t he want to answer a son who so respected him and looked to him for help?

The “bread” versus the “stone” reminds us of Jesus’ first temptation in the wilderness. If we bit on bread, we would receive pleasure. If we bit on a stone and broke our teeth, we would experience great disappointment. If we went to eat a fish and saw that it was a serpent, we would be repelled.

It is interesting that in the illustration here, the son asked his father for a *necessity* of life, not for a lavish gift. And that is true also of the Christian who asks the Heavenly Father for things vital

and necessary to his life as a new creature (for more wisdom, more of the Holy Spirit, etc.). The Christian does not ask for extravagances but for necessities and essentials.

Many have the mistaken thought that we should not ask for too much of the essentials, for to do so would be an unfavorable sign. However, Paul asked three times for his eyesight—something quite vital—until he was told to accept the experience. Thus he did get an answer. Our not asking would indicate that we were satisfied and unaware of our lack and constant need for more. We are always lacking in one thing or another, so we should keep making requests. How much we need the Father's help!

Some cast aspersion on the desire for more knowledge. One brother said that to desire more knowledge reveals a Christian as being puerile (childish). Such individuals do not see what is important. The brother continued, saying that to pursue and seek knowledge is an evidence of immaturity, yet the Scriptures say the opposite. "Incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:2-6).

"Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it" (Prov. 8:10,11). Diligence and effort must be expended. There will be much disappointment, but pursue knowledge, nevertheless, until it is obtained. Those who demean knowledge, making statements out of harmony with the Word, will eventually have to answer for their damaging and erroneous statements. If knowledge is *all* one looks for in life, that is one thing, but to seek knowledge to *know the Father's will* is another, and very commendable, matter.

Incidentally, bread and fish were the food staples in the Galilee area where the Sermon on the Mount was given. That is why Jesus fed the multitudes with bread and fish miraculously multiplied.

Matt. 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

The word translated "evil" in "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts" should be "imperfect." We are *imperfect*, but God is *perfectly* developed in love and knowledge and understanding and sympathy. Therefore, if we, being imperfect and in spite of the fall, have the desire to give good gifts, how *much more* would the Father want to give good things. The *Father* does the real rewarding. "Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

Matt. 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Here is the Golden Rule: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Verses 7 and 8 stress *self-need* and *self-desire*. Verses 9-12 stress the attitude of one who wants to give a gift to his son or to his neighbor. The Father does not frown on our seeking knowledge, understanding, food, growth, etc., but the picture is also enlarged to show that we should be interested in the requests and desires of others.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you" is a key thought. Each one of us decides the matter or situation. For example, we may have an unconsecrated friend or neighbor who wants to monopolize our time. Properly weighing matters will keep us from becoming unnecessarily and improperly obligated.

“For this is the law and the prophets.” The Christian is expected to study, meditate on, and abide by the principles taught in the Old Testament and in the Law. In the strict sense, the Christian is not under the Law, but the principles still apply.

Matt. 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Matt. 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Although a paragraph break is indicated, there is a relationship to the preceding. For example, the “seeking” could be a seeking to know God and the way, the truth, and the life. Thus one who is unconverted may be seeking as well as one who is consecrated. Not everybody finds “the way, which leadeth unto life,” for “few there be that find it.” But those who seek will find! Those who hunger and thirst to know God and His will are the ones who will be rewarded.

The wide gate and the broad (easy) way are contrasted with the strait gate and the narrow (difficult) way. How beautifully the Tabernacle pictured this lesson! Two million Israelites encamped round about the structure, with curtains obscuring the view on all sides except for *one little gate*. Not only is the gate to life “*strait*,” but the way itself is *narrow*.

Matt. 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Compare this verse with verse 1: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Verse 15 shows that we are to judge some things, such as false prophets. This requires some *discernment* and *discrimination*.

Outwardly, false prophets have sheep’s clothing, but inwardly, they are ravening wolves. “Ravening” means meat-eating. A raven likes flesh. Thus false prophets desire flesh, or sheep, to “eat” (destroy). “Ravening” also signifies a voracious appetite. Just observing *superficially* is not sufficient, for then the false prophets would appear to be sheep. We must be critical and analytical, but not hypercritical.

A ravening wolf is looking for something to satisfy his great hunger. When in the flock, a wolf looks to devour a sheep, but there are various ways to devour. One way is to fleece, or rob; that is, false prophets may want money, property, service, etc. The ravening wolf looks for satisfaction, which may be along fleshly or natural lines. He does not look out for the interests of the sheep; in fact, if necessary, he will eat the sheep. The shepherd protects the life of the sheep, but the wolf is just the opposite—he has no concern for the welfare of the sheep. Therefore, it behooves the Christian to take time to think matters over and to study the lifestyle of other Christians, realizing that a false prophet or brother would be a dangerous wolf in sheep’s clothing.

One who is a true brother could become a false prophet through either conduct or doctrine. In other words, a false prophet could be (1) one who truly consecrated but then went into gross error along one line or another, or (2) one who never actually consecrated but masqueraded as such. The previously consecrated individual would not be living up to his consecration. Incidentally, a false prophet could be either a brother or a sister.

Matt. 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.” There has to be a litmus test, as it were, and the Scriptures

help us to discern a wolf. “Can any good come from thorns and thistles?” is the gist of the question with the implied answer being “no.” The false prophet is like a thorn in the flesh, with nothing constructive to offer. Just as a fruit tree brings forth oranges, apples, pears, etc., so each true prophet produces something of value. The true prophet has something constructive to offer along one line or another, whereas the thorn or bramble character of the false prophet is always faultfinding and never edifying fellow members in the most holy faith. In short, he is destructive.

Matt. 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Matt. 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Matt. 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

The premise is that a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Jesus warned to beware of the ravaging wolf, the corrupt tree. Not only is an individual of this category unprofitable, but he is dangerous.

It is possible that a false prophet could be very sweet-talking. Hence the fact that he was hypercritical, or tearing down the brethren, would not be that obvious. It is like the Nadab and Abihu picture. Some manifest an open animosity and opposition by the spirit in which certain things are done. With others, things are done with “honey” but are actually laced with arsenic. The former are much easier to detect. To properly discriminate, we must do a lot of hard thinking; otherwise, the “sweet talkers” will mislead many. Unfortunately, many want to be misled, for their attitude is, “Prophecy unto us smooth things.” One should not rely on the majority opinion, line, and thought as his guideline of principles to follow. In Jotham’s parable, the people wanted the “bramble” to rule over them; this desire shows how unwise many can be (Judg. 9:7-15). Sometimes the many who are deceived are actually encouraging the deceiver in his wrong course.

Here is another example of an extreme statement by Jesus: “Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth [any] good fruit.” No matter how much we are pleasing the Lord, we are still imperfect and have some faults. Conversely, the wolf in sheep’s clothing will have some appearances of good fruit, of being a true Christian. In the final analysis, from God’s standpoint, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit because it will go into Second Death (“the fire”).

Matt. 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Fault can be found in the best of Christians if one is hypercritical or if one has ulterior motives. It helps to put ourselves back in Jesus’ day. The scribes and Pharisees considered Jesus to be high-minded; they felt he had a high opinion of himself. Jesus called himself the Son of God and said that others should follow him because he was the way, the truth, and the life. The scribes and Pharisees resented these statements. After all, *they* were the teachers of the Law. Thus they ascribed bad motives to the truth-bearer, Jesus, and condemned him for leading others “astray.” Also, they resented his “youth” (age 30-33). Despite his youth, Jesus spoke with *authority*. When he exposed certain wrongs, the scribes and Pharisees accused him of undermining the Law. Instead they should have *analyzed* his deeds and words and realized that he had the right slant. Thus, if the scribes and Pharisees put poison in the minds of the hearers to prejudice them, the hearers had to have humble hearts in order to think for themselves and recognize the value of Jesus’ ministry. Just a mere suggestion by one or two Pharisees could sway a whole multitude; their evil connotations influenced others. For example, they said, “Oh

yes, he does miracles—but by Beelzebul.” Not only did they attack Jesus personally and misread his deeds, but they caused others to misread his deeds as well.

Jesus spoke honestly. He uttered *strong* talk, not sweet talk, and made his position *plain*. He did not subtly introduce certain doctrines to wheedle his hearers away but spoke *openly*. “If it were not so, I would have told you” was his attitude. Jesus was open and honest by nature.

“Brambles” and “thorns” are discerned by *habits* of practice and *habits* of talk, not by isolated deeds and words. Even “thorns” will do some good, but their general tenor of thought is along one line.

We cannot read the motives of one’s heart. Therefore, it is possible at times to misinterpret someone’s actions when, actually, they were performed in harmony with the Father’s will. And conversely, some who *appear* to have good motives can be obnoxious in the Father’s sight. However, when one *obviously manifests* a spirit contrary to Scripture, it should be noted. For example, some threw large amounts of money into the coffer to be seen and honored of men. It should not be a *practice* to display one’s largesse openly. *Sometimes* public almsgiving and prayer are necessary, but this should not be the normal and usual procedure. There is sin in a multitude of words (Prov. 10:19).

Q: Are verses 15-20 directed primarily against public speakers (brothers) from the platform, although they would include any brother or sister who puts forth wrong and damaging thoughts continuously?

A: These verses show that the misleading will be done by false *prophets* in sheep’s clothing, but they also show that one has to be discerning in listening to the advice and instruction of others, which must be balanced according to the *will of the Father* in heaven and the *Scriptures*. In matters of *judgment*, we should not be swayed by a *personality*.

Matt. 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Matt. 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Some who say “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of heaven but *not everyone*. Just because some make outward professions and impress people with their attitude and manner does not mean they will be in the Little Flock. Only those who do the will of the Father in heaven will be so rewarded. What an individual teaches must be weighed against what the Word of God teaches. If the two are not in harmony, the individual is a *false* prophet (verse 15), a *false* teacher, a *false* preacher. If one speaks not according to the law and the testimony of the prophets, there is no light in him, yet the individual might be well educated and a fluent speaker (Isa. 8:20). In order to discern a true prophet from a false prophet, we must analyze the *substance* of one’s thinking and direction in the lives of others.

“False prophets” are destined for destruction (Second Death), but there are various *degrees* of misleading and responsibility. For example, Matthew 5:19 says that he who breaks the least of Jesus’ commandments and teaches men so shall be least in the Kingdom of heaven. Those who are a little careless will be at the bottom of the ladder, as it were. Those who are more careless will be saying, “Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name and do wonderful works?” These will not make the Little Flock, but they will get life. Still others are ravaging wolves and false

prophets; both they and those who imbibe their spirit will go into Second Death.

Many are convinced they are right because of providential circumstances. They cite experiences to show how the Lord has used them, but in this, they are *self-deceived*. “Didn’t we cast out demons in thy name?” “Haven’t we done many wonderful works in thy name?” They accomplish various works but are thrust out of the Little Flock (although, presumably, they will be in the Great Company). They are very impressed with the Lord’s leading in their lives but lack understanding. An Old Testament principle is being used here: “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22).

It is interesting that at the time of judgment, this class are trying to expostulate with the Master. They are disappointed and trying to reason with him, but they were deceived. Many mistakenly think that an individual who dies enthusiastically makes his calling and election sure. That may or may not be the case.

Of this deceived class, some may have been misled by false prophets/teachers. The principle is pointed out by the contrast in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee boastfully thought he was righteous, whereas the publican beat his chest and said, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee was deceived, and the publican had the right attitude.

“Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The word translated “iniquity” means “lawlessness,” that is, not following the rules in connection with obedience to the Lord. In other words, “You *thought* you were following the rules and being obedient, but your conduct was not according to the will of my Father in heaven. You did not properly recognize the right law.”

“I never knew you.” Jesus never knew this class as being of the Little Flock, but he certainly knew them as being consecrated. All are called in the one *hope* of the high calling, and of these, all who *continue on* to be faithful unto death will actually receive the reward promised. All who are called can be of the Little Flock *if* they are faithful. The very fact one is called means that he *can* attain the chief prize, by the Lord’s grace, *if* he properly *matures* and is *faithful* unto death. Each must come *up* to a certain standard of development in his own life (he must reach the “mark”) and then *stand fast* (that is, faithfully) in order to get the crown of life.

However, many do not come up to the mark in the full sense of the word. They do not mature in the sense the Lord wants, so they are never recognized as having developed the standard and qualities He is looking for. The *Diaglott* rendering is, “I never approved of you”; that is, this class never really qualified for the Little Flock. The Lord never knew this class in the sense of being what they thought they were. They expected to get the chief reward, and here they are, expostulating with the Master in the future after they realize they failed to attain the Little Flock. They were *confident* of their development in the present life but failed. We cannot assume that just because a person manifests this confidence, he will be in the Little Flock or he “knows the Lord.” Many people fool others by their professions; they use sweet, gushy talk.

There are many good people in the world with refined, kind *natural* qualities, but these are not proofs of either their Spirit-begetting or even their consecration. And even for those who are consecrated and develop fruits of the Spirit, such as kindness, this does not prove they will be of the Little Flock because *obedience* must accompany the fruitage.

Thus proper discernment and judgment are a *lifelong* study. We should have reserve when we see certain things and not foolishly rush in. We should carefully measure the situation first.

Q: With regard to those who ask, “Lord, Lord, have we not done this, and have we not done

that in thy name?” could this apply to some whom the Lord looked upon favorably at one time in their life, and then they did something, or a number of things, that were irreconcilable? From that point on, everything praiseworthy that was done previously (as shown in the type of the Nazarite vow in the Old Testament) is forgotten and no longer considered by the Lord as merits toward making the Little Flock. Such individuals might have their past deeds in mind when they express this surprised attitude. They *did* do wonderful works and they *were* blessed, but then came a point of testing where they failed and refused to repent. From that point on, they lost out on the Little Flock.

A: The Word of God definitely teaches the principle that a class can reach maturity and subsequently fall back, but not here. The thought in verse 22 is that this class *never* reached maturity. They were *never* recognized as having attained the level of the Little Flock, so Jesus can say, “I never knew you.” Although they do not reach maturity, they *think* they do, based on their *works*.

Of course there is another application here, too, with regard to nominal Christians. Those who have never consecrated would no doubt admit they are not consecrated if the term were explained to them, even though they nominally call themselves “Christians.” However, the class described here are not likely to admit their lack, even when informed in the Kingdom.

The thought of “prophesying,” or teaching, in the Lord’s name would apply to any of the consecrated, for all have opportunities to witness. This is *subordinate* teaching (as opposed to primary teaching in the ecclesia arrangement). These thoughts on teaching are very embracing and show various levels of responsibility: the false teacher, the nominal teacher, or any of the consecrated who teach in any capacity.

Matt. 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Matt. 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Matt. 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

Matt. 7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Notice, both the wise man and the foolish man *heard* Jesus’ sayings and built a house. The difference is that the wise man built upon a rock, and the foolish man built upon the sand. “Hearing” implies *consecration*. Both men hearkened (consecrated), but one was foolish in the building. The foolish man accepted Jesus but was a superficial hearer and hence failed to build properly. The time is coming when “every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it” (1 Cor. 3:13).

The Luke counterpart of the Sermon on the Mount says that the wise man “dugged *deep*, and laid the foundation on a rock” (Luke 6:47-49). This would imply *more effort*. The rock was not just on the surface but was down deep; effort and work were involved to dig down to that rock to build the foundation. *Both* the wise and the foolish heard, but *one* dug down deeper. *Both* accepted Jesus, but *one* was more *diligent* in his application.

In addition, because these principles are very broad here, we could also give the following application. The foolish man represents those who hear but do not follow Jesus in the best sense. For example, many who are involved in a social gospel are religiously inclined and have

good intentions and do good works, but they do not follow or preach the true gospel—they preach a *social* gospel. Such may or may not be consecrated; it depends on the individual. At any rate, *many* could be deceived. In the name of Christ, they expect certain things only to find out later that they were completely wrong.

From the standpoint of *principle*, there is an application to the true Church (the wise man) versus the false or nominal Church (the foolish man). But the primary application is on an *individual* basis: “*whosoever* heareth,” “*every one* that heareth.” The nitty-gritty is to the individual—to *his* responsibility, to the effort *he* must exert in order to obtain the Lord’s approval.

Building a house on rock has a practical application in everyday life (those who do not properly build a house to withstand storms suffer the consequences), as well as the main spiritual application of considering (accepting) Jesus as the Rock. The wise man hears Jesus’ words, is buried in his baptism, and becomes rooted, grounded, and settled in him; he digs deep. Likewise, there are the wise and the foolish virgins. When the door is shut, the foolish virgins will remonstrate. Basically, the lesson pertains to two classes of the consecrated, only one of which will get Jesus’ approval as Little Flock. The other class never attain to that position; they are the *unripe* wheat.

Matt. 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

Matt. 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The people heard Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount on *one* occasion. No wonder they were *astonished* at his doctrine! Also, he taught them as one having *authority*. Imagine the *power* of Jesus’ own words and the *tone of voice* he would have used!

It is interesting that Jesus’ two long discourses were given on mountain tops: (1) the Sermon on the Mount on the Mount of Beatitudes, and (2) his great prophecy of Matthew 24 and 25 on the Mount of Olives.

Jesus taught “not as the scribes.” The Pharisees were recognized as “great” teachers, whereas everyday explanations were given by the scribes. The Pharisees were more like “study preachers,” and the scribes were like “study leaders.” The Pharisees were the outward public exponents of the Law, and the scribes were supposedly more familiar with the minutiae of *detail* in the Law.

Matt. 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

After the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus descended the Mount of Beatitudes, and great crowds followed him. Next came the incident with the leper, who was seeking to be cured.

Matt. 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Matt. 8:3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matt. 8:4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Points of interest in verses 2-4 are as follows:

1. This incident happened relatively early in Jesus' ministry, and he was not seeking publicity for the miracles he performed.
2. Jesus wanted the leper to follow the precepts of the Law for one who was cleansed of leprosy.
3. The fact that the leprosy left *immediately* marked the incident as obviously a *miracle*.

“See thou tell no man.” Jesus was not trying to influence the public at that time. If the great multitudes following him had seen the cure, it would have caused too much of a commotion.

Q: Jesus spoke for a long time in delivering the Sermon on the Mount. How could so many people have waited so long down below?

A: While Jesus did speak to the disciples on the top of the mountain, he subsequently came down to another level and sermonized somewhat along the same line to a larger group. From there, he descended to the shore level of the Sea of Galilee, to the plain below, where even more gathered around him. However, the multitude began to assemble at the intermediate point.

It is interesting that the leper manifested faith in saying, “Thou *canst* make me clean,” not “Maybe thou *canst* make me clean.” “According to your faith be it unto you” is the principle (Matt. 9:29).

Jesus told the leper to show himself to the priest and offer a gift “for a testimony unto them” (the *religious* element). This instruction gave the priestly element an opportunity to change their course, that is, their wrong heart attitude and opposition to Jesus. Eventually, many of the priests followed him, especially after his resurrection. Jesus laid the groundwork for opening their eyes *during* his ministry so that later, after many witnesses testified to his resurrection, the priests could reconsider Jesus' role, their personal contact with him, the justification for his anger, etc. The right-hearted ones realized he truly was the Messiah.

The leper was cured near Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. He could have just gone home and praised the Lord and been thankful, but instead he was told to go to Jerusalem—a long journey to the Temple—to see the priest and make an offering. The leper was to give a testimony to the religious element; that is, he was to inform them of the miraculous power of Jesus and the leprosy cure itself. And so it should be with one who is spiritually healed. He should first thank God and then the servant God used to open the blind eyes. Many who receive an answer to prayer forget to thank God in their joy, and the Adversary encourages this forgetfulness. That is an important lesson here: when our prayers are answered, we should properly respond.

Mark 1:45, part of a parallel account of this incident with the leper, shows that he did not obey. “But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.” It was the responsibility of the teacher (Jesus) to instruct the leper what to do. The one who was “taught” (the leper) then incurred responsibility for not complying, although it is possible he went to the priest first, before blazing the matter abroad. Probably, though, the leper got carried away with enthusiasm and lost sight of his responsibility.

Matt. 8:5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

Matt. 8:6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

Matt. 8:7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

Matt. 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

Matt. 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

Matt. 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

How interesting that a *Gentile* would so quickly recognize Jesus' power and authority! There were a lot of Romans in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, which was not far from the cities of Capernaum, Magdala, etc., where Jesus taught and healed. This centurion might have been Cornelius.

A centurion was usually in charge of 100 soldiers, so he had a good income plus servants, and he could give orders to his soldiers and his personal servants. Being a Roman, the centurion was accustomed to *prompt* obedience because the Romans did not brook any sluggishness. The same respect and authority that prevailed in the military carried over into the household. What *humility* this Roman centurion had to regard Jesus, a *Jew*, as one having that type of authority himself but *superior* to his own! Since the centurion had authority to simply issue commands and have them performed, he thought he might dishonor Jesus by asking him to come to his home. Hence the centurion expressed faith that if Jesus merely issued the command, the servant would be healed. He respected Jesus' authority.

Jesus knew in advance how the centurion would respond. Thus his saying, "I will come and heal him," was foreign to his usual procedure. Normally Jesus delayed (for example, with the Samaritan woman and Lazarus). And the widow had to importune for the blessing. Delaying the answer to prayer not only brought out certain qualities and truths but was in harmony with the statement "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Here, with the centurion, Jesus *seemed* to be doing the opposite, but that was not the case, for Jesus knew what the centurion would say. His preparing to go immediately to the centurion's household brought out, with clarity before the others, the depth of faith of the centurion. And thus Jesus could say, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." This was a shocking revelation—that in Israel, among God's own people, there was a great lack of faith. The statement is true among God's Christian children as well.

Think how the centurion had to *humble* himself to go to Jesus. He had a position of authority, yet he humbled himself to petition Jesus, a *Jew*. Many people who are teachers, whether in the truth or in the world, have a hard time listening because of their usual authority of money, power, and/or influence. When they have a lack or a need, it is hard for them to humble themselves and make a request. To the contrary, the centurion realized that Jesus spoke to the multitudes with power and authority, not in a wishy-washy fashion. And so he humbled himself to make a request for his servant, a *subordinate*, not even for himself.

Jesus did not find faith such as this in *all* Israel. The nearest exception was the apostles, who forsook all to follow him. However, he had *previously* dealt with them either directly or indirectly. For example, when John and Andrew first saw Jesus, they heard John the Baptist's testimony "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:35-40). They considered the significance of John the Baptist, the most important man in Israel, acknowledging another individual as being *superior*. They reasoned, "Who is this one who is greater than John? He must really be something." They asked, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" and Jesus said, "Come and see." But this incident was not the forsaking of all to follow Jesus—*consecration* came later. When John

and Andrew went to see where Jesus dwelled, it was for only a few hours. When they consecrated, it was for *life*.

Matt. 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus mentioned Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to make a more marked contrast with the Gentiles. The centurion, a Gentile, went to Jesus with a request, and the humble manner or spirit of the request was so outstanding that it did not have a parallel in all Jewry. The same thing will be done in the Kingdom—and with *Gentiles*. Other Gentile powers will come to Israel and “sit down” with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Gentiles will come just as the centurion did.

Q: Why didn't Jesus say to the centurion, as he did to the Syrophenician woman, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”? Why did he say he would go to the centurion's house?

A: Jesus knew he would not go to the centurion's house but used this procedure and statement, which contradicted his own principles, to allow the centurion to manifest his faith. Jesus knew in advance what the centurion would say. Hence there really was *no* contradiction of principles.

The four Gospel writers each saw certain events in a different light and had a different vocabulary. Matthew took a string of events of the curing of illnesses. (1) The leper, who was *present*, was *immediately* cured. (2) The centurion's servant was *immediately* cured also, but at home, *not in Jesus' presence*. Hence in the first case, the miracle was instantly witnessed, and in the second case, it was not, even though the cure was immediate. The centurion had to return home and inquire the hour of his servant's healing in order to confirm the miracle.

Matthew was emphasizing the lesson that a person had to have *faith* to start with. The leper had faith and was instantly cured. With the centurion, a Gentile request, the healing was immediate but was not visibly seen as such. These were two radical differences in the two cures. The healing of the centurion's servant showed that Jesus did not necessarily have to be present to do the healing. The point is that when we pray to God, physical distance is no barrier to having a prayer answered. The *heart* condition, plus *faith*, bridges the time or space gap. This is a wonderful lesson for those who are isolated on beds of sickness, apart from a religious environment they so earnestly crave. Through prayer, they can reach out and contact the Master.

It is also important to realize that the centurion's request was made on behalf of *another* individual. The leper asked directly for himself, whereas the centurion asked for his servant. The faith was resident in the centurion. In other words, because of the faith of the *centurion*, the servant was healed. Thus the statement “According to your faith be it unto you” sometimes means “According to the faith of the parent or a close friend.” Prayer can be effectual *directly* by the individual himself or *indirectly* through others. Prayer, a *request* audibly or silently expressed, can do marvelous things.

The “children of the kingdom” were the Jewish nation. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the patriarchs, or fathers. Jesus was showing that not only was the current leadership of the nation at fault but also the general populace, who were subservient to the leadership; that is, the “children of the kingdom” included not only the scribes, Pharisees, etc., but also the common people. All who improperly responded would be thrust out of the Kingdom of heaven. Neither the 12 apostles, who were all Jews, nor the 3,000 and the 5,000 who responded on the Day of

Pentecost will be thrust out, but the sum total of those who hearkened was a mere *pittance* compared to the millions who hardened their hearts. The *vast majority* were thrust out. Jesus “came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

“Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” Verse 11 refers to the Kingdom, when the Gentiles will recognize that the blessings come through Israel.

Q: Is it unusual to call the *earthly* phase of the Kingdom “the kingdom of heaven”?

A: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be in the Kingdom of *heaven* in the final analysis, but not those who come to them. The Ancient Worthies will get a *spiritual* resurrection (Abraham looked for a *heavenly* city—Heb. 11:10,16). Thus verse 11 is another Scripture to prove that the Ancient Worthies will be in heaven ultimately.

Matt. 8:13 **And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.**

The fact that the servant was cured that very or “selfsame hour” shows not only that the cure was instantaneous but that the centurion might have inquired diligently regarding the time of the cure. Having this confirmation would be edifying to him as well as to the servant.

Just as the centurion had said he could command “Go,” “Come,” “Do this,” so Jesus returned these words to him: “Go thy way.” In other words, Jesus dealt with the centurion exactly as the centurion suggested he should.

One way to study the Gospel of Matthew is to compare it to the other Gospels, but for now, we just want to study the way *Matthew* saw Jesus and connected events. We want to know what impressed him. As a tax collector, Matthew was an orderly person. Accordingly, his Gospel is orderly—but not from a chronological standpoint. Matthew *grouped thoughts together* to teach a lesson. Certainly Jesus healed more than the leper, the centurion’s servant, and Peter’s mother-in-law in this part of his ministry; otherwise, great multitudes would not have followed him. However, Matthew selected out certain miracles to teach a lesson and to emphasize particular points.

Matt. 8:14 **And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever.**

We know that Peter was married because he had a mother-in-law. Until Paul came on the scene, Peter was the top apostle, so it is interesting to know he was married. The Scriptures are silent about Peter’s wife; therefore, she may have died relatively early so that Peter was unrestricted and could travel fairly extensively in his ministry later on. However, at this time, his mother-in-law was “sick of a fever.”

Matt. 8:15 **And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.**

Notice the *manner* of this cure; namely, it was effected by *touch*. The two previous cures were done by word of mouth, one where Jesus was present and one where he was at a distance. Also, in this case, a *woman* was cured, and the cure was *immediate*. *Faith* is implied because of Peter’s living in the same house.

Peter’s mother-in-law lay sick; Jesus touched and healed her; she arose and ministered unto Jesus and the apostles who were with him. What thoughts emerge from this sequence? It is

possible that while Peter's mother-in-law lay sick, she so wished she was well enough to serve Jesus and the apostles that as soon as her strength returned, she was up and waiting on them. The heart is willing, but the flesh is weak. Sometimes our hearts want very much to do something, but we are physically incapable of it. Recognizing the importance of Jesus, she would especially feel this way. Womanhood tends to want to serve and please. In fact, if guests arrive early and everything is not ready, the woman (or wife) may feel ashamed. The healing of Peter's mother-in-law also shows *immediacy* in that she got up out of a sickbed after having a high fever, which is depleting, and *right away* began to minister. The miracle was instantaneous.

Now we are beginning to see a little about Matthew's emphasis—*faith, immediacy* of the cure, Jesus' healing *others* besides Israelites on occasion, and his curing *both* men and women.

Matt. 8:16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

Matt. 8:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

This next segment also pertains to cures—and presumably on the *same* day as the other healings. Jesus cured *many* that were possessed with devils. If, in this relatively small region, “many” were possessed, then certainly a *great* number are so afflicted today. Moreover, hallucinatory drugs induce illusions and dreams, making the users even more susceptible to the influence of the fallen angels. Of those possessed (for whatever reason), some would realize they were possessed and some would not.

Jesus cast out the evil spirits with his “word.” Thus these verses emphasize the *authority* of Jesus in connection with his various cures. Those who came to him to be healed manifested their faith and confidence in him by that very act.

Jesus' miraculous curing is equated with the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4. He “took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Mark 5:30 and Luke 6:19 tell that “virtue” went out of him when he healed others. However, from Matthew's standpoint, Jesus “took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” by expending energy until he was weary. First, he delivered the *long*, deep Sermon on the Mount, and then he performed *many* miracles, serving throughout the *long* day and on into the evening after the supper prepared by Peter's mother-in-law.

Evidently, the house was “under siege” with many waiting outside for Jesus' miraculous power. Anguish over and pity for those he healed would also have drained him. Just to witness the various infirmities would tend to tire him, as he was sensitive by nature. Being a “whole” person as Adam was prior to Eve's creation, Jesus possessed qualities of both man and woman and was thus sensitive by nature in his very being, as well as compassionate.

To “bare our sicknesses” suggests these activities were a burden. He had no time to himself, for every moment was filled with service and activity. In fact, even his dinner was not relaxing because his mind was centered on the miracles he would perform afterwards. Jesus' vitality was drained—the miracles *cost* him something.

Matt. 8:18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Matt. 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

Matt. 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have

nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

The crowds pressed in on Jesus, and he felt the need to get away. Accordingly, he planned to depart to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but first, a scribe approached and said he wanted to follow Jesus. “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” What motivated the scribe to make this statement? (We can surmise the situation based on Jesus’ reply.) The scribe was no doubt *emotionally* impressed with the miracles he had just witnessed. It is interesting that Jesus’ response was actually a way of saying, “Count the cost, for it will *cost* you something to be my disciple.” Jesus did not urge the scribe to “rush right in” and become a disciple without considering the sacrificial aspect.

The scribe was moved to make a rash, emotional statement (somewhat like Peter on various occasions), expressing his desire to follow Jesus regardless. The scribe realized Jesus was about to leave, and he wanted to show that he had more than a casual interest, that he was not just listening to Jesus out of curiosity.

Jesus’ answer is significant: “The foxes have holes, and the birds ... have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Of course Jesus did occasionally stay in a house (for example, at Nazareth, his hometown, where his family resided), but at times, he slept outside on the ground with perhaps a rock for a pillow cushioned with a piece of cloth. Jesus was saying, in effect, that he had *no permanent* residence he could call home in an *enduring* sense. When he returned to Nazareth, it was for other reasons: courtesy, to go with his family to Jerusalem for the Passover, etc.

Since Jesus could read the thoughts of those who addressed him, he obviously knew their motivation. Therefore, we are able to see why he gave the reply he did. Not only did this scribe need to count the cost, but he had seen Jesus’ *popularity* with the multitudes, he had heard the *power* and *persuasiveness* of Jesus’ logic and reasoning, and he had witnessed the *miraculous cures*. Accordingly, he felt that Jesus would be a great man and wanted to *share in his glory and rewards in the present life*. That is why Jesus issued a caution and a rebuke in a sense, saying, “Forget your wrong notions. I do not even have a place to lay my head. This is a *narrow way* that will *cost* you something.” (We will be kings and priests in the *next life if we are faithful sacrificers* unto death in the *present life*. The glory comes later; now we must suffer.) The scribe may have had good and kind thoughts toward Jesus, but his thoughts were too much on the reward. He expected comforts and glory in the present life.

Hence, in the final analysis, the scribe’s words—“whithersoever thou goest”—were empty. (This incident is a caution to us, too, to be sure we *mean* what we say, for words can be cheap.) We are reminded of Jesus’ encounter with the rich, young ruler, who asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18-23). Jesus said (paraphrased), “If you mean what you say, do this one thing: sell all that you have, give the money to the poor, and come and follow me.” The cost of being a disciple was too high. The rich man went away sorrowfully. Thus in both incidents, Jesus was really saying, “*Count the cost.*” Being a follower of Jesus costs something.

Incidentally, Jesus’ followers do not have to literally sell all their goods and give the proceeds to the poor. Jesus was pointing up the rich man’s *weakness* and also emphasizing the *cost* of being a disciple. By being able to read the man’s thoughts and motives, Jesus knew what the sensitive area was and replied accordingly. Just as with the rich man, Jesus now made a startling statement (verses 21 and 22).

Matt. 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Matt. 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

This time a *disciple*, already a follower of Jesus, was urged to give up his family relationship, to not let it interfere with his discipleship. Under the Law, there was a period of cleansing and mourning following a death, but this disciple was just interested in the interment itself. (“Suffer me first to go and bury my father.”) Jesus was about ready to get in the boat and depart. The disciple intended to go along, probably in another boat, but first wanted to bury his father. Jesus replied in effect, “Do not go to bury your father.”

Normally we would attend a funeral, especially of such a close relative, giving due respect and doing that which is decent and honest in the sight of men. However, several things were involved here. (1) Jesus was testing a *priority of interest*. (2) If Jesus had heeded this man’s petition, he would have had to *wait* for him and could not have departed for the other side of the lake when planned. The lesson is that we cannot slow the Master down. If the Lord’s leading is in a certain direction, we should act. (3) This incident pointed out something we should all realize; namely, if such a circumstance were to confront us in our own life, we should be able to do *what the Master wants*, rather than to do honor to our own family or even the brotherhood. Abraham was willing to offer up his *own son* in sacrifice, and *all* of the Little Flock would be willing to take such a step. That is why Abraham is called the “father of the faithful”; his example must be a characteristic of everyone who is of the Isaac seed. The first step is consecration—to leave our father’s house, forsaking all and following the Master. That step of giving up the world to follow Christ is essential to being a Christian, but there will come a final, supreme test of offering up even our own “son” as Abraham did. And thus Abraham is the “father of the faithful” *throughout* our consecrated walk: in the beginning (at our initial consecration), in the interim, and in the supreme, final test.

Obedience is continually tested. If the Master goes elsewhere, we have to do the same and follow him. The principle is expressed in Revelation 14:4, “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” And again, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). To be of the Little Flock, we must love God and Jesus supremely. Whether or not we have that mettle of character, we may not even know ourselves until we are put to the test.

We have preparatory experiences to school and develop us for the supreme test, but when the test comes, we must make our decision for the Lord. Moses asked, “Who is on the LORD’S side?” (Exod. 32:26,27). Those who were, had to slay the disobedient, which included their best friend, their family, and their closest companion. That *principle* is correct, and it is used in both the Old and New Testaments. However, we must, in addition, *properly discern* when to apply this principle; that is, we should not do anything radical until we are sure it is God’s will.

After saying, “Let the dead bury their dead,” in the parallel account (Luke 9:60), Jesus added another statement: “But go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” In other words, “If you want to continue to be my disciple, you have to follow me on a *higher* mission.”

Matt. 8:23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

In harmony with his intentions expressed earlier, Jesus entered a boat and his disciples followed him. Probably the boat was large enough to accommodate all 12 apostles—so that the power of the lesson would reach them and they could address the Master in the manner recorded. Hence this was a reasonably large boat.

Matt. 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Apparently, the sea was calm when they started, but then a great storm arose. (When the wind blows from the north, it funnels down between mountains and *violently* churns up the Sea of Galilee. This happens three or four times a season, creating treacherous conditions.) “The ship was covered with the waves”; that is, the waves were higher than the boat and thus beat into the boat. If nothing had intervened, it was just a matter of a short time until the boat would be swamped and sink. The disciples were frightened, but Jesus was asleep. The Master slept because he was tired from speaking and healing. In fact, even the press of the crowds caused a claustrophobic, smothering effect that was debilitating. And each time he cured someone, virtue went out of him. All in all, Jesus was exhausted. Also, being a perfect man, he had a quality of sleep unknown to us—a peaceful, deep, undisturbed sleep that enabled him to be unaware of the turbulent storm. Whereas our sleep is often fitful because of troubled mind or conscience, he had perfect peace with God and a clear conscience, both of which were conducive to deep sleep.

Matt. 8:25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

The disciples awoke Jesus, saying, “Do you want us all to perish? Save us!”

Matt. 8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Matt. 8:27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Waking up out of a sound sleep, Jesus immediately addressed the disciples as having little faith. They had *some* faith, as evidenced by their waking him, but he rebuked them for having “*little* faith.” Why did Jesus say this?

Hearing these words was a *humbling* experience for the disciples. By being the select few in Jesus’ presence when he performed the miracles, and then being given the privilege of accompanying him in the boat, they may have considered themselves special and thus needed to be put in their place. They had heard Jesus point out deficiencies in others, but they felt approved and more worthy. Jesus’ words humbled them.

Also, they had already witnessed enough miracles and heard Jesus’ marvelous teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, so they should have had more confidence *in him personally*, realizing that God would protect him. This is the basic principle involved. No matter what happened with that boat, *Jesus’ very presence* in their midst was the stabilizing factor. Satan cannot defeat Jesus in the final analysis. Even on the Cross, Jesus was not really defeated by Satan, for the Savior’s death was part of the divine plan. The disciples should have had sufficient faith based on Jesus’ many miracles and his being the Son of God. He was also “the Son of [the] man [Adam]” (verse 20), a very meaningful expression. If Jesus truly was the Son of man, as they believed, their faith should have overcome this experience.

We are reminded of the Israelites after they crossed the Red Sea. If they had stopped to *consider* the mighty miracle they had just witnessed, they would have had sufficient faith for ensuing experiences. And here, if the disciples had *meditated* on Jesus’ life and power, they would have had more faith in regard to Jesus’ presence with them. The Israelites had heard Moses’ words, but their hearing was not *mixed with faith*; that was their failure (Heb. 4:2). This is a lesson to us: our experiences should be mixed with faith. Faith is needed throughout all of our journey.

In essence, Jesus was saying, “Fear not!” Even in an arena with lions, we should “fear not.” In such a trial, we should not meditate on the horrors of the experience but should pray, sing hymns, think of the Heavenly Father, etc. If we dwell on the experience itself, we will start to

tremble. It is like Peter's walking out on the waves. He was all right until he began to think about the fierce wind and waves; then he started to sink.

No doubt the disciples presumed they had faith, so Jesus' reprimand surprised them. He was alerting them of their need to let the lessons sink deeply into their hearts so that they would grow stronger. It is touching and commendable, then, that later they said, "Lord, increase our faith" and "Teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1; 17:5). If Jesus had not given them strong lessons, they might have assumed their faith was sufficient and not have made such humble requests. The point is, we should not take for granted that we have enough faith; we must not be overconfident.

Some of the disciples were fishermen, well accustomed to the waters of Galilee. Thus they knew how dangerous this storm was. The boat was beginning to sink, and they feared they would die.

The next thing Jesus did was to arise; that is, he *stood up*; he assumed a posture of *authority and power*. (Notice, arising and standing mean the assumption of power and authority.) Jesus *rebuked* the winds and the sea, and they *obeyed*. It would be interesting to know what words he used. Since *Satan* had caused the storm, the rebuking was in order. Following the rebuke, Jesus said to the sea, "Peace, be still ... and there was a *great calm*" (Mark 4:39).

Of course God permitted this experience, but the startling thing is that *no matter what circumstance developed*, Jesus was composed and gave the right answer. Here he was awakened *suddenly out of a deep slumber*, yet he knew just what to say and do. The Father knew His Son would handle the situation properly and thus be well capable of knowing what to do. Otherwise, God would not have allowed Jesus to be in such a dangerous situation.

The "great calm" means that the Sea of Galilee went *suddenly* from terrific turbulence to a glasslike calm. This experience of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee is a prophetic picture of the future. In fact, the higher lesson refers to the end of the age. Jesus will *stand up* in the "boat" in the great Time of Trouble and still the waves (stop the trouble abruptly), bringing a great calm.

The fact that a visible man could have so much power over these elements of nature was even more startling than the earlier cures. What are the lessons both for us and for the apostles? (1) We should not fear according to the flesh, for we have God, Jesus, and the holy angels to help us. (2) Satan has no power over us in the flesh except as it is permitted for our highest good.

Jesus was asleep in the midst of the raging storm. The frightened apostles woke him up, saying, "Carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38). In a sense, they were questioning Christ's *love*. We may talk very bravely about having great courage in a theoretical trial, but how do we react when a trial is suddenly upon us? We may be overtaken by the fear that our prayers will be not heard. It may seem as if God and Jesus are asleep or deaf to our cries for help. But we really should not fear according to the flesh, for we have God, Jesus, and the holy angels to help us. Every one of us will be tested along this line because such tests are part of discipleship and training.

Sometimes it is helpful to review and reflect on God's past dealings with us. Such reflections reassure us that we are a child of God, and then faith steps in and becomes an anchor for the present trial and circumstance. Then we continue to importune and implore, "Lord, are you hearkening to my prayer?"

Jesus wanted the apostles to reflect on how he had been dealing with them all along and thus to realize he was still interested in them. We should *grow* in grace and faith and strength of character. *Faith* leads to *hope*, and hope leads to *God's love*. Faith needs to be cultivated. There is

a *natural* faith, a *natural* gentleness, a *natural* patience, etc. These are usually viewed as the fruits of the Spirit, but they are not. We need to develop a *spiritual* faith, a *spiritual* gentleness, a *spiritual* patience, etc. To attain Godlikeness and the love that *He* teaches are our goal.

Reflecting at a later time on this incident on the Sea of Galilee and other experiences would give the apostles strength for future experiences. Past trials would serve as stepping-stones of faith so that when a similar experience with Satan—with all the powers of demons and darkness—would suddenly descend upon them (such as Peter’s crucifixion), they could exercise faith.

Jesus was *present* in the boat on this occasion, although asleep. Later, when a similar incident occurred, he was *absent* from the apostles. Thus he was beginning to teach them, step by step, added and higher and stronger lessons. Jesus does the same with us in the experiences of life. He schools, prepares, and develops us. This is especially true for those who are truly members of the Little Flock. The 144,000 will all have gone from step to step to step; the Great Company will not. Therefore, sometimes the *faithful* have the *severest* tests in order to be developed. Once they come up to the mark of perfect love, they must stand fast and have crystallization experiences before they are a finished product.

“The men marvelled” at the *great* calm, at how the winds and the sea *obeyed* Jesus. “What kind of man is this?” they asked. *Each* of the apostles had the same thoughts in his heart, and each got the same lesson. They had manifested *some* faith in waking up Jesus to help them, but when they saw the *way* he helped, it was beyond their wildest expectations—he did not drag them to shore and administer artificial respiration!

Matt. 8:28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

The boat reached “the country of the Gergesenes,” where Jesus had an encounter with two possessed with demons who came out of the “tombs” (caves). This area is on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee. Gergesa, a small localized area where the Gergesenes were, was part of the larger territory called Gadara, related to the tribe of Gad east of Jordan. A Gentile population was in Gergesa raising swine.

The two possessed with devils were “exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.” Gergesa was down close to the sea, and it is odd that from a little south of Gergesa north to where the 5,000 were miraculously fed has never really been occupied. On the eastern shore of Galilee, there is relatively little evidence of civilization.

Matt. 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Matt. 8:30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

Matt. 8:31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

Matt. 8:32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

The demons cried out, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” What do these questions tell us?

1. The demons knew that at some distant time, a day of judgment was coming, and they knew that Jesus' First Advent was too soon for the judgment to take place. The fallen angels had some idea of a future judgment, so when they were imprisoned in *tartaroo*, they probably were given some information.
2. The demons knew Jesus' name. The two wild, demented men would not have known this, so the fallen angels were speaking through them and even declared Jesus as the "Son of God." (The multitudes were not aware of this identity—the most they had said at this time was "Son of David.")
3. Not only did the fallen angels know that a judgment day was coming and that it was far in the future, but they also knew that Jesus was somehow related to the enactment of that judgment. Hence they asked, "Art thou come to judge us before the time?"
4. "What have we to do with thee?" The demons were not happy about Jesus' presence, and they recognized his *authority*. (For them to know that Jesus would be involved in their future judgment means they recognized him as the Logos, the mighty one.) Therefore, they *asked him* for permission to go into the swine. They not only knew his name but recognized that he had power of his own—*authority*.

"If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine." The word "if" has the thought of "since." The demons *knew* that Jesus would cast them out. "Since thou [wilt] cast us out, suffer us to go ... into the ... swine." The fallen angels had no doubt about Jesus' intention.

Luke 8:31, the parallel account, has, "And they [the fallen angels] besought him [Jesus] that he would not command them to go out into the *deep*." This means that when Jesus cast out the demons, they would have gone back into *tartaroo* (the "deep") if Jesus had not permitted them to go into the swine. The fallen angels would have lost their connection.

The evil angels try to get a medium by looking for those who are receptive to occult powers. Certain people are born with these receptive capabilities, and the fallen angels like to get such individuals under their control and use them as "tools," much the way a child uses a remote-controlled toy. By holding a battery in his hand, a youngster can direct a flying plane with no wires or strings attached. The child derives great pleasure from thus controlling the maneuvers of the plane.

The fallen angels operate similarly but with *animate* beings. When fully possessed, an animate being will do whatever the fallen angels want him to do. Here, in this account, the fallen angels were losing a possession they had and did not want to go into the void (*tartaroo*), where they would have nothing. Thus they asked permission: "If we have to leave this house [these two men], let us occupy the swine instead." Moreover, the fallen angels had the evil motive in mind to destroy the swine and make Jesus unpopular in that area. The great herd of swine was a source of income.

Q: Jesus would have realized the fallen angels wanted to go into the swine to cause trouble, so why did he allow it?

A: Evidently, his purpose was to cover the whole Galilee area, and he even went to Tyre, Sidon, and Caesarea Philippi—the entire region got a witness. Although Jesus did not intend to stay in the Gergesa vicinity, which was sparsely populated, he did want to visit one of the ten cities of the Decapolis that was inland at the south end of the Sea of Galilee. These two wild men possessed with demons had come from that city. They had been imprisoned there, but no jail could hold them because they were so fierce. As a result, the populace steered them to this other area of the Gergesenes. The two were a terror—they could snap chains asunder—but

somehow the people got them out to this area and dumped them, and then returned to their town. The point is that one of the two who were cured (Legion) went back and testified in that very city all about Jesus and how he had miraculously cast out the demons (Mark 5:9). Since the people knew that the swine had perished, the account left a deep scar on their memory—this one of Nazareth had touched their lives by destroying 2,000 swine (Mark 5:13).

This whole incident had the effect of a *great* witness of Jesus' *authority*. Not only did he cleanse the two men of demons, but they had been possessed of *many* demons—so many, in fact, that when they entered the herd of 2,000 swine, all of the pigs ran down a cliff and perished in the sea. Thus Jesus *visually demonstrated* the demon power that had been in these two men. No wonder they had been berserk with such tremendous power in them. The incident also shows that a person can be possessed by 1, 2, 100, 1,000, etc., demons—all in *one* being! An ordinary mind could see *very dramatically* what had happened. The demons were cast out, entered the swine, and caused the whole herd to perish. The local residents of that area were affected.

Both men were cured, but Legion was converted. It is like the situation with the ten lepers; all ten were cleansed, but only one of them returned and gave thanks to Jesus. Thus there was a greater effect on Legion, and he actually wanted to follow Jesus. However, Jesus refused and told him to go back to his home city and tell all that had happened. The man who formerly was wild and naked could now return neatly dressed and calm, with his hair combed and in his "right mind" (Mark 5:15). What a witness!

It is very possible that Jesus declined Legion's desire to be a disciple at this time because he was a Gentile. At the expiration of the 70 weeks of favor, this man could then have become a follower of the Master.

This incident beautifully points out the lesson of the selfishness in man's heart. That same attitude prevails today. We can witness to others about the coming Kingdom blessings, but when they hear that trouble must come first, they react, "Oh, I don't want to lose my investments and material possessions!" They are selfish and shortsighted, not appreciating that blessings will come to all. Similarly, the populace back there mourned the loss of the swine more than they rejoiced over the healed status of the two men.

The proper attitude would have been to see (1) the *radical change* in the individuals from insanity to sanity, (2) the *power* that Jesus had exercised in delivering them, and (3) in spite of the loss of property, there was some legitimacy to the claim of the demons that Jesus was the Son of God. If the claim was legitimate, the loss of property was minor. Instead the people were engrossed in material possessions and comforts.

Notice what Jesus said to the demons: "Go." The demons had been talking, and then they *besought* Jesus to go into the swine. What did he reply? A *very short, one-word* directive.

Many demons were involved, but there were not necessarily exactly 2,000 in Legion and the other man just because 2,000 pigs perished. Although one demon could go into only one pig, yet more than one demon could enter the same pig. Also, since a legion at that time consisted of 6,000 soldiers, more than 2,000 demons may have been involved. The incident was just giving the people a simple demonstration of the *multitude* of demons that possessed these two men and could thus adversely affect the herd of swine.

The swine "ran violently down a steep place into the sea." The place traditionally claimed as the site where this occurred is a little north of the actual place (called Gergesa on many Bible maps). Also, the road today partially obliterates the true site where the two demented men were in the caves, or "tombs," from which 20 bodies were exhumed in recent history. The traditional site is *too* steep, for the swine would have broken their legs on the incline and never made it to

the sea.

Matt. 8:33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

Matt. 8:34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

It is interesting that when the inhabitants of the city came out to meet Jesus, they besought him to leave, rather than stone him or in another manner force him to leave. After such a great miraculous work was done, they were in awe and fear of him. And they recognized his authority.

There were two reasons the people asked Jesus to depart. (1) They selfishly wanted to preserve their temporal possessions. (2) They were afraid not only of Jesus' power but also of what the requirements might be in becoming his disciples. Subconsciously they sensed that sacrifice was involved.

The swine keepers fled and went into "the city" (probably one of the ten Decapolis cities). The "whole city" came out to meet Jesus and besought him to depart out of their coasts. There was at least a partial motivation of fear plus not wanting to pay the price that was already involved with his presence. From the standpoint of material possessions, imagine seeing an entire large herd wiped out in a couple of minutes! A fortune was destroyed just by this man's presence. Unhappy about the loss of the swine, the people politely asked Jesus to leave (they were afraid to command him). However, his tremendous reputation has to be counterbalanced with the fact that he was "rejected of men" and not received by "his own" (Isa. 53:3; John 1:11). For a long period of Jesus' ministry, he was popular and at least recognized by the multitudes. Thousands came from all over to hear him—from Syria, Tyre, Sidon, the other side of the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, and the hills of Judea, as well as from all of Galilee. To transport the sick into his presence, traveling a distance, required faith, but those who had sick relatives exerted the effort—they found a way—in the hope that Jesus would work a miraculous cure. He had a magnetic attraction, especially for his curative powers.

Matt. 9:1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

Jesus' "own city" was Capernaum. He left Nazareth and went to Capernaum (Mark 2:1).

Matt. 9:2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Matt. 9:3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

Matt. 9:4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Matt. 9:5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

Matt. 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

Matt. 9:7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

A man sick of the palsy (paralyzed) who was bedridden was *carried* to Jesus on his bed or cot. Obviously, *faith* was exercised. In the miracles that Matthew discussed thus far, faith was

involved in each case—either by the individual himself or by others associated with him. Although faith is not actually mentioned in regard to the two demoniacs being healed, we can assume it was a factor. For instance, some who are possessed by demons feel a sense of bondage and slavery, and although they desire freedom, such a powerful influence controls them that they are helpless. There is evidence that these two desired liberty but were powerless to obtain it.

The man's paralysis could have been caused by many factors, for example, a stroke, possession by demons, or polio. After others made the effort to carry the sick man to Jesus, hoping for a cure, he addressed the palsied one thus: "Son, be of good cheer." Jesus would have paused to let these words sink in. Then he continued, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." It would be comforting for the paralytic to know that his sins were forgiven, but the implication was that his paralysis was a punishment for sin. Israel was given to signs, and the people thought that catastrophes were a direct result of sin. For example, consider the incident about the Tower of Siloam, which fell and killed some people (Luke 13:4,5). The popular belief was that the tower fell on them because they had done something wrong. But such a conclusion did not make sense. If that were the case, how could *several* people from *different* circumstances all be at the tower at the *same* time to receive a punishment for sin? This attitude in regard to calamities was derived from the Law, which taught that obedience brought material prosperity and health, and disobedience caused loss and sickness. *Generally speaking*, this was true, but the principle should not have been applied to *individuals* under ordinary circumstances. For instance, when one was born blind, the erroneous thought was that the parents had sinned.

Therefore, Jesus' words "Thy sins be forgiven thee" were uttered because *others* viewed the affliction as a punishment for sin, but the paralysis was not due to sin. Jesus made this statement for the benefit of the *beholders*, among whom were the scribes, who were indignant that Jesus presumed to forgive sins.

It is amazing how Jesus could perfectly prepare and control the situation—and on the *spur* of the moment! His technique was flawless. He was always "master" of the situation, even when dilemmas were thrust on him suddenly. He not merely had an answer but had one that seemed so *calculated* and well thought out under *difficult* circumstances. There was *amazing wisdom* in his techniques.

There is a similarity between this incident and the swine incident. The two demoniacs were possessed with *invisible* spirit beings, but the manifestation of Christ's authority was *twofold*: (1) in the extrication of those spirits plus (2) the implantation of them in the swine and the *visible* results. Jesus' *great power* was thus shown. For Jesus to tell the paralytic that his sins were forgiven was an *invisible* and *intangible* subject. But then, to show he had power and authority, Jesus did something *visible*: he healed the bedridden man so that he could walk.

Invisible: Demons were cast out.
Sin was forgiven.

Visible: Swine were adversely affected.
The paralytic was healed.

Jesus' question and answer were clever. He asked the scribes, "Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise and walk?'" Lest they accuse him of taking the easy way out and respond, "It is easier to say sins are forgiven," Jesus did *both*. He replied (paraphrased), "But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say to the sick man, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go home.'" The scribes *could not deny* the miracle.

In what sense could Jesus say, "Thy sins are forgiven"? What is the principle? Jesus spoke from a futuristic or prophetic standpoint. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Jesus' blood was not yet shed, but he knew that it would be. He came for that very purpose, and he was determined to accomplish it. Thus the Bible sometimes speaks of things yet future

not only in the present tense but also in a very positive way. And so, the Christian can speak with positiveness to one who is considering consecration, “If you do consecrate, you *will be absolved* of your sins.” That statement is an offshoot of the principle “Whatsoever sins ye remand will be remanded.” The apostles were addressed this way, “Whatsoever you agree on is bound in heaven and down here on earth” (Matt. 16:19 paraphrase). The Lord’s people themselves can use an offshoot of that principle under appropriate circumstances.

The purpose of Jesus’ miracles was primarily to show the nature of his ministry, and not so much to focus on the individual who was healed. Of course Jesus was compassionate and personally interested in the individuals, but the higher motive was to show forth the glory of the Kingdom. The miracles were but *samples* and *temporary* demonstrations of what he will do on a more *permanent* and *large-scale* basis. However, Jesus’ personal interest is shown in the term of endearment “Son”: “*Son, ... thy sins be forgiven thee.*”

Jesus’ words and actions were designed to manifest the critical attitude of the scribes and Pharisees and thus expose their evil heart condition. Jesus loved righteousness and wanted to heal the sick, but he hated the evil and the hypocrisy. And the religious leaders were so opposed to Christ that they could not see this goodness. It should have been apparent to them that Jesus could read their hearts and their innermost thoughts, but they were so filled with hatred, anger, and envy that reason departed. This can happen to us, too, if we are not careful. Frequently a person not directly involved can understand a situation much more readily. The one directly involved may be blinded, for strong emotion can blind us to reason. Hence the scribes and Pharisees might not have realized that Jesus could read their thoughts. They might have thought their facial expressions alone were exposing their thoughts.

Matt. 9:8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The multitudes *marveled* at the miracle. Certain other miracles were really more astounding, but we should remember that the crowd witnessing each miracle was not necessarily composed of the same individuals each time. Otherwise, the miracles would have been compared, and only the most startling ones would have caused the people to marvel.

Matt. 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Here Matthew was telling of his own calling, and he used the name Matthew rather than Levi (Luke 5:27). A tax collector, Matthew was “sitting at the receipt of custom” in the process of collecting taxes when Jesus called him, saying, “Follow me.” Matthew probably finished his immediate counting and then followed Jesus right away—perhaps five minutes later.

Prior to his calling, Matthew would have known about Jesus and his deeds. As a tax collector in the Galilee area, Matthew had contact with Israelites from all walks of life, and all the local news reached him. Thus he had to know about Jesus’ activities and miracles and be sympathetic toward him in order to respond in such an abrupt manner. Including the recounting of his own call, Matthew had now narrated the calling of five of the apostles (Matt. 4:18-20).

Matthew was known as a “publican”; that is, he was stigmatized because of his profession of dealing with the Roman government, Israel’s oppressor, to collect taxes. The word “publican” signified one who had business (commercial) dealings with foreigners.

Matthew was *ready* to separate from his former life and become a disciple of Jesus. It is like a person who is considering consecration. The individual usually entertains the idea for a while, and then a little push or suggestion triggers the actual consecration. Obviously, Jesus could

read Matthew's heart and knew he would be a good disciple.

Tax collectors earned a good salary because they set the tax rate themselves. The Roman government required a certain amount for each locale based on the population census, and tax collectors could keep the difference between that amount and what they were able to collect. Dishonest tax collectors set an exorbitant amount, but Matthew was not one of these. Despite the stigma, greedy Jews desired the job of tax collector so that they could get rich. However, Matthew was an *upright* man in a stigmatized profession.

Matt. 9:10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Jesus had dinner in Matthew's house (Luke 5:29). Matthew's response was not only to rise and follow Jesus right away but also to set up a feast, which would have taken at least a day to prepare. Matthew had been witnessing to his friends, some of whom were also tax collectors and/or "publicans" in another sense. Hence publicans and sinners were invited to this repast, plus Jesus and the disciples. A few Pharisees were also on hand (verse 11). In other words, this was a fairly public feast with quite extensive invitations that included tax collectors from other areas. Of course all are sinners, but these "sinners" were disreputable characters, for they were known to be living in sin. "Jesus sat at meat" with this mixed group plus his disciples.

There was wisdom in informing us of the backgrounds of some of the disciples: Matthew the tax collector, Paul the persecutor, Peter and Andrew the ignorant fishermen, etc. This information gives hope to others who have backgrounds they are ashamed of, for it shows that with repentance, one can come to Jesus. In fact, that was one of the primary motivations of Matthew in narrating these incidents in his Gospel. As a social outcast himself, he was sympathetic to other outcasts. He wanted to share the benefits of Jesus' presence and counsel. He wanted others to know they could have Jesus' love and fellowship through repentance.

Matt. 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

Matt. 9:12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

The Pharisees criticized Jesus for fraternizing with sinners and publicans. They said to the disciples, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" But it was Jesus who answered (the disciples probably deferred to him): "Those who *think* they are whole do not need a physician, but those who know they are sick do." (Actually all are "sick," but some are too proud and self-righteous and feel too self-sufficient to realize it.) Jesus' answer was helpful to both those who were criticizing him and his disciples. There was a *depth* of wisdom in Jesus' reply, and it was thought up on the *spur* of the moment.

Matt. 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus then quoted from Hosea 6:6 in the Old Testament: "But go and learn what the saying means, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'" In regard to "sacrifice," the Pharisees had added many rules and regulations, the keeping of which made them feel even more self-righteous. They kept the letter of the Law but not the spirit of the Law. The precepts of men were added to the Law, and the Pharisees were meticulous in these matters rather than in the knowledge of God. Jesus thus spoke *sharply* to the Pharisees. Using a question form, the Pharisees were insidiously trying to undercut Jesus, but he gave a direct answer, saying, "You do not understand what you are talking about. You are supposed to be the expounders of the Law,

but you do not understand the basic fundamental principles of Scripture. You are obeying the letter of the Law but not the spirit of that Law. Go and *learn!*" That last phrase was like rubbing salt in the wound. Many would say these words were not tactful, but tact is to be employed only where it is the best means of addressing a situation. Otherwise, the blow can be softened so much that the point will not get across. Jesus spoke with *power and authority*. To be able to address the multitudes so often, he would have had a strong voice.

"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." In other words, "I did not come to call the self-righteous (those who think they are righteous) to repentance but those who realize their need of help and their inability to keep the Law." Jesus likened himself to a physician, that is, a "priest" in the highest sense. A priest in Scripture was imbued with power to heal. We consult a physician when we are sick.

Matt. 9:14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

John the Baptist's disciples, who were *sympathetic* to Jesus and not faultfinding like the Pharisees, asked him a question. They were looking for instruction as to why there was a great difference between the character and nature of Jesus' and John's ministries. The question was very proper: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

Matt. 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Jesus answered the question: "How can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" He was the *prospective* "bridegroom," who will marry the Church in due time. The "children" were his disciples and those who would become his disciples. The "bridechamber" is the chamber of *preparation*, which can be likened in some respects to the Holy of the Tabernacle or the *Antechamber* (schoolroom) of the Great Pyramid. (Not all of those in the Holy get into the Most Holy as priests; hence the Holy is a "chamber" for preparing the Bride class.) The term "bridechamber" includes the preparation of *both* the consecrated and those who are not yet consecrated but are in the way of consecration. All of these, depending upon the degree of involvement, are really the "children" of God. Therefore, we should not be thrown off course because the term "children" is used with "bridegroom." The Scriptures show *degrees* of nearness to God: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). The distinction is between tentative and vitalized justification. Some are in the way of justification, and some have entered the door (the first veil).

Jesus used the term "children" for another reason too. There are two aspects of consecration: (1) We consecrate and (2) God consecrates us (accepts our consecration). Justification is closely related to consecration, and consecrations under the new dispensation were not legally recognized until Pentecost. Thus there was a gap of time between the consecration of those back there and the begetting of the Holy Spirit. To accommodate this unusual circumstance, the term "children" was used instead of "brethren."

Instead of the word "children," other translations use "wedding guests," "bridegroom's friends," "bridegroom's attendants," "guests of the bridegroom," etc. All of these terms include both the consecrated and those in the way of consecration, plus those who had a hearing ear.

"Mourning" was not to take place while Jesus, the Bridegroom, was present, for being in his presence was a *wonderful privilege*. Imagine actually hearing his voice back there, seeing him, and observing the working of miraculous healings! Just to hear his *perfect* counsel would be

thrilling! And not only was he perfect, and his counsel perfect, but he was the *Son of God!* Thus it would have been inappropriate to mourn while he was present. The time to mourn would come soon enough, that is, at his crucifixion. When he was *absent* from them, they could fast and mourn, as the disciples of John the Baptist were already doing. With *happiness and joy*, those with a hearing ear were following Jesus like humble little children, as “students” hearkening to a “master,” being very attentive to his words.

There is *no* such thing as taking our consecration too seriously. The more submissive we are to the Master and his counsel, the better.

Matt. 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Matt. 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

“New cloth” and “new wine” were the new doctrines and new dispensational truth. Wine is taken internally, whereas cloth is an external covering, and both are needed. The “new cloth” pertained to the new type of righteousness, the new concept as opposed to the old, which claimed that righteousness was according to the deeds of the Law. This new doctrine of the “covering” through Jesus enabled the sinner to approach God based on repentance and reformation. The “new wine” was the new associated doctrines in harmony with the new concept of a covering of righteousness. Subsidiary doctrines lend support.

If a new patch is put on an old garment, the garment will tear along the stitching for the patch. Therefore, sewing a new patch on an old garment is to no avail. And new wine will burst old wineskins during the process of fermentation.

Now let us consider the lesson of the container and its contents. Wine is taken internally to warm and cheer a person. Not only is wine a stimulant, but it gives a sense of joy and satisfaction. The cloth also provides warmth, but it is to be considered as an external covering. If the old cloth is torn by affixing a new patch, or the old wineskin bursts by adding new wine, *everything* is rendered unprofitable: the old cloth, the new patch, the old wineskin, and the new wine. Thus there would be a *double* destruction of both the new and the old. The point was that the new and the old dispensations could not be mixed, or both would be destroyed. Jesus’ sacrifice would make possible a *completely new* arrangement.

From the standpoint of the nominal system today, we would say that the new dispensational truths of the Harvest period cannot be harmonized with the old sectarian views and customs. The call is to “come out of Babylon” in order to receive the nourishment (wine) now due and to retain the covering of Jesus’ righteousness. Jesus said to the Laodicean period of the Church, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Rev. 3:18).

Back at the First Advent, Jesus’ comment was directed to the disciples of John the Baptist, who were sincere and desired to please the Lord. The Old Law arrangement did exist, and it was profitable and proper. The Israelites were obligated to try to follow the deeds of the Law, but nevertheless, they were in bondage. The only way to get relief was through liberty in Christ, that is, consecration—death to the old circumstance and being alive to the new situation. Thus for John’s disciples to become disciples of Jesus, they had to take a *definite* step and make a *definite* change, for a mixed condition would cause great mental confusion and problems with conscience. This advice was addressed to the disciples of John the Baptist who asked, “Why do

we fast and pray and your disciples do not but are happy?” Jesus made it clear that if they wanted to be his disciples, they would have to take a giant step of separation into a new circumstance and condition. They could not be disciples of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

Although John the Baptist was not present, this advice would have been helpful to him when he was told about it. John even used the expression “bridegroom” in regard to Jesus (John 3:27-30). John was smart and sized things up quickly.

Matt. 9:18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

Matt. 9:19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

Great faith was exercised by Jairus, who felt that his dead daughter could be brought back to life (Mark 5:22). Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, that is, probably a Pharisee. He was making this tender request for his daughter, whom he loved very much.

Jesus arose, and he and his disciples followed Jairus. This situation was different from that with the centurion, who had said all Jesus had to do was speak and the servant would be healed. In this case, Jairus said to Jesus, “*Come and lay your hand upon her, and she will live.*”

Matt. 9:20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

Matt. 9:21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

Matt. 9:22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

A woman approached Jesus from the rear, touched his garment, and was made whole. Of course this Gospel presents Matthew’s viewpoint and observation. We immediately notice, again, the exercise of *great faith*. The woman felt that Jesus had such curative powers that mere contact with the “hem” (outer fringe) of his garment would heal her. Perhaps, too, she felt unworthy to touch him more directly.

In each of the previous healings recorded by Matthew, a request was made either by the individual himself or by others associated with that individual. For example, in regard to curing the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law, Luke 4:38 reads, “And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever; and *they besought him* for her.” Faith that Jesus had the capability and power to heal was a necessary ingredient. Now, here, without a request, the cure was effected. And the woman’s physical ailment was no light matter, for she had had the condition for 12 years. This long period of an “issue of blood” was stopped immediately.

“Jesus turned him about, and *when he saw her*, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.” In other words, Jesus did not immediately see the woman when he turned around because she was momentarily lost in the crowd. A pause is implied: “Jesus turned about [pause], and when he saw her,” he spoke. It is possible that the long period of illness had affected the woman’s posture so that she could not straighten up. Then it would have been more natural for her to reach out from a *low* position and touch Jesus’ hem.

The principle of “Before they call, I will answer” probably applied here (Isa. 65:24). The woman did not make a formal request for healing, but her heart was already in that attitude. Many of

our “prayers” are answered that way too.

Matthew did not mention that virtue went out of Jesus, as the Gospels of Mark and Luke do, but he realized that when the woman touched the garment, Jesus was immediately aware of the contact and turned about (Mark 5:30; Luke 8:46). One aspect to consider, then, is the perceptive power of Jesus, but the virtue going out of him was an important and enlightening aspect as well, for it showed that effecting these cures *cost Jesus something*. He lost strength.

All of the disciples were startled that, in view of the press of the crowd, Jesus was conscious of the woman’s having touched his garment. Some might have thought, like Matthew, that Jesus had great powers of perception, but it was more than this. Jesus actually felt a drainage of his vitality. Probably it was a combination of both of these—Jesus’ powers of perception were even more heightened by the fact that strength went out of him.

The other Gospels tell that Jesus asked, with the *multitudes* around him, “Who touched me?” (Mark 5:30; Luke 8:45). The question is rather amusing because of the *number* of people surrounding Jesus. Perhaps Matthew did not record this question because he had actually seen the woman do this and thus knew who she was. However, Jesus’ asking, “Who touched me?” had a certain value not only for the woman herself but also in making the other apostles aware that virtue had gone out of Jesus.

No doubt *many* touched Jesus during the course of his ministry, and nothing happened. This woman was cured because of her *faith*: “If I may but touch his garment....” Matthew clearly showed that *faith* is necessary—that it must be exercised by either the person or one associated with him.

The woman was made whole “from that *hour*” (not “from that second” or “minute”). This statement shows that she sensed a healing *process* going on instead of having an instantaneous cure. The healing process, which began immediately and was complete within the hour, made the lesson sink in, and she realized more fully the worth of the miracle.

Matt. 9:23 And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

Matt. 9:24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

Matt. 9:25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

Matt. 9:26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

The cure of the woman with a 12-year issue of blood occurred while Jesus was en route to the ruler’s house. In the house were minstrels playing mournful music and “people making a noise” (that is, wailing). When overtaken with grief, we do not think of asking others to play sad music. The fact that this formalistic activity was going on shows that since the death of Jairus’s daughter, sufficient time (perhaps an hour) had elapsed to obtain such services. Minstrels were for hire and would come as soon as summoned to sound a lamentation.

What happened when Jesus informed the minstrels and the people of the nature of his visit? “They laughed him to scorn” when he asked them to move aside and make room for him to resuscitate the dead daughter. This laughter was *real mockery*, not just a nervous laugh.

“The maid is not dead, but sleepeth,” said Jesus. This cure was different, for previous healings

were done to *living* people. However, Jesus was calling attention to the fact that the daughter's death was not permanent extinction. She was actually dead, but there was hope. "Sleep" suggests the thought of an awakening. Jesus also used the words "sleep" and "dead" in regard to Lazarus. The question might be asked, Why did this Pharisee seem to have more faith than Mary and Martha? In the latter case, *four days* had elapsed, and the body of Lazarus already "stinketh"; that is, corruption had set in (John 11:39). Old Testament resuscitations with Elijah and Elisha were for recent expirations. Thus the revival of Lazarus seemed impossible.

A consideration of the other Gospels shows that the daughter was critically ill when Jairus first approached Jesus (Mark 5:23; Luke 8:42). She was dying, and Jairus knew it, so he wanted Jesus to come quickly. Luke 8:41 shows that Jairus prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house. Jairus pleaded, "She was dying when I left, and even now she may be dead." As they reached Jairus's house, it was apparent the daughter had died, and it appeared that Jesus had come too late. Then Jesus brushed aside the minstrels and the people, saying, "She is sleeping. I am going in to wake her up." What drama! How strange those words would have sounded to the minstrels!

The account suggests that Jairus and Jesus had to walk some distance to get back to the ruler's house. During the time Jairus located Jesus and returned with him, the daughter had died, and minstrels had been engaged. Jairus would have been very emotionally upset, yet Jesus took time out in regard to the woman with an issue of blood. The delay would have made Jairus even more nervous, lest his daughter die. Adamic death is real, but there is hope of an awakening.

"When the people were put forth," Jesus went in. This statement shows that a *lot* of people were there (friends, neighbors, relatives, and minstrels). A path had to be cleared for Jesus.

Jesus took the girl by the hand and said, "Maid, arise," and she arose (Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54). Jesus touched her and pulled her up by the hand. The resuscitation would have been *very dramatic*, for a dead person cannot hear, yet words were spoken to her. This incident emphasizes the *authority* and *power* of Jesus' voice. Matthew was very impressed by this incident.

Comment: This miracle is a reminder of the Scripture to be fulfilled in the Kingdom that all who are in their graves shall *hear the voice* of the Son of man and come forth (John 5:28,29).

Jesus assisted the maid to rise by gently pulling her up. She needed this assistance because she was hungry and weak. Accordingly, Jesus commanded that food be given to her (Luke 8:55). In contrast, when Peter's mother-in-law was cured of a fever, she immediately got up and ministered to those who were present.

What a scene to have viewed firsthand! The loud, mournful music of the minstrels and the emotional wailing of the people would have ceased abruptly when the daughter was about to be resuscitated. And subsequently, Jesus' "fame hereof went abroad into all that land." After witnessing such a miracle, some of the people would have run out like maniacs, shouting to all in the Galilee area, "Jesus just raised someone from the dead!" The Galilee area, the location of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, was much blessed with Jesus' presence.

Matthew listed samples of different types of miracles: leprosy, the sick servant of the centurion, fever, demon possession, paralysis, issue of blood, a dead girl, and next two blind men and one both possessed and dumb (unable to speak because of demon possession). By this time, Jesus had cured perhaps a hundred people, but Matthew was purposely and selectively listing these sample cures because he so desired that his people would know these things. He recorded these miracles lest they be lost to memory.

Matt. 9:27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.

Matt. 9:28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Matt. 9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

Matt. 9:30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

Matt. 9:31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

Two *blind* men had been following and importuning Jesus for a period of time: “Son of David, have mercy on us.” After some time, Jesus entered into a house and at his leisure healed them. He might have delayed the healing purposely so that the others in the house could witness it. Another reason could have been to obtain a quiet atmosphere and a more limited audience. And sometimes a delayed answer has more long-term benefits. Incidentally, the two blind men were persistent in their importuning in that they even followed Jesus into the house.

Jesus healed the two blind men in a calm manner. He asked quietly, “Do you believe that I can cure you of your affliction? Do you have faith?” (This calmness was a little different from the other miracles.) “Yea, Lord,” they responded. Both answered in the affirmative and called him “Lord.” In healing them, Jesus touched their eyes. And again in Matthew’s narration, the element of faith is conspicuous: “According to your faith be it unto you.”

Then Jesus instructed the two not to tell anyone about their cure: “See that no man know it.” In this case, it was not necessary for the formerly blind men to show themselves to the priest, as the leper did. Instead Jesus told them not to publicize what he had just done. How could those who had just received their sight obey the instructions? They couldn’t—and neither could we if we were in their place. Even those who beheld the miracle could not refrain from telling about it. Meanwhile, the apostles, who had witnessed many miracles would be puzzled as to the reason for the secrecy. If Jesus was the Savior and he had come to redeem Israel—and Jesus admitted he was such—then why keep his wonderful miracle quiet? This instruction was contrary to human policy. At any rate, the two cured blind men “spread abroad” Jesus’ fame in all the Galilee region.

Matt. 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

Matt. 9:33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Matt. 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

Previously two possessed men were cured, but this situation was a little different, for the man was not only possessed but dumb as well, meaning he could not speak. (With some who are dumb, the hearing is also affected and/or the eyesight.) In this case, since the dumbness was a result of demon possession, the affliction may have been spasmodic, with *brief* moments of relief when the man could speak or at least utter sounds, and then would come the seizures again. The “devil” who was responsible for the possession kept the man in this bondage.

Jesus “cast out” the devil; that is, he spoke with *power* to exorcise the demon, and *immediately* the man could speak. This miracle of casting out the demon was a dramatization of an *invisible*

thing. The people could see the man's *inability* to speak, they could hear the *powerful* words Jesus spoke, and then they could see the man's *ability* to speak. The miracle manifested Jesus' authority in that immediately, upon the pronouncing of certain words, the release came. The onlookers could see that which was invisible by the effects that were produced by Jesus' exercise of power: the man's liberation. It is like the wind—we cannot see it, but we can see what it does.

“And the multitudes [plural] marvelled.” Jesus' ministry was increasing. More and more people were coming to hear and see him. “But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.” The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Satan's power. In view of the multitudes' marveling, here was a class who were critical. What a dreadful and galling criticism!

Being “dumb” is the inability to carry on a coherent conversation. One who is dumb can utter unintelligible sounds, partial words at times, etc. Thus there are different degrees of dumbness.

Matt. 9:35 **And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.**

Jesus' ministry was quite extensive at this time. He went from city to city, from village to village, and from synagogue to synagogue. In addition to teaching in the synagogues, he preached “the gospel of the kingdom” and healed every kind of sickness and disease.

What is the “gospel of the kingdom”? Jesus was looking for disciples. “Consecrate and become my disciple” was his message. “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). Hence Jesus preached the same message as John the Baptist as far as the *repentance* aspect was concerned. However, Jesus did not urge John's baptism but *his own* (to become *his* disciple).

Incidentally, the Pastor often inserted the following little clause: “The Lord does not call sinners to the high calling.” The reason for this statement was that many failed to see the necessity to first repent of sins before accepting Christ and running for the prize of the high calling. This is as true now as it was back in Jesus' day. Repentance, reformation, consecration, sanctification, and glorification are the proper order and/or procedure.

Therefore, stated in a few words, the “gospel of the kingdom” is *primarily* the privilege of now becoming the sons of God. *Secondarily*, it is the gospel of a future Kingdom here on earth. The “kingdom” comprises kings and priests, and the *primary* objective of the work of the Gospel Age is to prepare those kings and priests so that, *secondarily*, in the next age, they can reign over the world. Thus the “gospel of the kingdom” is quite embracive, although the main emphasis is on the development of the Church class now.

Jesus' disciples baptized with *Jesus'* baptism, not with John's baptism. In fact, John 4:1,2 states that Jesus' disciples baptized a greater number than John's disciples. Since *many* were baptized with John's baptism, this indicates that an even *greater* number received Jesus' baptism into death. Although Jesus himself did not do the baptizing—his disciples did—nevertheless, he was accredited with those baptisms, for he was responsible for them.

The “healing” aspect is broken down into two categories: “sickness” and “disease.” “Every sickness” would include those who were crippled, deformed, missing a limb, etc., whether from birth, an accident, or perhaps leprosy. “Every disease” would be more those illnesses that were of an infectious nature or were contracted. This information gives us more insight. Joints were straightened, missing limbs were restored, etc.—these were real miracles, not just a remission but a *truly miraculous healing*. Lepers were often missing fingers, for example. When

they were healed, these missing extremities were restored. Lepers were made “whole” again. Indeed these were startling miracles to behold.

Most of Jesus’ preaching and discoursing were geared to the high calling, whereas if we view the overall effect of his ministry from the *broad* standpoint, most of his miracles pointed forward to restitution and the earthly Kingdom. Jesus realized that many followed him for the loaves, fishes, and cures rather than for his message about discipleship and the narrow way. He preached the gospel and then healed every manner of disease and physical infirmity.

Jesus knew that many of his statements would not be fully comprehended at the time he uttered them, but later the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to remember his statements on the various occasions. They could then grasp the full intent and purpose of their ministry and pursue it in his absence.

Matt. 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

When Jesus “saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion ... because they fainted.” The King James margin states that the multitudes “were tired and lay down.” Jesus was physically robust and sturdy. After an exhausting day of preaching and healing, he would climb a mountain to pray, for example. The crowds following him got so fatigued that they had to lie down and rest. When Jesus saw their physical exhaustion, he was sympathetic and compassionate, probably slowing down in consideration of their needs. The Gospels do not often state that Jesus looked with compassion on the multitudes, yet with all of the healings, we know that he did this *frequently*.

The multitudes “were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” “Scattered abroad” is a pastoral reference. If a shepherd dies while out tending his sheep, the sheep are in a pathetic, confused situation, for they depend on the shepherd for guidance, finding water, protection from enemies such as wolves, and so forth. Jesus thus viewed the multitudes. If there was nobody to lead them, how sad and confused their condition would be! His purpose was to create 12 apostles plus the other 70 undershepherds (a total of 82). Thus Jesus was considering the multitudes from *both* a physical and a spiritual standpoint (“fainting” and “scattered” like sheep without a shepherd). The reason can now be seen for the next two verses.

Matt. 9:37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

Matt. 9:38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Jesus had compassion on the multitudes who followed him because he observed that they fainted and were scattered like sheep. He realized they needed the guidance of “labourers” to direct them. The laborers went out and told others of the hope of the gospel of the Kingdom. This gave the hearers a purpose—something they could dedicate their life to. Jesus was saying that the disciples should pray to him, as the “Lord of the harvest,” with equal concern and compassion for the multitudes. In other words, the disciples were to have the same outlook and attitude.

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

How did Jesus give the 12 apostles the invisible power of the Holy Spirit to heal and cast out

demons? He *breathed* on them (see John 20:22). Although not necessary in order to empower them, the breathing served a purpose; namely, it kept the apostles in remembrance that the *source* of the power was *Jesus*. It was important for them not to forget that they had received something they had not previously had. The same principle applies to the anointing that we receive. It comes only through the *Head, Christ Jesus*. We are not separately anointed.

The apostles could have concluded that God mysteriously gave them the power to heal, but by seeing Jesus transmit the power to them, they realized that they had received the authority from *him*. In other words, to transmit an *invisible* power, Jesus wisely demonstrated the act in a *visible* manner so that all 12 apostles would know he was the source. What a wonderful way to illustrate the lesson that we “can do all things through *Christ*” (Phil. 4:13)!

Like Jesus, the 12 apostles were able “to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” They could even cast out demons. Earlier Jesus preached and healed all kinds of sickness and disease. Now the Twelve were able to do the same.

Jesus was giving the 12 apostles a little practice session. They went out for a short while and then came back. Upon their return, Jesus did the healing. However, their little mission, away from Jesus, gave them a small sample of what they would have to do after his ascension. Jesus was thinking of the future and preparing in advance for his own demise and absence from them. (Of course the apostles were unaware of his purpose at the time.) When the apostles returned after doing miracles, they were all excited, but then they had to listen to Jesus again. How marvelous that Jesus had the foresight to give them this little sample training and preparation for future work after his resurrection!

Matt. 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Matt. 10:3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Matt. 10:4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Verses 2-4 name the 12 apostles: Simon Peter, Andrew, James and his brother John (sons of Zebedee), Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Lebbaeus Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot. Some of the names vary in the different Gospels. Note that of the 12 apostles, there were three pairs of brothers: (1) Peter and Andrew, (2) John and James Zebedee, and (3) Lebbaeus Thaddaeus and the other James. James, the son of Alphaeus, was “James the lesser.” James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, was “James the greater.” Thus two apostles were named “James,” and two were named “Judas”: Judas Iscariot and Judas, the brother of James, or Lebbaeus Thaddaeus (see Acts 1:13). In other words, Lebbaeus Thaddaeus was also called Jude and Judas, the brother of “James the lesser”; both were sons of Alphaeus and, therefore, Jesus’ stepbrothers. The word “Canaanite” means “trader.” Simon the Canaanite was Simon Zelotes (the Zealot) (see Acts 1:13 again). Of the two sons of Zebedee, James was older than John.

The rest of Chapter 10 tells what Jesus commanded the 12 apostles. In some respects, this long discourse is similar to the Sermon on the Mount. The instructions Jesus gave here lasted the apostles throughout their ministry with the exception of one change he made later, prior to his death; namely, verses 5-15 were changed subsequently.

Lebbaeus Thaddaeus was Judas/Jude, who wrote the Book of Jude. He was a stepbrother of Jesus. In addition, James, the son of Alphaeus, was a brother of Judas—and hence also a stepbrother of Jesus. At least two of the apostles, therefore, were stepbrothers of Jesus. To

determine who Alphaeus was—whether or not he was Joseph—would require a study on genealogy. Judas and James were both sons of Alphaeus, and Jude 1 confirms that they were indeed brothers.

Mark 2:14 describes Levi (Matthew) as the “son of Alphaeus.” Although this is a reference to the same Alphaeus, note that “son” is in italics. Hence the relationship is not necessarily father and son here and elsewhere where the word “son” is italicized. The interlinear states that so-and-so is “of” a certain party. Then the translators came along and supplied the word “son” but not necessarily correctly.

Comment: The following is a helpful rhyme in remembering the apostles’ names:

Peter, Andrew, James, and John—
Men he most depended on;
Matthew next and Thomas too,
Philip and Bartholomew;
James the Less, Judas the Greater;
Simon the Zealot, and Judas the Traitor.

Matt. 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Matt. 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus’ instruction to the 12 apostles began, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans ... But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Jesus had said these very words about his own mission. Even though he spoke to the woman of Samaria, he would not abide with the Samaritans but was determined to go to Jerusalem, showing that he followed this advice himself. His primary objective was to reach the lost sheep of Israel. However, just after his resurrection, he amended this commandment slightly, saying in effect, “*beginning* with the house of Israel, next the Samaritans, and then the Gentiles” (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Not until the expiration of the 70 weeks of favor to Israel and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius was the gospel to go to the Gentiles.

“Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” reminds us of Matthew 9:36, “The multitudes ... were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” Thus this whole circumstance is tied in together: the instruction to the disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest, the theme about the lost sheep without a shepherd, and the instruction to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Throughout his ministry, Jesus had the thought of the “lost sheep” in his mind.

Matt. 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The apostles were to preach, “The kingdom of heaven is *at hand*,” which meant, “The kingdom of heaven is *now*,” that is, at the time Jesus was speaking. The Kingdom of heaven was *in their midst*. In Matthew 11:12, in referring to the coming persecutions on his followers, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.” In other words, in these instances, Jesus was speaking about the *spiritual* aspect of the Kingdom rather than the restitutorial aspect. The heavenly Kingdom class were in process of being selected and developed at this time of Jesus’ utterance—even though it was prior to Pentecost. Although not *legally* accepted until Pentecost, the disciples and apostles were being selected. At Pentecost, they were imbued with special power from on high, that is, the Holy Spirit.

In the *Diaglott*, the expression is, “The kingdom of *the heavens* has come nigh/approached.” There is a deeper significance than the apostles would have realized at that time. Paul, with his

deep insight, said that we are seated in “heavenly places [plural]” (Eph. 2:6). The usual explanation for “heavenly places” is the Holy, but the present life, the Kingdom Age, and the ages beyond the Millennium are all involved. Thus we are called to more than just the Kingdom Age, even though Jesus, when asked what the faithful would get, replied, “Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). Even in the present life, we receive a hundredfold (Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:30). The Bible says very little about the ages beyond the Millennium, but we know the benefits and rewards will continue on for eternity. During the Millennium, the 12 apostles will be the foundations of the Temple, but beyond the Millennium, the Bible is silent about positions of honor among the 144,000. Perhaps others will rise in the ranks. The Bible hints that other universes and other activities await the Little Flock.

Matt. 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

In this sample training session, the 12 apostles could “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, [and] cast out devils.” Thus the apostles were temporarily empowered to do even the greatest of miracles: to raise the dead. However, there is no recorded instance of their raising the dead at this time. Thus they probably did not perform this miracle until later on, when Peter, John, and Paul raised the dead after Pentecost. At that time, the Holy Spirit brought to remembrance this instruction of Jesus, and they then began to “raise the dead” occasionally. Surely, if the apostles had raised the dead at this time, at least one of the Gospels would have declared the matter. Moreover, the act would have detracted from the raising of Lazarus, which took place at the end of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus had already raised Jairus’ daughter, but that death had just occurred, whereas Lazarus was dead for four days before Jesus raised him.

“Freely ye have received, freely give.” The 12 apostles received the power of the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them. They got this healing power “free,” without asking for it, so they were to “freely” distribute it and use it to benefit others.

Matt. 10:9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

Matt. 10:10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

To go out in this manner and not take any money or supplies required *very strong faith*. A “scrip” is a bag, satchel, or suitcase for extra belongings. In other words, the apostles could not take any money or extra clothes or even a “suitcase” for belongings. Gold, silver, and brass were the coinage of that day in descending order of value.

The apostles were to take just the clothing on their backs and no extra “shoes” (sandals). Normally, an additional pair of sandals was taken on a journey, for tripping over a rock, for example, could break the straps on the pair they were wearing. Moreover, “staves” were important for walking and climbing. In climbing a hill and in hilly terrain, one used a staff for support. If it broke, the extra staff was needed. Note that the apostles were not to take “staves” (*plural*); that is, they could take one walking stick but not an extra one. They could also take along a coat but not an extra one.

The purpose of these instructions was to show that the “workman is worthy of his meat,” that is, that the “labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). “Meat,” an inclusive term, is “maintenance” in the *Diaglott*.

The 12 apostles had to go out on faith, and to receive temporal provisions, they had to be *active*. If they were active, they did not have to worry, for their needs would be supplied. What

marvelous training! They were not to beg, but if they preached the gospel and were active, the Lord would make sure their necessities were provided.

Matt. 10:11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

When the apostles, traveling two by two, got to a city, they wanted to establish a temporary headquarters, a base of operations. How did they go about doing so (and thus obey Jesus' instruction)? They inquired perhaps at the main well or in the marketplace if anybody in that city was very religious, very godly. Meanwhile, the guardian angels made sure that the right person was present to answer the inquiry so that the two apostles would be directed to the religious individual. All this was done *by faith*, and the Lord guided them. One thing for sure, when inquiry was made, it was not done at the synagogue. Otherwise, they would have been directed to a *nominally* religious person.

“There abide till ye go thence.” The apostles were not to go from house to house, constantly changing their lodging within a city. They were to remain in their temporary residence—where they were voluntarily proffered lodging—as long as they were in that city.

In each instance, the person who provided lodging for the apostles got a great blessing, for their stay was not for just one night but for their entire time in that city. That house was thus privileged with their fellowship and service for a period of time. (Later slight amendments were made to this commandment.)

Matt. 10:12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

Matt. 10:13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Matt. 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

The apostles were to *literally* salute a house. As a people, the Jews are very demonstrative with hands and voice. Accordingly, when the apostles got to a house, they paused and said, “The Lord’s blessing be upon this house.” If they were not favorably received, the apostles demonstrated their displeasure. If right-hearted, the host immediately received the apostles upon hearing the pronouncement of blessing and peace. A warm climate was created by the apostles’ words, and “peace” came upon the house as they were received. The apostles might then say to the host, “The Lord directed us to your house.” The host might respond, “I was praying just this afternoon that the Lord would send me something, and lo and behold, you came to the door.” The point is that there would be a mutual happiness—on the part of the two apostles and the host.

Of course not every experience worked out this way. The apostles would have been unfavorably received on some occasions as well. They were to be prepared for both favorable and unfavorable experiences.

These actions were *demonstratively* done. If not received, the apostles were to shake off the dust of their feet against the house or city. Since Pentecost, this has been done figuratively only, but back there literal demonstrative action was taken. The apostles showed that they had come in peace and asked the Lord’s blessing on the house, but if the one in the house had a wrong attitude and would not receive them, perhaps even cursing them, then the apostles showed that they wanted nothing to do with him or his house. They demonstrated that they wanted to remove any contamination of that spirit by stamping their feet to remove the dust and

brushing off their clothes. The one in the house would see what was happening. Then the apostles left, making a complete separation. By the apostles' actions, the individual knew that he had lost an opportunity.

Matt. 10:15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Jesus was not necessarily referring to the house that would not receive the apostles, but the principle would certainly apply to the city. We are reminded of the two angels who went to the city of Sodom to warn Lot. A difference was that Lot sought out and invited the angels, whereas here the two apostles had to inquire for the godly individual. If, when the inquiry was made, it came to naught and no lodging was provided for the apostles, the city was worse off than Sodom, for at least in Sodom, there was the worthy and righteous Lot.

In other words, if even the most "godly" person in the city would not receive the apostles, then that city was in a sad condition. Moreover, it was commendable that Lot took the initiative to aid and proffer hospitality to the angels. In the case of the apostles, if *their* inquiry came to naught, the city was in a worse condition than Sodom and Gomorrha.

Matt. 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Jesus likened his disciples, who go forth to preach the gospel, to "sheep in the midst of wolves." Then he constructively told them to be "therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." They were to be "serpents" as far as wisdom is concerned and "doves" in disposition and conduct. This allusion is interesting if it is thought of in a literal sense, for sheep without a shepherd are in a precarious situation. It would be a fearsome experience for the Christian not to have advice, counsel, guidance, providence, etc., and then to be sent out as the 12 apostles were here. But of course God is with His people in so many ways.

Although not stated here, the Christian should have another characteristic in addition to the wisdom of a serpent and the innocence of a dove. Where need be, the Christian should be "bold as a lion," for Jesus is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5).

In this context, the serpent is shown to have a positive connotation. The *Reprints* tell of a party who always had something favorable to say about others. Finally the question was put to him: What about Satan? The party replied, "We wish we had his persistency!" If that quality were directed toward righteousness, it would be admirable. Moreover, the Pastor stated in the first *Reprint* that *truth* is always truth, no matter who states it—even if it comes from the Adversary himself. Of course, however, we must be careful of *evil* motivation on the part of Satan, but the principle is correct. If our *enemy* makes a true statement, we should in fairness accept that statement.

Q: Are serpents really that wise?

A: They may well be, but they are so incapacitated since the fall of Adam that it is hard to discern this quality in them today. Prior to Adam's disobedience, the serpent "was more subtle than any [other] beast of the field" (Gen. 3:1). It has been physically degraded since, losing its legs and crawling on its belly. However, the serpent may still be "wise," for nothing is said about its mind. Serpents may have a means of communication that we are not aware of today because of the forcible restraints placed on them in Eden after the fall.

Matt. 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

How are we to “beware of [evil] men” lest they deliver us up to councils and scourge us in their synagogues? We should not immediately take others into our confidence but should first search them out, observing their words, actions, and motives, before placing trust in them. Verse 17 is a caution to have a little reserve and not to be too open and trusting. If we discern evil intentions, then we are to avoid the individuals. We are reminded of the Scripture to not cast our pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6).

In other words, we should not be open and intimate in communication in an *imprudent* sense, or we will walk into traps. Some have the attitude that they do not care what trouble comes on them as a result of preaching the truth. Well, that may be all right, but we should make sure that the truth does the smiting and not our own lack of wisdom. If we bring trouble on ourselves needlessly, the trouble cannot be reckoned as suffering wholly for Christ’s sake. The trouble may be partly the result of suffering for his sake and partly a suffering for foolishness’ sake. We should not deliberately stir up trouble with one who is not in a proper heart attitude.

Another Scripture applies here: “He that hath an ear, let him hear” (Rev. 2:7). These are good principles and admonitions. We should not push the truth down the throat of someone who does not have a hearing ear.

“Beware of men” (plural). In the ministry itself, among those who are preaching the truth, this is a warning to be selective within reason. Jesus especially sought out Peter, James, and John for communicating and observing deep truths. Incidentally, Jesus did everything he could to help Judas. Even when Judas gave false counsel, Jesus counteracted it with very practical reasoning.

And still another Scripture ties in: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:14,15). We are to avoid contention, for when we engage in contention, it is harder to keep our flesh, the old nature, in control. Nasty comments tend to come out in a combative situation. There is a time for righteous indignation, but usually our anger is not warranted.

“They will scourge you in their synagogues.” Jesus mentioned “synagogues” because true Christians are sometimes accused of being blasphemers. Attacks on them are considered to be a church or religious issue. The reference here is to a *public shaming* of the individual along *religious* lines. *Public* ridicule (such as the stocks) is harder to bear than the lash itself. The scourging can heal rather quickly, but the damage inflicted by public shaming can be much more lasting.

Matt. 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

Jesus said, “You shall be brought before governors, kings, and Gentiles for a testimony [witness] against them.” As time went on, the witness was predominately to Gentiles and Gentile leaders. These last two verses sound much like part of Matthew 24, showing that Jesus said many things repetitively on numerous occasions. For Matthew 24, Jesus spoke for four or five hours on different principles, yet parts of that discourse were given earlier in his ministry at various times.

Verse 18 is also a reminder of when Jesus spoke through Ananias to Paul following the latter’s conversion. Ananias was told to go to the blind Paul in Damascus and prophesy that great things lay ahead for Paul; namely, he was to be a witness before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15).

The counsel in verses 16-18 applies to the whole Gospel Age, pertaining first to the gospel being preached in Israel and then to Gentiles. A clue to this wider application is verse 23: “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel [literally and Christendom symbolically], till the Son of man *be come* [at his *Second Advent*].”

Matt. 10:19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

Verse 19 has several implications. (1) We must study *ahead* of time in order for the Holy Spirit to bring the proper thoughts to remembrance *later*. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of *remembrance*. For instance, if we are imprisoned at night and know we will have to appear before the magistrate in the morning, we are not to take any *anxious* thought about the words we will speak. An outstanding example of this was Peter, who slept *soundly* after James was executed. The brethren were very concerned, thinking Peter would also be put to death. In the wee hours of the morning, they prayed for his deliverance. Meanwhile, Peter obeyed this counsel of verse 19—he slept—trusting that in the morning, the Holy Spirit would give him the words to speak before governors. We can sing and pray and take thought, but not *anxious* thought. However, the verse does not mean to take *no* thought. We should *pray* and then not be overly concerned. In other words, we should not try to plan the format, for example, “If they say this, I will say that.” Rather, we should take thought *now* for what we will say at a *future* date and not wait to take thought when we are hailed into prison. We are to prepare *ahead*, and then the Holy Spirit will aid us at the time of incarceration.

(2) When imprisoned, *have faith*. We must exercise faith to *believe* this promise of verse 19. We should not feel timid about expressing ourselves but should *trust*. We should say our prayers and then not worry and not try to plan the actual words we will speak. Instead we are to let the Holy Spirit direct at the time. The promise is that when we are hailed before the judge, if we have been faithful to the Lord, He will perform a miracle on our behalf, giving us the words. Sometimes there is time for only one sentence—just a *few* words—but it is better for the Holy Spirit to give only a few words than to try to give a 15-minute discourse planned in advance. When asked by Pilate if he was the Son of God, Jesus replied simply, “Thou sayest”; i.e., “I am.”

The same principle applies now in regard to witnessing and giving a testimony. We are to have faith that the Lord will give us the words. In regard to the future, this promise applies to after we are incarcerated. We should study and prepare now but then take no anxious thought at the time we are “delivered up.”

Matt. 10:20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

This thought is rather touching—it is not just the Holy Spirit but our *Father* in heaven who will speak in us. A *close* relationship must exist between the Father and the individual in order for this to occur. What a *wonderful* promise!

Matt. 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

It is a horrifying thought that some of our very *own* families may turn against us, even the most *intimate* members of the family. The principle applies to the brotherhood as well, for some of our *brethren* may betray us. This is a scary and depressing thought if we dwell on it. Some of the persecutors may actually think they are doing *God* a service, but their *zeal* will be *misguided* and *misdirected*.

Matt. 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the

end shall be saved.

“He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” This statement sounds like part of Matthew 24. The principle has applied all down the age in regard to those Christians who *faithfully endured* to the end of their *individual* course. However, there will be a special application at the end of the age.

If we are imprisoned or incarcerated for the gospel’s sake, we are not to fear or take any anxious thought. We must trust that God, through His Holy Spirit, will speak through us, realizing that no matter what animosity the persecutors may manifest, we have the *Father’s approval*. If we persevere and do not recant, our *eternal* welfare will be secured, and our eternal welfare is far more important than a personal deliverance at that time according to the flesh.

The implication is that some will *not* endure and will jeopardize life itself, not just the high calling but life period! Verse 28 adds, “Fear him [God] which is able to destroy *both soul and body in hell [Gehenna, Second Death]*.” This instruction embraces *both* the Little Flock and the Great Company. More Christians down through history have died at the stake than 144,000. All of these Christians died courageously, but not all attained the Christlike character and degree of love that is necessary to be of the Little Flock. *Supreme love for God* qualifies one to be of the Bride class.

There is one favorable sign for those who initially recant and are unfaithful under persecution. Sometimes God graciously grants another opportunity to be faithful. Some of these Christians are very remorseful about their failure to be steadfast under persecution, and without a second opportunity, they would not get life *at all*. Therefore, verse 22 is not promising a reward in the Little Flock but simply everlasting life.

It is sad to read of some who recanted, but there is great happiness to learn that with their second opportunity, they were boldly and courageously faithful. Some were even so angry at themselves for their previous failure that they thrust out their arm and let it be burned right off in the flame. Instead of letting the flame come to them, they rushed into it, saying, “I have done wretchedly, and I want this arm to be burned off to purge my sin!” Thankfully, they got the second chance, for the context here shows the loss of all life. Our eternal destiny is at stake in such situations.

Jesus said, “Ye shall be hated of *all men* for my name’s sake.” In Matthew 24:9, he said, “Ye shall be hated of *all nations* for my name’s sake.” These two Scriptures show that waves of very severe persecution afflict Christians from time to time. If we are in prison and know that the next day we must appear before the chief magistrate to represent the cause of Christ, we may be frightened because we are not accustomed to speaking in such a formalized manner. This situation is a little different from living the Christian life from day to day. But God says, “Do not take anxious thought, for I will give you the words.” Then, when we appear before the council, the court, and the chief magistrate—*all of whom* are opposed to us—we can relax, trusting in the Lord. We should reflect on the coming *hatred* of the *true* Christian cause so that we will *not* betray one another or recant under pressure. God will help us at that time *if* we trust Him. The fact that Jesus devoted several verses to the subject of persecution shows that we should reflect on them and the coming condition at the end of the age.

Matt. 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

Opposite counsel is given here. “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.” This persecution is not unto death like that of the preceding verses. Verse 23 ties in with verse 16; that is, we should not look for trouble, but when it comes, we are not to be overly discomfited.

When we are trapped in a situation, we do not know whether we will just receive a public scourging or actually be put to death. We know we will have to speak, but we do not know what the effect of our message will be: stripes or death. However, if death is not the result, we should leave that area and thus flee from further persecution.

“Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.” Jesus stated the matter this way to give the *impression* that he would return *soon*, although that is not what he said. If the apostles had known he would not return for almost 2,000 years, their experiences would have been harder to bear, and they might have become somewhat discouraged. For example, if we knew we would be executed tomorrow but believed the Kingdom would be established later that very year, our attitude would be better. It is helpful to be living at the end of the age and *know* that the Kingdom is near at hand. Thus this part of verse 23 was worded very carefully, and the statement is true—the apostles never finished in Israel.

In the Book of Jeremiah, “Israel” often pictures Christendom, so when we extend that principle, “Israel” here also has a larger meaning. Christians down through the Gospel Age would not be able to thoroughly cover Christendom before Jesus would return.

Matt. 10:24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

In these verses, Jesus was warning not only what would happen to him but also what will happen to us. Whatever example he set, his disciples were to follow. He is *our* example too.

Matt. 10:25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

If persecutors called Jesus the Devil, the same—and *more*—will happen to us. And with us, the attack will seemingly be more justified because we are *imperfect*.

In the Dark Ages, some of the Christians who were burned at the stake were dressed up in devils’ costumes. Sometimes horns and tails were affixed, and drawings were hung around their necks. Also, at the time of execution, there was a reading describing the Christian as a demon, wholly of the Adversary.

“Beelzebub” refers to Satan, the prince of the devils. Beelzebub was a heathen deity to whom the Jews ascribed supremacy among the evil spirits. “Baal” means “lord,” and “zebub” means “fly”—hence “lord of the fly.” That symbol was also used with regard to the pharaohs of Egypt, although there it was usually described as a bee.

Just as Christ is the head over his household, so Satan is supreme over his house of demons. Imagine what a *powerful* being Satan is to be recognized as master and have control over all of the fallen angels—a *large* band of cutthroat, malevolent, evil characters! Satan gives his subjects independence along the lines of *license* to do evil, not along the lines of character building, as Jesus does.

Comment: The Sphinx, which represents Satan, has a deep shaft in its back with water at the base. As a result, *hordes* of mosquitoes swarm out of that shaft—a fitting picture of Beelzebub, lord of the *fly*.

Matt. 10:26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

What is the context telling us? No matter how the Christian is maligned and persecuted, the

real truth will be told some day. The Christian and the name of Christ *will be vindicated*. The implication is almost that there will be a movie of the actual *event(s)*, and not just a statement. The injustices *will be exposed*. Those who were responsible for persecuting Jesus and his followers will be revealed.

A movie of the actual trial and condemnation, with all of its hatred, malevolence, and venom, will expose the identity and wrong heart condition of the persecutors. If rightly exercised, the persecutors will repent and seek forgiveness of the member of the Little Flock or Jesus (not literally in person but through the means available to them in the Kingdom).

Matt. 10:27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

“Darkness” refers to what Jesus told his disciples in *private*. Jesus deliberately did not inform the public too much but gave more information to his disciples. He was saying, “What I tell you in *private*, preach *publicly*.” Jesus spoke in parables and dark sayings to the multitudes but revealed more information to his disciples.

Matt. 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

If the body is killed, the soul ceases to exist, but it is in remission as a “dead soul,” as opposed to being a “living soul,” until the time of the resurrection. *Temporarily* the individual ceases and is off the scene.

Verse 28 is a good Scripture to refute the thought that there is an immortal soul in man. God can *destroy* the soul; the soul can *die*. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20).

“Hell” here is Gehenna. Just as garbage was entirely consumed by fire back there in Jerusalem, so a soul can be *destroyed*. God can destroy both body and soul. Fear *Him*, but do not fear man, who can kill the body only. If the body is killed, the soul goes into remission—it ceases to live. The individual becomes a dead soul—temporarily.

Matt. 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

A “farthing” was one tenth of a Roman penny, or one tenth of a day’s wage. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father[’s knowledge].” The lesson is that *nothing* escapes the divine surveillance. Surely God is not literally watching every sparrow, but He has an observation network so that even the most trivial thing cannot happen to the consecrated without permission. Even if, at the moment, God’s immediate attention is on another matter, nothing can happen to the Lord’s little ones without knowledge and screening, for He has other agencies (holy angels) watching on His behalf. “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chron. 16:9).

Matt. 10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

This statement is not literally true. The Gospel of Matthew uses other such Hebraisms or expressions that are not literal. The point is that there is minute critical observation of the consecrated. (If taken literally, this verse would be ridiculous. If we had 1,659,018 hairs and lost one, we would have 1,659,017 left—ludicrous!) Nothing can happen without observation. The consecrated are under surveillance in a special sense, but even the world is being watched.

Matt. 10:31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Jesus used a little sarcasm here to cause us embarrassment. If our faith is so weak that we do not think God knows *everything* that happens to us, this type of reasoning should make us feel ashamed. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground, a leaf cannot fall off a tree, etc., without its being noticed. Thus God's surveillance is keen and alert, and *no* accident can occur to the Christian unless it is first screened and then permitted. The point is not that there is any value to the leaf or sparrow falling, but that everything is noticed. In fact, even *before* something happens, it is noticed that it is *about* to happen. If contrary to the divine plan or will, the action is halted or overruled before it occurs.

Matt. 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 10:33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Verse 32 refers back to a previous thought about the element of fear, starting in verse 16. "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "Beware of men." "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings." "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak." "Brother shall deliver up the brother to death." "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." "The disciple is not above his master." "Fear them not therefore." "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light." "Fear not them which kill the body." "Are not two sparrows ... [i.e., nothing escapes divine surveillance]?" "Fear ye not therefore." The point is that if we *fear*, we will *not* do, and we will *not* speak. We will be immobile and speechless. However, if we realize that God's divine protection and observation are over us, the fear *will be counteracted*. If, for example, we are in a windowless dungeon and no one knows we are there, *God will know where we are*.

This discourse was given by Jesus to counteract fear. God knows those who are serving Him, and He knows their condition whatever it may be. Whosoever, therefore, will faithfully espouse the cause of Christ and thus bring persecution upon himself and the contradiction of men can be assured that Jesus knows about and appreciates it. God appreciates our testimony.

Matt. 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Notice this doctrine. In other words, we are *not* always to speak peace. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," but there are exceptions to this *general* rule, for at times, we should be disturbers of the peace (Matt. 5:9). There are occasions where being faithful necessitates causing a problem. For example, Jesus' faithfulness did not bring peace to the scribes and Pharisees. While we are "peacemakers," we are such on *God's* conditions and not under all circumstances. We are to be shod with the sandals of peace, to speak the truth in love, as a *general* rule, but we are to be alert to the exceptions. Jesus certainly was not speaking the truth in love to the scribes and Pharisees when he called them "hypocrites" and "whited sepulchres"; that is, he was not speaking "love" in the short term but was speaking it in the long run (Matt. 23:27). We must be thoroughly familiar with Scripture so that we will not make *false* statements such as "We should *always* be peacemakers." The Christian is to beware of absolute statements.

Luke 12:51 shows that the "sword" is not literal, that it does not refer to carnal weapons. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather *division*." In the Jewish Age, it was God's will that literal wars were fought and that His people used carnal weapons, but Christians in the Gospel Age are not to fight with literal weapons. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight

[for it]" (John 18:36). This text shows that fighting itself is not wrong *depending on what* we are fighting for. During the Gospel Age, the Lord is dealing with His people in a different manner. We are not to use carnal weapons, but that was not true in the previous age.

Matt. 10:35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Matt. 10:36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Matt. 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Matt. 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

These are simple statements but very searching. "I am come to set a man at variance against his father," etc. In other words, for the truth's sake, there may be times when we have to take a stand in opposition to the members of our own family. When there is a tug in two different directions, the Christian, to be faithful, must be loyal to the Lord. "Let the dead bury their dead" is the principle (Matt. 8:22). Faithfulness will bring divisions for various reasons; examples are hatred of the truth by unconsecrated family members or attempts to get us to do our "wifely" or "husbandly" duty rather than God's duty. This is taking up our "cross," especially where family affection is involved. The implication here is that the pull in the opposite direction is a very tender tie. The more subtle tender ties are harder to break than those of a disrespectful or cantankerous husband or wife or where there are open threats. It is easier to take a stand against conspicuous, open opposition. In the Old Testament, the Levites were selected to serve the Lord because of their faithfulness in slaying even their brethren who were disobedient in worshipping the golden calf.

Matt. 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

This is a searching verse too. The one who tries to preserve his earthly life *in lack of obedience* to the Lord can lose *all life*. This does not mean an outward, stubborn refusal ("No, I will not") as much as a simple lack of obeying. The lack of obedience can cause the loss of life itself. Of course there are degrees of obedience, which differentiate the Little Flock from the Great Company. Both are *overcoming* classes, but the Little Flock are *more-than-overcomers*.

The loss of earthly life should be for Christ's sake, for the cause of Christ. This is just a broad principle, for more than 144,000 have been martyred for Jesus. Though we give our bodies to be "burned," if we do not develop in *obedience* to God, then it is questionable whether or not we *really love* Him (1 Cor. 13:3). "Love" is a very embracing subject—it is easy to discuss, but a lifetime is required to learn its full implications.

Matt. 10:40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Matt. 10:41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Matt. 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

In these verses, the perspective changes. Previously the *Christian* was the emphasis—what *he* did, *his* privileges and protection. Now the thrust is on those who *receive* the Christian. “He that receiveth you receiveth me [Jesus].” The subject is the same, but it is slanted in another direction.

There are *gradations* of reward to those who befriend or do acts of kindness to the consecrated. They are rewarded like (1) a “prophet,” (2) a “righteous man,” and (3) a “little one” (a sincere believer in Christ). The prophet would be the highest reward, next comes the righteous man, and finally there is the common denominator of one who is consecrated. The *degrees* of reward are based on the *perception* of the one *doing* the act of kindness—*his* insight into the character of the Christian.

If a person feels that another is not only a Christian but an above-average Christian (that is, a “prophet”—whether an apostle, one of the seven messengers, or just a very important personality) and accordingly displays kindness, he will be rewarded proportionately. Thus it is advantageous to recognize the *depth* of consecration in an individual. A “cup of cold water” signifies a humanitarian act, a common decency, to a fellow man. That is the lowest reward.

The principle of gradations of reward, as discussed here, applies to both the consecrated and the unconsecrated. It behooves *both* to recognize the depth of consecration in a Christian and to administer acts of kindness accordingly.

Consider the following two examples. (1) The story of Zacchaeus is touching. Because he was short, he climbed a tree to get a better view of Jesus. When the opportunity came, he said to Jesus, “Come to my house.” How willing Zacchaeus was to give Jesus the *best!* (2) Even though Jonathan realized that David would be succeeding him, he could see in David a greatness *above* his own. Jonathan was the legal heir, but he was, in essence, giving the throne to David by befriending him. Very few are that noble.

Verses 40-42 are very comprehensive. They can pertain to a worldling who recognizes a Christian or to one who is consecrated recognizing another Christian. But there is another aspect too. A person might render service, money, property, recognition, etc., to one who is *presumed* to be a proper representative of Christ but is not. However, the individual will get the reward anyway because the *motive* was right; that is, he *thought* he was serving one of the Lord’s true representatives. If the motivation is *pure and noble*, even though the service is mistakenly given to a goat or a wolf, the one rendering the service will be rewarded accordingly. That is why the wording says, “in the *name* of a prophet,” “in the *name* of a righteous man,” and “in the *name* of a disciple.” The application is broad.

A painting in the Metropolitan Museum showed a woman in the arena who was about to be devoured by a lion. At that moment, someone threw a flower on the ground in front of the woman to distract her attention from the lion. The little kindness of the flower being thrown under that horrifying circumstance was a *touching* display of sympathy. The one who threw the flower may not have been a Christian but will be highly rewarded for humanitarian purposes. The artist of that painting had a truly noble sentiment.

In summary, a blessing will be forthcoming if the motivation for an act of kindness was pure. Verses 40-42 again show the divine scrutiny and surveillance. The same surveillance that sees a sparrow fall also takes cognizance of acts of kindness that are done. The rewards will probably go far beyond what is mentioned here, for in the Kingdom, people in the world will get positions of distinction and honor based on principle and heart condition manifested in the present life, whereas, generally speaking, those who are prominent now will be pushed into the background. Moreover, those who have opportunities now but do not respond will not be highly favored in the next age. Others who “knew not” will be more recognized.

Matt. 11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

The suggestion is that when Jesus finished giving the instructions of Matthew 10:5-42 to his 12 apostles, he separated from them. He sent them out on a mission with these instructions fresh in their minds. He had cautioned them not to be naive. Not everyone had the best of motives, so some discretion was to be used. Jesus told the disciples how to behave and what to do. Actually, these commandments (at least verses 16-42) were of more benefit to them after Pentecost. Except for the temporary instructions of verses 5-15, which Jesus later amended, permitting the disciples to take some money, etc., these commandments were of *lasting* benefit.

Matt. 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

Matt. 11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Verses 2 and 3 are touching. John the Baptist, who had so courageously announced Jesus' presence, now asked from prison, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Matt. 11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:

Matt. 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Matt. 11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Jesus' answer was most effectual, as if to say, "Weigh divine providences, and go over them one by one. Then you will be reassured." John was to consider the works Jesus had done: the dead were raised, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, etc. Jesus concluded his answer to John (through the two disciples), "Blessed are those who are not stumbled in me" (paraphrase).

Jesus was not angry with John, for he said on this same occasion that none born of women were greater than John the Baptist (verse 11). We might jump to the conclusion that such questioning evidenced a lack of faith on John's part, but even the strongest ones need comfort at times. We are all imperfect.

Consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Usually the *victim* is thought to be in need of mercy; that is, the victim is regarded as the *neighbor* to be loved. But that is not the lesson. Jesus, the one *doing* the good works, is the good Samaritan and hence the "neighbor" to be loved and emulated.

John was probably put in a fortress of King Herod across the Dead Sea. That was one of Herod's winter palaces. Herod was from Idumea and hence had a mixed background; he was not purely Jewish.

Consider John the Baptist's situation. Jesus was thought to be the Messiah. Multitudes had come to John to be baptized and even many scribes and Pharisees. John thus achieved considerable popularity, but now he was in a *dungeon*. Many Christians likewise have extreme experiences, going from popularity to isolation and vice versa.

John's native humility was again manifested when he asked Jesus, his cousin, for information. John recognized that Jesus was his superior and hence asked advice from the best possible

source. He wanted his two disciples, in whom he had great confidence, to get the report straight. And the testimony of two would be of more value than the testimony of one.

Prophecies in Isaiah 35 tell of Messiah's work. Of course the fulfillment is in the Kingdom, but the fact that Jesus did samples of these miracles at his First Advent established him as the Messiah. Also, Isaiah 61:1-3 told of Messiah's work at the First Advent: he was sent to bind up the brokenhearted, etc. His ministry was one of comfort and consolation to others. And in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the wounds of the injured man were bound up.

In many instances in life, we get lost in the experience itself. Instead we should back off and try to analyze that experience in a broader sense in order to extract the lesson. In every trial, we should try to see the Lord's hand. "No trial for the moment seemeth joyous" (Heb. 12:11 paraphrase). It is *afterward* that the trial worketh the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" if we are rightly exercised. Regarding Jesus, Isaiah 53:11 says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." This realization or development happens *subsequently*, not during the trial. In the *midst* of the trial and agony, every little detail can become confused.

It really was not necessary for John to receive a more detailed answer or for him to understand the distinction between the First and Second Advents because he would be removed from the scene shortly. The point was that the one who could do the things Jesus enumerated was the Messiah, and in due time (the Kingdom), he would perform them on a larger scale. Jesus was doing the work of Messiah, as manifested in the dedication of his life. He was laying down his life not only for his disciples but also for the public. *No one else* in history had done *so much*. He performed *hundreds* of miracles, maybe even a couple of thousand. Thus those who reflected on his life knew he was unusual, and the prophecies helped to identify him.

Those who saw Christ as the Messiah became his disciples and were blessed. John's ministry was not to be a disciple but to *introduce* Messiah. Therefore, John would be blessed in the work he had previously performed in pointing out Messiah—if he was not stumbled ("offended"), if he did not depart from the faith (verse 6). "Stumbling" refers not to hurting someone's feelings but to turning someone aside from his consecrated walk so that he goes out of the truth. To be responsible for this would be "offending" someone.

Matt. 11:7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

As John the Baptist's disciples departed, Jesus began to instruct the multitudes. He asked them, "What did you go out in the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" The answer was "No!" for John's reputation was known. The people realized they were going out to see one who preached God's message with aggressiveness, firmness, boldness, and courage. He was trying to wake up Israel to the fact that *Messiah was here*. "Repent!" "Messiah is come!"

Matt. 11:8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

Jesus asked further, "What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" Again the answer was "No!" Because John dwelled in the wilderness of the desert, his clothing was *rough*. If he had lived in a king's palace, then they could have expected fine clothing.

Matt. 11:9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Matt. 11:10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Jesus asked another question: “What did you go out to see? A prophet?” The answer this time was “Yes.” The people did go into the wilderness to see a prophet, but why? The last utterance of the Old Testament predicted that before Messiah came, God would send a messenger: Elijah the prophet. “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal. 4:5). The Israelites were very familiar with this text. Therefore, when they heard that John was a forceful character and wore rough clothing similar to Elijah, who wore animal skins and was a prophet of strong character, the people went out to see if John was a prophet too.

Jesus continued, “I say unto you that John is not only a prophet but *more* than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written [in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3], Behold, I [God] send my messenger [John the Baptist] before thy [Jesus’] face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” The Israelites were familiar with both of these citations.

John was “more than a prophet” because he had the special honor of announcing or introducing the Messiah. The same phraseology could be used for some of the Gospel Age prophets; that is, there were seven special messengers to the Church, but two of these were “more than prophets” in that they had an additional role as apostles and possessed certain gifts such as doing miracles and talking in tongues. If Messiah had come 200 years earlier, someone other than John would have introduced him.

There is another point to observe here. Jesus went on to praise John the Baptist, but notice that he withheld this particular flattery until John’s disciples had departed. To have let John hear this praise back there would have undercut the surprise and joy he will receive in the resurrection when he is so heartily commended. If John arose from the grave already knowing Jesus had made this complimentary remark, he would have more expectation. If a surprise party is planned, it would be anticlimactic to take away, ahead of time, the initial surprise and joy. Jesus gave John a sufficiency of honor at the First Advent but wisely reserved the special honor for the resurrection.

Matt. 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist”; that is, among those born in *that generation, contemporary with Jesus* (including his apostles), there was not a greater man than John the Baptist. In other words, the honor of introducing Messiah went to the *best* one of that time. For the role of prophet prior to Pentecost, John was the best choice. *If* Paul would have been even greater in that role, God could have opened his blind eyes sooner. Therefore, we must conclude that John was specially prepared and selected to be the prophet so honored. His family background, plus his wilderness experience resulting in his wearing rough clothing that would identify him with Messiah, fitted him to be the best to fulfill the role of prophet at that time. Of the Old Testament saints, John was the last. Of the Jews living at that time, John was the best in the category of prophet.

“He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he [John the Baptist].” Stated another way, *all* of the Little Flock are greater than John the Baptist because they will receive a greater reward and greater privileges. Even the *least* one of the Little Flock will have more honor, a greater position, and more authority—a greater destiny. However, this statement does not mean that the least one of the Little Flock is greater in *character* than John, for many of the Ancient Worthies had characters *superior* to some in the Little Flock. It is just that the Ancient Worthies lived *prior* to the high calling and, therefore, cannot be part of the Bride of Christ, yet some may be higher in God’s estimation character-wise.

The lesson of the potter and the clay is applicable here. It is improper to reason just from the standpoint of goodness or justice in regard to the placement of those in the Little Flock versus those of the Ancient Worthies. *Grace*, favor, and honor are the determining factors. Since Jehovah is the Potter, we cannot question why John was not a member of the Little Flock and another one chosen to announce Messiah. Although not the topic of discussion now, the destiny of the Ancient Worthies is not just to spirit nature but to other things as well.

Matt. 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

In the interim between and including John the Baptist and Jesus, the violent took the Kingdom of heaven by force. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-40) illustrates this statement. Last of all, God sent His Son, but of the prophets sent previously, John the Baptist was the last. The prophets were all despoiled (stoned), so the “householder” thought that if he sent his son, perhaps the son would be received and accepted. However, the son, too, was killed. In other words, “violence” was done to the announcer of Messiah (John was in prison as Jesus uttered these very words), and Jesus was not being accepted by the nation in spite of the miracles he was doing.

John the Baptist was considered a part of the “kingdom of heaven” from the standpoint of his role as introducer or announcer of Messiah. Even though John would not be of the Little Flock, the *message* announcing Messiah and the Kingdom of heaven was necessary and was more important than the carrier of that message.

Matt. 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Of course the Law and all of the prophets *continue* to prophesy even today. Prior to the First Advent, they foretold a *coming* Messiah. At his First Advent, the role of *pointing to* (introducing) Messiah was an *accomplished* fact, even though the Law and the prophets continue to prophesy of Messiah. The principle is the same with the doctrine of Jesus’ presence. His secret presence was announced at the *beginning* of the Harvest period, but that announcement *continues* today.

Matt. 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

John the Baptist was a *partial* fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5 that “Elijah” would come before the “great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Jesus himself was a fulfillment of the role of “Elias,” and so is the Church.

Matt. 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

This statement had a practical application back there to those who were interested and could appreciate, *in part*, what Jesus was saying.

Matt. 11:16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

Matt. 11:17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

Matt. 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

Matt. 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of

her children.

Verses 16-19 are a picture of children in a marketplace, and what they are saying and how what is done is received. The lesson is a contrast between John the Baptist and his disciples on the one hand and Jesus and his disciples on the other hand, and between the message of John and his disciples (“Repent! The kingdom of heaven is at hand”) and the message of Jesus and his disciples (the same message but accompanied by Jesus’ sermons on *many* subjects, such as why he was here, his object in coming, what he intended to do, and how to become one of his followers). The *bulk* of Jesus’ preaching was not on repentance but on the privilege of his followers, if faithful, to share with him in his Kingdom—this was a *happy message of salvation*. John’s preaching was more of a question mark; he urged the Jews to repent and be restored to a former condition of favor in the present life—this was a *mournful message of repentance*.

The “children” were John the Baptist and his disciples and also Jesus and his disciples, as viewed by others. John and disciples gave the *mournful dirge*; Jesus and disciples preached a *joyous, happy* refrain. Both were piping their respective message in the marketplace (repentance versus salvation). The reason all were likened to “children” is that they were such in the estimation of the nation. The Israelites regarded them as puerile (childish), foolish, and impractical. In fact, today many Jewish people regard possessions as an indicator of one’s importance. Based on their past education, they think that those who live right will have material prosperity and intellectualism.

With few exceptions, the generation in Jesus’ day listened to both tunes but did not respond to either. Those who proclaimed the messages were regarded as children. The multitudes thought it was foolish to give up their property, etc.—to leave all—and follow Jesus instead of trying to make money. They thought it senseless to renounce pleasures and joys. They considered it equally foolish to wear rough clothing and follow John, living in the desert and going around baptizing people. Thus the multitudes regarded the teachings of both as a “pipe dream”—a sad “piping” and a happy “piping”—and as utter foolishness and childishness.

The vast majority of the nation of Israel were not converted; they did not receive either message. They considered John a madman and a fanatic—not drinking wine and eating locusts and honey. But they found fault with Jesus too, comparing “madman” John to him. Jesus was labeled a “glutton” because he ate regular food and a “winebibber” for drinking wine.

Jesus preached a wonderful and reasonable message. There were some hardships, yes, but the service was reasonable. However, the people stigmatized his message by calling him a hypocrite. “You speak beautiful words and phrases but are not what you claim to be,” was their assessment. His message was too visionary for them—it was a pipe dream. Moreover, they criticized him for being “a friend of publicans and sinners,” asserting that he was like one of them, yet all he did was *preach to them—and without any compromise—when they came to him*. Jesus’ lack of compromise was not appreciated, for the people viewed his condescension as compromise, whereas in truth, he held up the *highest* of ideals. Still the people found fault.

Jesus said, “But wisdom is justified of her children”; that is, *in time*, the truth of the matter would be seen. On the whole, the apostles were a little younger than Jesus, although there were exceptions. In contrast, the scribes and Pharisees were considerably older, and this age factor contributed to their attitude toward Jesus. They felt not only that it was necessary to obtain training at the rabbinical seminary but that it took *years* to accumulate the knowledge they had. Generally speaking, the scribes and Pharisees were probably 20 years older than Jesus.

In regard to the statement “wisdom is justified of her children,” the Church class are the “children” of *true wisdom*, and they will manifest this in the final analysis. Not only did Jesus

say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," but he is "made unto us wisdom" (John 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30). Ultimately, it will be seen that those who accepted Christ were the wise ones, especially if they make their calling and election sure.

Matt. 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

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

Matt. 11:22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

Matt. 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Matt. 11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

These words of condemnation were spoken by Jesus in that very area, the Galilee region: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Therefore, Jesus' criticism would have really "hit home." It is easy to find fault with those far away, but Jesus was criticizing many of those in the very multitude that was listening to him. It is interesting that all three of these cities were *destroyed*. Jesus said that if the mighty works which had been done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had been done in Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, the latter three would have repented and thus *remained* unto that day. Jesus predicted that these three cities in the Galilee area would be brought down to "hell," which is the case, for they were all destroyed.

It will be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom (three cities) than for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (three cities), the places where Jesus taught. Thus *three* cities in Israel were destroyed, and *three* cities elsewhere would have responded more favorably.

Capernaum was "exalted unto heaven" in the sense that Jesus spent a lot of time there; the city was highly favored to hear him speak so often and to witness so many miracles. In fact, Jesus made Capernaum his temporary headquarters; he had his abode there for a time. Just listening to the wisdom of Jesus was like "heaven"; the listener was transported.

Matt. 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Matt. 11:26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Matthew emphasized that those who hearkened to Jesus' message were like the "children" in the marketplace, for others considered them babes (see verse 16). Verses 25 and 26 are more of a prayer by Jesus to his Father. Jesus had the same attitude as his Father in noticing that those who received the truth were regarded as babes. He was completely submissive to the Father and in full agreement with Him. The Father hid these heavenly truths from those who were "wise and prudent" in *worldly* wisdom—the wise and prudent of this world.

Matt. 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son

will reveal him.

The important part of verse 27 to us is that no man knoweth “the Father, save [except] the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him [the Father.]” The other part of the verse describes a rapport that is mutual between Jesus and his Father. The Father instructed the Son, and the Son reciprocated in appreciation of the Father. The Father is revealed to the consecrated through the Son. The closer we are to Christ, the closer we are to the Heavenly Father.

Matt. 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Matt. 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Verses 28-30 are a contrast between (1) “laboring” under the Law and under sin and the death penalty and (2) “laboring” for Jesus. The former is oppressive; the latter, if our hearts are right, is a joy. We *delight* to do the Father’s will. His commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3). Jesus’ “yoke is easy,” pleasant; it has a purpose.

A distinction can be made between the *two* “rests” that are mentioned: (1) Verse 28 refers to a partial rest that is received by those who accept Jesus as the Son of God and thus are “in the way” of justification. (2) Verse 29 is talking about a *deeper* rest that results from taking Jesus’ yoke, that is, by consecrating one’s all to the Lord. This is a “rest unto your souls.”

Those who do not go on to consecrate but realize there is no burning hell and look forward to restitution on the earth do have some rest. They get a measure of peace through enlightenment and a partial hearkening to God’s Word. Whether or not Jesus intended such a distinction here, we cannot be sure, but in practice, it works out this way. Actually, there are three types of “rest”: (1) a *tentative* rest, (2) a *consecrated* rest, and (3) a *final* rest beyond the veil (“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God”—Heb. 4:9).

Jesus’ “yoke is easy”; his “burden is light.” The previous yoke (under sin) was one of futility, and it chafed as if it had sharp edges. In contrast, the yoke of consecration is constructive and disciplinary; it has an objective in view. While, technically speaking, the yoke of consecration may actually be even more burdensome with its severe trials, yet because this yoke fits properly and is custom-designed, the individual can bear a much greater weight with far less distress of mind and body. Therefore, this comparison between a yoke of sin and a yoke of bondage to Christ through consecration is relative. There is a vast difference between the two.

Jesus said, “Take my yoke ... and learn of me.” Just as a driver of yoked oxen can call out signals and directions, so Jesus gives counsel, instruction, guidance, etc., to the Christian. If the “animal” responds willingly to the Master’s command, the “burden” will be lighter. In proportion as the Christian hearkens to Jesus, the burden will be more joyous.

Depending on the setting or context, the consecrated yoke can be considered either single or double, where the Christian is yoked with Jesus. Here the yoke is single. Jesus calls out instructions to the Christian and provides food and rest. The yoke is merciful and specially tailored to each one’s situation. The “farmer” is considerate of the “ox” that is yoked in his service.

“Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” What does “meek” mean here? Jesus does only the Father’s will, and he instructs others as he himself is instructed. He does not grasp power to display his *own* authority but meekly receives and acts upon the instructions that

come from his Father. He was saying, “Learn of me, for just as I am meek and submissive to my Father’s will and humble in heart, so you should be also.” This invitation followed Jesus’ prayer in verses 25 and 26, where he thanked the Father for hiding these things from the worldly wise and revealing them to “babes.” Those with humble dispositions make good disciples, just as Jesus’ humble disposition made him do the Father’s will.

The mind and character of God are implanted in nature, in the Law, and in the instructions to the Christian. The Father is primarily concerned with the *long-term* benefit to the individual, the eternal salvation. He desires that as many as possible will be rescued and gain *life*, but getting life depends on one’s *obedience* either now or in the Kingdom.

In regard to the *single* yoke, Jesus had a yoke to be obedient unto death, even the humiliating death on the Cross (Phil. 2:8). We are to learn about him so that we will bear our yokes well. The fact that the account says, “*my* [Jesus’] yoke,” and not “*our* yoke,” proves this is a single yoke. Also, if a double yoke were intended here, the two oxen, horses, etc., would have to be reasonably equal in strength so as to not put an unfair burden on the weaker animal. Therefore, since we are *no match* for Jesus and the Scriptural principle is to be equally yoked, this must be a *single* yoke. The glorified risen Christ is not down here bearing our burdens but is *instructing* us from above.

It is a great blessing to be able to cast our burdens on the Lord. He helps us to make decisions and overrules on our behalf. The world has to carry responsibilities alone and unaided, but we receive help with our burdens from the great Burden Bearer. The world is receiving a lesson in *futility*, whereas the consecrated get a lesson in discipline—they are being trained for an office. Even chastisement for wrongdoing is designed to help us so that our final destiny is not jeopardized. In the higher sense, however, we are being trained for an office.

Matt. 12:1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

Matt. 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

The Pharisees were critical of the behavior of Jesus’ disciples for eating the “corn” (grain, kernels of wheat) while walking through grain fields on the *sabbath* day. The Pharisees contended that such could not be done on the sabbath but was permissible on other days. However, what the disciples did was not unlawful. Under the Law, they could go through the fields on the sabbath and eat *as they went along*. What was prohibited on the sabbath was harvesting or *storing up* the grain (see Deut. 23:25). Therefore, the “plucking” of corn (grain) *was not work*, contrary to what the Pharisees thought. They protested that to rub the grain to loosen the kernels was work, and it was the “work” they objected to, not the act of eating.

The field had already been harvested in the center, and the Law required that the corners be left *unreaped* so that “strangers” and the poor could go through the field and glean the remaining grain (Lev. 23:22). Even so, Jesus’ disciples were *not* reaping or storing up grain, so their actions were in perfect compliance with the sabbath regulations. It is interesting that Jesus did not refute the Pharisees by explaining the Law to them and showing that the disciples were not disobeying. Instead he gave them a *higher* lesson in regard to his being “*Lord* even of the sabbath day” (verse 8).

The main criticism of the Pharisees pertained to *violating the sabbath*. How *righteous* this criticism made them appear! How *zealous* they seemed to be for God and His Law! However, the Pharisees were manifesting an *outward* show of godliness while *denying* the power of God. Thus it is sometimes helpful to view the attitude of those who are critical as well as to consider

the proper instruction.

Matt. 12:3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him;

Matt. 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

To justify the deeds of his disciples, Jesus referred back to an Old Testament incident regarding David. Because of his *great* hunger and the scarcity of food while he was in this *famished* condition, David requested the shewbread of the Tabernacle (1 Sam. 21:2-6). Out of *necessity*, David ate the shewbread, which ordinarily was to be eaten on the sabbath day *only* by the priests. It is significant that God did not criticize David for this act. This illustration shows that the Old Testament incidents merit *close* scrutiny in order to extract needed lessons.

In contrast, King Uzziah was smitten with leprosy until the day of his death for presuming to go into the Holy of the Temple to burn incense unto the Lord upon the Incense Altar—a function reserved for the priests (2 Chron. 26:16-21). David, too, went into the Holy but was excused. On the surface, this would *seem* to be partiality, but it *definitely* was not because David was truly experiencing *great* hunger and ate out of necessity, whereas Uzziah was seizing a prerogative that belonged to the priesthood. Moreover, David asked first—he did not just march right in presumptuously. And his *motivation* was proper.

In David's case, a man's *life* was in jeopardy. In King Uzziah's case, the sin was wanting to be priest as well—*Pontifex Maximus*, as it were. Also, a stipulation for eating the shewbread was that David and his men had kept themselves from women for three days. The priest was trying to find a reason for David not to get the shewbread, but their compliance with this requirement before going to the Tabernacle removed the priest's objection. Actually, the priest was "manufacturing" a way to stall David—much as Aaron tried to stall the Israelites in building the golden calf by asking for donations of gold, all the while thinking the people would refuse. Incidentally, in the final analysis, Aaron is an Ancient Worthy; it is just that he was weak in certain points when compared with Moses.

Also, we should consider the *principle* of the sabbath, which is heavenly wisdom and is the principle of the *Law* itself. Among other things, the sabbath arrangement was slanted for man's *good*, for his *benefit*. The object was not to make man conform to an unyielding, relentless law. Rather, the sabbath was designed to benefit and give rest to man, beast, the land, and servants. The lesson Jesus gave was a quantum leap in wisdom. From the *letter* of the Law, he jumped to the *spirit* of the Law.

Notice Jesus' *sarcasm* to the Pharisees: "Have you not read [in the Law] what David did?" The Pharisees were supposed to be *teachers* of the Law, "doctors of divinity," as it were, yet Jesus dared to question their lack of awareness and hypocritical attitude. Those of the multitudes who were listening and recognized the faults of the Pharisees must have cheered inwardly.

Matt. 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

Matt. 12:6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

Matt. 12:7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Jesus continued with *more sarcasm*. "Have ye not read in the law...?" "But if ye had known

what this meaneth....” These were *strong* terms. Jesus used *very common practices* as examples for questioning the Pharisees. Sometimes the most obvious things in life can be overlooked. The priests were very active on the sabbath day, yet they were not counted as sinners. In fact, the sabbath was often the busiest day of the Temple. The priests did more than just eat on the sabbath—they sacrificed animals.

“In this place is one greater than the temple.” Jesus likened himself as being *greater* than the Temple. That was an *astounding* statement, for back there everything was *subservient* to the Temple. For example, the Jews had to pray in the direction of the Temple no matter where they were.

“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,” a quote from Hosea 6:6, pertained to the services and offerings of the Temple. Actually, the Lord desires *both* mercy and sacrifice, but mercy has to be included; that is, sacrifice is not to be put ahead of mercy. Jesus was saying that mercy should be extended to the *guiltless*. In other words, there can be extenuating circumstances, but the exception should not be made the general rule, lest the guilty be condoned. The proper perspective is to make the general rule and then to allow reasonable exceptions. When life or property (such as a sheep falling into a pit) was in jeopardy, it should be retrieved—and to do so did not violate the sabbath (verse 11). Therefore, motivation has a bearing, but it must be in harmony with the principles of divine government.

Matt. 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

Jesus said, “The *Son of man* is Lord even of the sabbath.” He also said he was greater than the Temple, whereas the Pharisees claimed that on the sabbath, everything was subservient to the ordinances of the Temple. Sometimes a higher law arises that supersedes another law. The lesser law is not nullified; it is just eclipsed. For example, the principle of aerodynamics allows a plane to fly and thus to seemingly defy gravity. However, gravity continues to exist. If the Son of man was greater than the Temple, then the teachings of Jesus superseded the laws that were subservient to the Mosaic Law. That is the point of what Jesus was saying. Again this was a *startling* statement.

Matt. 12:9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

Matt. 12:10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

Matt. 12:11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

Matt. 12:12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

The Pharisees asked, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?” Jesus did answer their question, but he gave an illustration, asking *them* questions, before answering in the affirmative. His method shows why lawyers try to have those on the witness stand strictly adhere to “yes” and “no” answers with no explanations or accompanying remarks that might sway the jury. This tactic of the lawyers is unfair in many instances, for the question may be framed in such a restricted manner that a “yes” or “no” answer could make one accountable. For example, when the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the sabbath, a simple “yes” response would have made him appear guilty before *all* in the synagogue, whereas the explanation with the answer appealed to at least the right-hearted element, however small it was.

Clearly, the Pharisees were trying to bait and trap Jesus. The sabbath question was considered

a “test” as to whether or not one was a real Jew. Christians who claim that observance of the sabbath is essential should realize how Jesus’ reasoning undercuts their thinking.

The Pharisees asked Jesus the question about the sabbath with the premeditated purpose of accusing him. Meanwhile, the man with the withered hand was standing by. His sorry plight was immaterial to the Pharisees. Instead of being interested in the man and his affliction, they were more concerned with trapping Jesus. They hoped to get an answer from the Master that they could maliciously spread abroad. But their mouths were stopped when Jesus replied, “Which one of you, having a sheep, would not pull it out of a pit on the sabbath day?” Of course the man was more important than an animal! One was in a literal pit; the other was in a figurative pit with his withered hand.

Why did Jesus use “one sheep” in the illustration? A person could have a *hundred* sheep, and only *one* falls in the pit. The owner would be so interested in the *one* sheep that he would pull it out of the pit for selfish reasons—for profit. In human society, only *one* in a hundred (or more) would have a withered arm. So here there was *one* man out of society with the withered hand, but the Pharisees were so interested in trapping Jesus that they overlooked the unfortunate man. This logic is *overwhelming*. For Jesus to draw such *powerful* lessons on the spur of the moment was remarkable. What marvelous wisdom! His reply is an evidence that he had thoroughly analyzed *all of the Law and its principles* to the extent of his capability. Then he *applied* the principles, not only to animals but also to humans. And there is an additional analogy: the Seventh Day is *God’s* day of rest, yet He helps mankind out of the pit.

Matt. 12:13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

The healing was very dramatic. In compliance with Jesus’ request, the man stretched forth his withered hand. He manifested *faith* by obeying. Apparently, the man’s hand was so withered that all of the Pharisees knew about it. Being acquainted with Jesus’ temperament and character, they also knew that he would probably heal this obvious deformity, so they seized upon this opportunity to bait him. (It was customary for Jesus to make someone who was sick, leprous, deformed, etc., the object of his interest, and it is interesting that the Pharisees were aware of this tendency. Hence they had been observing Jesus with *malevolent* mind and intent.)

Now the man with the withered hand was present in the synagogue, and when Jesus came into the situation, the Pharisees wanted to get him to betray himself so that they would have evidence against him for later. The man exerted the effort to thrust forth his hand, and as it was stretched forth, the hand became *whole* (was restored to normalcy). It is interesting that Matthew categorized this particular healing with a lesson on the *sabbath*. In the earlier listing of cures, there was no mention of the sabbath.

Matt. 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

The Pharisees went out and held a council on how to *destroy* Jesus. After such a miracle, they actually wanted to kill him. Their intent shows that a *wrong* heart condition can pervert how a person literally sees and hears a situation. The Pharisees saw the man’s pitiful condition, heard Jesus’ sound logic, and saw the hand get miraculously restored, yet the net result was that they wanted to *murder* Jesus. Their attitude seems unbelievable, but the incident shows that it is humanly possible—and that it can occur again in the future in our day.

Despite all of the education and enlightenment today, an unregenerate heart can respond in this way. And the Pharisees were *responsible* for their actions, for they were sinning *against light*. When they come out of the grave, they will not be told more than Jesus said to them at

the First Advent. He pointed out their hypocrisy, their inconsistencies, their misapplication of the Law and its principles, etc., etc., plus they saw Jesus heal people with their *own eyes*. Of course some Pharisees responded properly to Jesus, but the bitter, evil-hearted element wanted him dead. This malevolent heart condition was bordering on *incurability*.

Incidentally, Paul probably did not actually see or have personal contact with Jesus during the earthly ministry phase. That is why later, following Jesus' crucifixion, he was given a glimpse of the glorified risen Lord. To be an apostle, Paul had to have some kind of view of the Savior.

On the feast days, those Jews who lived too far to go to the Temple could utilize a prominent local synagogue as their "temple." This was true for Passover, Pentecost, and the Day of Atonement. Therefore, Jews from areas like Tarsus and Cilicia did not travel to Jerusalem for every holy day each year, yet they obeyed in spirit by this local provision. Hence although Saul of Tarsus would have known of Jesus, he probably did not see him. Moreover, since Saul was a Pharisee, the reports that reached him about Jesus were probably prejudiced, inaccurate, and perverted. Therefore, he was not as responsible as those who witnessed the miracles.

Matt. 12:15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

Matt. 12:16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

Matt. 12:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Matt. 12:18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

Matt. 12:19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

Matt. 12:20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

Matt. 12:21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

Jesus did not heal all of the multitudes but all *out of* the multitudes who came to him with individual requests. Many were *individually* (not collectively) healed and charged that "they should not make him known." This proper attitude on Jesus' part had been prophesied by Isaiah centuries earlier. Because his time to die had not yet come, Jesus withdrew himself from the conniving Pharisees' territory and charged that his miracles not be noised around. Also, Jesus was acting in harmony with the instructions he gave his disciples in Matthew 10:23, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." However, if apprehended and brought before the council, they were to be courageous and fear not, trusting that the proper words would be given to them. In other words, if discretion was used to avoid persecution but they were arrested anyway, then they should consider it God's will and trust that the Father would speak through them.

We usually apply the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-3, quoted here, to Jesus in the Kingdom, but he also did this during his First Advent for those who humbly requested his help. But why did Matthew quote this text on this occasion? "I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles." Here was another *partial* application of a *future* Scripture. This partial application identified Jesus as the "servant" who was filled with God's Spirit. Jesus manifested this disposition and interest in the poor and afflicted of Israel, and Matthew was showing that in the Kingdom, *this same one* would be given the responsibility to heal all of the willing and obedient.

The prophecy refers to *Gentiles*, yet Matthew applied it to *Israel*. The Hebrew word *goyim* is variously translated “heathen,” “nations,” and “people” as well, and generally speaking, the word does mean “Gentiles,” not Jews or Hebrews. However, several times in the Old Testament, that same word is applied to Jews. Therefore, this Scripture in Isaiah could have a partial application in Jesus’ day without doing violence to the principle the prophet intended. *Goyim* is used to refer to Israel as God’s people, and the context absolutely limits the application to the Jew. For example, God used this expression when Joshua entered the Promised Land (see Joshua 3:17; 4:1; 5:6,8; 10:13).

Matthew used “Gentiles” here in Chapter 12 to mean a collective body of people and applied it to the common people (Jews) who were listening to Jesus. Thus God put His Spirit on Jesus, who would show judgment to the common people. Not only did this identify *Jesus* as the one to have God’s Spirit, but it identified the *spirit* or disposition itself—Jesus had *humility* and a *sentimental interest* in helping the sick, poor, diseased, oppressed, etc. Matthew was identifying Jesus (and his spirit) as being the one in the Kingdom who would be empowered with the fullness of God’s Spirit to do the work of Messiah on a worldwide scale.

Therefore, here in verse 18, “Gentiles” has the thought of “common people.” This is one of the rare instances with this *dual* application, and the word really should not be capitalized but should be “gentiles.”

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.” A “smoking flax” is a *feeble, flickering* flame or light caused by carbon in the wick, poor quality paraffin, or whatever. Jesus is *very gentle* with such. The principle is that we are to *weep* with those who are weeping and to be *weak* with those who are weak, but we are to be *strong* with those who are strong. However, we tend to mix these up in practical applications. Jesus is interested in succoring the common people, who are in a pitiful situation until he sends forth “judgment unto victory.” This is his *long-term* interest in his subjects, and this should be the primary goal in our minds with respect to others. When weighing what action to take, we should generally decide according to the *long-term* standpoint rather than the short term. The long term is of much more vital concern.

“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.” This text ties in with verse 16, where Jesus charged those he healed not to publicize his miracles. He was trying not to make a big show like a barker. If Jesus had wanted more publicity, he would have gone to the busy main thoroughfares of Jerusalem and shouted to the people to come hither to be recipients of his miracles. However, Jesus did not “cry” in this manner, and he avoided the “streets.”

Moreover, Jesus did not “strive” with the Pharisees. When they asked him a question, he responded, but he did not linger there, contending and arguing back and forth at length. He directed his primary attention to those who had a hearing ear. With such, he spent time and tried to reason—in *proportion* to their interest. Even though Jesus refuted the scribes and Pharisees from a common-sense standpoint, he was not interested in just winning an argument.

“In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” The ultimate fulfillment of this part of the Isaiah text will be in the Kingdom Age. Although the term “Gentiles” can apply to Jews as well as to Gentiles literally, depending on the context, here the account was referring to the more proper *future* significance—the application being to people of a humble spirit, such as Jesus was basically trying to address back then.

Matt. 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he

healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

Matt. 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

The possessed one was blind and “dumb,” meaning he could not speak. In possessing this man, the demon prevented him from both seeing and speaking. The condition of this man leads into another aspect of possession.

In possessing an individual, a demon usually wants the victim to be able to see, hear, and speak in order to have a better vessel of communication for evil purposes. Therefore, since this possessed man was rendered blind and dumb, we can presume that the demon had an ulterior motive. For example, the demon might have wanted to ridicule the party and cause him to get into embarrassing situations. Demons have a warped, perverse sense of humor. For instance, under hypnosis, subjects will do bizarre and ludicrous things that they would not ordinarily consider doing.

Jesus miraculously healed the possessed one so that he could both speak and see. Amazed at the power Jesus manifested, the people asked in effect, “Is not this the Son of David? What more can we expect? Is not this an evidence of the truthfulness of Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God, the Deliverer? Is not this miracle proof that he has a future kingdom in mind?”

Matt. 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

When the Pharisees heard the people’s comments, they were angry and said Jesus was using the power of Beelzebub (Satan) to cast out devils. Although “fellow” is in italics, the thought is correct. The Pharisees did not even want to give Jesus the courtesy of using his name.

How does one become subject to demonism? The prevailing opinion is that those who are possessed are somehow *personally* responsible for their condition. That may or may not be true depending on the circumstances. Surely those who delve into demonism, witchcraft, etc., and thus become mediums or receive supernatural powers have willfully brought the possession on themselves. However, others become demon-possessed not because they gave their minds over but because of physical sickness and weakness of mind. For instance, babies can become demon-possessed, and they certainly have not invited a demon to enter. The Dalai Lama is specially selected according to his sensitivity to occult powers of wisdom; the *child* most susceptible to occult powers is searched for throughout the realm.

When a person is at a low ebb mentally, the demons can take possession of his or her thinking and thus make the individual subservient to them. The medical profession does not recognize this condition. Doctors prescribe certain drugs and medications so that the person gets well and no longer manifests the symptoms, and then they deny even the possibility of demon possession, not realizing that the demons capitalize on weakness. Just as Satan takes advantage of the morals of the populace and makes them subject to his will by catering to their depraved tastes and appetites and then manipulates them, so the demons can capitalize on physical sickness so that it results in mental weakness.

By administering drugs, shock treatment, etc., physicians get the demon-possessed patient out of a temporary low state and then claim that person never was demon-possessed, but that is not true. Demon possession is just as prevalent today as it was in Jesus’ day. It just is not recognized.

If a person has never willingly or voluntarily given his will over and has been possessed just

because of the physical aberration, then when he gets well, he has no problem shedding the possession. However, those who yield their wills and then become possessed may be perfectly healthy. For them to be rid of the possession, an exorcism would have to be performed.

Another factor in demon possession is if the parents or grandparents dabbled in occultism. In such cases, the sins can be visited on the children, who inherit the weakness for possession. Such possession can be eliminated if the party so desires—and sometimes without exorcism.

Dumbness, deafness, and blindness can also occur today as a result of demon possession. We know that in this instance in Matthew, the blindness and dumbness were caused by the demon because another account calls him a “dumb” spirit, meaning the “spirit,” or demon, had the power to cause this affliction—it was his *modus operandi*.

Matt. 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Matt. 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Why does verse 25 state, “And Jesus knew their [the Pharisees’] *thoughts*”? The Pharisees would not have accused Jesus to his face of casting out devils with Satan’s power but would have uttered these derogatory remarks behind his back, or at least a sufficient distance away to hold a private conversation with the people who were acclaiming Jesus. But even though Jesus was out of earshot, he knew their thoughts. He then began to offer a rebuttal.

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?” Notice the *thrust* of Jesus’ remarks: “How *can* Satan cast out Satan? What you are saying does not make sense with regard to Satan or any kingdom. Insurrection in a kingdom would be an evidence of weakness, and it would not be tolerated.” Jesus’ illustration went from a kingdom to a city to a house to an individual, Satan himself.

Matt. 12:27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Then Jesus came to the sensitive part of his remarks: “If I am using Beelzebub’s power to cast out devils, by whom do *your* children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.” Knowing the thoughts of the Pharisees, Jesus must have addressed his remarks very forcefully in their direction. He was telling *them* that their reasoning did not make sense.

The Master’s remarks suggest that there have been—and were in his day—others who exorcised spirits on occasion. How would this probably have been done? The children of the Pharisees were able to successfully exorcise a demon in the name of *Jehovah*, the God of Israel. The Jews had to use an authority *superior* to the demon they were casting out. When a demon was exorcised in this manner, they attributed the power to *God*, yet where Jesus was concerned, they used *inconsistent* logic in ascribing the power to *Satan*. They claimed that their children cast out demons by a superior, *good* power, whereas Jesus did it by an *evil* power. This reasoning did not make sense. In fact, when Jesus performed a miracle, he often prayed audibly to the Father and even at times looked up to heaven. Therefore, although the account does not so state the matter here, Jesus probably prayed to the Father.

“Healing” today is sometimes of God and sometimes of Satan. The Adversary’s ulterior motive is to gain a *larger* influence and control. For example, if Satan “exorcises” a demon through an

individual and that individual then goes around as a deceiver of others and gets a large following and ministry, reverence is taken away from God and His Word and turned to an individual, a *human* leader, who satisfies those who want such a superficial religion. Hence Satan would only “cast out Satan” if he had an ulterior motive of power for himself and distraction away from reverence for God. However, there can be *sincere* cases of healing and/or exorcism today, handled from a *compassionate* standpoint with only the welfare of the individual in mind and done on a private basis. That healing would be of *God*.

Jesus was pointing out the fallacy in the Pharisees’ inconsistent reasoning. Moreover, it did not make sense to say that Satan was divided against himself. Their reasoning was completely false. *Strong Satan*, the *prince* of demons, would not be dividing his *own* kingdom. Jesus’ words in Mark 3:23 are even stronger: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” In other words, “Satan *would not* do that.” The logic of the Pharisees was not reasonable.

Notice that Jesus did not criticize the “children” who cast out devils. Therefore, we should be careful when we discuss healing and not just issue blanket disapproval. Jesus’ criticism was leveled at the Pharisees for their improper spirit, malevolent thinking, and unwillingness to receive his instruction. His attitude toward the children was similar to what he said elsewhere: “Those who are not against us are for us” (Luke 9:50 paraphrase). James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven and destroy the others, but Jesus restrained them.

The point is that we must use discrimination and discretion in judging. We should soft-pedal for a while and think things over and *not judge hastily*. In other words, we should be slow to anger (James 1:19). We are not to be volatile and act without weighing matters. However, when it becomes obvious that something is wrong and out of whack, then we can be angry with righteous indignation depending on the situation.

“Therefore they [your children] shall be your judges.” Jesus’ words continually irked the Pharisees. He kept giving them digs about their attitude: “Don’t you know the Law?” “Don’t you know the Scriptures?” “Aren’t you aware?” And now, “Let your children be your judges.” Jesus was trying to shock the Pharisees into a realization of their wrong attitude.

Matt. 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

There were really just *two* alternatives for the Pharisees, and the first one was impossible; namely, Jesus *could not* be casting out devils by Satan’s power. Therefore, the conclusion was obvious: he was using *God’s* power.

This tack was similar to the way Jesus answered the Pharisees’ taunt: “Was John the Baptist a prophet or not?” The Pharisees did not want to answer yes or no, for either answer would cause problems. If they said no, the people would be angry, for they regarded John as a prophet. If they replied yes, they were also exposed, for John was the one who had introduced Jesus as Messiah. Thus the question method is a *powerful* manner of reasoning and dialogue. Although it did not convert the Pharisees as a whole, there were some exceptions.

In what sense had the “kingdom of God” come unto them? First, there was the *practical* aspect back there. The blind and dumb man had been healed and exorcised by a holy power. In Matthew 4:17, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”; he introduced and announced his own Kingdom. (John the Baptist introduced Messiah, and Messiah introduced the Kingdom and its message.) “The kingdom of heaven is among you [in your midst]” was another expression along this line (Luke 17:21—see *Diaglott* and *Rotherham*). Jesus was a leading proponent of the Kingdom. If he announced himself as a messenger or agent of God and the healing was done by a holy and godly power, then this was another evidence of the

authenticity of Jesus' claim to be the Son of man, or Messiah, sent to deliver the human race. Of course, too, there was a *prophetic* aspect of the Kingdom of God being at hand, coming to them.

Now comes the kernel of the matter. Up to this point, Jesus had pointed out the wrong attitudes and deductions of the Pharisees. Now he would treat the situation in a more practical sense as regards the actual exorcising.

Matt. 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

The "strong man" is Satan, and the "strong man's house" is Satan's kingdom. If the "strong man's house" is that which is under Satanic control, then the one who *binds* the "strong man" must be greater, stronger, and superior. Thus there are *two* "strong men" (see Luke 11:21,22).

It is important to note that the binding must occur "first." "First" *means first*, and *not* contemporaneous, progressive, and/or gradual. Jesus must *first* bind Satan *before* entering and "spoiling" his house. The account does not say that Jesus will progressively bind Satan and progressively spoil his house. This is the usual interpretation, but it is *wrong*. The binding must occur *first*, *ahead of* entering the strong man's house. The binding does *not* take place progressively, simultaneously, or after Jesus enters and spoils Satan's house.

In the case at hand, Jesus *bound* the demon's influence in the possessed man in order to relieve him of his affliction. First, Jesus nullified the influence of the demon who was possessing this individual, and then the Master took the "spoil" himself. Previously, the man was subject to demon control, but Jesus got rid of the demon (negated his influence) so that the individual was at liberty (at least temporarily—see verses 43-45) to become subject to Christ. Then Jesus drew certain lessons from this incident because after exorcism, one can lapse back into the former condition. While Jesus was present, he bound and nullified the demon's influence and healed the man, but in Jesus' absence, if the man again became demon-possessed, he would be in a *worse* state.

Verse 29 further emphasizes the point that if Satan were to cast out Satan, he would get no victory. In fact, he would *lose* his former possession. Not only would there be no "spoil," but Satan would lose what he controlled. The only exception is where Satan would get a further advantage, that is, if he had an ulterior motive and could gain in some other respect. But here the demon *lost* the individual from *prior control*, and nothing would be gained by such a loss. Therefore, Satan did *not* cast out Satan here.

Matt. 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Jesus made this statement on this occasion because the scribes and Pharisees had malicious intentions toward him; they wanted to *destroy* him, to *kill* him. This was not just a matter of doctrinal difference. The Pharisees wanted to remove him from the scene.

Many people are so naive that they do not see the destructive influence of others. Some can actually witness a person destroying the influence of another yet be blind in regard to what is happening. This blindness can occur either *willingly* or *ignorantly*, especially if a Christian does not *analyze* things for fear of impugning evil. Unfortunately, this type of thinking keeps one from judging anything, and we are to judge some things. There are two extremes: (1) One extreme is where a Christian never analyzes. He assumes that no one can do anything wrong and that everything is "love." (2) The other extreme is where a Christian is hypercritical, always looking for the wrong motive in everything. Neither extreme is proper. We *should* judge a situation and the circumstances.

In this case, Jesus did good: he healed a man. It should have been apparent to all that the man had been *miraculously cured*, but instead the Pharisees found fault. They pounced on the thoughts of the people: “Indeed Jesus must be the Son of David, who was prophesied to come. Wouldn’t we expect him to be doing a work of this nature?” (Matt. 12:23). The Pharisees vitiated the good that Jesus was doing. Therefore, those who were not with Jesus were, in effect, *against* him.

How do we harmonize the two *seemingly* contradictory (paraphrased) statements of Jesus? (1) “He who is not with me is against me.” (2) “He who is not against me is for me.” The *motive* is what counts. Regarding the first statement, the scribes and Pharisees had an evil, malicious intent. Therefore, Jesus was opposing the malicious thinking of those who were criticizing him. In the second case, Jesus was criticizing his own apostles, which was a different situation.

In other words, certain statements have to be considered in the circumstance in which they are uttered in order to draw the proper lesson. Here a wrong spirit was manifested. Jesus had done a *wonderful* miracle, and all the Pharisees could do was to *deliberately find fault*. Jesus was saying that those who did not support him were really his *enemies*. Sometimes it is necessary to point this out. The Apostle Paul acted properly by naming his enemies on several occasions, for more harm would have been done if he had remained silent.

One way we can suffer for righteousness’ sake is to stand up for *others* who are following a right principle in opposition to those who are doing wrong. Sometimes in observing a situation involving others, it is proper to take action. Most seem to think that the policy of “hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil” is correct—that following this policy makes one innocent—but the Scriptures do not so teach. If an injustice occurs and we willingly hide our eyes and ears to it, we are not obeying Scripture. Ignorance does not save anybody. The Law teaches that when the ignorant become aware of what they did wrong, they must make amends. Past wrongs are not excused. Sins of ignorance, when brought to a person’s attention one way or another, must be made up for. Sins of knowledge can only be expiated through some kind of judgment given.

Moreover, when we hear talks that are contrary to what the Lord teaches, we should approach the elder about the matter, even if doing so would be distressing to us. Personality should not be a factor. Just because we especially like an elder, we should not refrain from bringing the matter to his attention. It is our obligation to defend God’s Word. We could say, “Brother, on that matter, I do not believe you have the correct thought. I would suggest that you be more careful in the utterance of such principles.” Otherwise, if the wrong premise continues to be taught from the platform, many are influenced by those statements and can fall. Whether the elder knows it or not, he is really digging a pit for the brethren. If a sufficient number of brethren would oppose the teaching of a wrong principle, perhaps the elder would give heed to their comments. And especially if a wrong principle has been taught from the platform, we should not encourage the elder by commending his “wonderful talk” and saying nothing about the error. Such a course does not help either the elder himself or those being influenced by the wrong principle, doctrine, etc. If an elder is given correction and he heeds it, then his future influence will be *more beneficial* to others. For example, if a passage is definitely spurious but is used as a climax for a talk and is teaching a wrong principle, it should be pointed out to the elder in the hope that he will be more careful in the future. However, if *after* having the matter pointed out to him, the elder *continues* to use that wrong principle and spurious Scripture, he is very responsible—*doubly responsible*.

It is a distasteful duty to point these things out because the brethren think we are always critical, but it is our obligation. We may even tremble when we thus speak out, for it certainly is not joyful to do, but knowing that the principle is wrong and that God’s Word is being

maligned, we have a responsibility. Otherwise, all we would do is sit and enjoy the truth. How can we suffer for righteousness if we close our eyes and ears to wrong and do not speak up, especially since our fellowship is in the brotherhood, not the world? Some brethren have very little contact with the world; they may work for a religious organization, spend every free moment with the brethren, etc. Where, then, will they get their suffering and persecution if they simply sit and enjoy the discourses? No, we need to have our “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” by trying “the spirits” (Heb. 5:14; 1 John 4:1). And “let him that is taught in the word communicate unto [with] him that teacheth in *all* good things” (Gal. 6:6).

However, we should remember that if we do disagree with another, we should control ourselves and speak in the right manner. Nevertheless, we should not ignore the responsibility. If an elder says something wrong, even in a nice tone and attitude, he can still be quite sensitive to correction. Therefore, we should broach the matter as nicely as possible under the circumstances, for we are responsible for our attitude, but we are *even more responsible if we say nothing*.

“He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” The Pharisees were accusing Jesus of casting out the demon by Satan’s power, but what they really wanted to do was to break his influence and stop his ministry. They wanted to “scatter” his influence or make it *cease*. For example, when Jesus was down by the Sea of Galilee, the multitudes gathered to hear him expound. By criticizing him, the Pharisees were trying to discourage people from listening to his remarks. Consequently, the Pharisees were trying to “scatter” (diminish or divide) the collective or binding influence of the Savior. Their motive was to disperse the multitudes and keep them from giving his remarks serious consideration. Carrying the thought a step further, beyond physically scattering the people away from hearing Jesus’ message, the Pharisees wanted to stop the gathering of disciples (“sheep”) to Jesus. Their motivation reminds us of the seed that fell by the wayside and was snatched up lest it take root.

Luke 11:21,22 reads, “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.” Jesus will (1) “overcome” (bind) Satan, (2) strip him of his “armour,” and (3) divide the “spoils” (take his goods). The Luke account brings in an aspect that is not in the Gospel of Matthew: taking Satan’s armor.

What is the stripping of Satan’s armor? Satan is considerably more powerful than the other angels by virtue of his original position. His armor is not only his superior personal capabilities and influence but also the fallen angels, who protect his kingdom and guard his “palace.” Just as Jesus has legions of holy angels loyal to and supporting him, so Satan’s capabilities are increased by the fealty of the fallen angels. Satan will be stripped of his armor—of his agents who do his bidding. Satan operates through several types of weaponry such as invisibility, the fallen angels, ignorance, superstition, fear, weakness of mind or body, and depraved tastes. The power of death is in these to one degree or another, for man’s physical, mental, and moral deterioration is due to the death process operating in him. As a superior, invisible being, Satan has been capitalizing on these weaknesses of the human race. He can captivate men at his will without their awareness of the source.

What is “dividing the spoils”? In one sense, the “house” itself would also be the “goods.” Just as one has a house, so he has furniture in that house. When Satan takes a spoil, it means that a person is captive to him. When Jesus takes Satan’s goods (his “spoils”), the human race will be *delivered* from Satan’s power so that they can hear the truth. Jesus was showing forth the powers he will exercise in the future. Here he delivered *one* human being; in the Kingdom, he will deliver the *whole* human race.

What is the difference between the “house” and the “goods”? In this case, the “house” was the

possessed man himself. The demon occupied the human vessel and deprived the man of his sight and of his power to speak. When the evil spirit was exorcised, the “house” was left empty because the individual was freed from possession.

What happened to that *individual* is representative of a *much larger* situation in the Kingdom with regard to the world of mankind, the *human race*. The “house” represents (1) the man and ultimately (2) the human race. The “goods” represent (1) the man’s faculties and ultimately (2) the faculties of the human race. Just as the possessed man’s eyes were open to “see,” so when Satan is bound, the human race will “see” (understand) the truth about the Bible and God’s plan and character.

It is important to realize that before a “house” (an individual) can be taken, the demon has to be immobilized as far as that person is concerned. Therefore, those who say that the “house” is earth’s atmosphere and that Jesus entered it in 1874 would really have to believe—in order to be consistent—that Satan was bound *prior to 1874*, which is *not true!* The “house” is *not* planet Earth. Moreover, all down the age, holy angels, who are far weaker than Jesus, have entered earth’s atmosphere, and Satan could not stop them (although he was permitted to hinder Gabriel so that we would realize the powers of evil—Dan. 10:12,13). Also, if the binding of Satan occurred prior to 1874, it would have taken place before the seventh messenger was even selected.

We are in an imperfect world, and not one of us has perfect understanding on every doctrine. The light of the just shines more and more unto the “perfect day,” which is still *future* (Prov. 4:18). When light increases, it opens up some dark recesses to exposure and understanding.

The binding of Satan will occur *first*. The World Wars are not an evidence that his house is being spoiled. Some go to the extreme of saying that Satan is already bound, and only the unholy angels are still loose. However, this statement does not make sense either, for several other Scriptures regarding Satan are yet future in fulfillment. The trouble prevalent today does not prove Satan’s “house” is being spoiled. After all, the days of Noah were full of violence, lust, and depravity, but the “spoiling” did not occur until the *Flood* came and radically changed *society*, the human race. In other words, it is incorrect to view the “house” as planet Earth and to say that Satan was bound and Jesus entered earth’s atmosphere in 1874, and now the Savior is throwing the furniture around. To the contrary, the *powers of evil* are actually *increasing* every day. We are to put on the *whole* armor of God so that we will be able to withstand the evil one (*singular*, that is, particularly Satan—Eph. 6:11). It is *Satan* who will deal with the Great Company after the Church is gone—not to mention that he will be instrumental in putting the feet members to death.

Q: How would we refute the reasoning that because Satan seems to be casting out Satan today, his house is falling? Since his powers are *increasing*, wouldn’t we assume that the healing is done with an ulterior motive? Therefore, the “casting out” is *furthering* his power, preparing the world for the great deceptions that are coming.

A: When we finish the lesson regarding what took place back there (through verse 45), we will review this incident from the large perspective of the house, the strong man, etc. Back there the “strong man” was the particular demon (a representative of Satan) who was cast out. And the “house” that Jesus obtained then was an individual. We will have to consider the attitude of those who perceived this miracle, as well as certain other factors, because a new thought was introduced as time went on and the bulk of the coming verses will deal with it. Then will come a summation by Jesus. At that point, we will go into the enlarged picture.

Matt. 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Matt. 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

The thrust of the message in verses 31-37 was directed to the Pharisees and to the Church depending on which part is being considered. For example, “O generation of vipers” was definitely addressed to the Pharisees.

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.” This *general* statement applies to both the present age and the Kingdom Age. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit *demand*s punishment, for it is sin against *light and truth*. One does not necessarily have to be Spirit-begotten in order to commit this sin. Jesus was making a distinction between *one* type of sin and blasphemy, and *another* type of sin and blasphemy. A sin against the Holy Spirit is drastically more severe.

What did Jesus mean when he said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven”? Depending on the circumstances, there can be either a blanket pardon or a requirement of simple retribution. However, sin and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit *cannot* be forgiven; that is, there must be either expiation by stripes or the full penalty (Second Death) depending on the seriousness of the sin. In other words, there are *degrees* of sinning against the Holy Spirit, *degrees* of willfulness. Therefore, to sin against the Holy Spirit does not mean automatic Second Death, but depending on the degree of the sin, that might be the result. The nature of the retribution required would depend on the *degree* of the sin, but there *must be retribution*.

Mark 3:29 reads, “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness.” “Never forgiveness” does not necessarily mean Second Death, for the verse ends with the words “but is in danger of eternal damnation.” The degree of the willfulness of the sin is the determining factor. If one *deliberately* sins against the Holy Spirit, doing something wrong with intention, that sin must be expiated according to the degree of willfulness.

In the statement “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,” Jesus was referring to *Adamic* sin. By birth, one is a child of Adam and hence a sinner, but by repenting, trusting in the blood of Christ, and giving his heart to the Lord, the individual is forgiven for his past sins. And this will also be true in the next age. However, there is also a progressive standpoint. Following consecration, one still needs forgiveness through the merit of Jesus—and that would be true whether in this age or the next age. Therefore, the term “men” applies to two classes: to Christians now and to the world in the Kingdom. For example, to deny the Ransom after consecration and an understanding of this matter would bring Second Death, for it would be sinning against the Holy Spirit, against *light*. Thus in some instances, we can discern those who sin unto Second Death. For such, we do not pray (1 John 5:16). And we should not make excuses and allowances such as “he [or she] was never Spirit-begotten.”

“Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.” Notice that a “word” spoken against Christ can be forgiven, but this statement does not mean that *all* manner of sin and blasphemy against Christ will be forgiven. Under certain circumstances, sin and blasphemy would not be forgiven.

“Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, and neither in the world to come.” The phrases “neither in this world” and “neither in the world to come” apply only to sins against the Holy Spirit not being forgiven.

Some Jews, such as the Apostle Paul, opposed Jesus (and/or his followers) in all *good* conscience, *honestly* believing that he was undermining the Law. Such individuals would be

forgiven for their sins against Jesus if, when their eyes of understanding were opened, they properly responded. However, retribution was rendered; for example, Paul was stoned and left for dead as retribution for what had happened to Stephen.

Based on Matthew's Gospel, it is possible that those who witnessed the use of the Holy Spirit, the power of God, to miraculously heal the blind and dumb possessed man may have sinned against *light*. Their opposition to Christ was much more than a "word" or a momentary cursing, for they manifested deliberate malevolency toward him based on a distortion of *obvious* facts obtained *firsthand*. Those who were *eyewitnesses* of the miracles and Jesus' words and manner were especially culpable. Another example would be the Pharisees who paid "hush" money to the tomb guards to say that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body from the sealed and guarded tomb. Those religious leaders are in danger of Second Death, for they developed such evil characters that they may not be able (or willing) to retrace their steps in the Kingdom. They are liable to Gehenna (eternal destruction).

Sometimes a person has malevolent attitudes because of information received secondhand or thirdhand, which is a different matter. However, when such a one then views firsthand the *innocent* person who is being maligned, and has personal contact with him, he may (and should) soften his hard stand. And some of the Pharisees did respond favorably to Jesus upon actually seeing and hearing him; a few even became his disciples. Thus a "word" spoken against Jesus is much different from a *trend* of thought.

If faithful, we, too, will receive persecution both for Christ's sake and for righteousness' sake. Although afterwards, in retrospect, we rejoice for this privilege of suffering, the experience is not pleasant at the time. The Scripture "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" will be our realization and consolation *afterward*—in our quiet moments of meditation (2 Tim. 3:12). If, in examining our conduct, we can find nothing wrong, then the spleen being vented on us is part of our suffering for Christ, for which we can thank God. In fact, we may be trying to instruct, for their *own good*, the very ones who downgrade us when the persecuting experience comes. That is what happened to Jesus and the apostles. Jesus spoke strongly to try to wake up the Pharisees to their wrong heart condition: "O generation of *vipers*." Surely Jesus was not rejoicing at the time of this interchange following the accusation that he was using Satan's power.

Comment: We do not have the liberty to speak as strongly as Jesus did to the Pharisees.

Reply: That is not necessarily true. Whether we realize it or not, we say similar things about the nominal Church, a *class*. But even with *individuals*, depending on the situation, we can speak out strongly—and for their own good. If someone falsely accuses us before others, we should certainly say, "What you are stating is a falsehood." Jesus was *right to deny* he was using Satan's power. He pointed out that their reasoning was ridiculous and tried to exonerate himself in the eyes of those who were witnessing the scene. Thus there are times when, for the good of the accuser, we should speak out. In fact, our very silence might be a misrepresentation.

Of course there are some things that we cannot answer. For instance, if we tried to answer every argument in the newspaper, our whole life would be filled with trying to explain this situation and that situation, but where something is done in our very presence and in front of other independent observers, we have a duty to defend ourselves for the benefit of the onlookers. Otherwise, silence would give consent. In a one-on-one situation, we can turn to the one who slapped us on the cheek and ask, "Why did you do that?" Paul and Jesus were smitten this way, and silence was not required. However, it was another matter when Jesus was sentenced to death. When the die is cast and we are a prisoner, then we are to submissively accept the consequences, but prior to that, we should speak up. The Christian does not strike back physically but can at least ask, "Why did you do that?"

Jesus' being led as a lamb to the slaughter pertained to his crucifixion, not to his ministry. During the 3 1/2 years, he spoke the truth and was not a "dumb lamb." Today the brethren have to speak out against individuals such as Walter Martin—and *by name* as opportunity permits. In the *Reprints*, there are at least 20 instances where the Pastor *named* individuals who had a damaging influence on the truth. And for these 20 instances, there are a thousand where he made no comment whatever. We, too, must learn when to speak out. The Pastor also pointed out certain ministers by name for advocating higher criticism, being agnostics, etc.

Today the cliché is, "Speak evil of no man." Although this is the *general* rule, there are exceptions. A good tree gives forth "good" fruit and also "medicinal" fruit when something unpleasant but *corrective* has to be said. The comment is intended to be beneficial; it is not meant to poison and destroy but, if possible, to save. For example, we are to warn and admonish those who are unruly and those who do not work but are spongers.

Sinning against the Holy Spirit *must* receive retribution, but the *degree* of retribution is proportionate to the amount of knowledge one has. The Moody Bible Institute has taken isolated sentences of paragraphs from the *Volumes*—sometimes even photocopying a page and circling a paragraph—and thundered, "This is what Charles Russell said—*blasphemy!*" But those who go to the *Volume* and read what preceded and/or followed these excerpts will, if they are honest, see that the accusation is a false, deliberate distortion. The *originator* of such a poisonous and fallacious article, who had access to the entire *Volume* but intentionally distorted the truth, is *far more culpable* than the one who merely reads the poisonous article and believes it, not having a *Volume* to check it against. Again, depending on the degree of responsibility, some who have *deliberately* distorted the truth in order to discredit other Christians will probably merit the extreme penalty: Second Death.

Some time ago three brethren attended a meeting in Staten Island where Walter Martin was giving a speech. While he was still on the platform, a sister got up and said, "That was a *wrong* quotation. Read the paragraph before and the paragraph after." He refused. He had *deliberately* read a paragraph out of context from one of the *Volumes*. How many would have had the courage of that sister? It took courage for her to get up in front of 200 people, but she did it.

Matt. 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

The "tree" is the individual. The Scriptures liken the righteous to a "palm tree" and the wicked to a "green bay tree" (Psa. 37:35; 92:12). Verse 33 refers to the individual himself and his fruitage—the outcropping of his life.

Not only were the Pharisees inconsistent in reasoning that Jesus cast out demons by Satan's power, but falsifying facts about him indicated *evil* fruitage. Jesus was showing that a consistency exists between the tree and its fruitage. Consider the circumstances. Jesus had just healed a pathetic person, one who was blind and could not speak, and *immediately* the Pharisees had the *audacity* to utter such a criticism. Jesus reacted with logic: "How can you be a good tree if such *garbage* comes out of your mouth? You say that I cast out demons with Satan's power and overlook the *marvelous* miracle and benefit to this *individual* in order to find fault with the one who healed him. You are using very foolish reasoning in saying that I am doing this by the power of the prince of demons. If that is true, then by whose power are your children casting out demons? How can Satan cast out Satan? Your type of reasoning does not make sense." Especially in view of the fact that Jesus had *just* healed somebody, their words were inexcusable and needed correction. In this unusual circumstance and setting, others were observing what was going on, and Jesus' corrective remarks and instruction were necessary—not only for the critical Pharisees but also for the observers.

Matt. 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Matt. 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

If *sweet, fresh* water is in the well, then *sweet, fresh* water will be pumped out of the well. If the well contains *bitter* water, then *bitter* water will come forth. Jesus used an extreme way to state the lesson in order to get the point across, for even those with good hearts sometimes say “bitter” things and vice versa. In other words, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth *generally* speaks. The *habit* of speech betrays the heart condition, and the Pharisees were *continually* finding fault in this circumstance. Incidentally, if we *know* a person is lying, we can call him a liar.

It makes a difference whether a situation is one-on-one or whether there are witnesses. With witnesses, the problem is compounded. When Peter dissembled at the table in front of others, Paul publicly rebuked him for his conduct. The rebuke was embarrassing to Peter but necessary. Usually Paul would go *privately* to a brother lest he undo the good intended, but in this case with Peter, Paul had to issue the rebuke before all because others were witnessing Peter’s conduct. Thus a *public* situation can demand a different action than a personal incident between two individuals or brethren.

Matt. 12:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

The word “men” means *all*, for this principle applies to *everybody*. What a man sows, that shall he reap (Gal. 6:7). The *present* age is the “day of judgment” for the Church; for the world, it is the *next* age.

“Idle” means careless, and “careless” is a good rendering, for it embraces more categories. Jesus was referring to the overall effect of our character and ministry, for none of us can control every single word. The *accumulation* of “idle” words produces a habit, and a habit that is encouraged eventually produces a destiny. Some kind of account will be given for idle words.

There are different types and degrees of carelessness. A *habit* of flippant and corny words is one type of carelessness. According to the *degree* of carelessness, an account will have to be given. Even among the 144,000, a measure of carelessness along a certain line may affect the degree of elevation to an office and honor in the body of Christ. At any rate, carelessness will have *some* effect.

Q: In some way, will *unprofitable* words and actions committed by the new creature be called to his attention before he finishes his course so that he will have an opportunity to rectify them?

A: Yes. In life, some people completely forget that they made certain definite statements. For example, they may have said, “I will never do such and such,” yet a few years later they deliberately do the opposite as though they never made that strong statement. Apparently, the statement was erased from their memory. However, it would seem that the statement would be called to their attention sometime in either the present life or the next life.

Of course we can still have a sense of humor, but we would not joke at the Memorial, for example. And if there is an earnest discussion on a sensitive and serious subject, it would be improper to distract attention by introducing something extraneous or humorous. Humor can completely vitiate a principle if used at the wrong time, sarcasm can demean someone, and

exaggeration is out of order.

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be *sober*, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13). The second chapter of Titus urges brothers and sisters (long-time and short-time consecrated) to be “sober”; we should grow into this as we progress in the school of Christ. At the same time, we can be “joyful” as long as the joyfulness is *in the Lord*.

Matt. 12:37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Verses 32-37 emphasize what we say. *Words* (and not conduct) are stressed here as being indicative of character. What we think in our heart finds expression in our words, and our words can be judged either for good or for evil.

Matt. 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

Some of the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus to give them a sign.

Matt. 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

Verse 39 does not mean it is wrong to ask for a sign, for Gideon and others asked for and received signs. The determining factor would be the *motivation* or heart condition of the ones doing the questioning and making the request. Many of those who opposed Jesus asked for a sign in an effort to tempt and confuse him, and thus to get evidence so that they could accuse him. In other words, an “evil and adulterous generation” was asking for a sign from Jesus.

Many Jews are inclined to look for signs. In the Talmud, configurations are considered significant, being read almost like tea leaves. Other Jews go into the numerics of the Bible, trying to ascertain mystical interpretations.

The scribes and Pharisees *would get a sign*—but *after* Jesus’ death. The entire sign was Jesus’ death and resurrection, but of course the sign was not apparent until after they got a report of his resurrection. Did the scribes and Pharisees get a *firsthand* report? How did they obtain the information? They had gotten permission from Pilate to station their *own* guards at the tomb to make sure Jesus’ disciples would not steal his body and then claim he had risen according to his statements to that effect. These Temple guards reported back to the scribes and Pharisees about the angel, the earthquake, the stone being rolled away, Jesus’ body being gone, etc. And what did the scribes and Pharisees do with that information? They paid a great sum of money to the guards to keep quiet and not tell others what had happened.

Moreover, there were *other signs* when Jesus died. An earthquake rent the Temple veil to show God’s disapproval and displeasure, and it occurred at the very moment of Jesus’ death. It is significant that the rabbinical records do *not* state that the earthquake was false or that the veil of the Temple was not rent. This would have been the easiest way to discredit the account about Jesus and to prove he was a false Messiah. And there was another sign: the sky was darkened. Darkness was over the land when Jesus was on the Cross, and it got darker and darker until 3 p.m., when he died. Still another sign occurred: dead saints were resuscitated, and they entered Jerusalem after Jesus’ resurrection to testify of their awakening from the tomb. *None* of the early rabbinical writers contradicted the fact that these things occurred.

The scribes and Pharisees were an “evil and adulterous generation” in several ways. (1) They

profaned the Temple (Ezek. 8:7-17). (2) They were “whited sepulchres,” that is, rotten and corrupt. (3) They mixed religion with worldly customs and philosophies and adulterated the Word of God by their Talmudic teachings. “Adulterous” is also translated as “faithless” (see the *Diaglott*).

Matt. 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The “whale’s belly” represents the earth, the tomb. The Hebraism “three days and three nights” has the significance of “*parts of three days and three nights,*” as shown by Esther 4:16–5:1. Esther put on her royal apparel on the *third* day of fasting, not on the fourth, which means that only *parts of three days* were devoted to fasting.

Moreover, the Gospels say that Jesus arose on the *third* day, not the fourth, showing that three full 24-hour days had not elapsed between his death and resurrection. Jesus was in the tomb a *part* of the first day, Friday, for he died at 3 p.m. and the next day began at 6 p.m. Thus on the first day, Jesus was dead for only three hours. The whole next day (24 hours) he was in the tomb. On the third day, he arose *early* in the morning, having been in the tomb from 6 p.m. until midnight (six hours), plus midnight until 6 a.m., sunrise (six more hours), for a total of 12 hours that day. Thus the total number of hours that Jesus was in the tomb is roughly 3 hours (day 1), 24 hours (day 2), and 12 hours (day 3) for a total of 39 hours, not 72 hours (three full days). On the fortieth hour, Jesus arose, “40” being a symbol of a judgment period.

It is interesting that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus removed Jesus’ body from the Cross (and not any of the disciples or apostles). Joseph and Nicodemus were on the sidelines, and at least one of them was on the Sanhedrin. Earlier Nicodemus had questioned Jesus at night about his Kingdom, but now he exposed himself in the most crucial moment imaginable. To repeat: this one, who earlier, for secret fear of the Jews, had come to Jesus at night, now *openly* dealt with the crucified, cast-off Jesus in *daylight* before the nation. What a radical change!

At another time, the Pharisees even derogatorily asked Nicodemus, “Are you also a Galilean?” (John 7:45-52). Although Nicodemus had not yet espoused Jesus, he did defend him in a round-about way. He at least opened his mouth.

With time being limited because of the approaching sabbath, Joseph and Nicodemus had to move very quickly. They had to get permission from Pilate to remove Jesus’ body from the Cross, take out the spikes (which required *effort*), prepare his body temporarily with spices, and put him in the tomb. During this time, Peter may have been overwhelmed with grief for having denied the Master, and John may have taken the weeping Mary, Jesus’ mother, to his own house and sheltered her. However, it is surprising that at least one or two of the apostles did not assist Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, for the longer Jesus’ body was left on the Cross, the longer his shame was exposed to the nation.

Matt. 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Sometimes Jonah is misunderstood. Although Jesus *far exceeded* him in greatness, this verse indicates that Jonah *was approved* by God. At times, his rebellion is exaggerated out of proportion, for he was accepted by the Lord as a prophet. Job, Peter, and David are others who can be misunderstood if their positive qualities are not sufficiently considered. We should study as to *why* God recognized them. For example, David *openly* confessed his guilt *in writing* before the *entire* nation.

When Jonah went throughout Nineveh preaching destruction for their wickedness, *all*, from the king down to the stable boy, repented. *All* fasted and wore sackcloth by order of the king; even the animals fasted (Jonah 3:8). *No* food or water was consumed. The animals would have been very vocal, braying and carrying on for want of water. What a lesson of repentance in the Old Testament! We would think that with this example in the Hebrew Scriptures, the nation of Israel would repent now in sackcloth and ashes before God and proclaim a national fast day, but the nation today does not repent because only a certain element has sufficient faith.

Just as Jonah was cast out of the belly of the whale upon the shore and went to Nineveh where he was recognized as a *true* prophet, so it will be more tolerable for those of Nineveh, Sodom, Gomorrha, Tyre, and Sidon when they come forth from the tomb and realize that Jesus is the *true* Savior—that he died for them and was resurrected—than for the natural Israelites who did not accept him at his First Advent. As the people of Nineveh repented in the case of Jonah, who seemed to come out of nowhere (that is, without a “pedigreed” background), so the Israelites should have repented and accepted Jesus.

Also, there is a story behind the people of Nineveh. They had a religious belief that included the worship of a fish god and prophecies of a coming messiah. Thus when the story reached them that the Prophet Jonah had been cast out of the great fish’s belly, they thought that their fish god, Nin (of *Nineveh*), might be giving them a message and that Jonah might be the messiah they expected. Nin was their chief god, and they considered Jonah’s experience with the fish to be an omen. Nineveh did not just superficially repent—they meant business and repented with fervor. In contrast, when Jesus came with a *strong* message of *repentance*, among other things, the nation of Israel rejected him.

Generally speaking, the heart condition of the Ninevites in the resurrection will be better than that of the Israelites at Jesus’ First Advent. “Not because of you but for the fathers’ sakes” is the principle behind God’s favor continuing with the Jews (Rom. 11:28). The honor for Israel in the Kingdom is predicated upon the faith of the fathers—and their obedience.

Matt. 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

The Queen of Sheba, “the queen of the south,” traveled from Egypt all the way to Jerusalem. (Ethiopia, considered to be the end, or “uttermost parts,” of the world at that time, was related to Egypt.) The Queen of Sheba was Queen Hatshepsut, whose mortuary temple is at Thebes. Incidentally, by considering Ethiopia the uttermost parts of the earth, this verse shows that the civilized earth was relatively restricted just 3,000 years ago. History should be adjusted according to the Lord’s calendar. Man was not here on the earth millions of years ago.

This was *strong* language to the Pharisees, who revered the wisdom of Solomon, for Jesus, being considerably younger, claimed to be *greater*. He said that he was the Son of God, that he existed before Abraham, that no man had seen the Father but him, etc. Those who *sincerely analyzed* what Jesus said would have been convinced. Moreover, the whole nation was waiting for Messiah. Therefore, when one came claiming to be Messiah, the people should have listened and then judged the facts. They should have mused: “Does his message really comport with lifting people up to a very high standard? Wouldn’t his healing of *thousands* be an indication of Messiahship? Aren’t his claims justified by his deeds?” But what did the scribes and Pharisees conclude? They concluded that Jesus did these things with *Satan’s* power! Jesus’ claims should have been considered with an open mind. The prophecies regarding Messiah should have been studied. For example, Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Therefore, they should have questioned Jesus privately where he had been born. Instead they right away called him a Nazarene without inquiring further. Jealousy prevented a proper investigation of the

matter.

Matt. 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Matt. 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Matt. 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Jesus now drew a lesson from the blind and dumb possessed man he had just healed (verses 22-30). Jesus had said, in answer to his accusers, that Satan would not cast out Satan, for it was not logical to think he had used Satan's power. Jesus had asked, "If I use Satan's power to cast out demons, by whose power do your children do this?"

What Jesus did to this man, he will do in the future for the human race. In other words, this man represents mankind. However, Jesus also brought the nation of Israel into the lesson. "Even so shall it be also unto *this* wicked generation." Jesus drew a lesson, first, by what he did to that man, whom he likened to the nation of Israel. But in the larger picture, that man represents the world of mankind. Therefore, what Jesus did to him, he will do for humanity in general.

What about the term "this wicked generation"? In what way did Jesus at that time "cast out" the wicked generation of Israel? He was drawing an analogy between that man and that generation in Israel. Jesus healed the man so that he was no longer possessed, but what did he do for the nation? He did the *same* thing but on a *larger* scale. Jesus healed hundreds—perhaps thousands—of Israelites. Lepers, the sick, those who were possessed, etc., were brought to him for healing. If we had lived back there and had a sick child or husband and heard that a man called Jesus was healing others, wouldn't we have taken our sick relative to him, especially since he was a Jew who worshipped God? The net effect was that Jesus was draining the nation of Israel of sick people. They *flocked* to him, and he healed them by the hour with virtue going out of himself. Thus he was, in essence, casting the demon out of not one man but out of *many* in Israel. This work was a *part* of his ministry.

But then Jesus said that when a devil (an unclean spirit) is driven out of a man, a weakness remains, especially if the demon was invited in and the possession was not just due to a physical sickness. When one is very low physically and/or on strong medication, he may hallucinate or even become amenable to occult powers, but such possession would not be the individual's fault. However, when one has willfully delved into or acceded to occult powers and then been cleansed, he has to be specially on guard lest he fall into that trap again, and his weakness even seems to affect his progeny. Whether the particular man here that Jesus healed was again subsequently overcome by occult powers, the account does not say, but the possibility is left open. The point is that although a person is rid of the demon, the condition can reoccur depending on how the individual lives his life after being exorcised, or cleansed. Many forget as time goes on and then lapse back into their previous condition of possession.

In the final analysis, the nation of Israel was responsible for rejecting Jesus. The people went along with the scribes and Pharisees and hence shared the responsibility, even though there were paid witnesses, trumped-up charges, and "plants" among the crowds shouting, "Crucify him!" When we consider the scribes and Pharisees, the common people of Israel, the paid witnesses, the Roman soldiers, etc., it can be seen that there were *varying* degrees of responsibility and culpability in regard to Jesus' crucifixion.

As a result, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, there came a period of anarchy in Israel (AD 36-69). The lawlessness was caused by revolutionaries, who tore the nation apart. Each band of revolutionaries had its own ax to grind. Even in regard to defending the city, it was not until Jerusalem was almost completely doomed that the two prominent revolutionary ringleaders joined forces. Prior to that, they let their differences and strong animosities separate them. Jesus said in Luke 23:31, "If they do these things in a green tree [that is, while I am still here, present with you], what shall be done in the dry [what will happen when I am gone]?" When the virtue of his presence was withdrawn, what would become of the nation? The people said later, at the time of his crucifixion, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25)—and it was! We find, then, that the nation of Israel was cleansed for a while with Jesus' presence and his healing work, but his crucifixion made the nation even more culpable than initially.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places." In other words, when a demon is exorcised, he loses his medium of control. The fallen angels have different levels of influence over those they possess. For example, some give advice to presidents and heads of state. (It is normal to gather advice from different sources but *not* from occult powers.) The exorcised demon looks for another residence ("house"). The man who was blind and could not speak had been a "house" in which the evil spirit resided. When the demon was deprived of his house, he looked around for another with whom he could have *direct* communication and *strong* mental control, almost as if the victim were hypnotized.

Mankind as a whole "lieth in the wicked one" through the bait Satan uses, but a segment of the population is so susceptible to mental occult control that Satan does not need to use bait. Although these "agents" are not so numerous, they are considered a prize possession by the demons. Here, not finding another medium, the demon returned to the exorcised one who, if not on guard, would end up even more possessed and susceptible to control than originally. The nation of Israel was in the same situation: "the last state of that man [or nation or human race] is worse than the first." And with a Christian, this condition would be *doubly* so. For one who has been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son to revert back (without repentance) would mean Second Death.

Why would the demon take "seven" other fallen angels with him when he repossessed the individual? Just as down through the Gospel Age, there have been *seven* component parts, or dispensational outpourings, of God's Holy Spirit (through seven messages to the Church, as well as the seven messengers or doctrinal leaders), so Satan has had *seven* counterfeit messages to the false Church. During the Gospel Age, Christ has been enlightening the true Church, and Satan has been enlightening the false Church. The woman, the harlot (the false Church), is pictured as sitting on *seven* "mountains," or periods of time (Rev. 17:9). Jesus also has seven periods of time but for the true Church, which is represented by seven golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:12,13,20). Satan uses *unholy* power; God uses *holy* power.

The "house" has various applications: (1) the man himself, (2) the Jewish nation of the First Advent, (3) the nominal spiritual house of God, (4) the world of mankind, and (5) the consecrated who go into Second Death if they do not repent. Matthew 12:29 tells how the demon was cast out of the man; that is, Jesus had to *first* bind Satan ("the strong man") and then take his house. The binding does *not* occur simultaneously with the spoiling. The binding of Satan must *precede* the destruction of his "house."

What is Satan's "house"? It is his rulership, dominion, or leadership. (We similarly use the expression "the house of Savoy," for example.) God has a house, and Satan has a house. Moses "was faithful in all his *house*" (the natural house), and Jesus faithfully administers the spiritual house (Heb. 3:2). Satan's house of control (or leadership) has not yet been entered. The binding must occur *first*. Then Jesus will reign over the house and thoroughly cleanse it, with the

incorrigible going into Second Death.

Review of Matthew 12:22-29,43-45

Jesus healed one who was possessed with a devil, being blind and dumb. When the scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of using the power of Beelzebub to do the healing, he exposed the *unreasonableness* of their thinking. Then the narrative was interrupted where Jesus sermonized (verses 30-37) and the Pharisees asked to see a sign (verses 38-42). The only sign they got was Jonah's being in the whale's belly for parts of three days and nights. In verses 43-45, Jesus returned to the original theme about possession and exorcism. A paraphrase is as follows: "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, that spirit walks about, seeking a place of rest but finding none. Then he takes seven other demons worse than he and goes back to his original house, which is empty, swept, and garnished. The last state of that man is worse than the first."

Originally, the individual was exorcised of the evil spirit by Jesus, who reasoned, "How can one do this type of work unless he first binds the man, then enters his house, and finally spoils his goods." Thus there are *three* procedures: (1) binding, (2) entering the house, and (3) spoiling the goods, that is, taking possession of the booty. This account about the *individual* is not hard to understand, but then comes verse 45: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." In other words, Jesus likened the man out of whom he had cast the demon to the *nation* of Israel. And in a larger sense, that individual represented the *world of mankind*, who are "possessed," as it were, and "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10). Jesus will cleanse them in the Kingdom—and by the *same* procedure: binding, entering the house, and spoiling the goods.

In explaining the binding of Satan, the Pastor said it commenced in 1874, when our Lord returned. However, he admitted freely that Satan was not fully bound and said that his binding was *progressive* from that date. But the parable about the binding of the strong man (Matt. 12:29) *precludes* this interpretation for several reasons, two of which follow.

1. Satan, the "strong man," is bound *first, before* his house is entered. Some brethren try to rationalize this by saying that Jesus enters one room and casts out Satan, then enters another room and casts him out, etc.—that he *progressively* binds Satan. However, the parable says that Jesus must bind the strong man *first, before* he enters the house. Therefore, Jesus could not have entered Satan's house in 1874, because then Satan's binding would have taken place *earlier, prior to 1874*, before Jesus came to earth's atmosphere.

2. Conditions are getting *worse* today, not better as the case would be if Satan's binding were progressive. What was a relatively puritanical society back in the Pastor's day is now a very promiscuous society. Both the world and the nominal Church are getting more and more promiscuous.

In regard to Jesus' first binding Satan and then entering his house, the "entering" will be into the very midst of Satan's organization in earth's atmosphere and breaking up Satan's control. Jesus will first bind Satan, then enter his household, and finally take possession of his goods. All three of these events are *future*. The binding must take place first, before Jesus even enters the house. Jesus, therefore, did not enter Satan's house in 1874, the beginning of the *parousia*.

There is a problem in the minds of many Bible Students as to whether or not Satan is being bound. Most end up concluding that everything is progressive—the binding, the smiting, and the reign—but such is not the case. When Jesus binds Satan, he will be bound—period! When Jesus reigns, he will reign—period! The Master will actually take control at that time. With this understanding of the matter, Matthew 12:29 causes no problem. The trouble in the world—wars, rumors of wars, etc.—is not an evidence that Satan's house is being spoiled. The world of mankind is like this possessed individual: blind and dumb (to the truth), that is, *helpless*. Before

Jesus can cure the world, he will have to deal with Satan *first*. The “strong man” must be locked up *first*. Then Jesus will enter the world from the standpoint of taking possession of the human race and schooling them in the Kingdom and bringing them back to God. At that time, he will take possession of the “house” the Adversary had previously usurped.

Right in the lesson is the thought that the individual represents the nation of Israel. The analogy to the world of mankind is an inference that can be drawn.

The word “garnished” (verse 44) refers to an *exterior* covering, or surfacing, in a favorable sense. The usual explanation is wrong—that furniture is put in the swept and clean house. To prove the thought of “exterior” (as opposed to “interior”) is the fact that this word is used in regard to whited sepulchers. Jesus likened the scribes and Pharisees to “garnished” whited sepulchers, the white covering of paint being an *exterior* covering. Moreover, in vision, John saw the foundations of the wall of the Holy City garnished with all manner of precious stones, which was an *exterior* surfacing (Rev. 21:19).

Matthew 12:44,45 fits well the picture of consecration. We give our life and make a profession, but unless we *progress*, we do not really develop into the new creature. In that sense, one who does not make progress is worse off than an individual who never made a consecration. The house was cleaned up externally, but the interior was not properly filled. The seven evil spirits, plus the original one, returned to the empty house and occupied it.

The “seven other spirits” have an application to the nominal spiritual house of Israel down through the Gospel Age. Thus there are multiple applications: the individual himself, the nation of Israel, the nominal spiritual house, and the world. Just as God’s *Holy Spirit* was dispensed in each of the seven epochs of the Church, so Satan counteracted them with seven *unholy* outpourings or infusions. Satan adapted his seven messages to meet the need of the seven *Holy Spirit* outpourings. The seven *unclean, unholy* spirits represent the nominal professed house, which will end up *worse* off than when it started in the beginning.

In summary, the incident of Jesus’ healing this individual is a key to understanding how he will handle the Adversary and the power of death.

Matt. 12:46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

Matt. 12:47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

Matt. 12:48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

Matt. 12:49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

Matt. 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Evidently, Jesus’ mother and brethren could not gain ready access to him because of the crowd that had assembled. Therefore, a message was passed to him through the multitude to the effect that some of his family wanted to speak with him. Jesus’ “brethren” were of his natural family and in this instance were probably not the apostles James and Judas (not Iscariot). The two with Mary would have been Joses (or Joseph) and Simon.

At any rate, here was an appeal from Jesus' natural family, who were trying to interrupt him. What did Jesus do? He turned to his disciples and said, "These are my mother and my brethren"; that is, the hearing and obeying disciples were his true "family." Out of the large assembled multitude, the disciples were like an *inner core*, being more in his immediate presence. Thus when Jesus turned, he addressed primarily the apostles.

Verse 46 proves that Jesus had brothers and sisters and that Mary was not always a virgin. In addition, it dispels the veneration of Mary. There are just enough comments in Scripture to counteract the worship of Mary and show that she should not be especially venerated. Mariolatry, or undue reverence and inordinate respect to Mary, is thus refuted by the Scriptures. Another place is where Jesus, at age 12, said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Also, he called Mary "woman" in connection with changing the water into wine at the wedding in Cana: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4). Still another instance is when Jesus was on the Cross and said to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son [John]!" (John 19:26). Jesus did not even address Mary by her name.

In spite of these multiple safeguards in Scripture, the numerous and powerful Roman Catholic institution regards Mary as the Mediatrix and, therefore, even more important than Jesus. Although Mary's virtue is discussed in the Magnificat, where the angel complimented her and her background and spirit, these other Scriptures are governors against undue reverence. Nevertheless, Mary is worshipped because the people do not use the Bible as a guide. Incidentally, Catholics believe that Ann was the mother of Mary, although there is no Scripture to prove this. In accordance with the Catholic belief, there is a St. Ann's Church in Jerusalem.

Q: In view of the fact that Mary was a follower of Jesus and also had other children who were apostles (James and Judas), why did Jesus put Mary into John's care?

A: There were several reasons. (1) John was probably a man of means who could better provide for her. (2) John had a very tender-hearted disposition. He loved Jesus so much (he leaned on Jesus' breast) that he would have considered it a privilege to take care of her. (3) Later the other apostles went to distant countries (India, Africa, Persia, etc.). (4) Since John loved Jesus so very much, it would be comforting for Mary to be in his presence. They could share their love for him. Thus John would be of more benefit to her as a new creature than her natural sons.

Jesus probably went out to see his mother and brothers but not right away. He would have finished what he was saying first. However, it was very beneficial for him to say, before going out to them, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" Not only did his words counteract the tendency toward Mariolatry, but also they help us to get the right perspective so that we do not honor mother, father, sister, brother, etc., *above* the Lord and His Word. Jesus particularly honored Peter, James, and John, and *none* of these three were of his natural family. Two were sons of Zebedee, and Peter was the son of Jona (hence he was called "Bar-jona"). Jesus honored these three because of their *spirituality*.

Notice that Jesus "stretched forth his hand toward his disciples." He did not merely look but demonstrated his point so that the multitude would not mistakenly conclude they were Christians. There was a *distinction* in fellowship between his true followers and those who followed him merely for the loaves and fishes and the healings. Moreover, Pharisees were also in the crowd, and Jesus did not want any misunderstanding regarding whom he was addressing: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

In John 15:14, Jesus used the word "friends" when he said, "Ye are my *friends*, if ye do whatsoever I command you." A man should "lay down his life for his *friends*" (John 15:13).

Thus the distinction between a Christian's "family" and "friends" is dependent on the degree to which they do the Father's will. Similarly, John's first epistle explains that our "love" for the brethren stands or falls on whether or not we are obeying the Lord's commands and doing His will according to His Word (1 John 5:2).

For us to increase in our development along any line or subject that the Bible sets forth for the Christian would mean that we have to grow *as the Word teaches us to do*. And so, when it comes to "love," we must develop *Godlike* love and not just proceed according to clichés, phrases, and impressions. Flowery words may sound great but will not necessarily stand up to scrutiny against the Word.

We do believe Mary was faithful and thus is probably part of the Little Flock. For this reason, the wording in verse 50 is even more remarkable: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

1. Overall Observations of Chapter 13

Matt. 13:1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

Matt. 13:2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Matt. 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

This was a busy day for Jesus. He went to the seaside and out into a ship, from which he spoke "many things unto them [the multitudes] in parables." All of the parables of Chapter 13 occurred right after he had healed the blind and dumb possessed individual and refuted the illogical reasoning of the Pharisees (Chapter 12). Jesus *sat* in the boat while the multitudes *stood* for a considerable length of time. Only a synopsis of his long sermons is recorded here.

At this time, Jesus and the multitudes were probably near Capernaum, but the people were not on a grassy slope or plain such as Gennesaret; otherwise, they would have reclined instead of standing up. Jesus probably had a megaphonic voice because he spoke to *thousands* at a time in the *open* air. Also, as he spoke, the Holy Spirit and the angels would have assisted in the transmission of his voice. In order for the multitudes to stand for so long, they would have been a rapt audience—at least for the moment. Like the lesson in the parable, many received the Word gladly, but then the fowls came along and picked up the seed.

The seven parables of this chapter will be treated in detail subsequently, but first, we will consider them from a backed-off standpoint. The seven are the parables of (1) the sower and the seed, (2) the wheat and the tares, (3) the mustard seed, (4) the woman who mixed leaven in dough, (5) the treasure hid in a field, (6) the pearl of great price, and (7) the dragnet.

In a *collective* sense, these parables have an application down through the Gospel Age. For example, the sower began to sow seed in the *beginning* of the Gospel Age. The different types of ground the seed fell on represent different heart conditions. In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the instruction was not to uproot the tares until the *end* of the age. Thus a progression was shown. The Parable of the Mustard Seed indicates that the primitive Church started with relatively few people but grew into a large nominal system (Papacy).

In other words, we are considering these parables from a different standpoint now—a *dispensational* standpoint. The woman who hid leaven in the three measures of meal pictures the adulteration of truth by Papacy in three primary areas: love, faith, and hope. Treasure

being hid in a field pictures the Dark Ages, when it was very difficult to find the Word of God. Diligence and effort were required.

As for the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, the revealment of truth has been gradual ever since the French Revolution. From that time on, the Bible was no longer chained but was translated into many languages and dispersed throughout the world. After the long period of drought in the Dark Ages came the revealment of precious truths, so that, except for the apostles, the Bible was known as never before. The Parable of the Dragnet treats the Harvest period. The net was cast out in the beginning of the Gospel Age, and “fishing” has gone on all down through the age. However, the main point of the parable is its being drawn to shore in the Harvest period and the sorting of the fish, which is a “harvest” work with continuing siftings.

From the *dispensational* standpoint, the mustard seed would have to be a bad seed, for it grew into the nominal system. However, in an earlier consideration of this parable, which was not presented from the dispensational standpoint, it was stated that not enough detail was given to determine if the seed was good or bad. The mustard seed is mentioned favorably elsewhere, and in the Kingdom, a good tree will grow. A tree was cut down in Daniel 4, leaving only a stump that was watered with the dew of heaven. In the Kingdom, this tree will grow again, just as the stone that smites the image will grow. When these seven parables are considered *one by one*, the mustard seed can be considered *either* good or bad, but when treated *as a whole*, dispensationally, the parables suggest that the mustard seed is evil.

The Smyrna period of the Church extended from the Apostle John’s day until AD 313, covering approximately three centuries of time. During this time, the enemy sowed tare seed. After a while, the tares began to outnumber the wheat, and the wheat field became a tare field.

These parables are valuable whether studied under close scrutiny verse by verse or viewed afar off, as a whole. By combining the lessons from both standpoints, we get a complete, rounded-out picture.

Matt. 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

“Whosoever hath [*faithfully* used]” was the thought of the Pastor, but in order to faithfully use something, we must have it originally. Those who make use of certain things will be proportionately rewarded, especially in the Kingdom. A wealthy, powerful, and/or intellectual man who is faithful to the truth will, according to the parables, get a greater reward, for his is a more difficult path to walk.

Matt. 13:51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

Matt. 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Jesus was talking to his disciples: “If you are really a true scribe [disciple], you will receive the new things I am telling you.” When they asked Jesus to explain the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the disciples wanted to know why he had not explained them clearly to the multitudes. Then Jesus said, “Do you *really* understand?” They replied, “Yea, Lord”—but they could not have fully understood, for the parables were *extremely deep* (Matt. 13:51). However, the disciples felt they had gotten a blessing from his explanation and understood. Incidentally, a true scribe is familiar with Scripture and is

recognized of the Lord. A scribe can give a witness both verbally and in writing.

In Matthew 13:11, Jesus said, “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” Thus the disciples learned new things as they listened to the Master. And some of them had a history of learning the Old Testament. For example, Peter said, “I have never eaten anything unclean in my whole life” (Acts 10:14). Zacchaeus, who climbed up in a tree to see Jesus, said, “If I have defrauded anyone, let him speak now, and I will pay him back fourfold,” showing he knew the requirements of the Law, whereas the average Jew would not have studied the Law so carefully (Luke 19:8). Even most Bible Students do not study the Law. For example, how many of us know the Old Testament penalty for a thief—and the distinctions? When is a thing replaced by kind; when is it doubled; when is it quadrupled? Thus the fact that Zacchaeus knew the penalty showed he was familiar with the teachings of the Old Testament. Jesus’ apostles and early disciples were not taken “out of the gutter,” but had a background of faith. *Natural* faith is a prerequisite of the called; *spiritual* faith is added later.

Matt. 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

Matt. 13:54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

Jesus went “into his own country,” which was not Capernaum here but the Nazareth region, where he had been a carpenter. A large field separates the Galilee area from the Nazareth region, but Nazareth is not far from Galilee.

Matt. 13:55 Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

Matt. 13:56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

Matt. 13:57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Jesus was known in the Nazareth region as “the carpenter’s son.” Those who were familiar with his background and family were puzzled. They knew that he had worked as a carpenter and that he had not gone to rabbinical school, yet he could debate with the scribes and Pharisees and had the wisdom and could outwit them. Added to this type of thinking was a wrong heart condition that did not want to recognize Jesus’ claim. Also, the people thought he was too aggressive and lacking in humility before the scribes and Pharisees.

“And they were offended in him.” Those living in the Nazareth region had heard reports of his miracles on the other side of the mountain on the shores of Galilee, and they asked each other, “How can this be? We know his mother and brothers and sisters. He is just an ordinary son of a carpenter.” Being skeptical, they refused to believe the reports. Thus those with the wrong heart condition failed to recognize Jesus’ greatness and judged it wrongly.

Notice the way Jesus responded: “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.” This reply was expressed strangely, instead of just saying, “A prophet is without honor in his own country and house.” That was true, but it was only *part* of the truth. Jesus was combining *two* thoughts: one favorable and one unfavorable. (1) “A prophet is with honor in other places,” but (2) “he does not have favor in his own country and house.” In other words, a true prophet of God *will be successful* in his ministry, even if the success is small. God

sends him, and he is successful. For example, consider Jeremiah. He was sent by God but was not received, even though he was a true prophet. Very few accepted his message, but the fact that some did—even though a vast minority—showed he was successful. A prophet's role is to enlighten the ones who will respond and to expose those who are false—a *twofold* ministry. Hence a prophet has honor in certain places. He does his work, but his family, neighbors, and countrymen may not recognize him. In other words, "Familiarity breeds contempt."

It is interesting that Jesus included his own "house" as not giving him honor, and yet his mother and two "brothers" were followers of him. However, the other two (Joses and Simon) may have opposed him and were a problem later with regard to his going to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, and they even ridiculed him (John 7:2-5). They felt that if he was the Messiah, he should back up his claims and go to Jerusalem openly. Their reasoning was far different from that of Peter, who tried to protect Jesus and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22). In contrast, the mocking element said in effect, "Why hide here in this tiny and insignificant town when you would have a much more effectual ministry by going to a more influential place?"

The very fact that Jesus said he would have problems in his own house suggests that there were negative influences there—perhaps two of his brothers or his sisters or other relatives. And he had some difficulty earlier with his parents, who did not fully see his calling: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Of course their reaction was normal under the circumstances, but they were *nowhere near* his level. Jesus sort of remonstrated with them, for he would not be fettered by their reaction. The account does say that on this occasion, Jesus submitted to his parents, but he had already been absent three days and had accomplished his purpose. Until age 30, he more or less took on natural responsibilities.

Incidentally, Joseph was older than Mary. His first wife had died, leaving two sons. Hence of the four listed in verse 55, two were actually brothers of Jesus (James and Judas), and two were stepbrothers (Joses and Simon).

Matt. 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

After finishing the parables, Jesus went into the synagogue in the Nazareth region and taught the people. They were *astonished* not only because of his ability to read and the way he enunciated, but also because his explanations contained great wisdom and made a lot of sense. Nevertheless, they resented his teaching.

Sometimes we may recognize merit or worth in an individual that others may not see. Later those who were unaware of the person's greatness at first, but are apprised of it eventually, resent the earlier recognition by others. This attitude is wrong. All things should be viewed from the Lord's standpoint. Would he approve? We should give others the liberty to appreciate what they want and not look down on them. We must search our motives. Are we jealous? Are we fearful of the loss of honor or power or funds for the collection box? In the final analysis, it will be revealed who was the Lord's and who was not. Or perhaps both were the Lord's, for there are different types of service, talents, and recognition.

The point is that the reaction of those in the Nazareth region should have been repressed. They should not have been "offended" in Jesus (verse 57). Seeing that he was unusual, they should not have allowed jealousy and pride to enter in. It was wrong to resent the fact that others over the hill, in the Galilee area, had recognized Jesus first. They were embarrassed by the situation, yet here he was, right in front of them, giving wonderful instruction.

Jesus "did not [do] many mighty works there because of their unbelief"; that is, Jesus did *some*

mighty works there but not many. He *minimized* his work in the Nazareth region. In fact, he even took one *outside* the city to heal him.

It is hard to serve where we are not wanted—unless, of course, the work is denunciatory and critical. Then the service would be done in the heat of passion for what we feel the Lord's work is. In that case, we would intrude self where we normally would not. Otherwise, we would feel uncomfortable, for a suspicious atmosphere kills the spirit.

2. Consideration of the Seven Parables of Chapter 13

Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:3-20; Luke 8:5-15)

Matt. 13:1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

Matt. 13:2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Matt. 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

Matt. 13:4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Matt. 13:5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

Matt. 13:6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Matt. 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

Matt. 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Matt. 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The Parable of the Sower was delivered with no explanation at first. Jesus began to teach on the shore itself, but as the crowds started to gather in numbers, he found it necessary to push off from shore in a boat. Sitting down in the boat (probably the stern), he spoke to the multitude from there. The nature of the shore prevented the people from reclining, so they all stood.

The parable did not seem unusual at first. Since Israel was an agricultural nation, many of the people were quite familiar with the sowing procedure and how some seeds fell variously by the way side, on stony ground, among thorns, and on good soil. However, Jesus hinted of something deeper toward the end of the parable (verses 8 and 9) with regard to some seeds bringing forth from the good soil a “hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

A *large* crowd was assembled, so Jesus would have spoken distinctly and in a loud voice. Even so, he spoke even *louder* at the end (see Luke 8:8): “*Who[ever] hath ears to hear, let him hear!*” This loud, dramatic ending should have aroused those who had some interest as to the meaning of the parable *to inquire further* for the *deeper* significance.

Matt. 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

Matt. 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Subsequently a number of disciples (more than just the 12 apostles) went to Jesus privately and asked him why he spoke in parables to the multitudes. Actually, the disciples themselves did not know the meaning of the parable, but they camouflaged their own interest by inquiring about the multitudes.

The primary reason Jesus gave for speaking in parables was, “It is given unto *you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” In other words, Jesus spoke especially to those who inquired *further* and had a sufficiency of interest to *bestir* themselves. These were the ones who had a “hearing ear.” The multitudes were given the framework of an important sermon but not the details and deeper understanding.

Matt. 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Matt. 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Matt. 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

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

Why did Jesus quote Isaiah 6:9,10 to explain about this “way side” class? If we read all three Gospel accounts and consider the circumstances under which the Parable of the Sower was uttered, we will see that there are three reasons why some do not understand.

1. The people are *willingly* ignorant. They sense immediately that responsibility comes with understanding, and they want no part of it. In other words, the *individuals blind themselves*.
2. Satan *blinds* the eyes of men (2 Cor. 4:4).
3. Jesus desired that this class would not understand “lest ... their sins should be forgiven them,” that is, lest he should heal them (Mark 4:12). The point is that those who consecrate and have Jesus’ blood applied to them in this age will have no further opportunity in the future. If they have a completely *nonreceptive* heart, yet hear and accept and consecrate, they will fail and go into oblivion (Second Death). The principle is, “Let him who has an ear to hear, hear.” Jesus does *not* want superficial hearing.

Matt. 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Matt. 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

“Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For ... many prophets and righteous men have *desired* to see ... and to hear [understand] those things [but it was not given them to know].” The disciples were given the understanding, but before Jesus explained the

parable, he told them that they were in a unique position. The lesson is that before the Lord gives us *advanced* understanding and truth, we must *act*. We must have the *desire* and must *hunger* and *thirst* for further righteousness if we are to be filled. Holy men of old had this desire and were in the proper heart condition, but it was not yet *due time* for this understanding.

Before explaining the parable, Jesus asked, “Know ye not this parable?” (Mark 4:13). Jesus asked this question because he knew their question about *others* was a subterfuge (Matt. 13:10). In reality, the disciples themselves were asking for an explanation of the parable; that is, Jesus was asking, “Aren’t you the ones who are interested in the parable?” He continued, “How then will ye know all parables?” This was another type of question—it was *constructive* criticism to stir up the disciples to attentively apply themselves to understand the Parable of the Sower. In a negative way, Jesus was commending them: “If you are to gain an understanding, you must inquire.” Then he said in effect, “I will tell you what the parable means, but you must *diligently apply yourselves* in order to get the understanding.”

Matt. 13:18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

The explanation of the parable follows.

Matt. 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

First, some of the seed fell on the “way side” (the hardened soil on the route or pathway of travel), and of course the seed did not prosper. This ground was very hard because of the constant traffic going over it (“it was trodden down”—Luke 8:5). “Immediately” after the sowing, the “fowls of the air” came and ate up the seed (Mark 4:4,15). The “fowls” (plural) were Satan and his agents, who devoured the seed lest it prosper. Hence such seed was wasted; it did not bring forth fruit.

Not only was the soil trodden down and the seed thus prevented from growing, but this first class did not understand. Note: *All four classes heard*, but this first class did *not* understand. And nothing is said about the understanding of the next two categories, but the last class, the “good ground,” did understand (verse 23). Therefore, when we witness and the effort does not prosper, it is because *Satan* is watching and does not *allow* the “seed” to prosper. Satan renders the effort fruitless.

Matt. 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Matt. 13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

In regard to the second class, the seed fell on *rocky ground*, or “stony places” (plural). There was *soil* here, but the proportion of rock was too great for the seed to really prosper. The implication is that a rock stratum, or shelf, was under the soil, so the soil was too shallow for the seed to sufficiently prosper.

Those of this class hear the word and *receive* it “anon” (immediately) with “joy” and gladness. They are *receptive* to the truth. They acknowledge the message and what it has done for them. The thought is that when they receive Jesus’ message, they endure “for a while,” but as soon as tribulation and persecution arise, they are immediately “offended.” Being unable to stand the persecution, they wither and do not prosper (Mark 4:17). Thus there is a *time element* for a while—until the sun arises and scorches them. The “sun” in this context represents trial,

persecution, and hardship because of the Word. Seeing the responsibility of consecration, they do not endure. This class are not successful because they do not have any root and they lack moisture. (In trying to penetrate the rock, the seed pushes itself up out of the earth. Being exposed, the seed is scorched by the sun.)

Note: The soil represents the heart condition of the individual. Such a one does not have “root in himself.” The soil is the soil of the heart. When the seed of truth, the gospel message, falls on the heart, it can be graded into one of these four categories.

The “stony ground” class would be those who profess Christianity immediately upon hearing of it. They desire to share what they have heard but have not inspected the requirements and responsibilities of truth. They are “all mouth.” In short, it is *profession without inspection*. Consequently, later on, when they begin to realize the responsibilities and cost, the truth becomes too strong for them.

Matt. 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

With the third class, the seed fell among *thorns*. This seed fell on soil that did have some depth, but thorn seeds were there too. As the seeds of truth were growing, so were the seeds of thorns (compare all three accounts). Both kinds of seed grew side by side (somewhat like the wheat and the tares except that the Parable of the Sower presents the *individual* standpoint, and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is *dispensational*). The truth seeds and the thorn seeds both grew, but the thorns grew more plentifully and faster, so that they overshadowed and choked out the good seed. Therefore, the good seed brought forth no fruit “to perfection” (Luke 8:14).

The “thorns” choke or strangle the Word of truth. Like the second class, this class hear the Word, and in addition, they “go forth” something like the second class except that these have more soil, so they *endure*. However, they do not prosper; that is, they do not bring forth fruit to *perfection*.

“Thorns” are the “cares of this world,” the “deceitfulness of riches,” the “lusts of other [miscellaneous] things,” and the “pleasures of this life” (Mark 4:19). The Apostle Paul said, “This *one thing* I do,” not miscellaneous things (Phil. 3:13). When the lust of other things enters in, the Word is choked. This class are described as “unfruitful,” meaning that they do have *some* fruit, but the fruit does not properly mature.

This third class would be the Great Company. Their problem is mixing the world with the Spirit. They live *two* lives.

Matt. 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

With the fourth class, the seed fell into “good ground.” Thus there are four classes (1) way side, (2) rocky ground, (3) thorny soil, and (4) good ground. The term “good ground” indicates an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15). This class hear the Word and *understand* it—this commendation applies only to the fourth class, and not even to the Great Company. Therefore, this “understanding” does not refer to superficial knowledge of the plan, etc., but means that the “good ground” class understand the responsibilities of the truth and what its significance should be in our lives. They “keep” the Word of truth; they press on without getting entangled with “thorns” and bring forth fruit “*with patience*” (Luke 8:15).

What does bringing forth fruit with patience signify? In the growth of seed, there are *three* phases of development: (1) “first the *blade*,” (2) “then the *ear*,” and (3) “after that the *full corn* [the fruit or kernel] in the ear”—the objective (Mark 4:28). We will consider these three phases in more detail.

1. The word “patience” means that *time* is needed to bring forth fruit, just as with the development of a child. Babies are adorable, generally speaking. God has blessed them in their simplicity, giving them an attractiveness before the formation of character is made manifest. And so the “*blade*” of promise is attractive in the development of fruitage—the promise of *life* and *hope* and *encouragement*.

2. The “ear” is the awkward stage of development. The fruitage is starting to develop but is somewhat ugly because it is undeveloped. The potential is there but is difficult to see. The “ear” corresponds to the teenage years with immaturity, lack of concentration, etc. We want to rush the ear (teenager) into maturity but cannot. Thus the awkward in-between “ear” stage is necessary but is somewhat undesirable. Even the word “ear” itself suggests “all ear” and not the perfection of the development of fruit to maturity.

3. With an “honest and good heart,” a change will come eventually, and mature “*fruit*” will be produced. The quantity may vary (30-, 60-, 100-fold), but the fruit does develop to perfection.

Mark 4:29 makes an important point that is generally contradictory to all the sermons we hear. “When the fruit is brought forth [to maturity—when it is ripe], *immediately* he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Immediately, the mature fruit is taken home, into the heavenly “garner.”

We sometimes hear the question asked by an elderly brother or sister: “Why am I here so long?” That question is idle chatter and completely out of order. The first point is that if we are of the Great Company class, we will never mature to perfection no matter how long we are here, all things being equal. Therefore, we should not be so confident as to ask that question. According to the Parable of the Sower, if we have honest and good ground, then we will be harvested when the Christlike maturity is developed.

However, it takes *time* to develop fruit. Stephen was the exception. His development was rapid because he applied himself with *great* zeal. What about the apostles Paul and John and others who lived long lives? We usually reason: “If we are left here, there is a purpose whether or not we understand it,” but more is involved. The point, in harmony with this parable, is that if a person has great depth of capability or talent, it will take many more years to draw out what is in him. Unfortunately, some who linger assume they have developed the mark of perfect love and wonder why they remain in the flesh. Others are quite content to stay here awhile because they do not feel confident they have made the grade yet, and they want extra time to develop the fruitage. Whatever the reason one is left, we can be assured *there is a reason* because our time is appointed. When we are to go, we will go, whether we like it or not (Job 7:1; 14:5).

The Parable of the Sower suggests that when the fruitage is fully mature and developed, it is reaped—*immediately* (and not just prolonged for many more years). For Moses, Paul, and others who were very unusual in their character and knowledge, *time* was required to bring out their fullness of development because of the *depth* of the soil. When the seed falls on good ground, it brings forth 30-, 60-, and 100-fold; that is, it is *increased*. The one seed brings forth a *multitude* of seed.

Observations

1. The *same* seed fell on all four kinds of soil, and that seed was the Word of God as it pertains

to the Kingdom, that is, to the high calling and being with Jesus (and not just restitution).

2. The *kind* of soil (heart condition) determines the type of reception the seed gets. If the seed goes into an honest and good heart, it will bring forth the required fruitage to the *extent* of its capability.

3. At first, the parable might seem to be discouraging because in only *one* category, the good soil, is the seed fruitful as far as reaching the objective. However, to the contrary, the parable is meant to be encouraging, for *some* of the seed does prosper. And so the Christian is told to sow his seed in the morning and not to withhold his hand at night, for he does not know which of it will prosper (Eccl. 11:6). Even if we personally do not bring someone into the truth, our life and doctrine may be fruitful, nevertheless. Thus we are to *endure* and to profess our calling and then leave the results with the Lord. Especially since we are living at the end of the age, the numbers coming in and consecrating are dwindling more and more as far as really deep, sincere followers of the Lord are concerned.

4. Initially, there is no emphasis in the parable on either the sower or the seed. Instead all of the emphasis is on the *soil*. In explaining this parable in Mark 4:21,22, Jesus made certain points in conclusion. To understand how the seed is received and brings forth fruit is one thing, but then Jesus discussed the sowing and explained it by using other terminology. For example, he used a candle, saying in effect, “Do men put a lighted candle under a bushel or under a bed?” No! The purpose of a candle is to place it on a lamp stand so that others can see it.

What exactly was being put under a bushel or under a bed? Jesus explained, “There is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.” Jesus was using the illustration of the sower in a subtle way by relating a candle to the sower. Here is a class who hide the light through *fear*. Secretly, this class are believers. They like the gospel and abide by it for the rest of their life, but they fear to manifest it to others. Lacking confidence in telling forth the truth, they do things in “secret”—have secret meetings that relatives, neighbors, business associates, etc., are unaware of. The light is kept confined to the home. When this class venture forth, they put the light under a “bushel” (*themselves*). Each Christian is a container, an earthen vessel, a bushel. The point is not to keep the light within oneself and retain it as a secret. This class keep the truth a secret between the Lord and themselves. Oh yes, they enjoy the light—it is lighting them—but they are not lighting (witnessing it to) others. With the mind, a man believes unto righteousness, but *confession and profession* are necessary to the salvation of the soul (Rom. 10:10). The light is set on a “candlestick.” We are the “candlestick” as well as the bushel. If we keep the light *within* ourselves, we are the bushel, but if we show the light to others—manifest it *exteriorly*—then we are the candlestick.

In regard to witnessing, many feel that we should just go out and prattle truth all over and that we do not have to do much study. “Just go out and tell what you know, and the Lord will bless you somehow” is the attitude. Some do not have much light to show to others because they are so busy witnessing that they do not have enough time to study. That can be a deception, for we should always be trying to understand the Scriptures better. Jesus cautioned us to be careful how and what we hear. In other words, when a Christian gets the seed of the gospel in his heart, he should begin to *discriminate, analyze, and discern* that which he hears and receives. And he should be careful how the truth is meted (given) out to others. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:2; Mark 4:24). The point is that if we give a *superficial* gloss of information to others, that is all we will get because we lack the hunger and the desire for deeper truth. And so we learn what it means to put our light on a candlestick: “For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken [away] even that which he hath” (Mark 4:25).

The seed that fell on the wayside was taken away. The seed that fell on rocky ground withered and died. The seed that fell among thorns was choked and did not bring forth fruit to maturity. Only the last class—the good ground—had abiding fruit. Jesus was saying that those who *apply* themselves will get *more*. Usually we think only of the witness aspect when we quote Matthew 25:29, “For unto every one that hath [faithfully used] shall be given, and he shall have abundance,” whereas the Parable of the Sower treats *two* aspects of the disposition to *inquire further*: (1) We should be careful what we hear; we should be *discerning*. (2) We are to *hunger for deeper, more accurate truth* on how to do the Lord’s will better. We should read the Bible more carefully in order to understand it more perfectly and thus be able to obey it more faithfully.

The Master gave an illustration of “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:9). In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus preached the Word. His responsibility was not to give the depth of the Word to everyone but to see who had a “hearing ear.” He threw out the “bait” with the Parable of the Sower. Only those who showed interest got more attention. And so today we are to find the wheat class, which is to be *further fed and developed*. Our effort should *not* be just to feed “babes”; rather, we should be concerned with and nurture *all strata* of development.

5. Next Jesus mentioned the “mystery” of the soil (Mark 4:26-29). Seed is put in the soil, and nothing happens for a while. In time, a tiny blade peeks forth from the ground and begins to grow visibly. Still later, as time goes on and on, the plant puts forth its stem, stalk, and leaves. Finally comes a development of fruit: the ear. And as more time passes, the corn (fruit) reaches *full maturity*. This all takes *time*. The seed grows up—“he *knoweth not how*.”

The farmer knows that if he puts the seed in the soil and keeps the weeds and the thorns away, then it is up to the elements whether or not that seed prospers. It is “*God that giveth the increase*” (1 Cor. 3:7). The farmer has certain responsibilities in regard to the seed, but it grows mysteriously. And so it is with the Kingdom of God. Miracles can be worked in the characters and hearts of the humblest of God’s people. The power of the Holy Spirit acts on that soil. The seed itself has dormant life in it that can prosper based on the receptiveness of the individual. The Holy Spirit makes the seed and the ground bring forth a *new creation*. A bare seed is put in the ground, but what grows up is entirely different in appearance, size, and value.

Jesus continued (Mark 4:30-32) but was sort of at a loss for words. “Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?” Jesus was trying to get the lesson across but realized that those he was addressing were not educated people who knew about chromosomes and genetic material. They did not know that there are “*commands*” even in seed with regard to a *time* element—that a “computer tape” (DNA and RNA) programs the seed to put forth leaves, for example, at a certain stage of development. When that computer tape has fully run out, the result is *mature fruit*. Fruit, vegetables, animals, and man are all programmed. Today we understand a lot more because of advanced technology, but we still cannot *manufacture* a seed. We merely have a little deeper understanding of the genetic aspect. The point is that *God-given grace* is exercised on the seed to produce the fruitage.

The little seed is like the mustard seed, which can be the humblest and the tiniest of all the herb seeds, yet it eventually grows to such a size that it is like a *tree*. In fact, the mustard tree is so large that the fowls of the air can lodge under its shadow. (The mustard seed is treated in a favorable sense here, and not from the standpoint of Revelation 18:2, where Babylon is said to be the “cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”) *If faithful*, this class, who are humble in the present life, will be exalted to glory as kings and priests in the next age and bless mankind.

6. It is interesting that Jesus used the illustration of the fowls of heaven lodging in the shadow of the mustard tree, especially since the Apostle Paul said that we will judge *angels* as well as men (1 Cor. 6:3). In the first category, the “fowls of the air” plucked up or devoured the seed

on the “way side.” The mustard seed class will judge the *fallen* angels, the fowls of heaven. We now wrestle not only against flesh and blood but also against this wicked, invisible spiritual element. In the next age, however, the mustard seed class will be elevated and grow to such a stature that even spirit beings will be made subject unto them.

7. Mark 4:33,34 tells that Jesus spoke the word unto the multitudes in parables “as they were able to hear [bear] it” (compare John 16:12). In other words, he schooled himself not to overextend. Later, when he was alone with his disciples, he “expounded all things” to them. It is interesting that Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:9,10 with regard to the blindness of the people, yet the same prophet also said, “If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come” (Matt. 13:14,15; Isa. 21:12).

Q: Does the seed that fell on stony ground represent a consecrated class?

A: It is not certain whether the second class consecrate, but the third and fourth classes definitely consecrate. However, it is certainly possible that the second class consecrate and then wither and thus, by drawing back, go into Second Death. From this standpoint, the classes would appear as follows:

1. The first class are those who do not consecrate.
2. The second class consecrate but do not get life.
3. The third class consecrate and get life but on a secondary level as the Great Company.
4. The fourth class consecrate and get life on the highest plane (divine nature) as the Little Flock. Their ultimate degree of honor and position in the body of Christ will be according to their opportunity, capability, and application of zeal.

Q: Does 1 Corinthians 3:12 have an application to the Parable of the Sower?

A: That text mentions three overcoming classes (gold, silver, and precious stones). Those three are comparable to the three categories of the fourth class: the 100-fold, the 60-fold, and the 30-fold.

Q: What is the principle of the time element with the consecrated? Please explain this again.

A: As Moses, Paul, and others of great ability are given *more time* to be drawn out in the present life, those of lesser ability benefit by being fed. The Parable of the Sower gives us an insight with regard to the harvesting of the grain. When the crop, or “fruit,” is *fully* developed, it is harvested immediately—both in nature and with the Church. Otherwise, literal crops will spoil.

Q: Does the Parable of the Sower tie in with the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares?

A: Yes, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is another aspect of the Parable of the Sower.

Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30,37-43)

Matt. 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Matt. 13:25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

The translators used variously “darnels,” “weeds,” and “tares,” but “tares” is the best word, for (1) it most accurately describes what has happened in history and (2) tares are *imitation* wheat.

The Parable of the Sower preceded this parable. There the “seed” was the Word of God, and

the emphasis was, first, on the different kinds of soil in which the seed developed. Next the fruitage was stressed. Here, in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the emphasis is on the fruitage that develops from hearing the Word of God. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The “good seed” (or wheat) are the “children of the kingdom,” and the “tares” are the “children of the wicked one” (verse 38). The sower (or man who sowed the good wheat seed) is the Son of man; the “field” is the world (verses 37 and 38).

“But while men slept.” These “men” are primarily the apostles, who kept the seeds of iniquity from sprouting or taking root while they were alive and on the scene. Being able to read the hearts, the apostles pointed out *by name* the enemies of the Church—pretenders, wolves, and those who were wicked. Therefore, the Church was relatively pure during the lifetime of the apostles. The early Church is likened to a woman arrayed with the glory of the sun and is described as a “white horse,” that is, relatively pure in doctrine (Rev. 6:2; 12:1). After the apostles fell asleep in death, the doctrine and practices deteriorated.

“But while men slept, his enemy [the enemy of the sower] came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” Why is the expression “went his way” used? If Satan had not disappeared from *obvious* view, the subtlety of his work might have been perceived more easily. By sowing the tare seed and then disappearing out of view, so to speak, Satan could more easily work his deception. Very few people analyze principles; instead they make decisions based on emotions, visible circumstances, and providences. Therefore, by withdrawing himself, Satan could deceive the greater percentage. Unfortunately, *in the Church* as well as in the world, most judge by emotion and the outer appearance rather than by analyzing principles.

Matt. 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

The Parable of the Sower had to do with how the Word of God develops in the hearts of different individuals depending on the *depth* of soil in their hearts. The emphasis was on the reward to the believer according to the *fruitage* brought forth. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares gives more of a *dispensational* aspect. The time period covered extends from the sowing that took place at the beginning of the Gospel Age to the Harvest at the end of the age. Hence this parable is a story of something that has occurred all through the history of the gospel Church. The blade springing forth and the fruitage developing of both wheat and tares is a *long-range* perspective. The Parable of the Sower was more personalized, showing what happens in each *individual's* heart, whereas the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is more general, showing the history of the gospel Church and its experiences.

After the seed of either truth or error is sown and it begins to grow, the first evidence of growth is a sprout, or “blade” of grass. As time goes on, the plant continues to grow and mature until eventually it either does or does not bring forth fruit depending on whether it is wheat or a tare.

Matt. 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

Matt. 13:28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

The servants of the householder asked, “Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?” This was the puzzling question to the true Church down through history. The Apostle Paul said, “Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). Christians asked, “How could an evil element

arise in *God's pure Church?*" Because the enemy who had sown the tare seed had disappeared from the scene (Satan "went his way"—verse 25), they could not understand how the evil had developed. Thus the *mysteriousness* of the tare development *within* the Church is emphasized here. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is considered from the standpoint of *internal* evil (not an external introduction of false doctrine such as is illustrated in the parable of the woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal).

The Master explained that he was not responsible for the introduction of the tare element but that "an enemy hath done this." God's Word tells us that He *permitted* evil to come into the Church (as well as into the world).

Matt. 13:29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

To the disciples' question "Should we pull out the tares?" the Master replied, "No, let both the wheat and the tares grow together, for in forcibly extricating the tares, you would injure the wheat class too." This was especially true during the Dark Ages, a period of simple faith and doctrine and of a paucity of the Word of God (described as a famine in which wheat was scarce—Rev. 6:6). Because true Christians were not sufficiently informed on prophetic matters to be able to survive the shock of "weeding," some would have been injured. There was a relative lack of knowledge during the middle period of the Church's history, but now, at the end of the age, when the focal rays of prophecy are beginning to converge, we have considerably more information—just as the Church did in the days of the apostles. (There are "early" and "latter" rains of *much* truth—James 5:7.) Therefore, the separation of the wheat and the tares was to take place during the "harvest" period at the *end of the age* (verses 30 and 39).

Matt. 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The "householder" is the sower, that is, the Son of man, the instructor of the reapers. The Son of man said, "In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Notice that the gathering of the tares *precedes* the gathering of the wheat into the barn. This very important point cannot be vitiated by saying that the tare and wheat harvests exactly coincide in point of time. It is true there is a period of concurrency, but both the beginning and the ending of the wheat harvest occur within the time frame of the tare harvest.

Tare bundling/ harvest began:	Wheat harvest/ going into barn	Tare bundling/ harvest complete:	Wheat harvest complete; all wheat in barn:	Tares are burned:
1846	1878	? date (near future)	? date (near future)	? date (near future)

The tares are *first* gathered together and bound in bundles—to be burned *later*. We should not assume that when the tares are gathered and bundled, they will be immediately burned. This does not occur either in nature (agriculture) or in the antitype. The gathering of the wheat into the barn is the more important work. Only when that work is complete will the Lord deal fully with the tare element. In other words, a little time period will occur between the bundling of the tares and the burning of them. The ultimate destiny of the tares is destruction (verse 40)—"fire"! The destiny of the wheat is the "barn"—heaven!

The "barn" can be considered from two standpoints, and both thoughts are given in the *Reprints*. (1) As a position of rest and security, it can have a fulfillment on this side of the veil in the sense that the Lord's people are gathered together around a message of truth. For a time at least, they are sheltered with the sunlight of God's favor so that they can grow before the

storms of persecution break upon them. (2) However, the ultimate purpose of the wheat is storage in a barn for future use. The *full* application, therefore, is the barn *beyond the veil*, in heaven, the Church's final destiny. The Church will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" in heaven, beyond the veil (verse 43). The destruction of the tares will take place after the wheat class is off the scene; that is, Babylon will not be destroyed until the Church has gone home. Hence the proper emphasis of the "barn" is that of the *heavenly garner* with Jesus.

Matt. 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

Matt. 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

Matt. 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

Matt. 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

Matt. 13:40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Matt. 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

Matt. 13:42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matt. 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels ... [to] gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (verse 41). The usual application is that the "angels" are the Lord's people this side of the veil who cooperate with Jesus, the Master Reaper, in gathering the wheat. *Reaping* (not sowing) is the primary work of the present Harvest time (although, of course, we individually do both as opportunity arises).

There is a seeming problem in this verse, which we will consider from the natural standpoint. From the mixed wheat and tare field, the "angels" (reapers) are to gather out (uproot and remove) the tares (those who "offend" and "do iniquity"). Then it would appear that only a wheat field would be left. However, as many other Scriptures show, the *opposite* will happen—iniquity will abound at the end of the age.

It is true that when the Harvest period began, there was a great blessing as different ones from the various denominations came together and fed on one centralized truth regarding the Ransom, but as time went on, deceptions arose. In fact, these deceptions will get worse and worse until finally *only* the elect will remain undeceived (Matt. 24:24). However, that is not the thrust of this parable.

The destiny of this parable is, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (verse 43). All things that offend will be gathered out of the Father's Kingdom. Therefore, we must adjust our thinking for this parable because the *opposite* occurs *in the flesh*. In other words, the Kingdom of heaven on this side of the veil, in the embryo state, has suffered violence in the past, suffers violence now, and will suffer violence in the future—as

long as it is *in the flesh*. Indeed the tares so outnumber the wheat that the Church resembles a *tare field*, and the world is unable to distinguish between wheat and tares. Since the true Church will be revealed in the Kingdom, the final thrust of this parable pertains to the Church beyond the veil, in which there will be no tares. Thus gathering out “all things that offend” pertains to *beyond the veil*.

To state the matter another way, the word “angel” in the New Testament is spiritual in a ratio of about 50:1 (except, that is, for the Book of Revelation, a book of *symbols*, where the word “angel” has a variety of meanings). Here, too, the “angels” who gather out all things that offend are spiritual beings—*literal angels*. Notice, “all” things that offend (not “most” or “some”) will be gathered out. On this side of the veil, the true Christian is to watch out for corruption of doctrine and morals. However, the Scriptures show that those who are (and remain) pure in doctrine and morals will be *greatly* outnumbered, for the true Church beyond the veil must increase and the true Church on this side of the veil must *decrease* (that is, be outnumbered more and more as time goes on).

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is saying that when the world “sees” this *wheat field*, all things that offend will have been *previously* gathered out and the righteous will be shining forth as the sun. Thus the “barn” is *beyond the veil* in the true, strict sense. And the “reapers” in the true, strict sense are *angelic beings*, for earthly beings are not capable of gathering out *all* things that offend. Literal angels will successfully do this work. Moreover, Christians in the parable are called “servants” (verse 27). Literal angels will be successful in gathering out “all things that offend, and them which do iniquity,” with the result that the righteous will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” beyond the veil.

The destruction of the tare element is a *part* of this process of gathering out all things that offend. After all of the Church class are beyond the veil, the tares will be burned. With the tares gone, only wheat will be left—the ripe wheat beyond the veil and the unripe, immature wheat still in the flesh, that is, the Great Company class, who will subsequently be ripened in the Time of Trouble. However, the emphasis in the parable is on the tares and the Kingdom class and not on the Great Company. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares shows the *true Church* of 144,000 in contradistinction to the *false Church*.

Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leavened Meal (Matt. 13:31-33)

Matt. 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

Matt. 13:32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the least of all seeds, but when grown, it is the greatest among herbs—so great that it became a tree and the birds of the air came and lodged in its branches.

Matt. 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Leaven pictures sin, spiritual pollution. The three measures of meal are faith, hope, and love (character-development doctrine), which were changed by the antitypical Jezebel. The nominal Church introduced doctrine that leavened, vitiated, and distorted these fundamentals. Instead of looking for a *future* marriage, a *future* kingdom, and a *future* return of Christ, the emphasis was changed to say these are available in the *present* life. For example, “You can reign in the

present life,” “You can receive the rewards *now*,” and “There is no need for the Second Coming, for that will occur *after* everyone is converted.” These distorted doctrines vitiate faith and hope in a future reward beyond the veil. Faith and hope are related, and “faith [which precedes hope] cometh by hearing ... the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Hope results when one exercises faith to the degree of real heart conviction that the reward will be his (or hers) if obedient. Faith leads to hope, and the culmination is love. All three have been distorted by the nominal system. The woman who introduced the leaven is Jezebel, the *false* Church.

Other parables in Matthew 13 show a wheat and tare *mixture* and a good and bad fish *mixture*. Here the bread was unleavened to start with, but then leaven was introduced. That which was pure became leavened. Just as the tares began to outnumber the wheat, so the leavened bread outnumbered the unleavened bread. The nominal Church is a *tare* field; it is *leavened* bread.

Matt. 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

Matt. 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl (Matt. 13:44-46)

Matt. 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

In this parable, the Kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure hid in a field. When a man found the treasure, he hid it and, for the joy thereof, went and sold all that he had and bought the field. The joyful “man” (Jesus) found the treasure (the Church) and hid it; that is, he did not immediately tell others about the treasure, for he did not want to jeopardize his own situation. Then he went and sold all that he had in order to procure the field which contained the “treasure” (*primarily* the true Church class).

God’s work in the present age is primarily the Church and secondarily the world and restitution, which will follow. The Father loves both the Church and the world (“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”—John 3:16), but He loves the Church *more* and honors them *more*. By purchasing the “field,” Jesus accomplished *both* because both the Church’s and the world’s justification is based on his redemption, his Ransom price.

Comment: Jesus “hid” the treasure in the sense that the true Church is a *Little Flock*.

Matt. 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

Matt. 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man who is “seeking goodly pearls.” When he “found *one* pearl of great price,” he went and “sold all that he had, and bought it.” In the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, Jesus sold all that he had. The Parable of the Pearl states the same thing but, in addition, stresses the great *cost* to the “merchant man,” for the pearl had a “*great* price.” We are bought with the precious blood of Christ. Thus the “treasure” is equated to the “pearl.” The pearl is, again, mostly the Church.

The “field” is the earth, the dominion of man. After the sacrifices in the Old Testament, the blood was poured into the ground, showing that Jesus purchased both humanity and the right to this planet. Before Adam sinned, not only did he have life, but the Garden of Eden was his, as well as dominion over the animals. Jesus purchased all of these and will give them back to mankind. “The earth hath he given to the children of men” (Psa. 115:16).

Parable of the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50)

Matt. 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Matt. 13:48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

Matt. 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

Matt. 13:50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This parable is a fitting conclusion to the series of parables in Matthew 13. Both the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and the Parable of the Dragnet show the severing work of the just from the unjust and the destiny of the tares, or unjust, as being a “furnace of fire” (verse 42). Also, both parables are *dispensational*—both have a beginning and an ending.

The net was cast into the sea of humanity to gather the *true* Church class, or *good* fish. However, fish “of every kind” entered the net (just as tares grew among the wheat, resulting in a mixed field). In other words, *mixed* fish came into the net, some good and some bad.

The net was “full” in 1881, when the general call was complete. At that time, the net began to be drawn to shore. The net was full (the number was complete) at that time from the standpoint that if all in the net had been faithful unto death, the Church would have been complete, and no one else would have been called. However, Laodicea, the Harvest period, is a period of *crown losers*. The warning of the Philadelphia period was, “Be careful lest any man take your crown,” the implication being that there would be *many* crown losers (Rev. 3:11).

Therefore, a Harvest work was necessary to replace and fill up the numerous crown vacancies. What was not completed in almost 2,000 years of the Gospel Age is being finished in the 100-plus years of the Harvest period. Before the age ends, there will come a time when all who will make their calling and election sure will have been called. This point in time has not yet quite been reached. When it occurs in the near future, no more calls for replacements will go out. The net will then be full of all who will ultimately make their calling and election sure. At that time, the net will reach the shore, and only a sorting work will remain. No more fish will enter, and the good fish will then be severed from the bad—just like the harvesting of the wheat from the tares. In the final analysis, only the Church class will be left.

In the Parable of the Dragnet, both the sorting (separation) and the gathering work go on simultaneously, but the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, which is more important because it has *far more* detail, makes a distinction. While the harvests of the wheat and the tares are simultaneous for the most part, the *beginning* of the tare binding or sorting actually *precedes* the gathering of the wheat. Although the gathering of the tares *starts first*, the Parable of the Dragnet is valuable to show that for the *bulk* of the time, the binding (sorting) work of the tares is *contemporaneous* with the gathering of the wheat into the barn.

In verse 48, the pronoun “they” refers to the holy angels (verse 49; Mark 13:27; Matt. 24:31). It could not refer to the Church, for the Church does not sever the good from the wicked as *individuals*. With regard to principles and doctrines, Christians in the present life try to do what they can, but they are not successful. Just like Jesus, they are destined to *seeming* defeat. The permission of evil helps to develop the true Christian, but the successful overcoming of the Church will not be seen or appreciated until the next age. Therefore, for the separating and gathering work to be done unflinchingly and unerringly, a superior spiritual agency would have to do it. In the present life, we merely *discuss* principles, truths, doctrines, Scriptures, what constitutes a true Christian, what true consecration and true justification are, etc. We do not label individuals and their final destiny.

Matt. 13:51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

After discussing all of these parables (the sower, the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the hid treasure, the pearl, and the dragnet), Jesus asked his disciples, “Have you understood all these things?” Their reply, “Yea, Lord,” is rather humorous. Of course the disciples were thinking of these parables from a practical, natural standpoint.

Matt. 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Then Jesus said, “Therefore every scribe who is *instructed* unto the kingdom of heaven is like ... an householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.” Enlightened Christians of the Harvest period are likened to wise servants, but lest we get “overwise,” the Scriptures show that there is a wise *individual* (the Pastor), as well as a wise *class* of servants (Luke 12:37,42-44). Incidentally, the Luke account is important because it mentions the wise servant (an individual) right after the wise servant class, thus refuting those who discount the wise individual servant.

Additional Comments on the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

The tares will be burned, or destroyed, in the “furnace of fire” (the Time of Trouble) from the standpoint of their *profession*, not as individuals (although, of course, there will be some loss of life). To be a Christian then will bring severe persecution—Christians will be “sitting ducks.” On the one hand, the tares will drop their profession to be Christians. On the other hand, true Christians cannot drop their profession if they want life. The faith and energy of the Great Company will be rekindled because they will have to take a stand in order to resist their persecuting experience—but too late to be part of the Little Flock.

In the *full* picture, which answers all the details in the Parable of the Dragnet and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the “angels” (reapers) are *literal* angels. The “angels” cannot be the risen Church because they were not used in the past. Down through history, Jesus and the literal spiritual angels have been developing the true Church, and that procedure would not change in the Harvest period. Instead the risen saints are being instructed regarding their duties in the Kingdom. Hebrews 1:14 tells us that *all* the holy angels are employed as ministering servants to develop the Church class. Therefore, they have been, and still are, involved in developing the Kingdom class from *beginning to end* under the supervision of Jesus. Guardian angels have a lot to do with a Christian’s making his calling and election sure; they watch out for physical, material, and spiritual interests in every circumstance, with the spiritual interests prevailing.

The bundling of the tares began in 1846, when the Evangelical Alliance was formed. At that

time, the orthodox churches of Christianity got together to develop, if possible, a common creed or basis for identifying who was and who was not “orthodox.” In other words, the Evangelical Alliance was formed to determine who are “legitimate” and who are the cults. An agreement was reached in 1846. The Church of England was not part of the movement at that time, but in 1946, or more visibly in 1948, the Church of England identified itself with the other Protestant churches. Thus the bundling of the tares began in 1846 and has been proceeding ever since, with the bundles getting larger and less numerous. The hope is to make *one* huge ecumenical bundle, but the Scriptures show there will be at least *two* bundles (the two ends of the scroll—Isa. 34:4).

The gathering of the wheat began in 1878. The Lord returned in 1874, and his first work was to instruct that “faithful and wise servant” (Matt. 24:45). Then in 1878, the Harvest began. Since then and through today, both the bundling of the tares and the gathering of the wheat are going on at the same time. However, the burning of the tares will not take place until *after* the wheat are all garnered into the barn. Babylon will fall *after* the feet members go beyond the veil. The Book of Revelation shows the two harvests: the wheat first and then the vine of the earth *shortly* afterwards (Rev. 14:15,18).

Matt. 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

Matt. 14:2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

“At that time” is specific and yet not specific, meaning “in that season” or “about that period of time.” Verses 1 and 2 show Herod’s reaction to the report about Jesus’ ministry—that Jesus was gaining a lot of prestige and popularity and having remarkable success with the people. Why would Herod think that perhaps Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead? The precedent is found in Malachi 4:5, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Elijah and Malachi had died years earlier, but the people thought that one of them would have to be resurrected and come back again before the great catastrophe would occur. And since many considered John the Baptist to be Elijah, it was only logical that Herod would project a step further and think that John has been resurrected in the person of Jesus. The thought made Herod nervous because he had put John the Baptist to death. (John was beheaded about a year into Jesus’ ministry.) Incidentally, this Herod was an Idumean and not the same Herod who had killed the babies in Bethlehem.

The quantity of miracles and “mighty works” Jesus did seemed to give credence to the thought that he was a prophet raised from the dead. Jesus healed *many, many* people, some having the *worst* diseases imaginable. Thus Jesus seemed to be more than just an ordinary man. With even the Jews not being sure of his identity as Messiah, Herod’s confusion and fear were understandable under the circumstances and with his guilty conscience. John the Baptist had been a very *strong and bold* well-known character. At first, Herod had tried to protect John, but the scheming Herodias inveigled him into killing John at the birthday celebration.

Between his wife and his fear of the multitudes, the tetrarch Herod had a conflict of interest where John the Baptist was concerned. Sometimes we react similarly. First, we may feel ill-disposed toward another individual, and then in time, he may become our best friend. At any rate, Herod had a sense of guilt after he had *reluctantly* put John to death. Between the guilt feelings and knowing of Jesus’ mighty works, Herod thought, “Who else could Jesus be but John the Baptist raised from the dead?” When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod shortly before the Crucifixion, Herod, being superstitious, wanted to see a sign (Luke 23:8).

Matt. 14:3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife.

Matt. 14:4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

Matt. 14:5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Matt. 14:6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

Matt. 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

Matt. 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

Matt. 14:9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

Matt. 14:10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

Matt. 14:11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

Verses 3-11, a break in thought, are a flashback and not consecutive. These verses tell what happened *previously*, giving the cause and circumstances of John the Baptist's death. John was a *dispensational* servant. The Pastor treated this topic in the *Second Volume* in the chapter entitled "Elias Shall First Come." There John the Baptist is shown to be a type, and verses 3-12 are applied dispensationally and antitypically.

In addition to John the Baptist, the main characters were Herod, Herodias, and Salome. All three were involved in John's death. Herod gave the actual command for John's beheading. Salome consented to her mother's desires. Herodias, the mother, was the worst "criminal," but the other two incurred guilt by conceding. Although there are different *degrees* of culpability, all were responsible for John's death. Herodias seized upon the occasion of Herod's birthday party to maneuver John's death, knowing that the drinking would lower Herod's guard and that the seductive dancing of Salome would dazzle him.

Why was Herodias so desirous of having John killed? He had rebuked her unlawful (adulterous) marriage to Herod, and John was no ordinary man. The *multitudes* came to him at Jordan to be baptized, including even some of the scribes and Pharisees (although John rebuked the latter for not properly repenting and refused to baptize them). John had great influence, which was probably based on Malachi 4:5 and the fact that his rough clothing made him look like Elijah. Herodias bitterly hated John, who was so popular with the people, for daring to criticize her adulterous position. Moreover, she feared that if John's popularity got excessive, it would threaten the civil authority in that he might be exalted to kingship.

Philip was the legitimate husband of Herodias as well as Herod's brother. In antitype, the Church's fealty is to Jesus as elder brother and Lord, and it is interesting that the name Philip means "brother." Originally, the nominal Church was espoused as a virgin unto Christ, but in Constantine's day, it became wedded to civil power. With this background, the final drama will take place at the *end* of the age, when the John the Baptist class is beheaded.

What is the birthday party in antitype? It is equivalent to (1) the unveiling of the statue on the Plain of Dura at the time of its dedication with the three Hebrew children; (2) Belshazzar's feast, where the king prepared a feast for a thousand of his lords and their concubines; and (3) the

special rejoicing of the nominal powers in their united cry of “Peace and safety” when the coalition becomes a reality (1 Thess. 5:3). The dedication of the statue pertained to the god of the Babylonian Empire; hence it had a *religious* connotation. The decree in regard to the type of Daniel and the lions’ den, which was formulated by chief rulers to trap Daniel, stated that for 30 days, no other religion could be recognized; that is, only the “*orthodox*” religion was recognized. Thus various pictures bring out the *religious* aspect. Conformity was desired and *tested* from the *nominal* standpoint to honor the *orthodox religion* and the *state*.

Many Evangelicals are adverse to Mariolatry and the primacy and aristocracy of the Roman Catholic Church, but the doctrine of the Trinity will be so overwhelming that they will forget these other differences with Catholicism. The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of the nominal Church, and Catholics and Protestants will unite to safeguard this one all-important truth, forsaking their reasoning powers. The image, or statue, of the beast and its relationship to the number “666” in Revelation 13:18 are reminiscent of the 60- by 6-foot *religious* statue of Bel on the Plain of Dura.

In the antitype, Herod’s birthday party refers to the *birth* of a *new arrangement*—a “*birth day*” party. The new order, or arrangement, will be expected, and when it occurs, it will be celebrated. At the antitypical celebration, a statue will be *unveiled*—*how very unusual!*

Salome’s “dancing” represents the miracles and lying signs and wonders that will be done particularly through Protestantism. Of course Catholicism will have deceptions too, but the *image* of the beast will be very instrumental in leading others to join in (Rev. 13:11-17).

The technical beginning of the organization occurred in 1846 with the Evangelical Alliance, which is the World Council of Churches in its current development. These beginnings must occur so that when the real fulfillment takes place, the characters will be in position. In antitype, John the Baptist must be in prison *first*, so that at the time of the birthday party, he can be beheaded. The three Hebrew children were dispatched at the unveiling of the statue. Hence at the moment of high exaltation, the beheading of the John the Baptist class will take place. First, the statue has to be made, cast, and covered and the invitations sent out, which takes *time*; then will come the unveiling of the statue and the decisive decree. John spoke out *before* the birthday party but was beheaded *at* the birthday party.

Philip’s wife, Herodias, was attracted to Herod because she could see that Herod would have greater wealth and power. Satan put this same temptation before Jesus: “If you cooperate with me, you will have all these kingdoms that you see” (Matt. 4:8-10). The nominal Church *falsely* assumed that their mission was to convert the world in the present age. Consequently, wanting greater influence, they allied themselves with the empire. Type and antitype dovetail beautifully. Herod was far more political and ambitious than Philip.

Matt. 14:12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

John the Baptist’s disciples came and took his body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. Imagine burying the *headless* body of one they loved so much! At this point, the disciples of John probably became *Jesus’* disciples. John’s disciples went to Jesus on two occasions. (1) “Art thou he who was to come?” (Matt. 11:2-6). John asked this question through his disciples while he was in prison. (2) After John’s beheading, his disciples again went to Jesus. Moreover, earlier at *his* suggestion, some of John’s disciples went over to Christ. John pointed to Jesus: “Behold [this is] the Lamb of God” (John 1:35-37). The two apostles John and Andrew probably went to Jesus at this time, which was the beginning of the nucleus of the Church.

The news of John the Baptist’s death came to Jesus about the same time that Herod heard of

Jesus' mighty works. Hence verses 1, 2, 12, and 13 happened fairly close to each other. Although Jesus had been doing miracles for a year before John was beheaded, the impact of Jesus' great popularity did not hit Herod until after John's death.

Matt. 14:13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

Matt. 14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Jesus went by ship from Capernaum to a flat plain on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Thus he went from a relatively populated area to a relatively desolate area far removed from a market for food. This area is described as a "desert place apart."

Since Jesus' hour was not yet come, he skirted danger for a while after John the Baptist's death. John's enemies might have tried to capitalize on his death by seizing Jesus if the Master had not departed. Jesus also went to the more desolate area because of his grief over John's death. He was remorseful over the loss of his cousin.

When Jesus departed by ship for the other side of Galilee, the crowds followed him around the shoreline, some *running*, so that they were there to greet him when he arrived (Mark 6:33). Being cut off in the midst of such a wonderful discourse and lessons, the multitudes thus demonstrated their interest and enthusiasm. Touched by their reaction, being "moved with compassion," he "healed their sick." In their enthusiasm, the people had not taken time to prepare food to bring along. Jesus appreciated this eagerness for further instruction.

Not only did the great multitude run around to the other side, but those who carried the sick on litters also made haste. This transporting of the infirm was a double difficulty. The sick had come to Jesus to be healed, so when he departed by ship, they persevered in pursuing him.

Matt. 14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Matt. 14:16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

Matt. 14:17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Matt. 14:18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

Matt. 14:19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matt. 14:20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Matt. 14:21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

As late afternoon approached, the disciples suggested that Jesus dismiss the multitudes to give them time to return home before dark to get food. Notice (verse 21) that there were 5,000 *men*, plus women and children, for a total of about 10,000 people in all. The fact that only the 5,000 men were mentioned indicates there is a spiritual significance, which will be explained when the

second incident of feeding the multitudes comes up.

The *five loaves* and the *two fish* ($5 + 2 = 7$) were multiplied. Hence these numbers are important. The act of multiplication on Jesus' part was actually an act of *creation*. It was like an amoeba or paramecium type of multiplication with a growing and splitting off, a growing and splitting off, etc. Probably when the pita bread was picked up, it was doubled, and as the disciples tore off the back half, it replenished and was torn off again, etc., etc. The widow's cruse of oil was similar; namely, in proportion as the cruse emptied, it was mysteriously refilled with a like portion (1 Kings 17:10-16). And so, as the bread was taken out of the basket, it was replaced by the same numerical quantity. If one pita bread was removed, one pita bread remained. Perhaps the bread was even attached and had to be separated. At any rate, the multiplication was happening like sausages. Of course the angels would have assisted in this miracle.

The Old Testament manna was called "angels' food" (Psa. 78:25). Since angels do not eat material manna, the term "angels' food" has several implications. The angels multiplied the manna by a directive from on high. Probably the Logos gave the directive because he had watched out for Moses. Also, the "angel of God" who went before the Israelites in the cloud was probably the Logos. The point is that man ate food *supplied by angels*. Now, at the First Advent, the bread was similarly multiplied by a directive to the angels. If angels can materialize and miraculously duplicate clothing, equipment, etc., then making bread is no problem.

It is interesting that Jesus looked up to heaven (verse 19) before the miraculous duplication began. Even when not directly stated in the Gospels in connection with all of the miracles, Jesus probably looked up or in some way made it apparent that the power came from the Father. For example, when Lazarus was raised, Jesus *both audibly and visually* "looked" to God, beseeching Him for authority (John 11:41-43).

"And they did *all* eat, and *were filled*" (verse 20). When the leftover fragments of bread were collected, there remained in all "twelve baskets full." This incident and the next feeding form a composite picture with a spiritual significance that will be discussed subsequently.

The 12 baskets of leftover bread are primarily a Kingdom picture. The dispensers of the food, the food itself, and the recipients of the food all have to be identified. In addition to the multitudes, Jesus and the disciples would have partaken of the bread and the fish. The leftover 12 baskets fed the disciples as well as, perhaps, subordinates who helped to dispense the food. The multitudes sat down in units of 50 and 100 in military fashion (see Mark 6:40). Then the disciples and the assistants fed the multitudes in an orderly and efficient fashion, for time and distance factors had to be considered. Therefore, the 12 apostles directed the dispensing of food to the people by the hands of others. In antitype, the Little Flock, the Great Company, the world, and even the Ancient Worthies are all involved in this picture.

How many people were fed in all if there were 5,000 men? Those who came with the sick would have been predominately men who were reasonably capable physically. Also, in many instances, wives would have dutifully stayed home, and little children would not have come. Thus the number 5,000 should probably be doubled to 10,000 (rather than quadrupled as back in the Exodus, where 600,000 men old enough to go to war meant more than 2 million people). The 10,000 would have come from all over Judea, Tyre, Sidon, Decapolis, etc., from outlying provinces as well as villages.

Comparison of First and Second Feedings of the Multitudes

First:	5 loaves	2 fish	5,000+ fed	12 baskets leftover
Second:	7 loaves	A few fish	4,000+ fed	7 baskets leftover

Why were "fish" and "bread" used for food? In the final analysis, the bread pictures Jesus'

justification. The 12 apostles gave the directives of how to dispense the food, in addition to partaking of it themselves. Others assisted them in distributing the food.

Actually, the food was *pita* bread and *raw* fish. Moreover, the “fragments that remained” were each *whole* units, not munched-on pieces. Jesus’ *powerful megaphonic* voice would have been heard by all 10,000 despite the distractions.

Matt. 14:22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Matt. 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Matt. 14:24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Matt. 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Matt. 14:26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

Matt. 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Matt. 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

Matt. 14:29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Matt. 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Matt. 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Matt. 14:32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Matt. 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Matt. 14:34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

Verses 22-34 describe the incident where, following the feeding of the multitudes with bread and fish, Jesus went up into the mountain to pray and a storm arose on the Sea of Galilee the second time. When Jesus dismissed the multitudes toward late afternoon (around 5 p.m.) and went up in the mountain to pray in solitude, it was still light enough for the people to find their way back home before dark.

Verse 13 tells that when Jesus learned of John the Baptist’s death, his intention was to go to “a desert place apart” to pray. However, because the multitudes outran him, he spent the rest of the day healing them, and now this was his first opportunity to commune alone with his Heavenly Father in prayer. Jesus dismissed the multitudes and constrained the disciples to get into a boat and head off for the other side of Galilee, where he would later meet them. Then he

climbed the mountain to pray. Jesus' prayers would have centered around the sobriety of John's experience, as well as the event of feeding the multitudes.

A great windstorm arose while the disciples were in transit on the Sea of Galilee. Notice the time factors. The storm had already been blowing for many hours when Jesus "went unto them, walking on the sea" in the "fourth watch." The time was about 3 a.m., for the fourth watch extended from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. Since the disciples had departed from shore about 5 p.m., this means they had been rowing for a *minimum* of at least *ten hours*, yet they were only in the *middle* of the sea. Imagine, it took ten hours to get only to the middle! Just as with the importunate widow, the Lord waited until the *extremity of their need* before answering.

Meanwhile, Jesus had been on the mountain, engaged in long and earnest prayer. Then he became aware that the disciples were struggling in the wind, for he could see them from his vantage point (see Mark 6:48). This information tells us that it was a moonlit night. Apparently, too, the moonlight made a path on the sea so that the disciples could see Jesus walking toward them. What a startling and dramatic event! Moreover, Jesus even acted as if he would not stop—he "would have passed by them" (Mark 6:48).

The disciples "were troubled, saying, It is a spirit." They could not believe their eyes and thought they were seeing a ghost or an apparition. Several of the disciples were hardened fishermen who had been out in all kinds of weather and were accustomed to storms on the Sea of Galilee, but this particular storm troubled and frightened them.

There is another factor too. Since the disciples had been rowing for ten hours, *exhaustion* had set in. And psychologically, as well as physically, they were at the point of no return because they were in the *midst* of the sea. They could not get to their destination, and they could not return to shore. They realized they could easily perish.

The Sea of Galilee is peculiarly formed so that it is susceptible to windstorms. A mountain range runs from north to south on both sides of the sea. At times, the wind comes from Mount Hermon to the north and funnels into the Sea of Galilee, creating a lot of havoc. Many have written about the *suddenness* and the *violence* of the storms that whip up on this otherwise placid body of water.

Jesus pretended to pass the disciples and then, addressing their troubled state of mind, said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; *be not afraid*." Jesus was telling them not to fear, for they really did see *him* and not an apparition. He thus reassured them.

There is another lesson from another standpoint. This was the disciples' *second* experience of being in a storm on Galilee. The first time Jesus was *in* the boat *with them* but asleep. They woke him up, saying, "Aren't you concerned? We will perish unless you do something." Subsequently, he stilled the wind and the waves, showing that he had mastery over the elements of nature. This first incident gave the disciples a *prior* experience to draw on. (Like the disciples, we do not always think of the prior experience right away when we have trials.) However, this second experience was *more extreme* from several standpoints because of added pressures. This time they were alone—or *seemed* to be, for Jesus was not physically present with them. Previously, Jesus had been there in the boat for the duration of the storm. This time they were in the *middle* of the sea and had been rowing for *ten hours*.

When Jesus assured the disciples that they were seeing *him* and not just an apparition, impulsive Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the *water*." This incident provides a little insight into Peter's impulsiveness. The Lord loved his zeal and impulsiveness, but it had to be trained and *disciplined*. Under the Lord's guidance, Peter learned valuable lessons of constraint and control so that his zeal was properly directed. This one who had been

unstable as water (like Reuben—Gen. 49:4) became a *rock* who could feed both lambs and sheep. As a mature leader, he helped *others*.

In his zeal and enthusiasm, Peter said, “If it be thou, Lord, bid me come on the water.” (Incidentally, if it hadn’t been Jesus, Peter would have sunk like an anchor.) Peter stepped out and *did walk* on the water for a few steps at least, but then he began to sink. When he cried out in fear, the Lord stretched out a *long* hand to help him. Peter was tested to the full. The roaring of the boisterous wind and the tempestuousness of the waves had distracted him—both sight and sound—interrupting his concentration. This shows the importance of concentration and *continuity of purpose* in regard to *faith*.

It is significant that Peter cried out *before* Jesus rescued him—and then Jesus saved him *immediately*. The disciples had cried out in the first incident too: “Carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38).

There is another factor to consider. The disciples were in the middle of the lake, about 30 furlongs offshore, or approximately *3 1/2 miles* (John 6:19). In other words, the entire distance would have been seven miles on the diagonal route they were trying to pursue, for they landed in Gennesaret. Thus it took ten hours to row only *3 1/2 miles*.

The wind and the waves were *roaring*, but what about Jesus? He was *walking* on the angry sea. He was placid and stable and undisturbed by the fierce storm. His composure was another way of showing his control over the wind and the sea. The last time he had said to the wind and the waves, “Peace, be still,” and they had obeyed, but here was another way in which he mastered the sea. He made the sea a *sidewalk*, as it were.

The Apostle John noticed something else with his superior powers of observation (John 6:21). Not only did he give the distance the boat had traveled, but he recorded a startling detail. When Jesus stepped into the boat, it was *immediately* at land. The boat had been equidistant from both shores after ten hours of struggling when *suddenly* it was just offshore.

This additional information shows the importance of comparing the Gospels and extracting all of the details for a *complete* picture, yet we must guard against going above the Word of God. Many can fantasize and dramatize from the platform, and such exaggeration is wrong if it *adds* to the Word of God. However, where Scripture is dramatic, we, too, should be dramatic. To overstate the Word is to misrepresent it, and to understate it brings culpability (see Rev. 22:18,19). Here John’s narrative is very dramatic, but it is *Scripturally* dramatic. To get the power of the account, we should try to live the experience by putting ourselves in the boat as one of the disciples. Then we will begin to observe the details.

In both instances on the sea, Jesus rebuked the disciples: “O ye of little faith!” (Matt. 8:26; 14:31). We often think of Jesus as being exceedingly and consistently gentle, but notice how he dealt not only with the scribes and Pharisees but also with his disciples. “O thou of little faith.” “If you had faith even as a grain of mustard seed, you could move mountains.” To his disciples, this was *constructive* criticism, which is needed to arouse us from our mental fogginess. The whole world is sick to a greater or lesser extent. Therefore, in order for some truths to penetrate, they must be thrust with some force. As Jesus said, “Let these sayings *sink down* into your ears” (Luke 9:44). Jesus frequently used “Verily, verily” to indicate “Pay attention to this particular statement!” God’s Word uses repetition because of our weak, undone condition.

Bro. Russell gave a prophetic application, a dispensational fulfillment, to this incident of the storm on Galilee. There is also an application down through the Gospel Age. Jesus came to the disciples on the water in the “fourth watch,” that is, in the *early rays of morning just before sunrise*.

Incidentally, Jesus had been up on a mountain praying. Then he came down and walked out the 3 1/2 miles on the water to the disciples, arriving at about 3 a.m. This all took time. In the Bible, when things can be done in a normal fashion, they usually are. Miracles are performed *only when necessary*. For example, when Peter was in prison at the time of the beheading of James, he was chained to two men at his side (Acts 12:1-16). An angel appeared to Peter and the chains miraculously dropped off his wrists and feet. But then the angel said, “Dress and clothe yourself.” In other words, the angel did not perform what Peter could do for himself. After Peter dressed, he went to the locked gate of the city, and the angel opened it—something Peter could not have done. After that, the angel disappeared, and Peter had to walk from the open gate to the house where Rhoda opened the door, thinking she had seen Peter’s ghost. This illustration applied to Jesus too. Jesus could have changed the stones to bread, but he did miracles only when necessary. Otherwise, he proceeded in a normal and natural manner. Moreover, Jesus did not avoid fatigue or labor, which he could have done. Here, too, in the storm on Galilee, Jesus *walked* out to meet the disciples, and this took time.

Jesus was absent from the disciples and then returned to them. If we make this incident a *spiritual* picture, he was “absent” from the time of his ascension until his invisible return in the beginning of the Harvest. Of course he was aware of what was happening in the interim—“Lo, I am with you always”—but he *personally* returned as an invisible spirit being in 1874, the start of the end-of-the-age period (Matt. 28:20). Thus there are two ways for Jesus to be with his Church: (1) being aware of what they are experiencing and (2) coming to earth’s atmosphere at the end of the age.

At the expiration of the 3 1/2 years at the First Advent, Jesus would leave the disciples and be *absent* from them, and so he was *absent* from the boat in the storm. The “water” pictures the world. The Christian is in the boat, and he is safe as long as the water (the world) is not in the boat. Stated another way, the Christian is *in* the world but not *of* the world. The boat represents the transit of Christians down through the Gospel Age. The Christian is crossing the sea, going through trials and experiences in the boat to get to the other shore (heaven).

Then a very troublesome storm arose. The multitudes had gone back around the shoreline on foot, so only the *disciples* were in the boat, and only the *disciples* experienced the storm. Therefore, the storm pictures the time of trouble on the *Church*, not the world, at the end of the age.

If we had lived at the time of the Spanish Inquisition and had been put in a dungeon, knowing that torture was forthcoming and ultimately death if we did not recant, we could have derived strength by recalling this incident of Jesus’ *awareness* of the disciples’ experience. Faith would translate the experience to the personal situation at hand: “Jesus *knows* I am here in this dungeon, and he *knows* what I am going through.” In other words, confidence would be extracted from *previous* understanding about Jesus. This incident of the storm on Galilee has helped Christians in every age, but its *particular* application is at the end of the age. Jesus *knows* our plight *wherever* we are and *whenever* we live.

End-of-the-age application: Jesus’ coming to the disciples on the water represents the Lord’s *parousia* (or presence). He did not immediately rescue the disciples, but during that period, the wind blew fiercely and Peter’s awareness shows that the Peter *class* at the end of the age will be conscious of the meaning of events and their responsibility. The *fear* Peter had when he began to sink, as well as previously, suggests that the feet members will have *temporary* periods of discouragement and doubt (just as Jesus himself did in Gethsemane and on the Cross). In *faith*, Peter stepped out on the water but then began to sink, only to be strengthened again and saved. Jesus experienced great agony in Gethsemane, crying out, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” On the Cross, he said, “My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?” Also, John the Baptist experienced *temporary* doubt and sent disciples to ask if Jesus really was the Messiah.

Another lesson is that we should not judge someone who falters momentarily while undergoing a trial. Neither should we assume that one is with the Lord after death just because he was placid in a trial at the time we saw him. If there are *many* acts of doubt, that would be different, but if one has led a *godly* life, we should not judge a faltering moment. We cannot judge the *depth* of one’s consecration because we cannot understand things *above* our own level of development, but we can certainly see whether one has led a consecrated life. Stated another way, we cannot appreciate the thinking and motives of those who are spiritually more mature, but we can see whether a “tree” has brought forth good or bad fruit. Therefore, we should not judge according to a fleeting or spotty observation, a facial expression, etc., as to whether or not an individual has been faithful. First and/or hasty impressions can be misleading. *Overall* character is what counts. The fact that Peter wavered in this illustration would seem to indicate that the trial on the last members will be *very severe*—in fact, so severe that it will be like Jesus’ last moments, where the hand of God was heavy on him.

The other disciples, who were fearful and did not walk on the water, represent the Great Company class. They are contrasted with Peter, who said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee,” and he stepped out onto the water. In that experience, Peter was different from the others. The Peter class will have trepidations at the end of the age but *will step out by faith*, needing Jesus’ hand to rescue them at that moment. They will be *divinely* strengthened. The Scriptures show that the last members will have a checkered experience. They will be strengthened with inner peace and conviction but also tested to the very core.

Jesus seemed like an apparition at first, but he reassured the disciples: “It is I.” This parallels John the Baptist’s reassurance that Jesus truly was the Messiah. However, despite the reassurance, *only Peter* walked on the water. The fact that he began to sink teaches another lesson; namely, there will be “great [lying] signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). The trials will be so severe at the very end that even the very elect will not be able to withstand the experience in their own strength but must have help from on high. Luther stood against the whole Roman Catholic system, as it were. He had great fear and trepidation and prayed and fasted in that experience, and subsequently, through *supernatural* strengthening, he was able to boldly, eloquently, and remarkably state his cause. Jesus helped him. And so it will be with the faithful feet members.

A *Manna* text tells that among the Lord’s people, there are “leading spirits.” This term does not mean they are proud, yet many would jump to this conclusion, thinking the leading spirits are proud and bold in a disrespectful sense. Sometimes a sweet and gentle disposition is obnoxious to the Lord because it is a veneer that can do a lot of mischief. A Christian should have love dwelling in his heart, but sometimes the circumstances of a case require us to Scripturally refrain from certain things.

At any rate, Peter’s reaction here was *favorable*. Instead of seeing a weakness in him, we should see a *strength*, even though he sank. His reaction was *superior* to that of the others.

When the disciples got to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they were in the land of Gennesaret, which is the plain between Capernaum and Magdala. As villages, Capernaum and Magdala had peripheral areas including suburbs, and Gennesaret was the *area* in between. It extended to the shore of Galilee as a *point*, occupying only a small part of the shoreline and then becoming larger as it stretched westward away from the sea.

Gennesaret means “harp.” The Sea of Galilee is also called the Sea of Tiberias, the Lake of Gennesaret, the Syrian Sea, and the Sea of Chinnereth. The land area is harp-shaped; that is, the

sea is called the Lake of Gennesaret (harp) because of the land. The Gennesaret Plain is the lower level where Jesus preached after coming down from the Mount of Beatitudes. Incidentally, there are multiple names for the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea as well.

A point of *progression* should be noticed between the two storms on the Sea of Galilee. In the first instance, after Jesus calmed the wind and the waves, the disciples said, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” (Matt. 8:27). The second time the disciples said, “Of a truth thou art the *Son of God*,” showing their progression and development, which are a part of training. A trainer pushes one a little further and a little further, etc., until the individual becomes a superathlete. And so it is with the very elect. We are tested a little more and a little more, etc., to develop us to attain to the position. If we do not progress sufficiently, we will not be Little Flock. The Lord is looking for the *development of faith and obedience* in us.

Matt. 14:35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

Matt. 14:36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

When Jesus and the apostles landed in Gennesaret, the news of his arrival spread rapidly. As a consequence, the diseased and sick were brought to him. It is interesting—and significant—that many were healed just by touching the hem of Jesus’ garment. In fact, *all* who were cured on this occasion were healed in this unusual fashion.

Review of Incidents in Chapter 14

The following is a review of the feeding of the multitudes, the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and the healing of the people in Gennesaret as a *type*. The Pastor had remarkable insight to liken the storm on Galilee to trouble on the Church at the end of the age. The “fourth watch” indicates early in the Millennial morning, before sunrise. This suggestion opens the door to a larger (and dispensational) picture.

Jesus fed the multitudes on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Subsequently, he commanded his disciples to get into a boat and depart and leave him alone to go up on a mountain to pray. This incident is a dispensational picture that embraces the whole Gospel Age. In antitype, Jesus’ putting the apostles in the boat, seeing them depart from him, and going to the mountain began when he ascended on high after his resurrection. At that time, he told the disciples to go out into all the world and preach the gospel. He sent them out in a boat in the “ocean” (the world) on this mission, while he absented himself up on the “mountain” (heaven) to pray as their Advocate. And all down the Gospel Age, Jesus has been the Advocate of the Church. Later, at the end of the age, the “storm” (trouble on the Church) occurred; i.e., the disciples got in the boat at the *beginning* of the Gospel Age, and the storm took place at the *end* of the age.

Gennesaret means “harp,” and the Plain of Gennesaret, or harp, is a picture of the Kingdom, the Promised Land. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they sang on the opposite shore. Their refrain (the “song of Moses”), which is taken up in the Book of Revelation, has two applications: one at the end of the Gospel Age and one at the end of the Millennial Age (Rev. 15:3). However, the Church is the focus in regard to the storm on Galilee. The land of Gennesaret represents entering Canaan, the Promised Land. In other words, the arrival of the disciples at Gennesaret pictures their arrival in the Kingdom arrangement.

When Jesus stepped into the boat, it was *immediately* at shore (John 6:21). What is the antitype? In past times, the saints who died slept in death to await the Second Presence of Jesus, at which

time their resurrection would occur, but now, since 1878, we are living in the day when the saints who die are *immediately* transferred to spirit nature. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13). The fact that the boat was immediately at shore suggests not only a dispensational picture, including the storm, but a miraculous and instant change from earthly to spirit nature.

If the land of Gennesaret is, first, the Land of Promise as regards the Church, then it will subsequently show the beginning of the Kingdom arrangement after the storm. The message will have gone forth: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psa. 46:10). The Kingdom will be inaugurated, and the people will seek help—the curing of their physical, mental, and moral diseases. News of Jesus’ “presence” will spread quickly, but to receive cures, the people will touch only the “hem of his garment”; that is, in the Second Advent, Jesus will not be physically here in a material sense to visibly take up the reins of government but will use intermediaries: the Church in glory plus the Ancient Worthies. Thus those of the world who will be healed will approach but the “hem of his garment.” The contact will be *minimal but effective*. In the type, the hem of the high priest’s garment was full of pomegranates, showing the fruitage available to the world. The golden bells will call attention to (announce abroad) the Kingdom blessings.

In summation, the whole account of the transit over Galilee, plus Jesus’ landing and the cures, are a picture of the entire Gospel Age and on into the inauguration of the Kingdom.

Matt. 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

Matt. 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Scribes and Pharisees from *Jerusalem* approached Jesus to ask why his disciples ignored “the tradition of the elders” to wash their hands before they ate bread. What does the expression “tradition of the elders” imply? In law, a legal decision sets a precedent. Then, as time passes, that precedent becomes more and more like an unwritten law. And the more time-honored a “law” is, the more inviolable it becomes. The attitude is, “Our fathers, and our fathers’ fathers, have always done such and such.” Thus the precedent becomes like an immutable law. Accordingly, the scribes and Pharisees were calling attention to past customs.

This kind of subtle argument enters civilian as well as religious life, so that the opinions of others are given great credence. We must be on guard against this type of attitude lest we accept certain procedures, doctrines, etc., as being right or true just because they are time-honored when, in reality, they conflict with the Word of God or have no substance. Jesus did not say we should not wash our hands, but it was wrong to *ceremonially* wash, to do it *ritualistically* according to man-made laws. Today this attitude is manifested in the saying, “*Historic Christianity has taught...*” Notice that the scribes and Pharisees did not ask Jesus why *he* transgressed but why his *disciples* transgressed.

Matt. 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Jesus answered their question with a question, turning the situation right around and putting the scribes and Pharisees on the defensive. “Why do *you* transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” Jesus frequently used this tactic of responding to a question with another question.

Matt. 15:4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

Jesus continued, “For God commanded, ... Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die.” Jesus was raising another issue, for the scribes and Pharisees were not talking about honoring parents. Jesus used this illustration to show one way they were violating God’s commandments. Under the Law, a child who was disrespectful to his parents was to be stoned to death.

Matt. 15:5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

Jesus repeated the ready answer commonly given by the scribes and Pharisees to justify their violating the Law. Under the Law, elderly parents were to be given financial or other assistance by their children, but instead the Pharisees urged the “children” to give the money to the Temple. This gift was called “Corban” (Mark 7:11). If father and mother were in need, this Corban was a violation of the commandment. Offhand, giving the money “to the Lord” would appear to be a *superior* need, but not in this case. Parents in need should be provided for. Another example of neglecting parents would be to give time to the Lord for sacrifice and then not provide or care for the parents. It took *time* to offer animals in sacrifice. The Scripture says, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). Therefore, it would be wrong for the priests to urge sacrifice to the neglect of parents who were ill, for example. The Apostle Paul followed this principle in saying, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

Matt. 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

“He shall be free” is supplied but is the correct thought. The Pharisees reasoned that breaking the Law was all right because the time, money, etc., were going to a higher cause (to the Lord, to the Temple). However, Paul said we are to provide things decent and honest in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21). The Pharisees wrongly reasoned that giving to “God” freed one of parental responsibility. To this, Jesus replied, “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of *none* effect by your tradition.” God did not say that Corban would free one from the parental law. (Note: The Christian should not go to the other extreme either and provide to excess for a parent. By so doing, one would have nothing for the Lord.)

Matt. 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

Matt. 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

Matt. 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Verses 7-9 are *strong* language: “Ye hypocrites!” Isaiah prophesied of the Pharisees’ attitude, saying that they drew nigh unto God with their mouth, but their heart was far from Him. Jesus did not hesitate to speak insultingly when the occasion demanded it. Not only were the Pharisees violating the commandment of God, but they were *teachers* of the Law. They taught a *wrong* principle and then tried to justify themselves by *tradition* and time-honored customs.

Any of those Pharisees who were right-hearted would have pondered Jesus’ reasoning and seen that he was correct. Strong rebukes were needed to bring repentance. Jesus’ stinging remarks did one of two things. They either (1) more and more *embittered* the Pharisees or (2) sobered them up to realize there was truth in the rebuke—that in asking for Corban, they were setting aside God’s commandment. Later on, even the disciples questioned Jesus as to what he really meant, so we wonder how many Pharisees understood. At any rate, blunt,

straightforward words were needed.

Jesus noted that the Pharisees' words, conduct, and appearance *seemed* to be Godlike, but he accused them of being hypocrites because their hearts were far from God in that they were *not obeying* the precepts of the *Lord's Word*. They were teaching as *commandments* the doctrines of men. We must beware lest we do this too. We must not teach the doctrines of men as being on a par with the Bible, as being a "thus saith the LORD."

Jesus used exceedingly strong language, adding that they worshipped God *in vain*. The scribes and Pharisees appeared to worship God, but their worship was not acceptable. In fact, it was repugnant.

Although we cannot judge motives or attack individuals, we can certainly (and *strongly*) attack a wrong principle. Violation of a principle cannot be pussyfooted or whitewashed—especially when others are trying to force that wrong principle on us.

Matt. 15:10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

Matt. 15:11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

The multitudes were actually present, as bystanders, listening to Jesus' exchange with the Pharisees. Now he specially addressed his remarks to these bystanders: "Hear, and understand." Then Jesus reviewed what he had previously said but added an emphasis for their benefit. He treated the Pharisees' original question: "Why do your disciples not wash their hands in the accustomed manner before they eat?" Thus eating was an issue, and the Pharisees were particular about how it should be done—that one should not eat with unwashed hands.

The kernel of Jesus' lesson was, "Not that which goeth *into* the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh *out* of the mouth, this defileth a man." In other words, a person is very responsible for what he teaches (for what comes *out* of his mouth) about God's Word. There is a great responsibility when we *talk* to others, and not merely from the platform. True, a public speaker has a larger audience, but the principle is the same whether only one or 500 people are being addressed. Of course the *degree* of responsibility increases according to the number of those being taught about God's Word. Even an individual sister can "teach" and influence the thinking of others through a *private* conversation.

Matt. 15:12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

Verse 12 is rather humorous. After all of this *strong* language by Jesus, the disciples innocently asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended by your words?" These Pharisees had traveled a *long* distance—all the way from Jerusalem—to query Jesus, so the disciples thought that perhaps Jesus should have used softer words to these *important* religious leaders. But Jesus *intended* to offend them.

The lesson is that when necessary, we should state the situation exactly as it is, *whether or not* the person is considered "important." To the Pharisees, Jesus was strong. To the multitudes, he merely said, "What comes out of your mouth is more important than what goes into it."

Matt. 15:13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

Jesus next uttered another important statement: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath

not planted, shall be rooted up”; that is, merely nominal Christians will be exposed either in the present life or in the future life. False pretensions will be manifested as such. False Christians either (1) were not “planted” (called) by the Father in the first place or (2) were truly “planted” (called) but did not develop sufficiently for one reason or another. Specifically, here, Jesus was referring to those who just outwardly professed to be religious.

Matt. 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

“Let them alone: they ... [are] blind leaders of the blind.” What did Jesus mean by “Let them alone”? The disciples were more concerned for the *feelings* of the Pharisees than about their *false teaching and doctrine*. Thus Jesus meant, “Do not be overly concerned about the feelings of the scribes and Pharisees.”

We should be concerned when someone espouses a very *damaging principle* (and not just an interpretation of a Scripture, which could be relatively minor if there is not enough evidence to be dogmatic). The teaching of a wrong principle should be rectified. At times, it is necessary to identify proponents of error.

Imagine the multitudes hearing this *extreme bluntness* of Jesus: “They be blind leaders of the blind.” Many fail today to realize what a *large percentage* of Jesus’ statements were *very direct, honest, open, blunt, and straightforward*, and not delicately camouflaged or gently suggested. This was true whether he was exposing error or expounding truth.

Matt. 15:15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

Matt. 15:16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

Matt. 15:17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

Matt. 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

Matt. 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Matt. 15:20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Although Peter was the spokesman, *all* of the disciples wanted an explanation, as shown by Jesus’ reply: “Are ye [plural] also yet without understanding?” They even considered Jesus’ words a “parable,” whereas he was having a *blunt and open conversation* upon a principle and precept. What the disciples wanted explained was the statement “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.”

Verses 17-20 contain Jesus’ explanation. That which enters the mouth [food] goes into the belly and out the rectum, but what is in the heart is another matter. The words that come forth from the mouth are an index of the heart. Spoken words are merely an overflow of all that yet remains in the heart. What comes out of the heart is more important than that which goes into the belly. Food just streams through the system, whereas what we say is an indication of what is in the heart.

A man is defiled when evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, false witness, etc., proceed forth from

the heart. Moreover, the defiled person defiles others, but what a man eats does not defile others. Poisoned food affects only the one who actually eats it, whereas that which comes out of the heart affects not only that individual but others. Thus the heart is far more important than the belly. Jesus concluded with the axiom that eating with unwashed hands does not defile a man. (Note: The Scriptures do urge moderation and restraint in food intake.)

The Pharisaical element was trying to find flaws in Jesus. Because of this wrong heart condition, they seized upon a nonsensical issue, trying to make a case out of unwashed hands. We should *guard against* such a tendency. If we have envy, malice, etc., in our heart toward another, then we will be happy to think we have found an issue against him. And we might try to magnify a relatively inconsequential matter all out of proportion.

The first two categories of verse 19 were the evil harbored in the hearts of the Pharisees towards Jesus: evil thoughts and murders. The Pharisees thought Jesus might be teaching error in regard to not washing hands, and they wanted to “murder” his influence.

Matt. 15:21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

Matt. 15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

Matt. 15:23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

Jesus went to the “coasts” of Tyre and Sidon (in Lebanon today) on the Mediterranean. A Canaanite woman residing there at the time (she was a Syrophenician by nationality) approached Jesus and cried for his aid in healing her daughter, who was possessed with a devil (Mark 7:26). The fact that Jesus “answered her not a word” must have seemed strange to the disciples, for it was customary for him to heal all among the multitudes who needed help, yet he remained silent when this *one* individual besought him. Therefore, the disciples must have concluded that Jesus had a good reason for not healing the daughter.

“She crieth after us,” said the disciples. In other words, she kept following Jesus as he *walked* along, importuning him all the while. In addressing Jesus as “Son of David,” the woman was acknowledging him as the Messiah and attributing to him great authority and power. She had *faith* that he could help her daughter.

Matt. 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Finally Jesus told his disciples, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Matt. 15:25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

Not satisfied with Jesus’ silence, the woman came and worshipped him, saying, “Lord, help me.” Probably she prostrated herself, falling down on her knees.

Matt. 15:26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.

Then Jesus answered her with a *strong* statement: “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” The Gentiles were regarded as household pets.

Matt. 15:27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

Matt. 15:28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

The woman responded, "That is true, Lord, yet dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Her response melted Jesus' heart. He said to her, "O woman, *great* is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Because of her answer, Jesus could not deny her. She kept humbling herself more and more. "And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Matt. 15:29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

Matt. 15:30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:

Matt. 15:31 Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus left Tyre and Sidon to go to a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, where great multitudes came unto him. We can deduce that the mountain was not too steep because of the large number of people who came bringing many lame, maimed, etc., who had to be carried.

The "lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others" were cast down at Jesus' feet; that is, they were abruptly deposited at Jesus' feet without any preliminaries, as if to say, "Now what are you going to do?" "Maimed" means one who is actually missing a limb or is twisted. What a miracle for a limb to be restored! When all of the suffering ones were healed, the multitude "glorified the *God* of Israel." In other words, the multitude could see that the power used for the healing was even greater than Jesus, the one doing the healing. The power came from on high—and praise was due to *God*. The effect of the healing was that the dumb could speak, the maimed were made whole, the lame walked, and the blind could see.

Probably this healing occurred somewhere near the place of the feeding of the 5,000 earlier (compare verse 39 to Matthew 14:22,34). Boats were needed in both instances; hence this healing could not have taken place in either Magdala or the land of Gennesaret but was done on the east side of Galilee.

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

Matt. 15:33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

Matt. 15:34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

Matt. 15:35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

Matt. 15:36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matt. 15:37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

Matt. 15:38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

Matt. 15:39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

This feeding of 4,000 occurred a little while after the previous feeding of the 5,000. In the meantime, Jesus had gone to the coasts of the Mediterranean (Tyre and Sidon), returning via a northern route to Galilee on the eastern shore. Jesus' travels would have taken several months, part of a year.

We might think, Why didn't the apostles recall the previous feeding? Couldn't they have had the faith to realize Jesus' power? But conditions are the same today. With some, the message of truth just does not get across. If disciples back there, who were apostles and true followers of the Lamb, could forget the lesson, then if we had been in their shoes, we probably would have reacted similarly. Hence we see the need for *repetitive* lessons. Sometimes we are oblivious to miracles happening right around us. Our senses can be very numb.

Remember, too, that we read these accounts quietly and calmly, but the apostles were living a life of long, tedious journeys under the hot sun with various kinds of "excitement" and incidents occurring now and then. These extenuating factors kept them from drawing apart and reflecting on specific incidents. They were too busy listening to Jesus' latest talks and advice and observing his behavior and miracles.

Just as with the raising of Lazarus, Jesus waited until a crucial period—until three days had passed—to miraculously feed the multitudes. With Lazarus, Jesus waited four days, and he delayed to heal the Syrophoenician woman's daughter in order to extract her depth of faith. Our trials, too, sometimes persist in our best interest so that other lessons are extracted and we appreciate the eventual overruling more. For three days, the multitudes were with him. What a sight—"great multitudes" (verse 30) with their sick!

To draw the spiritual lesson of the two miraculous feedings, we will set forth the comparison:

Matthew 14:15-21

5,000 fed (plus women and children)
5 loaves of bread
2 fish
12 baskets of food remained

Matthew 15:32-39

4,000 fed (plus women and children)
7 loaves of bread
"A few little fishes"—2*
7 baskets of food remained

* The "few *little* fishes" would probably be two fish. The disciples were contrasting the size of the great multitude with the two little fish.

The first time *all* of the apostles were with Jesus; hence 12 baskets were left over. This time only seven baskets remained, so it is likely that only seven apostles were with him. In other words, each time *one* apostle collected *one* basket of food.

The numerical quantities of *food* and the number of *people* fed add up to 144,000 as follows:

$$(5 + 2 + 7 + 2) \times (5,000 + 4,000) = 144,000$$

$$16 \times 9,000 = 144,000$$

Jesus sent away the multitude, and they went back around the shore by foot. Meanwhile, he entered a boat and came into the coasts of Magdala on the west bank of Galilee.

The “three days” of verse 32 are significant spiritually. It takes parts of three 1,000-year days to develop the 144,000 (part of a 1,000-year day, a whole 1,000-year day, and part of another 1,000-year day). Stated another way, it takes part of the fifth day, all of the sixth day, and part of the seventh day.

Incidentally, the Scriptures state that Jesus was “three days” in the grave, but the time was actually less than two days. The principle is the same: part of the first day, all of the second day, and part of the third day. A proof text in regard to the development of the Church is John 6:39,40, where Jesus said he would raise up the body “at the last day.” Another proof text is John 2:19, where Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in *three days* I will raise it up.” Both citations refer to the completion and glorification of the Church.

The “bread” of the feeding of the multitude could relate to the shewbread of the Tabernacle. A “fish” was a Christian symbol during the first three centuries. As a directional signal for a Christian church, a fish called attention to Jesus and Galilee. Many Byzantine churches have fish in their mosaics.

Matt. 16:1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees came with the purpose of “tempting” Jesus. They thought he would not be able to show them “a sign from heaven,” and as a result, his reputation would be ruined.

Matt. 16:2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

Matt. 16:3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

Verses 2 and 3 are not necessarily spurious (see Luke 12:54-57). The verses are a thumbnail sketch of how to foretell weather a day in advance under normal circumstances.

The basis of Jesus’ rebuke was that the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not recognize “the signs of the times,” namely, that Jesus was the Messiah, appearing right on schedule in their midst. Had they known the Word of God, they would have accepted him.

Matt. 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

In responding to the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus primarily used this verbal technique: “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” In other words, only the “sign” of the Prophet Jonah was given, and what was that sign? Jonah stayed three days in the belly of the whale, typifying Jesus’ three days in the grave before his resurrection (see Matt. 12:39,40). Incidentally, Bro. Charles Chopoorian noted that the right side of the Garden Tomb is designed to look like a fish, and the Garden Tomb is the scene of Jesus’ death and resurrection (the “Jonah” sign).

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted an immediate sign produced, but Jesus did not humor them. He said in effect, “You will get an evidence but not right now, and it will be in the nature of that which transpired with Jonah.” As Jonah was three days in the whale’s belly and then vomited forth onto dry land, so Jesus would be buried in a sepulcher and then vomited forth in resurrection. (When Jesus’ resurrection occurred, the news spread through Israel like wildfire,

but only a few got personal evidences: the apostles, the 500, and the women.) The way Jesus responded showed that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were not in the proper heart condition for an immediate sign to be given.

It is not wicked and adulterous to ask for a sign, and Jesus was not saying that it was. Rather, this wicked class *did not deserve* an answer. Jesus' reply was like John the Baptist's remark when some of the Pharisees and the Sadducees came forth to be baptized: "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance [first]." John did not want to baptize them, even though they humbled themselves to the extent of coming to him. He called them a "generation of vipers." Jesus, too, called attention to their wickedness. Signs in themselves are all right; the heart condition is what matters.

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

In crossing over to the other side of Galilee, the disciples had forgotten to take bread along.

Matt. 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matt. 16:7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

When they were on the other side, Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The disciples considered this a strange statement, so they "reasoned" on it. (We should not be critical of the disciples, for our reaction would probably have been the same had we lived back there. By living in the Harvest period, we have been indoctrinated through present truth to see that "leaven" is a picture of sin.) Apparently, Jesus' statement made the disciples conscious of the fact they had forgotten to bring bread, but they could not understand the reference to the Pharisees and Sadducees. At any rate, the disciples *did discuss* the matter. Their only conclusion was, "We forgot to bring bread along." "Bread" represents doctrine.

Matt. 16:8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Matt. 16:9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Matt. 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Matt. 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

Jesus replied, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" Then he reviewed his miraculous multiplication of bread on two occasions. Notice that Jesus' approach here was a little different. He was not speaking of literal bread, yet he took time to reason from the disciples' standpoint before giving the real explanation.

No doubt Jesus could rebuke us often too: "O ye of little faith!" No matter how long we have been consecrated, faith needs to be *increased*—to grow—*more and more*. In calling to mind the two previous miracles of feeding the multitudes, Jesus was saying, in effect, that the disciples were not learning the intended lessons. There should have been an *increase* in faith.

Previously the disciples had brought a little pita bread; now they had *none*. Perhaps this complete lack of bread caused them to doubt, but even then, Jesus could have made bread from *no* bread. Those were *stupendous* miracles to be able to feed *thousands* of people (first, 5,000 men plus women and children, or approximately 10,000, and then 4,000 men plus women and children, or about 8,000) out in the desert with *two* little fish and *five or seven* loaves of pita bread. The multiplication aspect was phenomenal. Jesus could have made bread out of a *stone* if necessary!

Therefore, even though the disciples had no bread, there should have been an *increase* in faith—going a step higher. When we are blessed with an answer in one experience and then in another experience, etc., our faith should keep reaching out a little higher each time. It is like the progress of weight lifters. Each time they reach a certain level, they exert extra effort to lift a little bit more. Faith develops the same way—step by step—when we face the unknown. We are to exercise the mind to trust in God in the face of a new experience. “O ye of little faith” means the disciples should have been able to realize that *somehow* Jesus could provide.

Matt. 16:12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Then the disciples understood what Jesus meant: “Beware of the leaven of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees”; that is, “Beware of *wrong doctrine*.”

Of course the disciples were *learning*, and every experience was *new*. We do not realize how blessed we are to have the Bible, the *Volumes*, concordances, and other study helps. Jesus introduced the thought of “leaven” in meal earlier (Matt. 13:33), but it did not sink in. Now the disciples called to mind Jesus’ previous statement and understood that he was referring to wrong doctrine.

From another standpoint, why did Jesus *warn* the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees? These religious leaders were men of *learning and culture*. Of course not everything they said was wrong, but the disciples were to be *discerning* hearers lest the erroneous doctrine rub off on them and the wrong attitude toward Jesus adversely affect them.

This lesson is also needed today. In antitype, the Pharisees and Sadducees are professed Christians with considerable understanding who are well educated and deeply immersed in Christian thinking and philosophy. Not only does Jesus’ lesson apply to leaders in the nominal Church, but it can also apply to some in the Bible Student movement who speak from the platform. They may be speaking about and teaching something they do not know. When principles and Scriptures are reasoned on, we should question and *analyze* the statements in our minds. This does not mean we do not respect the individual, but for our own safety, we should not just accept statements without analysis, especially if they could be far-reaching in terms of possible future development. Christians of all ages are to *weigh what they hear* and see if the words comport with the Word of God. Incidentally, we should not be embarrassed at having an inquiring mind, for we want to *grow* in grace and knowledge continually. This is true of both those who teach and those who are taught.

Sadducees were professed religionists but more along philosophical lines. They did not believe in the resurrection, for example, but considered the present life to be the whole life. Scribes were teachers on a lower level, whereas the Pharisees were held in more esteem as teachers. Both the scribes and the Pharisees believed in the resurrection. Although there were different kinds of scribes, a “scribe” was usually a “writer,” one who took down or read information from another source. A scribe explained what someone else said; for example, in our day, a “scribe” might explain what Pastor Russell said or take dictation. Thus a scribe either received

information and recorded it or explained the information of others. In contrast, the Pharisees did the teaching.

Matt. 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

Since Caesarea Philippi was inland, what were its “coasts”? According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the word “coasts” means “division” or “part,” hence “boundary” or “region.” As a division of the Roman Empire, Caesarea Philippi was an allotment of territory over which the Caesar appointed someone to be in charge or have the jurisdiction. In this case, Caesar gave a certain area called Philippi to be governed by Philip, Herod’s brother and first husband of Herodias. This region extended from Bethsaida up to Mount Hermon.

Jesus asked, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” He frequently used the expression “Son of man” in regard to himself to drum very necessary lessons into “school children,” as it were.

Matt. 16:14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

The disciples replied, “Some say you are John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Based on Malachi 4:5,6, some thought Jesus was Elijah resurrected, but why did others think he was Jeremiah? This thinking was based on Jeremiah 1:10, “I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.” Also, Jeremiah procured land from his nephew and had the deed recorded and notarized in duplicate. The fact he was following God’s instructions suggests that in the resurrection, Jeremiah will come back and claim his property. To think Jesus was John the Baptist shows what great respect there was for John. Though he was put to death, some thought he had come back to life.

Matt. 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

Then Jesus asked the disciples directly, “But whom do *you* say that I am?”

Matt. 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Simon Peter was the first to speak: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In other words, “You are the Messiah.” Peter’s response must have warmed Jesus’ heart. A couple of years of Jesus’ ministry had elapsed by this time, perhaps even three years. After this training period, the apostles were convinced that he really was the Messiah.

Matt. 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“Flesh and blood” did not reveal this truth to Peter, and *not even Jesus*, but the *Heavenly Father*; that is, the Holy Spirit, which is *of God*. *God* does the calling, *He* selects the Bride, and *He* will set the members of the body in their positions of honor. Jesus was pleased that Peter responded so well to lessons from the *Father*, and Peter was touched to the core with this conviction.

“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” This very solemn documented statement has been recorded in history with credit to Peter for speaking first. It is *God-given* for the Holy Spirit to act upon a human. Enlightenment comes from *God*—even if the enlightenment is not fully complied with.

Simon “Bar-jona” means “son of Jona.” Jesus contrasted this natural name with the new name, Peter.

Matt. 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Jesus continued, “You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church”—but in what sense? It was upon Peter’s statement, or confession of faith of the fundamental truth that *Jesus is the Messiah*. In other words, the “rock” upon which the Church was to be built is the truth that Jesus truly is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter’s statement was likened to a rock because a rock is a foundation and *Jesus is the foundation* of the Church. To have a solid structure, the builder should erect it on rock and not on shifting sand.

In Greek, there are two different words of similar origin: *petros* (Peter) and *petra* (rock). Peter was a *little stone*, and the truth he uttered was a *massive rock*. Jesus would build the Church upon Peter’s confession of faith as it would come forth from the lips of *all his followers*. Thus there are *many* “Peters.” The class who exercise the faith that Jesus is the Christ and believe *into* him comprise his Church.

Originally, Jesus’ question, Peter’s answer, and Jesus’ reply were given in Aramaic, not Greek. Accordingly, some of the Gospels call Peter “Cephas.” The singular and plural (piece of stone versus a mass of stone) are indicated in the Aramaic as well.

The Roman Catholic Church uses this statement to prove that Peter was the first pope. Actually, however, St. Augustine and some of the early church fathers properly interpreted Peter’s *confession* of faith as the rock. The *office* of Papacy claims that someone is sitting in *Peter’s* chair. When installed in office, the new pope is given a key (see verse 19).

“And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [the Church].” Jesus was saying that no matter how persecuted his followers were and no matter how many were put to death, the grave (oblivion, destruction) would not prevail against the *Church* and its *resurrection*. If the “gates of hell” did prevail, there would be no resurrection.

The Roman Catholic Church erroneously claims this promise for itself, boasting that it will never fall. When the system does fall, never to rise again, the lie will be given to this false claim. Stated another way, when the woman, the harlot, is buried, she will *remain* dead. The beast rose out of the bottomless pit once, but it will stay there the second time.

Matt. 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

What are the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” that Peter obtained? (1) On the Day of Pentecost, he was honored with being the chief spokesman to the Jews. (2) He had the honor of going to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. Therefore, Peter had the privilege of opening the door of the gospel to two classes. After that, Paul rose in prominence above Peter. Thus the “keys” were the privilege of introducing the gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles.

“Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Here Peter alone was given the honor of binding and releasing, but in Matthew 18:18, this statement was made with regard to *all* of the apostles and the *ecclesia* (compare John 20:23). Hence we see the necessity to consider all Scriptures on a given subject, or one would conclude that Peter alone was given the signal honor. If true, this

honor would have indicated his great superiority and supremacy over the other apostles.

How far should we carry the “binding” and “loosing”? It includes the statements of the apostles that were recorded in Scripture other than in the few instances where a correction was necessary (for example, Paul had to rebuke Peter for dissembling with the Jews). This honor of binding and loosing also implies that the apostles in council, as a *collective* group, could give profitable reasoning. Remember the council that was held and gave practical advice in regard to not eating meat sacrificed to idols or blood or things strangled and to abstaining from fornication (Acts 15:20; 21:25). In any case, the apostles’ statements had to be *according to the Word of God* in order to bind or loose. Moreover, such a council was of the *apostles*, not of the Roman Catholic Church and its bishops, etc.

“Church authority” back there was *apostolic* authority, which ceased when the apostles fell asleep in death. There is no such thing as apostolic succession. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, is built on the *12 apostles* of the Lamb, and not on other church councils or individuals. The Roman Catholic Church put the emphasis on *Peter’s* having the power to loose and bind in order to justify its claim that one personage in the office of Papacy had this authority. In time, when the Roman Catholic Church could no longer get away with one person, it started the idea of church councils, imitating the council in the Book of Acts with its own councils at Nicea, Trent, and other places. In 1870 came the blasphemous claim of papal infallibility, predicated on Matthew 16:19. The pope wanted to make sure that he could not be outvoted in councils. The statements of the pope *ex cathedra* have been considered all supreme and infallible since 1870 but not the statements of the church.

Matt. 16:20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Jesus charged the disciples to “tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” This command was given because to have told others would have impeded his primary work of selecting the Little Flock. Jesus spent 3 1/2 years instructing the apostles; that is, he was instructing the instructors of the Church. Also, he did not want them to get too enthusiastic because he had to tell them about the Crucifixion, which he started to do on this very occasion (see verse 21). The faith of the disciples had to be established so that when he was off the scene, they would be stalwart men of faith, zealous and able to instruct others. Jesus had much to tell them yet—many other lessons—so he did not want the apostles to run off to inform others that he was the Messiah. He gave abundant sermons toward the end, whereas earlier, around Galilee, he did mainly a healing work, with strength going out of him. Although he did instruct the apostles earlier, he taught *much deeper* lessons later and gave *detailed* instructions. Thus two factors were involved in Jesus’ not wanting the apostles to tell others that he was “the Christ”: (1) lest he become too popular too quickly and (2) lest the apostles become more interested in spreading the news of his being the Messiah than in getting the “graduating” lessons they needed as he neared the end of his course.

Matt. 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

From the time Jesus charged his disciples to tell no man he was the Christ (Messiah), he began to teach them that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the scribes and chief priests, “and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” At the time, he was in the extensive territory of Caesarea Philippi, which extended from Mount Hermon to the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee.

It is interesting that Jesus *forewarned* his disciples before he even left for Jerusalem. He prepared

them *long in advance*, going into some detail by telling them “many things” that he must suffer.

Matt. 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

We can appreciate why Peter commented, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee,” for he thought the events just foretold in verse 21 should not occur. Peter took Jesus “and began to rebuke him.” In view of Peter’s impulsive nature, it is possible that he even laid his hands on Jesus. He was trying to bring Jesus to his senses!

Matt. 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

But Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan.” That was quite a rebuke! And it continued, “You are an offense unto me.” Peter received a response that was exactly opposite to what he had anticipated. Jesus added, “For you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” In one sense, Jesus was addressing Peter personally, and in another sense, he was particularly faulting the Adversary.

There are several lessons here, as follows:

1. Sometimes the advice of the consecrated is *wrong*. It is all right to ask advice, but the words must be weighed against *Scripture*. Peter was the *active agent* here. With his taking hold of Jesus and rebuking him, the situation was a little different than where an individual *asks* for advice. Nevertheless, all comments and advice should be weighed and analyzed.
2. Sometimes, in order to justify ourselves, we look for someone who will agree with us. Suppose three brethren were asked for advice and one gave the answer we wanted. That could be the *wrong* advice, but we would justify ourselves by having someone back us up. Although it is comforting to receive counsel that supports our viewpoint, we must make sure the advice is *right*.
3. This was Satan’s reasoning, but since he is a *powerful* spirit being, how could he reason on things “that be of men”? To a certain extent, much that is in the hearts of men has been put there by Satan. As the prince or “god of this world,” he has an influence that operates on the minds and actions of men so that, as with Peter, they really reflect his arguments and reasonings. Satan appreciates the things of men because they reflect what he put in their minds to start with. That is one perspective. From another standpoint, the things of men are along natural lines of pride, ambition, appearance, satisfaction of temporal and/or lustful desires, etc. Even though Satan is a spirit being, his thinking is along carnal lines.

When Jesus began to tell the disciples the events that must befall him (verse 21), Peter responded *quickly*, and so did Jesus—*abruptly and to the point*. By nature, Peter was impulsive in speech and action. Therefore, this incident of being rebuked so strongly by Jesus would act as a “governor” in future situations that might arise. It would cause Peter to stop and reflect that perhaps his initial thought was not the advisable course to take. His impulse or desire might be one way, but he would have to pause and *weigh* it.

Matt. 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Jesus had just disclosed to his disciples that he had to suffer and die but that he would be resurrected. After rebuking Peter for his hasty remark, Jesus drew a lesson from the incident, as presented in verses 24-28.

First, Jesus gave the terms of discipleship: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Peter had just advised Jesus to do the opposite—*not* to take up the Cross and *not* to suffer humiliation. Not only was suffering not Peter’s concept of an ideal Christian, but he considered suffering to be beneath Jesus, the *Lord and Master*. In fact, it was repugnant to Peter to consider that the Master should be humiliated and put to death. However, Jesus contradicted Peter by correcting him. If we want to be like Jesus, we must *suffer humiliation and take up our cross and follow him*—after first *denying self*. The flesh does not like to suffer and be the recipient of unkind remarks. We like to be liked.

Notice that we are to take up *our own* cross, not Jesus’ cross; that is, different brethren have different crosses. *Each* gets the training and discipline he needs along particular lines, or stated another way, not all need the same training and discipline. Thus our crosses vary one from another to a certain extent. In any event, we will have a “cross” that *conflicts with our natural reasoning and way*. God’s will crosses our will, and *His* will must be supreme.

Matt. 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

On the occasion that Jesus uttered these words, what depth did his words have? Jesus had just said that he would be killed and that this was God’s will for him. Now he added that it is God’s will for the Christian to also sacrifice his life. Earlier Jesus evaded danger when persecution arose because his time had not yet come, but when his time came, he did exactly the opposite—he went right into the jaws of death. In other words, there are times when we should think of the dangers of persecution and times when we should not. We must weigh certain matters, but if Providence indicates that this is the time to face persecution, we are to do so. Many would inherently recognize when the time comes to take a stand, even though they might back out of it. Conscience and other circumstances alert an individual as to when to take an action that might result in death. Jesus was saying that when such a situation occurs, to not face up to it and take a stand would mean the loss of everything.

Verse 25 can be viewed two ways. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). When the time comes, the Little Flock will *willingly* go into the situation. In contrast, the Great Company will not advance into the danger voluntarily but will wait until they are *placed or forced* into the danger. Stated another way, the Lord’s goat goes *spontaneously and voluntarily*, whereas the scapegoat is *led or brought* by Providence. But even the Great Company *must react faithfully*, the principle being, “whosoever will save his life shall lose it.”

In the past, many have been martyred for Jesus—a number *far in excess* of 144,000. Thus the majority of those who died at the stake will be Great Company, even though they did not try to save their lives but were willing to die for their conviction. Those who recanted to save their lives were another matter. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love Christ more than our family, or we are not even worthy to be Jesus’ disciple (Matt. 10:37,38). The text is not saying, “worthy to be of the Little Flock” but “worthy to be my disciple”—period! We must *not* recant in the face of danger, for in doing so, we could lose *all* life.

There are perhaps some exceptions, however, for Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and the Mennonites’ *Martyrs’ Mirror* tell of cases where some recanted but were later so grief-stricken that they ended up doubly zealous and were eventually martyred at the stake. Probably forgiveness was extended in these cases where the individuals were so shocked at their actions that they were renewed in zeal and became fearless.

Matt. 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own

soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

It would be wonderful to fully know, *without question*, that we will live forever. *Everlasting life* in itself is such a thrilling reward that it should be worthy of obedience. After all, what is the present life where one lives to the age of 30, 50, 70, or even more, when balanced with billions of years—*eternity*? There is *no* comparison! Everlasting life is worth *far more* than the “whole world.”

Matt. 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Why did Jesus introduce this thought here? Though Jesus and the Christian must suffer and die, the *resurrected* Son and “his angels” (the Church in *glory*) will return ultimately to “reward every man according to his works.” Although verses 25 and 26 are addressed to the Christian, the same principle applies that *any* man in *any* age who eventually gets life, including those of the world, must love God *more than self*. Indeed *all* who ever get everlasting life on *any* plane will love God above self. The heart attitude of every individual will be judged according to this requirement.

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

Jesus had said he must die, and this verse made the disciples think they would go right into the Kingdom. Verse 27 sounded as if that event would occur at some nebulous date in the *future*, but verse 28 made it seem *near* at hand. The two statements *seemed* contradictory until Jesus’ transfiguration on the mountain six days later (Matt. 17:1,2). Peter, James, and John were then privileged to witness a representation of the Kingdom in vision. The *Diaglott* reads, “Till they see the Son of man coming in his *royal majesty*.”

Matt. 17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

Matt. 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John up into a “high mountain apart.” There they witnessed the transfiguration scene, or *vision*. Mount Tabor was probably the site of this incident. Imagine seeing Jesus’ face shining “as the sun”! It is likely that his face was seen first and then nothing but a *bright* light. Moses’ face shone similarly when he came down from Mount Sinai. In addition to Jesus’ face shining as the sun, his clothing was “white as the light”; both glistened.

Matt. 17:3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

In vision, Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus. Jesus was in the middle. Moses (representing the Ancient Worthies) was on one side, and Elijah (representing the Church) was on the other side; that is, Moses and Elijah represented the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints, respectively. Moses pictured the faithful who lived *before* Christ, and Elijah pictured the “more than conquerors” who live *after* Christ, with Jesus being the “centerpiece,” as it were (Rom. 8:37).

What were Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talking about in this vision? They spoke about Jesus’ death, “his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (see Luke 9:31). Earlier Jesus had been discussing this very subject with his disciples (Matt. 16:21).

Of course at the time of the vision, Peter, James, and John did not realize what Moses and Elijah represented. Moses looked *forward* to the death of Jesus at Calvary, and Elijah looks *back* to that event. Moses forsook the wealth of Egypt because he looked *ahead* to Christ and the Kingdom Age, whereas the Church class in the present age look *back* to Christ. Inferentially, the death of *The Christ* is included in the vision. If the Master had to have a cross, then so do the disciples who follow him (Matt. 16:24).

Even though Jesus spoke sternly to Peter (Matt. 16:23), laid the groundwork for his crucifixion, provided many details, and gave the transfiguration vision to the three apostles, the disciples were surprised when the Crucifixion actually took place. Nevertheless, these facts, experiences, and words entered into their minds like a computer. Information must at least be received—even if it is not acted upon or fully appreciated at the time—so that *later* the Holy Spirit can energize and call it to remembrance.

Because Jesus could perform so many wonderful miracles, including the raising of the dead, the disciples and others thought that he could not be put to death under such humiliating circumstances, but they—and we—have to be educated to God’s way of thinking. God’s plan was something *new*; we are a *New Creation*. That is why Peter wrote in his epistle, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Pet. 4:12). Earlier, at Jesus’ crucifixion, Peter did think the trial was strange, but he learned his lesson.

Matt. 17:4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

“Then *answered* Peter.” In the New Testament, “answered” does not necessarily mean the comment was preceded by a question. Peter simply made a remark here. See Luke 9:33, which reads in connection with the same event, “Peter *said* unto Jesus.”

A natural born leader, Peter did all the talking. If properly *disciplined* (“when thou art *converted*”), this trait is a *good* one (see Luke 22:31,32). When Peter denied Christ, he *wept bitterly*. After the third denial, Jesus turned and looked directly at Peter. The look of the Master caused Peter to remember the prediction and, accordingly, cut him to the quick. Later, after Jesus’ resurrection, he appeared to Peter *privately* (1 Cor. 15:5). Although no details are given, it must have been a very touching scene.

Also, when Jesus appeared as a stranger on the shore following his resurrection, Peter recognized him from the boat, plunged into the water, and swam to shore. After Jesus and the disciples dined on fish, the Master continued the rebuke, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?... lovest thou me?... lovest thou me?” (John 21:15-17). Jesus’ questions were instructional. They were like a surgeon’s tool going into the heart of Peter—very precise and to the point. Later, in retrospect, Peter could see that these rebukes were a confirmation of Jesus’ love: “Feed my lambs.... Feed my sheep.... Feed my sheep.” Peter was “converted”—he was a changed man—when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. He was the primary spokesman who preached *boldly* to the thousands who were assembled.

Why did Peter say, “Lord, ... let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias”? Of course Peter was impulsive, but why did he choose these particular words? In the *vision*, only Jesus was truly there, for Elijah and Moses were merely represented, being off the scene and/or in the grave. Why was Peter interested in constructing tabernacles to their memory, in making memorials in the form of *small* tentlike structures? In view of the *tremendous* effect the vision had on Peter—he wrote about it many years later in his

second epistle—it was natural for him, as a Jew, to be given to signs and thus to make the suggestion. The Greeks liked wisdom, whereas the Jews were given to signs and demonstrations of a supernatural power.

As already stated, Mount Tabor was probably the site of the Transfiguration. There are three “holy” mountains: Sinai, Hermon, and Tabor. Daniel 11:45 describes Mount Tabor as a “glorious holy mountain” that is “between the seas” (the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee). Jesus could not have been transfigured at Mount Hermon because there would have been snow on it. Deborah’s song is about a great victory that occurred at Mount Tabor (Judg. 4:6). A prophetess with great ability, Deborah masterminded the victory for Israel, yet in humility under the divine arrangement, she achieved the victory through a man, Barak. The situation with Priscilla and Aquila in the New Testament was similar. Both helped Paul, but Priscilla, a woman, was the driving force.

Matt. 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

“A bright cloud overshadowed them.” This phenomenon was awesome in itself, but then a voice thundered out very majestically, “*This is my beloved Son, ... hear ye him.*” This scene was so impressive that Peter referred to it in his epistle but said that despite its awesomeness and positiveness, the “more sure word of prophecy” was superior (2 Pet. 1:16-19). Do we have such a conviction? Is God’s Word more “sure” to us than if we had witnessed the transfiguration and heard the voice coming from the cloud? We should have the same reverence and respect for the Word of God that Peter had—regardless of the degree of our comprehension.

Being familiar with the account of the bright cloud over the nation of Israel and the Tabernacle in the Wilderness of Sinai, the disciples would have had no difficulty realizing that the message, or voice, came from God. Also, “Hear ye him [Jesus]” was almost like a reprimand, for earlier Peter had been arguing with the Master (Matt. 16:22). Now the Father was saying, “This is my Son. I am well pleased with him. You had better listen to *him*.” In other words, in listening to Christ, we are really listening to God, for the Son is the true and highest representative of the Father.

Matt. 17:6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

Matt. 17:7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

Matt. 17:8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Imagine first seeing Jesus with a bright effulgence emanating from him, and then Moses and Elijah disappeared from the vision, so that finally only the man Christ Jesus remained!

Matt. 17:9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Notice Jesus’ charge to the three apostles as he came down from Mount Tabor: “Tell the *vision* to no man.” This statement proves that the scene was a *vision* and *not a literal occurrence* with Moses and Elijah actually being there. The vision was not to be told until Jesus had “risen again from the dead.”

Matt. 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

What was the disciples' reason for asking, "Why then say the scribes that Elias [Elijah] must first come?" The transfiguration is sometimes called the "Kingdom vision" because of Matthew 16:28, where Jesus said, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his *kingdom*." On Mount Tabor, the disciples saw a vision, a portrayal, of Jesus' authority and glory in the Kingdom. In his epistle, Peter spoke of this vision as a preview, or foreview, of Jesus' coming glory (2 Pet. 1:16-18). Having seen this tableau of Jesus transfigured and his garments glistening, the disciples raised this question about Elijah. The question was correct from one standpoint but incongruous from another. First, what was troubling the disciples? If Jesus was the Messiah, where was Elijah, for the prophecy of Malachi 4:5 had to be fulfilled; namely, "Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD," Elijah would be sent. The disciples reasoned that Elijah had to come *first*, before Messiah and the Kingdom. (Others used this argument to undercut or vitiate Jesus' Messiahship.)

Matt. 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

The word "first" in verse 11 is spurious. Jesus' answer should read, "Elias truly shall come, and restore all things." The word "all" is very significant. In the Old Testament, Elijah restored the *true* religion. Jezebel had her own private priesthood of 400 "prophets of the groves," who ate at her table, and the nation of Israel also had the 450 prophets of Baal, totaling almost a thousand false prophets in all (1 Kings 18:19). The true religion was represented by only Elijah and a handful of minor personalities. In the ensuing contest, the true God of Elijah answered by fire and consumed the sacrificial offering on Mount Carmel. The 450 false prophets were all slain subsequently but not the 400.

For a while, therefore, Elijah restored the true religion in Israel. Jesus was alluding to that work except he was referring not to the restoration that took place at the time of the French Revolution, which was only a *partial* fulfillment, but to the *real* fulfillment or restoration that will occur in the Kingdom, when all men will serve the Lord with one "shoulder" (Zeph. 3:9 KJV margin). In that day, there will be *one* religion and *one* language.

Thus the disciples used the argument that Elijah had to first come, and their reasoning seemed to belittle Jesus' understanding. However, Jesus used the rebuttal of verse 12.

Matt. 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Matt. 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Jesus rebutted the disciples' question of verse 10 by saying, "Elijah has *already* come." He was referring to a partial fulfillment in the person of John the Baptist, who prefigured an "Elijah work" by preaching repentance for sin; that is, John did the beginning of the Elijah work, and he introduced Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Thus the prevalent argument to insinuate that Jesus was not really the Messiah was having a fulfillment before the disciples' very eyes.

"They knew him [John the Baptist] not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." The pronoun "they" referred to *Herod* (the king, civil power, who gave the executive order), *Herodias* (Papacy, the mastermind and instigator), *Salome* (federated Protestantism, the daughter who danced and did the mother's bidding), and the *nation*. All four shared in the responsibility. Even though the king, the queen, and the daughter did the dirty work, the people incurred responsibility because they were not sufficiently astute and zealous to halt John's imprisonment and execution.

“Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of *them*.” This was a significant prophecy, for Jesus was predicting his coming death at the hands of civil and religious power and the people.

Matt. 17:14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

Matt. 17:15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

Matt. 17:16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

In this *forcefully emotional* account, a man came to Jesus and cast himself down at the Master’s feet to implore help for his “lunatic” son. Notice the son’s behavior. It is one thing to have an epileptic fit, in which one falls to the ground and froths at the mouth, but the man’s son was trying to *destroy* himself by throwing himself into the fire or into a body of water to drown. Imagine the *terror* the parents experienced in having such a son! When least expected, the son would run over and cast himself into the fire. No doubt the father beseeched Jesus with *great fervor and emotion*. Previously, the father had asked the disciples to help, but to no avail. Now he came to Jesus directly.

Matt. 17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

Why did Jesus abruptly call that generation “faithless and perverse” and ask, “How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” The father, the son, and the disciples *all* lacked sufficient faith, although they themselves were not the “perverse generation.” This statement, which was made before Jesus initiated the cure, was quite embrasive, for the whole generation was being criticized.

Matt. 17:18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

Jesus effected the cure by rebuking the demon spirit that was in the child, making him want to destroy himself. This incident gives us a clue as to the vicious, sadistic, malevolent nature of fallen spirit beings. To a greater or lesser extent, certain crimes are committed because a person is possessed (for example, stabbing a person 50 times when two or three times would be sufficient to kill him). When taking hard drugs, a person can be susceptible to strange, bizarre acts because the fallen angels influence his mind. For the same reason, patients in an insane asylum are sometimes put in padded cells or straitjackets to prevent injury to themselves. Hence these evil spirit beings still exert a powerful influence over their victims in our day. In other words, today the conditions are the same as at the First Advent, even though the medical profession denies the possibility of possession. The most the psychiatrists will admit is that a person can have “illusions” of being possessed by fallen spirit beings or separate personalities. The doctors will not recognize the reality of the matter because they do not believe in the existence of a personal Devil and fallen angels. Thus they consider possessed patients as having a “disease.” Actually, a disease can exist, but the fallen angels capitalize on *weaknesses* of the mind or body to produce effects that might not otherwise be done at all by that individual.

Matt. 17:19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

In order to avoid embarrassment, the disciples went *privately* to Jesus and asked, “Why couldn’t we cast him out?”

Matt. 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If

ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Jesus replied, “Because of your unbelief.” If the disciples had had as much faith as a grain of mustard seed, they could have effected the cure. In fact, they could even have commanded a mountain to depart and it would!

What is faith? It is the exercise of the mind with regard to the Word and the will of God. Faith is not credulity (superstitious belief), for faith has a large degree of *knowledge*—so much so, in fact, that faith and knowledge are inseparable. However, “knowledge” does not mean seeing how things are done, but rather, it is seeing the *necessity* for them to be done. A person with real faith would not pray for or do certain things on certain occasions because he would realize the request and/or action would be contrary to divine thinking, but the cure of this man’s son under this circumstance—and where the father was beseeching help on his knees—was the proper thing to do. Therefore, Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, causing it to depart. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If you had possessed faith to the degree of a grain of mustard seed, you could have cast out the demon plus done other things even more miraculous. And nothing would be impossible unto you.”

The question is, Can a Christian have such faith (“faith as a grain of mustard seed”) in the present life? No. The disciples said to Jesus, “Lord, *increase* our faith” (Luke 17:5). After a while, they began to get the lesson that they needed more faith than what they already possessed. If faith were possessed to the degree of a grain of mustard seed, the power of prayer would not be exercised for selfish reasons. Real faith is doing *God’s* will. Even if something *seems* to be impossible, if it is the *Lord’s* will, it can be done through faith.

Matt. 17:21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Jesus gave a clue as to why the disciples could not exorcise the demon from the son. The son was deeply possessed by an especially malevolent spirit being that was resident in him. This kind could not be exorcised except by prayer and fasting.

As far as we know, Jesus did not pray and fast in the casting out of this demon because he already had faith to an even *greater* extent than a grain of mustard seed. Therefore, nothing was “impossible” to him, but he did suggest that it is possible for others to produce a *miraculous* cure even *to this extent* in some instances *if* prayer and fasting accompany the words to exorcise the demon. In especially difficult cases, praying and fasting are a necessity. Fasting is *preparation*. In order for exorcism to be performed in an effective manner, it must be *preceded* by a condition of fasting for a day or more. With such a procedure, exorcism can be accomplished. The apostles could not cast out this malevolent demon because they had not prayed and fasted.

The words “and fasting” are omitted in the Sinaitic Manuscript but are a proper thought (compare Acts 13:3 and 1 Cor. 7:5). In other words, the disciples were unsuccessful in exorcising this evil spirit, but exorcism was possible if accompanied *previously* by prayer and fasting—prior to the actual time or day of exorcism. In proportion to the seriousness of the case at hand, prayer and fasting are prerequisites. Consider Daniel, who, wanting to know the meaning of a vision, fasted and prayed for *three weeks*, and then he got the answer. How many of us would do likewise? Daniel was greatly beloved by God. A person with that type of conviction is a real leader.

Those who say they are like Paul or Moses are talking through their hats. Words are cheap, but deeds, suffering, persecution, and being an outcast in the eyes of fellow brethren, false brethren, and the world are another matter. Those who so suffer and endure are a little more

realistically identifying themselves with the faith of Paul or Moses.

Fasting is a *natural* accompaniment to *serious* prayer. Our faith can be increased, but in the present life, a Christian will *never* achieve faith to the degree of a “grain of mustard seed.” Therefore, at times, prayer and fasting are essential—as in the case of *extreme* possession.

Matt. 17:22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

Matt. 17:23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Luke 9:43-45 gives additional information: “And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying [in regard to Jesus’ death], and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.” How do we harmonize the Matthew and Luke accounts? The two accounts did not take place at exactly the same moment, even though both statements followed the exorcism. The Luke account occurred first, with Jesus’ statement going over the heads of the disciples. When he repeated the statement, making it more explicit the next day or so, the disciples understood and were “exceeding” sorrowful.

Jesus clarified the situation. He would be “betrayed into the hands of men.” They would kill him, and the third day he would be raised again. Jesus was preparing the disciples in advance for his death. In many instances, when Jesus desired a lesson and/or words to sink in, he prepared the way instead of bluntly announcing or doing something. First, Jesus said, “Let these sayings sink down into your ears” (Luke 9:44). Then later—perhaps even three weeks later—Jesus explained more fully.

In Luke’s account, the disciples got a hint of what Jesus was saying but were afraid to question him. Sometimes the “bait” is held out, but the “fish” will not bite. Thus Jesus later forced the disciples to understand. It is possible that following Jesus’ rebuke of Peter for telling him not to go to Jerusalem, which occurred prior to the transfiguration and this exorcism (Matt. 16:23), the disciples were hesitant to question or contradict him in regard to his death.

Despite all this preparation and warning in advance, when the crowds hailed Jesus and joyously acclaimed him with “Hosanna,” the thought of his being put to death fled from the apostles’ minds because they had not dwelled on his words about the Crucifixion; that is, they did not let the words “sink down” into their ears. They were caught off guard by the emotional reaction of the populace. Their reaction shows that as Christians, we must be careful to follow God’s Word and not let a momentary exaltation sidetrack us from our mission. The apostles mistakenly concluded that the Kingdom was close at hand and forgot what Jesus had told them in advance regarding his death and betrayal. If the apostles had really let his words sink down into their hearts, they would have realized all the way down to Jerusalem that Jesus was intentionally going to his death. In fact, he was walking into a death trap. Despite his warnings, the apostles thought he would use his miraculous powers to protect himself. That is where one aspect of Judas’s problem came in. He thought that he could get money in the meantime and that no one could really execute Jesus.

Matt. 17:24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

Matt. 17:25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him,

saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Matt. 17:26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Matt. 17:27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Jesus and the apostles went to Capernaum, and it was tax-collecting season. Notice that the tax collectors approached Peter instead of going to Jesus direct when they were really inquiring about the latter. Evidently, Jesus' personality had an aura of innate purity and holiness that made people a little fearful.

Jesus was inside a house at the time. As Peter was about to enter, Jesus stopped him in the doorway and preempted him with a question, showing he knew about the inquiry and conversation that had just transpired. "What do you think, Simon? Of whom do kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers?" This significant drama indicated that a lesson was forthcoming; namely, when taxes are due and we have no money, we must realize that God and Jesus know of our temporal predicaments. God will take care of us and feed us with bread and water. Peter did not have to relate the incident and conversation, for Jesus already knew about it. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matt. 6:8).

Why did Jesus ask of whom tribute is taken? Peter knew the custom, which was to pay tribute to the conquerors. In the *higher* sense, it was the *Jewish nation*, not Rome, that was recognized of God, but in order not to offend Rome, Jesus gave Peter instructions to pay the tax to Caesar.

This incident gives some insight into the practices of Rome. Roman citizens were free from many obligations; they had several real privileges not only in criminal courts but also in everyday life. For example, they could ask someone along the road to carry their burden to the next milepost. Evidently, Paul inherited a large amount of money from his parents, for not just anybody could receive an education under Gamaliel. However, Paul sacrificed that education to follow Christ.

Actually, the *reverse* was true in the *higher* sense. Israel was the true nation in God's sight, and Rome was tribute. The Gentiles (Romans) were "strangers," and the Jews were God's "children." Instead of the Jews being the "strangers," as Rome regarded the matter, the Jews were *free*. Jesus could have simply said, "In order not to offend Rome, we will pay tribute." Instead he inserted a *constructive* lesson as well.

Peter probably knew they did not have the tribute money, and this was embarrassing. That is one reason Jesus intercepted him—and also to give a lesson to all of God's people with regard to temporal privations.

"Then are the children free." From the *Jews'* standpoint, Israel was a subject nation ("strangers"), of whom Rome was exacting tribute, but from the *divine* standpoint, the *reverse* was true. Israel was the nation of God (and hence "free children"), and Rome was the "stranger."

"Notwithstanding, lest we *offend* them [Rome]," we will pay the tax. In other matters, Jesus did a lot of "offending," especially to the scribes and Pharisees. Why not here? He "offended" the religious leaders when *principle* was involved, but he did not offend civil authorities

unnecessarily when conscience was not involved. “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matt. 22:21). In religious matters involving conscience, we are to take a stand. The Christian should concentrate his time on doing *God’s* will and avoid social and civil causes as much as possible.

Notice the manner in which the tax money was acquired. Peter, a fisherman by trade, was told to go down to the Sea of Galilee, cast in a hook, and take up the first fish he caught. In its mouth would be a coin sufficient to cover the taxes for “me and thee” (for Jesus and Peter)—a tender expression. Why was the coin provided in this way? Why did not Jesus produce a coin instantly like a magician? A *miracle* occurred all along the way—from Jesus’ knowing about Peter’s conversation with the tax collector to the provision of the coin. If Jesus had merely pulled a coin out of a pocket, Peter might have considered it a donation previously given to the disciples. Notice that Peter had to expend *some effort*. Similarly, Christians are to provide things decent and honest.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12, the Apostle Paul showed that the Christian should work for his food and shelter and not expect others to take care of him. The *principle* is the same here. Christians are to provide for parental and marital responsibilities, and they are to work for their living according to training and ability. It was natural for Jesus to tell Peter, a fisherman, to go to the sea and catch a fish in order to get the money to pay the tax. Accordingly, the Lord expects Christians to earn a living, and in so doing to first provide for the needs of their families, pay taxes to the government, etc.—all *necessities*—and then to give the free time to Him. Our main responsibility is to *God*, but He expects us to do what is right and honest in the sight of men, providing the *necessary* things for our own (not large houses, luxury cars, etc., but essentials). This lesson—that *God* knows and cares, but that we have responsibilities too—was not only for Peter but for all Christians.

Matt. 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

The disciples questioned Jesus: “Who will be greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” In other words, “What is the standard of rating? How do you determine the level of advancement in the Kingdom?”

Matt. 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

Jesus did not answer immediately but beckoned “a little child” to come over to him. He set the young child in the midst of the disciples and began a discourse in answer to their query.

Matt. 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Why did Jesus use the word “converted” here? Usually the word means that one consecrates and gives his heart to the Lord. However, the disciples had already forsaken their homes and occupations to become consecrated followers of Jesus. In fact, they had been following him for some time. Therefore, Jesus’ use of “converted” in this circumstance indicates that more is necessary than just the act of consecration; namely, the disciples had to change their present wrong attitude.

We are reminded of Jesus’ words at the time he prophesied of Peter’s three denials: “And when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). In other words, a *real change or transformation of character* is needed, not just mental assent at the time one makes a consecration.

Jesus used a young child as an illustration of this needed change. The child showed trustfulness, teachableness, and humility. Some nominal ministers use this illustration to give an entirely *wrong* slant, saying that a Christian does not need much knowledge, that all one has to say is, “I believe in the Lord Jesus”—words that even a child could utter “parrot” fashion. A simple belief like that of a child is all that is needed, they say.

After consecration, we must be “converted.” Teachableness, humility, and trust must *abide* in us if we would mature in Christlikeness. These traits were all implied by the child’s *obeying* and coming to Jesus when he called. True, Jesus called the disciples and they obeyed, requiring them to *radically* leave business and family, yet to *grow* into maturity as a Christian, they had to render *complete submission and obedience* to God’s Word and to His providences. Otherwise, the prize of the high calling would not be obtained. And the attitude of meekness and humility should be toward *God* and *His* will and Word, not toward others. Many are quite willing to be teachers and/or to give opportunities for service, but submission and obedience should be not to them but to the *Lord*.

We cannot even enter the “kingdom of heaven” unless we are “converted” and become like a child. Therefore, in this context, the Kingdom of heaven is limited to the Little Flock. Elsewhere the Kingdom of heaven sometimes includes the Great Company, as in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25). Since Jesus was addressing those who had already consecrated, he was referring to the Kingdom not in an embryonic sense but in the finished future sense beyond the veil, where only 144,000 will be in the Bride class.

Matt. 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

What a simple but *profound* statement! We are not to render blind obedience, however, like a literal baby with no knowledge. If we want to be the *greatest*, we must humble ourselves the *most*, but understanding should *accompany* the humility. Paul’s humility was especially manifested in connection with his beseeching the Lord three times to remove the impediment to his eyesight. God replied, “My strength is made perfect in [your] weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul drew on this lesson with statements such as “When I am *weak*, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). In *weakness*, Christ becomes more manifest in the individual who is rightly exercised. If *weakness* was the cost of pleasing God, then Paul wanted to be the *least*, and he called himself *weak* on many occasions, whereas he was really the “chiefest” of the apostles (2 Cor. 11:5).

In our trials and experiences, we should keep trusting, be humble as a little child, and *not get discouraged*. If we were beaten with many stripes for witnessing and our back was very sore and inflamed, the persecuting experience would be apt to temporize or modify our speech and behavior when we went to another city, but not so with Paul. Although he *repeatedly* went through the threshing mill, he continued with great zeal. He was beaten to the point of death with 39 stripes several times, stoned, etc., but *nothing* could dampen his ardor. He retained the attitude of childlike obedience, faith, and trust in God. And so it should be with us—persecution should *increase* our zeal, faith, trust, and obedience.

Matt. 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

How easy it would be to take this verse *out of context* and teach infant baptism or that the simplicity of faith only requires one to say, “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” and he is saved. To say we do not have to know much of truth is *wrong*. Truth is *necessary* and needful.

When Jesus made this statement, he probably demonstrated by some action or movement that he was not really talking about the young child. He *likened* the child to one young in the truth, to a believer who is amenable to the truth and is looking for help, instruction, and comfort. The

lesson was *not* that we should be children in knowledge.

Paul gave a proper slant: “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but *in understanding be men*” (1 Cor. 14:20). Under normal circumstances, children do not have prejudices or a malicious or malevolent attitude. They are not troubled with race, religion, or politics.

Thus Jesus probably pointed to the child at first, but then abstractly spoke to the apostles with a manner, posture, or look to indicate that the child *represented* one who, in childlike trust, is searching after God or, having found Him, is desiring guidance and instruction. We are very responsible for how we treat such “children.” To “receive” one such little child means to be kind to and recognize him as a brother and to lay down our life for him. Acts of kindness are a means of “receiving.”

Others have made a consecration *outside of* the Bible Student movement, yet some think dispensational truth is necessary today in order to really be one of the Lord’s little ones. This attitude (of *denying* Spirit begettal in Babylon) could keep one from “receiving” a “little child” and thus from “receiving” Jesus in this instance.

There are two aspects of “receiving.” One aspect pertains to the *initial* receiving (that is, of consecration itself), and the other is a *progressive* condition of receiving one at *any time* in his consecrated walk. Here Jesus was showing the principle of dealing with others whom the Lord may actually recognize. If we do not receive them, we are in jeopardy. When Paul persecuted Christians, he *thought* he was doing God’s will, and when correction came, he *immediately* received it. In inflicting injury and harm on professed followers of Christ, Paul was really doing it to *Jesus*. Hence the risen Lord said to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?” (Acts 9:4).

The simple lesson is that we should be very careful in dealing with other people, especially those who demonstrate dedication to the Lord—whether they are first coming into our company or have been in our company for some time. Such should be treated with “family” (brotherly) respect, all things being equal. Even in present truth, there are *degrees* of development, but there can be *progress and growth*. Therefore, if someone does not believe the doctrine of the presence, we should not disparage him. It is one thing when we are *established* and then *retrogress* in doctrine such as the presence, which may or may not portend serious problems, but when one is a *child and growing*, that is another matter.

Matt. 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones *which believe in me*.” Here Jesus qualified what kind of “child” he was talking about: a *believer*.

In what way would it be better to have a millstone hung around the neck and be thrown into the depth of the sea than to “offend one of these little ones”? To “offend” means to hurt or lead astray spiritually so that the individual goes into Second Death. The party who does the offending will also go into Second Death. Under the Law, one who was involved in a crime was as guilty as the one who actually committed the crime; *both* got the full penalty. Therefore, verse 6 is *not* a reference to hurting one’s feelings. If we went through life never hurting anyone’s feelings, not only would we be perfect gentlemen (or ladies), but we would not speak much truth because we would always be compromising lest we step on someone’s toes.

An example of incurring guilt in “offending” a little one would be to say of an individual who had earlier professed consecration, “I do not think he is consecrated. He did not know what he

was doing. His consecration was not accepted.” To take this attitude and reason thus, only more firmly establishes the individual in a direction away from the Lord. Such a one could go into Second Death, and *we* would be responsible.

A middle-aged woman who had consecrated many years earlier and been among the brethren for a number of years eventually left the way of truth. In time, however, she came into a room where three brethren were assembled. The woman said she felt the Lord had never accepted her consecration because she did not know what she was doing at the time. Two of the brethren present commiserated with her and agreed that was quite possible. Unfortunately, those two brethren were actually strengthening her hand in an evil situation, making her retrieval more and more unlikely. In comforting her, they established her in *error*. It is better to err the other way around. If we encourage one to come back who never really was consecrated, no harm is done, but to encourage one who was truly consecrated that she was *not*, would bring a stiff penalty on both the individual and the one giving such advice. As to the *degree* of culpability of those who commiserated with the woman in this case, the Lord will have to judge. At any rate, verse 6 indicates that if we are the cause of the *original* offense—if we cause someone to go out of the truth—we incur the full Second Death penalty, as does the individual who is thus prevented from later coming back.

If others were present in such a situation—some who were newly consecrated and thus without established characters—and heard the bad advice that possibly the Lord had not accepted the consecration, wrong seed thoughts would be sown in their minds. A bad climate would be created that could later result in their giving up the narrow way when persecutions, trials, and besetments became severe. Anyone who gives such wrong advice is very culpable—and yet might be completely unaware of his jeopardy. The Old Testament teaches that ignorance is no excuse.

If we compare and contrast verses 5 and 6, *both* are serious. It is serious (1) to fail to “receive” one who is consecrated and (2) to “offend” one who is consecrated.

For one to have a millstone placed about his neck and then be cast into the sea means that not only would he die, but also a *stigma* would be attached to his death. He would be regarded as anathema. From one standpoint, that would be a horrible death (unless, of course, the individual died for the truth), but it would not be as horrible as going into Second Death because the one with the millstone would get a resurrection.

Here in verse 6 is a brother who offended one of the “little ones” and did not have a noose put around his neck. In fact, nothing seemed to be happening. He did not go through any trauma, and he might even have *forgotten* that he offended one of the consecrated. Nevertheless, that individual will go into Second Death—which is *worse* than having the trauma and experience of being cast into the sea with a millstone about the neck. One can be *oblivious* to the offense he has caused and still not get a resurrection.

Q: In regard to causing one to stumble, would the *degree* of willfulness and knowledge be a factor? There would be responsibility no matter what, but would the punishment be the same in every case? Could someone actually go into Second Death if he caused another to depart from consecration *out of ignorance or without intention*?

A: If someone completely forsakes his consecration and another brother has created the climate and condition that caused the departure, the party who departed would definitely go into Second Death. As for the brother who caused the offense, the Lord will have to judge, for there is another aspect. Sometimes one who reneges on his vows falsely blames another brother or sister. Just because a statement is made does not make it true. Thus it is from the *Lord's standpoint* that culpability is determined. Some can take a statement and enlarge it to

such an *abnormal* extent that they truly believe (falsely) that another is responsible for the situation at hand.

John 10:29 states, “No man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” If one is “offended” so that he goes into Second Death, that individual would have failed *anyway*—if not for one reason, then for another. In other words, *we can take ourselves* out of the Father’s hand, but none can pluck us out if we are trying to obey. Nevertheless, responsibility is incurred by the one who *causes* the stumbling. Those who go into Second Death will be fully responsible *themselves* for having ended up with that fate, but if the Lord feels that another was responsible as the *instrument* of that failure, as the *active agent* of that deflection, then that individual would incur the same Second Death penalty. He would be considered a partner to the crime, even if he was oblivious to his role.

One who has a disposition to “offend” (such as excusing errant behavior among the professedly consecrated with statements like “Oh, he did not understand consecration”) tends to hurt not just one but several or *many* brethren. Those words should not be used because none of us can read another’s heart.

At any rate, there are *degrees* of culpability. Only God knows the full situation and, therefore, can judge one’s destiny for “offending” another Christian. However, in verse 6, the Lord is certainly emphasizing the importance of our dealing with others. Verse 6 does not mean we cannot say something to hurt somebody’s feelings. Jesus “offended” the scribes and Pharisees in that sense and even rebuked the disciples (for example, “O ye of little faith”). Thus there are hurt feelings in the Church in daily behavior. Verse 6 is referring to a *much more serious offense*. We should exercise extreme caution with others. Jesus was warning us to be careful—to deal with others only from a proper *Scriptural* perspective.

A “millstone” is a large, heavy, circular stone with a hole in the center. There are usually two stones, an upper and a lower stone. The upper stone turns to crush the grain.

Although the thought was somewhat stated earlier, it is worth repeating. Those who would literally drown another with a millstone are, in effect, dramatizing that they do not want to see or hear of that individual ever again. They want the corpse to remain glued to the sea bottom *forever*. Thus the victim is stigmatized. However, it is better to be wrongly stigmatized in this manner and ultimately get a resurrection than to not get life because of spiritually injuring a consecrated one.

The *Diaglott* interlinear reads, “Who but ever may insnare one of the little-ones these, of the believing into me, it is appropriate to him, that should be hung a millstone upper on the neck of him, and he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.” It is such a serious offense to ensnare one of these little ones that the offender deserves to be quickly drowned in the sea with a millstone around his neck. This thought, which is different from the one presented earlier, has some merit. If accurate, the word “better” in the King James Version is not used in a comparative sense. The Lord has such a distaste for one who would stumble a “little one” that His desire is to peremptorily or abruptly drown the offender with a millstone. However, sometimes an enemy of the truth is kept on the scene as a means of testing the brethren. The same principle applies to Satan. Certainly Satan is very obnoxious and distasteful in the Lord’s sight, but he was not dealt with expeditiously because he unwittingly performs a service: the trial and testing of particularly the consecrated in present or past ages.

Matt. 18:7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

“Woe unto the *world* because of offences!” Jesus even brought the world into this picture.

“Offences” are snares, traps, misrepresentations, persecutions, etc. Nero is an example of one in the world who caused “offences” to Christians. He and others in this category have accrued great responsibility. We do not know the *degree of light* Nero had with regard to Christianity, but he was certainly guilty just from a *humanitarian* standpoint. He was responsible for making *human torches* for his gardens. Offenses by the world are *permitted* to come on the consecrated for the development, growth, and proving of faith. However, even though it is necessary for the Christian to experience offenses, woe to the one who causes them.

If the “world” is considered from the standpoint of the present age at the First Advent, then Jesus probably had Judas in mind when he uttered these words. “Woe to that man [Judas] by whom the offence cometh!” Otherwise, the “world” would be especially the so-called *Christian* world. Jesus repeated these words at the Last supper, and Judas even asked, “Master, is it I?” (Matt. 26:24,25). Jesus replied, “Yes.” Judas subsequently went into Second Death, for he was *fully* responsible.

If it is “woe” to the *world* for offenses committed and the penalty will be very heavy and serious, then the inference is that for a *believer* to be involved in such a circumstance would bring an even *greater* damnation. In any age—past, present, or future—the *instrument* who caused the offense, but not necessarily the victim who was “offended” (persecuted, etc.), will receive *much* harm. Consider Judas (the offender) versus Jesus (the one offended), not to mention all those put to death for religious reasons in the early Church and during the Dark Ages. The same principle applies in regard to being a teacher: “Be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [judgment]” (James 3:1). A teacher incurs great responsibility.

Jesus was saying, “Woe to the one who *causes* the offense!” He knew that he would be the victim of the offense and that Judas would cause it. In this case, the victim went into *death*, but the instrument of offense went into *Second Death*. Verse 6, which mentions the millstone, refers to *greater culpability* and thus *Second Death*. Thus there are *variables* in the lesson of offending, but all are somber and serious. To offend a young or little one not yet established in the truth—one especially liable to depart from the way—brings *Second Death* to the offender. However, the victim does not always go into *Second Death*.

A young or “little one” is more apt to be offended and thus forsake his consecration, thereby going into *Second Death*. On the other hand, one who is more established and mature may be offended so that he dies, but because he has a *sufficiently developed* character, he will die as a martyr and thus prove *faithful* as an *overcomer* (either Little Flock or Great Company).

Consider the Great Company class. Their schooling and testing take place now, in the present life. Therefore, to get life at all, the consecrated must be developed at least to a *minimum standard* in the *present life*. All of the consecrated who get life in either the Little Flock or the Great Company must be *overcomers*—even if the Lord has to take them out as a scapegoat into the wilderness. *They must not deny the Lord*. Hence there must be *progress* to a *certain level* even to get life. The term “little one” refers to one who has not yet matured sufficiently to get life. It is not an excuse to say of one who professed consecration and then departed from the way, “He did not know what he was doing.” When a person gets married, he really does not know what he is doing either, but the marriage vows are *binding* (or should be). No one knows what lies ahead with either consecration or marriage. However, in both cases, a person knows he has made a *decision*. The future is *unknown*, but the “contract” *has been signed*. Having made the commitment, we *must abide* by it and accept the responsibility. Otherwise, we are behaving like the children of Israel who said they wanted to return to the leeks and garlic of Egypt.

Paul said, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be *formed* in you” (Gal. 4:19). Paul was showing that there has to be a *minimum* level of character formation in

Christlikeness in order to get life even in the Great Company.

The paragraph mark at verse 7 was improperly inserted, for Jesus made this statement on the same occasion as verses 1-6. There are times when Jesus spoke on two occasions on the same subject, giving a more elaborate discourse on one of those occasions, but that was not the case here. Matthew frequently extracted statements from several different occasions and combined them as if they were all spoken at the same time setting. His purpose in collecting statements of our Lord and putting them in one harmonious theme was to show how Jesus reasoned. On the whole, the other Gospel writers were more accurate chronologically.

Matt. 18:8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

Matt. 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

It is better to be “halt or maimed” in the *present Christian life* than to go into Second Death (“everlasting fire,” “hell fire”—Gehenna). When necessary, we should suffer *limitations* lest we incur the full penalty.

Earlier, in the Sermon on the Mount, the *right* hand and *right* eye were specified (Matt. 5:29,30). Here there is no restriction as to which hand, foot, or eye. In Matthew 5, the thought was that our *best* time, ability, desire, etc., should not be used to serve the old man. Matthew 18:8,9 is a *broader* statement to the effect that if *any* quality in us is capable of causing offense, we must get *rid* of it by doing something *drastic*.

Verses 8 and 9 also show that the Lord enlightens an individual as to the *trend* of character he has, what it might *lead* to, and how he has to *curb* himself. For example, consider James and John, who wanted the Master to grant permission for fire to come down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans, who were not receptive to Jesus on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:54). However, Jesus rebuked James and John and said they were of the wrong spirit. He called attention to a trend of character that if it were not schooled in the future, it could be damaging not only to others but also to themselves. Thus Jesus enlightened them as to a weakness.

The clause “if thy hand or thy foot offend thee” shows that the individual realizes he has this offensive trait, which is not a lack of cultural refinement but an *ingrained character* fault or *defect*, such as a spirit of envy, malice, pride, etc., that *must be uprooted*. The consecrated individual is aware that he has this wrong spirit, but it has not yet “matured” to offend someone else, one of the “little ones.”

The Pastor wrote a number of articles where he selected a trait such as pride or jealousy and said that if this trait was not curbed, it could *lead* to Second Death. At first, such a statement might seem harsh, but it is not harsh in light of Scriptures like verses 8 and 9. Wrong traits, *if governed* under the Holy Spirit, can be beneficial, for then the “fire” is directed into *useful* channels.

There are distinctions between “eye,” “hand,” and “foot,” as follows:

1. The “eye” represents the intellect, the mind, and what goes into the mind. Wrong suggestions that enter the mind along the lines of envy, lust, pride, jealousy, earthly pleasure, etc., must be dealt with.
2. The “hand” signifies service, activity, employment (both in secular work and for the Lord),

hobbies, etc. We are to do with our might what our hand finds to do in proper areas (Eccl. 9:10).

3. The “foot” represents our walk and conduct in life, the choosing of paths to take. We make decisions as to what direction our feet will go. We are to direct our feet toward a goal that is *heavenward*, for “evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” (1 Cor. 15:33). If we know we are going into a nest of trouble where we will be tempted, it is our feet that take us there. Therefore, we must make a decision: will we go there anyway or somewhere else? We should choose a path that circumvents the evil. Jesus went among sinners but *always* kept himself *separate and distinct*. He preached to publicans and sinners but remained separate. Paul said, “See then that ye walk circumspectly ... Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15,16). And he advised, “Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (Heb. 12:13).

Matt. 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Verse 10 is related to verse 5, where Jesus said, “If you receive one of these little ones, you are really receiving me.” Now he said, “If you despise one of these little ones, you are really despising the Father.” If the Father is so solicitous of the welfare of these little ones, then the party who injures a little one affects the Father and His feelings. The same principle operates in both verses.

Verse 10 is helpful in an entirely different way too. It reveals that each consecrated Christian has *more than one* angel watching over and guarding him. If the guardian angel were *always* in heaven beholding the face of the Father, then he could not be down here superintending the providences of his assigned individual. Therefore, *at least two* angels (and probably more) are watching over each consecrated one. The angel in heaven, as the guardian angel, has the *chief* responsibility. Several angels, or “spiritual body guards,” are assigned to each individual, and one of these, the guardian angel, is appointed to be in charge and make decisions. This latter angel is responsible to the Father to make sure things are done properly.

Another Scripture seems to indicate that each Christian has only one angel, but the statement is based on the thinking of the other disciples at the time Peter was in prison (Acts 12:1-16). James had just been beheaded, and Peter was scheduled for beheading the next day. The disciples prayed into the wee hours of the morning. When an angel appeared unto Peter and released him, the apostle went to the house where the others were praying. Peter knocked on the door, and Rhoda answered and then ran to tell the others with great joy. When she announced, “It is Peter!” the others thought she had seen his guardian angel (singular). However, this statement was just part of the narration of a historical event and was not a doctrine being taught.

Satan concentrates more on certain individuals than others. Consider what Jesus said about Peter, who was a natural-born leader: “Satan has desired to *sift* you” (Luke 22:31). Satan knew that if he could get Peter to fall, many others would fall with him because of his influence. And it may not always be that an individual is so important. Rather, the circumstance and the effect that circumstance would have on the Lord’s people could be what is important. Or a very humble brother could be doing something very critical in nature that the Lord does not want disturbed. It could be that rain will not be allowed to fall on a certain day lest the circumstance be interfered with and, of course, the individual. Thus even the weather can be influenced because of the crucial nature of something that is to happen. (We are not referring to a convention, for example, but to something crucial.) And the Lord could intervene so that a certain decision will not be made. The point is that there is *always* a sufficient number of angels available to assist an individual in a given situation, even if that assistance requires activity in *several* areas.

Each consecrated child of God receives *round-the-clock* surveillance and supervision from the angels assigned to him, *collectively* speaking. The angels take turns or have “shifts” to work, for they need to eat, rest, relax, etc. They need times of recuperation and rest from watching the sinful earth. Thus there is a “changing of the guard,” as it were. Even though the guardian angel also needs to eat, rest, and sleep, he is like an office supervisor who goes on vacation but appoints someone to be in charge while he is away. The guardian angel has the responsibility to see that matters are adequately handled in his absence. The emphasis in this setting is to show the sensitivity of the Father and of Jesus toward these little ones—how *highly* they regard the consecrated and how *much displeased* they are with those who offend these little ones.

Jesus could have had 12 *legions* of angels assist him if he had so prayed (Matt. 26:53). Since a “legion” consisted of somewhere between 3,000 and 6,000 men, Jesus could have had *at least* (12 x 3,000) 36,000 angels. Why 12 legions? Perhaps it was to show that *all* of the spiritual “tribes” would subsequently have angels to guard them.

Extra help was needed to answer Daniel’s prayer (Dan. 10:13). Gabriel was withstood by the “prince of Persia” (Satan) for 21 days until Michael came to help him. This incident shows that adversarial spirit powers are in *tartaroo* (around earth’s atmosphere). Even though limited to a certain condition or place (a “prison”), the fallen angels exercise great malevolent powers. It is like a Mafia member in prison who continues to manage *with authority* an illegal operation on the outside.

To us, 21 days (three weeks) is a long period of time, and Daniel fasted for three weeks just to get an understanding of a prophecy. For Gabriel to not come to Daniel for 21 days seems like an inordinate amount of time from our standpoint, but this incident reveals that angelic time is different from ours. Time is relative, so a *long* time to us is a *short* time to angels. A thousand years are as a day in God’s sight, and yet, if He so desires, a day can be a thousand years; that is, God can do *many* things in a *short* period of time, and He also does things over a *long* concept of time from *our* standpoint. Thus 21 days could be like 21 minutes to the angels. When the angels watch an individual from birth to maturity and old age and death, it may be like watching a flower that perishes *overnight*, whereas to us, it is 80 years.

Matt. 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Verse 11 is probably spurious, but the thought is proper because of the next verse. Perhaps that is why it was interpolated.

Matt. 18:12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

A paragraph mark should have been inserted at verse 12, for Jesus said this on another occasion. In this parable, the shepherd momentarily leaves the 99 sheep in a relatively safe position and goes into the mountains to find the one sheep that is lost. The implication is that the search entails some *difficulty*. The shepherd takes great pains to retrieve that one sheep by going into rugged terrain. An artist usually shows the one sheep hanging over a precipice and the shepherd reaching down and embracing that sheep and pulling it up to safety.

The shepherd is Jesus. Even from the natural standpoint, *much emotion* is involved—that a shepherd would temporarily leave the 99 sheep to retrieve the one that is lost. Of course the shepherd is still concerned about the 99 sheep, but they are in relative peace and quiet.

The lesson is that Jesus, as the Shepherd, *is concerned* for the straying “sheep” and does not just

write it off as lost right away. Many might rationalize on the difficulty involved in trying to find the one lost sheep, plus the jeopardy to the 99 left behind, and thus not go to recover the lost sheep, but this situation should not be rationalized. It is like a drowning person yelling, "Help!" A rescue attempt should be made immediately. Rationalizing takes up valuable time, and the person could drown.

This lesson is being treated from an *emotional*, not an intellectual, standpoint. The *concern* of the Shepherd for that one "little one" is the emotional lesson and relationship. If a little one, no matter how feebly and plaintively, cries out emotionally in a prayer for help and deliverance, the Shepherd *will* respond. This lesson is intended to pull at the heart strings, for it shows the care and interest of God (the *Great Shepherd*) and Jesus (the *Good Shepherd*) in the sheep. It is their desire that not one be lost.

The significance of the 100 sheep is shown in Luke 15:4,5, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." On the highest level, there was a time when *all* of God's creation was perfect in heaven and in earth. Then came sin on this planet, the *one* place where sin has occurred. God's will has *always* been done in heaven. Thus the "100" sheep represent the period of time of perfection and purity of all things. When the earthly domain went astray, the 99 still remained perfect. In time, Jesus came to earth to rescue man, and he will ultimately bring the race back to the fold.

Matthew 18:12 has a little different emphasis in regard to the 100 sheep. The setting starts with the sin-cursed earth instead of showing deterioration from perfection. The "100" picture the pure Church in the beginning of the Ephesus period, *collectively* speaking, before leaven was introduced. (Judas was lost *prior* to Pentecost, so when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and later to Cornelius, the Church was pure and wholesome.) In the Matthew 18:10 context, Jesus was speaking emotionally from the standpoint of *sympathy* and showing God's *great* concern for the sheep.

Matt. 18:13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

"If so be that he [Jesus] find it [the one lost sheep]" indicates that one might *not* be recovered. Of course not finding the straying sheep would not be due to the inability of the Shepherd. One can go so far astray that recovery is impossible. There eventually comes a "point of no return" when one departs from the Lord and resists recovery and helpful providences. When the "sin unto death" is committed, rescue is *impossible* (Psa. 19:13). David prayed to be kept back from "the *great* transgression," from which there is no possibility of extrication or retrieval. At that point, we are no longer to pray for the individual who has committed the sin unto Second Death.

This parable is an emotional theme regarding the *great concern* for even *one* straying sheep. Unfortunately, many go astray, and some to Second Death. The Great Company is included in this lesson, as well as the Little Flock and a Second Death class. One can momentarily fall and then be retrieved and energized either for the Great Company or the Little Flock, although generally speaking, those who stray and return would be the Great Company. The issue is *life*, and one would be rescued from the possibility of *loss* of life.

It seems contrary to reason to say there is *more* rejoicing over the *one* sheep that is found than over the 99 who never went astray. Actually, the 99 are more important than the one, but the parable states the matter in a way that will get the principle across. (The principle is the same with the prodigal son.) The one who strayed could have forever jeopardized his opportunity

for the Little Flock, although his recovery would give him life in the Great Company. Therefore, there would be *more* rejoicing over those who did not stray and made their calling and election sure. In other words, Jesus used this extraordinary illustration to emphasize his point. The rejoicing would be *relatively momentary*, for it would occur at the time of *retrieval*. Naturally, there is a more *continuous* joy for the ones who *never* go astray and make the Little Flock.

Matt. 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Taken out of context, verse 14 could be erroneously used to teach universal salvation. Instead, and in harmony with the lesson, this verse would be very encouraging if we found we had strayed. It shows that the Father wants very much to help us.

Why did Jesus use the phrase “even so”? In verse 13, *Jesus*, “the shepherd,” rejoiced over the recovered one, for *he* sought that which was lost. Verse 14 is saying that in a similar manner, the *Father* is concerned. While Jesus personally rejoices in the rescue of a straying sheep, the Father is also pleased.

The relationship and close affinity of Jesus and the Father are *incomparable*. In fact, Jesus has so much respect for the Father that he continually mentioned the Father in his teaching, looked heavenward, etc. Before accepting adulation, Jesus wanted all to know that the source of his power was the *Father*. A *very tender* relationship exists between them. No wonder Jesus can be trusted not only with the divine nature but also with every knee bowing to him and every tongue confessing (ultimately) that he is Lord. The Father and the Son have the utmost confidence in each other, and Jesus can, therefore, be trusted with a high degree of adulation.

Why is the same expression used in verses 10 and 14: “Father which is in heaven”? The expression shows the *source* whence salvation comes. The Luke 15 account states that the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents and is found. In the Matthew 18 account, the Son comes down and the action is here, but the feeling of all the drama is *heaven-oriented*.

Q: What is our responsibility as brethren to try to recover one who has gone astray?

A: That would depend on the circumstances and the degree of going astray. For example, Jude made a distinction in showing two classes who go astray. A serious effort is made to rescue one of those classes, but the second class is another matter. How do we know one who has gone into the Second Death category? This class is not to be prayed for; hence this class can be seen (1 John 5:16). However, many refuse to recognize the Second Death class because they are more noble than the instructions of God’s Word. On the one hand, we must be careful not to shirk the responsibility of trying to rescue a brother, and on the other hand, we must not be overly sympathetic. If God and Jesus are interested, then certainly we should be too—*within* Scriptural guidelines and definitely in prayer. If someone stops attending meetings and we do not really know what is occupying his time, it is always good to invite him home for a little supper and/or fellowship to create a relaxed atmosphere that is conducive to one-to-one talking. That is one suggestion. But if gross sin has been committed and no repentance follows, there can be no close fellowship. We are to reason on *each* issue as to the *degree* of involvement in sin. *Concern* is in order unless the matter is irretrievable.

In trying to retrieve one enmeshed in sin, we must be careful even of the garment (Jude 23). Sometimes all efforts to communicate are rebuffed. Even in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the father did not go to the son *until* he saw the son coming home in a *repentant* attitude (Luke 15:11-32). Then the father *ran* to the son, whose first words were, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before [against] you.” Just remember, the Father is *always interested* in our

welfare—even if it seems that the brethren are not.

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

Some very important principles are enunciated in verses 15-20. However, before the subject can be reasoned on with regard to principle, certain primary things, certain contingencies, should be noticed.

“If your brother trespasses against *you*....” This is a trespass by a consecrated individual against *you personally*, so both trespasser and victim are *consecrated*. Also, the trespass is against *you* (and not against another party or against God). Therefore, Matthew 18:15-17 cannot be used as a formula to cure all situations. Some brethren incorrectly use these verses like a Band-Aid® for all kinds of wounds.

The victim goes to the perpetrator *alone* to voice his grievance. Notice, the Scripture does not say, “If you *think* your brother has trespassed against you.” This is a *real* trespass, not an imagined one, and it is serious enough not to be overlooked. This would not be a rumor, for instance, for all down the age, Christians have been evilly spoken of. This trespass would be doing damage to you personally, so you would want to have the matter resolved before it deepened into an irreparable scar incapable of healing.

This trespass would not be against *God*, for in such a case, the matter would be handled differently (see 1 Corinthians 5); the victim would *not* go to the party alone. Matthew 18:15-17 pertains to an *individual* trespass, one against the other. With both parties being consecrated, they are *equal* before the brethren. If the accused says, “I did not do that” or “Bro. A is telling a falsehood,” it is a one-against-one situation. That is why one or two witnesses are called in the next step (verse 16). Other consecrated one(s) are needed to see if the stated facts are really accurate.

“If he shall hear thee” means that the trespasser not only will admit to the action but also will agree that he misbehaved on that occasion and says, “I am sorry.”

Q: When one is publicly slandered (that is, before others) and the victim sooner or later, depending on the circumstances, goes to the perpetrator but the perpetrator refuses to hear him, should the victim take one or two witnesses and continue to follow the steps in Matthew 18:15-17?

A: No, because this is a *public* trespass before many brethren (witnesses).

Q: Why would one brother slander another brother and not apologize when the trespass is pointed out?

A: For one thing, each one feels superior to the other—that is part of human nature. The tendency is to feel that our own reasoning on a given subject is superior to the reasoning of those who differ. Sometimes the evidence is so overwhelming that we know we are right, and Paul did say to speak with a “trumpet” (with distinction) and not be wobbly. However, there are other matters we should not be dogmatic on. Then, too, especially if a brother is esteemed, the temptation is even greater to always think he is right. Incidentally, the ones who *hear* a slanderous remark being made have a responsibility.

Paul rebuked Peter *before all* for dissembling from the table. If Paul had waited and gone privately to Peter afterwards, untold injury would have been done, for the others who had witnessed Peter’s action would have returned to their respective ecclesias thinking he was right

in refusing to eat with Gentiles. “Dissembling,” or dissimulation, meant that Christian Jews made a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, whereas Paul correctly taught that in the body of Christ, there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile, for all are *one*. James and Peter were *very highly respected* by the brethren, so it was essential that Paul give a *public* rebuke for Peter’s dissembling. However, on another occasion, pertaining to the same issue, Paul went *privately* to the apostles lest they be stumbled. Paul had been teaching on this subject, and since others had trouble seeing that the Christian was not under the Law, he went to them as *individuals*. But that situation was different. When the issue occurred right in front of him, he had to act *immediately*.

From the platform today, the thought is often presented that we forgive—period! It is not mentioned that a rebuke followed by repentance precedes the forgiveness. The philosophy of love and forgiveness is generally not understood among the brethren. We should *not* be fearful to take a stand. We should *not* fear being thought of as critical or siding with somebody. We should *not* be fearful of disrupting fellowships or opportunities of service.

If a wrong comment is made, we can go to the brother and ask, “Did I hear you correctly?” Sometimes we do not have to ask, for we know the statement was wrong, since it was backed up by two or three examples. Incidentally, those who are in a position of influence (such as money, education, or reputation) sometimes treat others not similarly circumstanced as inferior, even though the latter are well versed in Scripture.

This whole subject of forgiveness should be studied and discussed in depth by the brethren, for many times it is said from the platform, “We should *never* rebuke!” Then Matthew 18:21,22 is quoted to forgive “seventy times seven.” And the problem is that we cannot raise a furor with the speaker in the middle of a convention. Perhaps there is an intermission of only ten minutes (after the hymn and prayer), which is not enough time to talk to the brother alone. At other times, the brother may be waiting in the food line with his family, so there are all kinds of complications. Nevertheless, one way or another, we should alert the brother to the error he just uttered, and that is about all we can do.

In previous times, it was permissible to interrupt a sermon or discourse for purposes of clarification: “Brother, did I understand you to say such and such?” “Would you mind repeating that, please.” At least today we should have a question period either following each discourse or following all of the discourses. To just go alone to the speaker afterwards does not allow the others who heard the discourse to benefit from the correction and/or questioning.

In summary, there are circumstances when we should go to the brother alone, and there are times when we should speak immediately, in situ and on the occasion the remark is made, before all who are present.

Matt. 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Notice that the one or two witnesses do not go with the purpose of correcting the perpetrator. They go to see whether the brother who feels he was victimized is stating the matter truthfully. Thus the witnesses do not prejudge the situation, for how would they know beforehand that the supposed victim was telling the truth?

The victim should try to take independent witnesses who know nothing about the matter and thus do not have a prejudiced mind, witnesses who are respected by *both* parties. The witnesses go with the intent of seeing whether the accusation is correct. Only if the trespass is deemed worthy of pursuing would the witnesses go to the perpetrator. Moreover, this trespass or grievance should be a *recent* incident, something pertinent to *current* conditions, as opposed to

something that has been harbored for years.

First, the one or two witnesses listen to the alleged victim to hear what the grievance is. If it is a trivial matter, the witnesses would nip the matter in the bud, and it would be dropped. But *if* the accusation is judged *worthy* of attention *if* it be true, then the witnesses go to hear the alleged perpetrator's side of the story. If the witnesses find the accusation is true—that the victim has been injured and has stated the case fairly (not exaggerating it)—they would try to help the perpetrator to see the error of his way. However, the witnesses *do not start out* with that motive, for at first, they do not know who is right. (Some claim injury when it is really a figment of their imagination.)

If the perpetrator will not acknowledge his error and the matter is sufficiently serious, it must be called to the attention of the ecclesia. This error would not be just a little dig or an impulsive statement, but perhaps it is a statement or action that has really adversely affected the ministry or influence of the injured party. In that case, the incident would be of a serious nature.

Incidentally, there are all kinds of rare situations. Matthew 18:15-17 is like a test case. The Law in the Old Testament makes a statement of God's will or commandment and then gives two or three test cases. These test cases do not fit every condition perfectly, but they provide the gist of God's thinking. A sufficient number of examples are presented so that when a peculiar case arises, we can adapt our thinking to what the overall Scriptural viewpoint would be.

“Take with thee one or two more [witnesses].” Sometimes it is advisable to have three witnesses, but it may also be impossible to take more than one other witness because of rural conditions, paucity of brethren, etc. At any rate, if the victim takes one or two witnesses *with him*, then he has a *total* of two or three witnesses. At least *two* witnesses are essential to decide an important issue (see Deut. 19:15); this procedure eliminates prejudice.

Luke 17:3 might seem to be a contradiction: “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” Matthew 18:15 says, “Go and tell him his fault ... alone,” whereas Luke 17:3 says, “Rebuke him.” The purpose of going to the brother alone is to try to persuade him in a friendly manner and thus resolve the issue without either party being injured further. However, Luke 17:3 calls for *open rebuke*. Thus the two treatments are different: secretiveness versus open rebuke. The difference is a *time* element, and there are several incidents in Scripture. When a brother trespasses against a brother, the most effective method of correction is *immediately*, right then and there, not later. Suppose the injury is a false accusation, and it is done *openly before others*. Some who would never gather with those brethren again might hear the remark. Therefore, to wait and later go to the brother alone would do irreparable damage (unless, of course, the victim also later went to each one who had attended that meeting, which is absurd and would make him appear to be a troublemaker). Silence at the time such a remark is made would imply the false accusation is partly or wholly true.

A trespass is committed in two ways: (1) in the victim's presence or (2) at a meeting where the victim is not present but hears of the remark later. If the trespass occurs in his presence, it is best to do the rebuking immediately so that the witnesses will know he is not consenting to the false accusation. Then, when the witnesses depart for home, even if they do not know the whole matter, they will at least be aware that they have to exercise reserve. Silence would be a tacit acknowledgment that the victim may very well be guilty of the false accusation. However, in a case where the victim was not present but subsequently hears of the trespass, he cannot rebuke the trespasser before all but must go to him alone to ask if he said such a thing. If he says “yes,” then the victim would reason with him. Hopefully, the trespasser will apologize, but sometimes the trespasser becomes resentful.

One or two witnesses are taken so that “every word may be established.” The witnesses go to ascertain whether the grievance is valid or whether it has been misstated or exaggerated. The witnesses agree to go because the alleged grievance is worthy of investigation. Sometimes the witnesses are not informed beforehand. Out of fairness, it is good for the witnesses to be taken “cold,” that is, without the matter being previously discussed or their minds being prejudiced. At other times, the witnesses should be talked to alone first, and then they would go to the alleged perpetrator.

In other words, sometimes the victim can go *separately* to the one or two witnesses. For example, he does not have to go to the witnesses in the hearing of Bro. A, whose trespass was making a particular statement from the platform. This situation actually occurred. Bro. B quoted the statement later to some who had heard the discourse. The others all denied that Bro. A had made such a statement and even looked at Bro. B unfavorably. Bro. A then walked into the room, and Bro. B asked him if he had made that statement in his talk. The answer was “yes,” yet none of the others apologized.

This incident shows that as a people, we need cleansing, healing, and instruction. Generally speaking, there is a weakness on these matters. The Scriptures are *explicit*, and we need to learn them.

Matt. 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

This procedure does not have to take place within one ecclesia. Suppose that the injured party is from one ecclesia and the trespasser is from another ecclesia. Out of fairness, the victim can then get a witness from each ecclesia. (Matthew 18:15-17 does not specifically cover this situation, so we have to use a little wisdom.) Also, getting witnesses from *both* ecclesias can prevent a misunderstanding. If the trespass is verified, then the ecclesia of the perpetrator should handle the matter. There are other possibilities too. For example, one brother could be in an ecclesia and the other brother not, or perhaps neither is in an ecclesia.

The application here in Matthew 18:15-17 is limited. Other circumstances that are quite different must also be considered as we go along.

Verse 17 describes *excommunication*. “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Some say, “I could never refuse to shake hands,” or “I could never excommunicate a brother.” But Matthew 18:15-17 leaves the door open for many reasons for excommunication. The trespass may be something *other than* what the Apostle Paul listed in 1 Corinthians 5 (adultery, drunkenness, railing, etc.); it could be fist fighting or *any number* of things that would constitute a trespass worthy of attention (1 Tim. 3:3). Matthew 18:15-17 goes *beyond* 1 Corinthians 5 and covers an unknown quantity of trespasses. The point is that the trespass is serious but unnamed. Hence there could be perhaps 50 different grounds for excommunication.

Q: What does it mean to regard one as a “heathen man and a publican”?

A: The excommunicated individual should be treated as one in the world. He is not welcome in the ecclesia because he has disregarded the law of God. He is to be treated exactly like public—but *not* public with a “hearing ear.” Some deference is shown to public who have a hearing ear in the hope that their interest will increase, but such recognition is *not* given to a “heathen man” or to one who is excommunicated (*until* forgiveness is asked).

The problem today is that the terminology “heathen man and a publican” is *modified*. The argument is that the public come to our meetings and we shake hands and greet them;

therefore, we should *always* shake hands and speak to one, even if he is excommunicated. To not say “hello” or to put such a one out of the meeting would be unkind, they say, because we allow the public to attend our meetings, but Matthew 18:15-17 is teaching just the *opposite*. There is a *double* emphasis: (1) “heathen man” and (2) “publican.”

“Heathen” is a *strong* term that does *not* mean a believer, one who has accepted Jesus but has not consecrated. Rather, it means one who has *no* belief and *no* interest in the Lord. And a “publican” back there was regarded very *odiously* by the Jews, being almost like *anathema*. Hence these terms are *strong*; they do not just mean a worldly person but one who is considered *hands off*.

Q: If an excommunicated brother did come to the class, should the elders tell him he is not welcome?

A: The class would have to interrupt whatever they were doing and take up the matter, telling the individual he is not welcome. (This applies to an ecclesia meeting, not a convention, for a convention is a *well-attended public* meeting and we are not detectives to know just who every attendee is and what his status might be.) In ecclesia meetings (studies, testimonies, etc.) where there is more intimacy of fellowship, the excommunicated one is to be barred. The elder could go right to the disfellowshipped individual as soon as he entered, explaining that he was not welcome until there was a change of attitude and an evidence of repentance. And if the individual should try to enter an ecclesia other than the one in which he was banned, the excommunication decision still holds. We are to honor the decision of the excommunicating ecclesia. Unfortunately, some do not seem to recognize that principle.

While the elder has the unpleasant responsibility, the congregation should *support* him—and not smile and welcome back the unrepentant offender. Barring the excommunicated one is a distasteful duty that sometimes has adverse effects on the elder who is responsible for doing it—because of *lack of support* from the other brethren and even *opposition*.

This responsibility also brings out the necessity to inform other ecclesias if an excommunicated individual is in their area. For example, if an excommunication occurs on the East Coast and the party moves to the West Coast, the West Coast ecclesias should be informed, lest the person start attending meetings as if nothing has happened.

Unfortunately, it is sometimes questioned whether the ecclesia that does the excommunicating is even in the truth. However, if the individuals comprising the ecclesia are consecrated, having given their hearts to the Lord, and are trying to lead consecrated lives, we have no right to disparage them. Just because they do not subscribe to certain doctrines does not mean they are not consecrated. What matters is whether they see the truth of God’s Word on the issue of excommunication. And *attitude* is important—it should always be distasteful to have to perform an excommunication procedure.

Q: When an excommunicated individual repents, can he go to *any* ecclesia with this information regarding his changed heart condition?

A: If such a one tried to enter a different ecclesia, the elder should quickly intercept him. If the party said he repented, the elder should tell him to return to the ecclesia where he was excommunicated to rectify the matter and make apologies. Otherwise, to not have to face the victim in person makes “repentance” too easy. Remember, this was a *serious* wrong. And there is another reason too. If one is *publicly* excommunicated, he should be *publicly* welcomed back by the class when he repents. He should be received back *with joy* by the original ecclesia.

Matt. 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in

heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matt. 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Now we begin to see how verses 18-20 apply. (Usually there is a misapplication.) When an ecclesia excommunicates an individual, that excommunication is binding. Jesus was saying, “I back you up.” He was also saying that there may be only two or three members, yet they constitute an ecclesia. Jesus purposely stated the principle with a *minimum* number of brethren in an ecclesia so that his words would fit *all* circumstances, whether there were 3, 10, 50, or 100 in the class. The ecclesia hears the matter and verifies that the transgressor should be disfellowshipped, judging that such would be the Lord’s will. However, verses 18-20 do not mean that the *collective majority* of a class is always right.

The verification of a grievance would be easier than, say, the verification of a nebulous doctrine. For example, a person might be excommunicated from an orthodox church because his belief conflicts with the dogma of that group. In such a case, that individual might be received into another group who would regard the particular doctrine in question as correct. Thus the decision of a majority is not necessarily the Lord’s mind on the matter. If we are in a class and find we are out of harmony with the majority, we should do one of two things. Either (1) accede and give in to the majority, or (2) if a vital principle is involved, leave the ecclesia. Then our conscience will not be troubled, even though we may have trials in other ways.

It could be a problem if other ecclesias upheld an excommunication that was not merited. Although this situation is highly unlikely, it could more easily happen in nominal circles. Jesus said we would be cast out by our brethren for his name’s sake (Luke 6:22). Down through history, true Christians who were excommunicated found fellowship elsewhere.

Paul said, based on Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5:11, “any man that is called a brother” is subject to excommunication for a grievous trespass. When a serious sin is committed, it is wrong to suddenly say, as an excuse, “His consecration was never accepted.” That thinking does *not* justify the situation. Up until that point, the individual was considered a brother and no one questioned the matter, but as soon as the sin is committed, it is presumed that the party was never really consecrated. Such reasoning is wrong! “He did not understand what he was doing” is no excuse. How easily such statements would “butter over” the grievous situation and release brethren from their responsibilities—both for the trespasser to repent and for the ecclesia to excommunicate. Especially in *family relationships*, this tendency occurs.

Thus *here*, in the context of verses 18-20, to “agree” pertains to excommunication. Sometimes this statement is found in another context. Back in the early Church, the apostles and elders at Jerusalem were in agreement, and the injunction they made on that occasion was considered the Lord’s will. The point is that among the consecrated, an excommunication should be honored unless there is a *truly valid, justifiable* (Scriptural) reason for not doing so.

Q: If the trespasser was the husband and the victim was the wife, both being consecrated, and if the grievance went all the way through to the excommunication stage, would the wife have to separate from the husband until there was repentance?

A: Yes. If she remained in the same home with him, she would constantly be violating the excommunication decision.

Q: Are the standards lower today than they used to be?

A: Obviously, yes, because we do not see excommunications occurring to the degree that there are gross immoralities. If gross immoralities and other matters of Christian living were Scripturally discussed more often (and not considered hush-hush), many cases could perhaps be healed before they got to the explosive stage. A sin should be recognized right away. Then perhaps some of the consecrated brethren who have separated would see their shortcomings and be able to maintain their marriages. The brethren should be willing to take a stand and excommunicate where necessary. Otherwise, erring individuals either leave the truth, forsaking their consecration, or remain in the fellowship without repenting.

Verses 18 and 19 are more or less saying the same thing. If there is agreement, it is recognized in heaven—and even by the Heavenly Father. Verse 20 is saying that two or three brethren can be considered an ecclesia: “where two or three are gathered [meet] together in my name.” It is significant that the ecclesia is brought down to a very small unit in this Scripture.

“Bind” means to excommunicate. “Loose” means to exonerate. Someone could be brought up in a church trial and then be exonerated. The exoneration might or might not be valid in the eyes of the Lord, for the class could be wrong. However, one who is exonerated has the right to fellowship in that ecclesia according to the decision made.

Matt. 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Matt. 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:15-17 tells the three steps for treating a trespass (a *personal* grievance) of a brother against a brother, no matter how large or small the class is. Luke 17:3,4 reads, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” The two accounts (Matthew and Luke) need to be harmonized. Forgiveness is not automatic but is *based on repentance*. Even if a brother says *seven times in one day*, “I repent,” he must be forgiven. This shows the need for the erring one to (1) recognize his error, (2) repent, and (3) obtain forgiveness. Saying “forgive me” shows that some shred of conscience is left. It is to one’s credit to realize he has done wrong instead of being brazen in a situation. However, just because one is forgiven by a brother seven times in a day does not mean he will make his calling and election sure, for the *Lord* may not forgive.

The Bible must be our instructor—it is the *ultimate* word. Brethren frequently search the Pastor’s writings to see what he said here and what he said there, and they end up plucking statements *out of context*. That is what lawyers do to win cases. They extract information from previous cases that are not pertinent and use the information as a precedent to exonerate their client. The point is that *God’s Word* comes first.

The Pastor understood well the subject of forgiveness and was quite strong in his statements. He explained that excommunication meant to *withdraw all fellowship*. However, brethren modify this to mean that the excommunicated individual cannot vote in an election or hold an office and that he cannot be invited to homes, but they still permit shaking hands, attending meetings, and exchanging greetings. The final analysis is what the Scriptures teach. We can get instruction and advice from others, but we should follow that advice *only if it squares with Scripture*.

“Then came Peter ... and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive

him? ... Jesus saith unto him, ... Until seventy times seven.” The emphasis usually given is that we should forgive a brother who trespasses at least “seventy times seven” (or 490) times. That is a *lot* of forgiveness! However, the *conditions* of forgiveness are usually not brought in.

Notice that Jesus gave an answer to a specific question. The question was not “How shall I forgive?” or “Under what conditions, shall I forgive?” but “What is the limit in times?” In other words, “How many times shall I forgive?” Luke 17:3,4 gives the conditions for forgiveness. If the trespasser turns to us and says, “I repent,” after being rebuked (if necessary), we are to forgive him. If a brother trespasses against us seven times, we are to rebuke him seven times. However, if he turns to us and says he is sorry seven times, we are to forgive him seven times. Therefore, rebuking and repentance precede the forgiveness.

Matt. 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

Verses 23-35 cover the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, which is a very potent lesson. The beginning, “Therefore is the *kingdom of heaven*,” suggests the lesson of this parable is especially for the *consecrated*. Jesus was implying that the condition he would describe exists in the “kingdom of heaven” class. Some with an unforgiving spirit are called, as well as some who are overly forgiving. All need to be balanced to a greater or lesser extent.

The “king” (God) was to “take account of his servants.” Accordingly, we go to *God* for forgiveness.

Matt. 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

Matt. 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

A servant was brought to the king who owed 10,000 talents, which was a *tremendous* amount—like the national debt. To give us an idea of the amount, *one* talent weighs 100 pounds. Each silver-talent socket of the Tabernacle had to be sufficiently heavy in weight to hold up a 15-foot-long by 27-inch-wide board covered with gold plating.

Thus the parable is emphasizing the *great* debt owed to the king by a certain individual. Trillions of dollars were owed—an excessive amount. Jesus purposely exaggerated the parable to teach a valuable lesson.

When the individual was brought before the king to give an accounting, he did not have the wherewithal to pay. Then the king commanded that the servant be sold, plus his wife, children, property, and all possessions, so that some payment could be made. All of his assets (including human ones) were to be liquidated to obtain cash to apply against the debt.

Matt. 18:26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Matt. 18:27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

The servant pleaded for time to repay the debt. The king could have reasoned, if he were hard-hearted, “The servant could *never* repay the debt, no matter what.” From a practical standpoint, the king knew the servant’s reply was more words than substance, but the king was moved by the servant’s *humility* and worship. Out of compassion, the king “forgave him

the debt.” Talk about largesse! The king did not say, “All right, I will give you 60 days,” but was so moved by the repentance that he completely forgave the *huge* debt. The king’s attitude tells us that the Heavenly Father so appreciates our humbling ourselves and asking for forgiveness that He will forgive us to the uttermost.

Matt. 18:28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

After first seeing the king’s attitude, we now see the servant’s attitude following his own experience of being forgiven. A fellow servant was found who owed the servant 100 pence (100 days’ wages), which was a fairly sizable debt but *nothing* compared with the 10,000 talents the servant had owed. We are reminded of the splinter versus the heavy plank in the eye (Matt. 7:1-5). The plank would be comparable to the 10,000 talents and the mote to the 100 pence. The *same* servant who had prostrated himself before the king and pleaded for mercy now grabbed the fellow servant by the throat and made demands. This *scary* situation shows that in *each* of us there exists this technical possibility of *irrational, incongruous, unmerciful* behavior.

The nearest analogy to the king’s forgiveness of the servant’s debt is our initial consecration. When we give our heart to the Lord and repent for our past sins, we are forgiven an *accumulative* debt of sin from the past, and this debt is *huge*. If we had a playback of prior misdeeds, we would be very shamefaced. After consecration, and onward in the Christian walk, there is a difference of behavior. Although we still commit sins in the Christian life, they are of a lesser nature than the previous accumulated sins.

As stated, at one’s initial consecration, a person’s past debt is forgiven. And even the person’s family (husband or wife plus children) receives a measure of protection. For the world of mankind, willful sins committed in the next age as well as now, in the present life, will have to be paid for with some penalty. For example, one who commits murder now will get “stripes” (retribution) in the Kingdom.

Matt. 18:29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Matt. 18:30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

The fellow servant *likewise* pleaded for mercy. He fell down at the servant’s feet and besought him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” The *same* words were even used. The servant’s words and actions make the parable very startling, for he who was *forgiven* earlier now cast the fellow servant into prison. The servant would not forgive the debt or even grant a time period but imprisoned him and said there would be no release until the debt was paid *entirely*.

The principles of this parable should be combined with those of the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8). The unjust steward was commended for his wisdom in obtaining partial payments from the Lord’s debtors.

Matt. 18:31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

The other fellow servants told their lord what the servant had done; that is, this incident of unmercifulness did not go unnoticed. Others who observed the situation and were very sorry reported the incident to their lord.

Matt. 18:32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Matt. 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

“Then his lord ... said, ... O thou wicked servant, I *forgave* thee *all that debt, because thou desiredst me*: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, *even as I had pity on thee*?” The “king” is Jehovah; the “lord” is Jesus. The relationship was so close between the two that the lord could say for the king, “I forgave thee.” Both the Father and the Son are in this picture, plus the fellow servants and the two principals. The fellow servants were properly sympathetic to the underdog in this situation. The unforgiving servant was brought into the presence of the lord and reprimanded. Incidentally, there is a distinction between pity, grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Matt. 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

The lord was angry and delivered the unmerciful servant to the “tormentors,” that is, to the Adversary for the destruction of the flesh. The individual received punishment, but there was hope of recovery *if* his heart condition changed. The unmerciful servant was delivered to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due unto the lord.

We pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” and that is the principle. The fellow servant should have been forgiven because he *asked* for forgiveness. Both the servant and the fellow servant asked for mercy, but only the former was forgiven. This Parable of the Unmerciful Servant ties in Matthew 18:15 earlier in the chapter. If a brother trespasses against another brother, the wronged brother should go to him alone. *If* the perpetrator “hears” (that is, *if* there is repentance), the victim should *forgive* him.

Matt. 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

The Heavenly Father is definitely in this parable, but so is Jesus, for it was the Master whom Peter questioned originally (verse 21).

Verse 35 is frequently quoted from the platform without a proper explanation. *Forgiveness must be considered in context*. Forgiveness from the heart is mandatory *if* there is evidence of contrition. In the parable, *both* the servant and the fellow servant fell down on their knees and asked for forgiveness. Therefore, verse 35 should be understood in connection with the parable just uttered. It is *wrong* to separate the verse and just use it as an axiom of behavior. Carte blanche forgiveness of the trespasser regardless of his attitude is *not* the Scriptural teaching. The Scripture teaches the necessity for contrition and repentance.

Now we will consider verses 21 and 22 again and combine the thought of “seventy times seven” with Luke 17:3,4. A paraphrase of verses 21 and 22 is, “If your brother trespasses against you seven times in one day, and seven times in one day turns to you and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” Suppose this *exact* situation occurred. A brother trespassed against you seven times in one day, but each time he apologized, so you were to keep forgiving him, and *from the heart*. It would be reasonable to think that because someone trespassed *seven times in one day*, his apologies were not sincere and he did not really repent—that the words were empty and just a formality. This example brings up another important principle; namely, if one follows God’s instruction and returns and repents, we *must forgive*

regardless of the repetition. Therefore, this example shows the importance the Father places on the very act of asking for forgiveness, of saying, “I am sorry,” and admitting the wrong.

If a person is trespassing because the nature of the problem is incurable, such as a club foot, for example, it is still important for him to ask forgiveness because doing so creates the habit of recognizing a wrong. (This trespass would pertain not to trivia but to something that really does injure another party.) The Lord puts a priority on the asking of forgiveness.

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant is *forcefully exaggerated* with the 10,000 talents in order to get the lesson across to our dull senses. It is as if Jesus were saying, “Let this lesson sink down deep into your hearts.” Therefore, Matthew 18—the *whole chapter*—should be considered in its entirety, starting with the discussion of the “little ones” who are stumbled. The entire chapter is the lesson, and the more it is fragmented, the less the lesson will penetrate. Moreover, Luke 17:1-4 should be considered at the same time.

Note: The lesson here pertains to forgiving what is done to *you personally*, not what is done to others. “If your brother trespasses against *you*, go to him *privately*.” Then, in the parable, the action changed to the one who *committed* the trespass (the one who owed 10,000 talents).

Matthew 5:23 reads, “If thou ... *rememberest* that thy brother hath aught against thee.” In other words, in this situation, you *realize* you did something wrong to your brother; you *know* you injured him contrary to the Scriptures. What, then, should you do? In such a case, you are to go to him—and *haste* before the day is done to make amends by saying, “I am sorry,” etc. If the trespasser does not go to his brother, then it is the responsibility of the victim to go to the trespasser. In other words, the wrong should *not* pass by unnoticed. If the trespasser does not ask for forgiveness on his own initiative, then the victim should act.

Matthew 18:17 shows that the final recourse is to take the grievance to the ecclesia. The parable teaches the same lesson by introducing the “fellowservants” (verse 31), who represent the ecclesia. The entire chapter is part of this drama.

With regard to Matthew 18:15-17, what steps would be taken in the following three situations?

1. The victim is in an ecclesia, and the trespasser is not.
2. The trespasser is in an ecclesia, and the victim is not.
3. Neither the victim nor the trespasser is in an ecclesia. (This situation would be the most difficult to handle.)

In all three situations, the *time* element is important. Action should be taken *as soon as possible*. Hence *contemporary* grievances should be heard and not trespasses of years past. Another problem is that sometimes the ecclesia itself is not amenable to a review and/or a trial. If such is the case, then taking a grievance to that ecclesia would be like talking to a blank wall. Matthew 18:15-17 tells how a grievance should *ideally* be handled, but there are times when a situation is so complex that it cannot be handled according to those instructions.

If the ecclesia is disinterested and refuses the responsibility, the victim will not get a hearing ear—especially if he is not in that ecclesia but the trespasser is. However, at least an attempt could be made to go through the procedure. Then the victim has discharged *his* responsibility.

If either the victim or the trespasser is in an ecclesia, it is *usually* the wiser course to try to handle the grievance through that ecclesia. After the victim has gone to the trespasser alone and the trespasser refuses to repent, the victim should go to the elders of that ecclesia (if he has confidence in them) and reveal the wrong. The trespasser’s ecclesia should rebuke him if a trial is necessary.

In review, Matthew 18:20 states, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” This verse shows that just two or three brethren meeting together can be considered an ecclesia, even if it is not formally declared as such. If the trespasser is part of this small group, the victim should apprise the other(s) if the trespasser does not voluntarily disclose his weakness.

However, if an individual who transgresses is all by himself, *alone*, with no ecclesia attachment, that is another matter. Then not only the victim but also all the brethren who are informed of the misdeed should take a stand of disfellowshipping him. And remember, this should be a *recent* transgression. The trespass should be nipped in the bud, so to speak, so that the cancerous growth will not develop over a period of time into other extenuating circumstances that cannot be solved in the traditional prescribed manner.

If two or three meeting together differ with the transgressor, that would be considered a church hearing, even without any formal secretary, treasurer, etc. Suppose only three individuals are involved, and one is the trespasser and one is the victim. If the victim and the other brother (or sister) consider the trespass serious enough, Scripturally speaking, to disfellowship the trespasser, that would be an ecclesia judgment. Just make sure that the transgressor knows the grounds, the reason, for his disfellowshipping. *In the locality* where the misdeed occurred, other brethren should be apprised. Otherwise, if the transgression became a *national* matter, we would have full-time employment in trials and investigations that should be handled in the area where the transgression occurred.

In regard to the third situation, where neither the victim nor the transgressor is in an ecclesia, an ecclesia can be informed, but the class will not have the same hold on the wrongdoer.

What about Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” All things being equal, we should try to be part of an ecclesia so that we will not find ourselves outside. The more one isolates himself, the more difficult retrieval becomes. The verses following Hebrews 10:25 show what can happen through the insidiousness of sin. Sin is so contagious that we are more liable to its disastrous results if we are not assembling together with others. In that context of not assembling, the penalty for willfulness is Second Death.

The more influence a brother has, the wider the disfellowshipping should be made known beyond the local area. Others should be alerted to the danger of a *wolf*. If a brother was excommunicated who spoke at conventions around the country, a form letter might have to be sent to all ecclesias, although alerting just certain key groups would probably be sufficient. Word would then get around. Another factor that would aid in spreading the word is that there are family relationships in many ecclesias, so if one brother is told about the disfellowshipping, then all who are related to him in the various ecclesias would be apprised. And there is another point. If possible, the transgression should be documented with proof so that if a trial does take place, the evidence is available.

Normally, we are not to listen to evil speaking but are to turn away. However, for a *serious* matter, the Old Testament Law gives the principle. If we hear a slander, we are now responsible to investigate whether or not the matter is true. We should go to the one who is *slandered* to find out. If the claim of the slanderer is *false*, and thus the victim truly was slandered or transgressed against, then we should tell the victim we will stand by him and support him if a church trial is initiated. We should also go to the slanderer to tell him that he has transgressed and told a lie.

Note: If the slander occurs publicly at a convention, then the convention has the responsibility

to bring the matter to a trial. A “slander” can be *either* true or false according to the definition given in the *Manna*. Sometimes evil reports are true, but as a “slander,” they are mentioned with the intention of doing damage.

Luke 17:3,4 and Matthew 18:15-17 cover two different circumstances. In the Luke circumstance, the victim is actually *present* when the slander occurs and can rebuke on the spot and even publicly. With the Matthew situation, the victim is *not present* but receives a *report* of what was said. Then the victim goes *alone* to the supposed slanderer to find out if the report is true.

If we should be present at the time a slander is made, we can ask the slanderer to clarify what he said if there is any doubt. Of course if the slander occurs during a talk, it would be awkward to interrupt the discourse. If the speaker on the platform utters a blatantly unscriptural statement (for example, that Solomon’s Temple was of the Devil), then everyone who heard the error is responsible for bringing that brother to task immediately after the talk ends.

Today convention talks are taped and liberally passed around afterward. If in a subsequent testimony meeting, question period, etc., a brother either retracts, apologizes, or amends what he said in his discourse, then the one passing the tapes around is responsible for also including the correction lest a matter appear erroneous. If the testimony meeting, etc., was not recorded, then it would be better to withhold the discourse tape.

It is a good idea to have a question period following a discourse or at the end of a convention. This communication is a healthy way for both speakers and audience to get clarifications.

Review of Matthew 18

Verse 7: “Woe unto the world because of offences! ... woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” This verse shows the seriousness of committing a trespass.

Verse 10: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones [in the Church].” For one in the Church to be trespassed against is also a very serious charge.

Verses 15-17: “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more.... And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” These verses give the formula in which the victim goes privately to the trespasser to inquire concerning the fault. This procedure applies *only to the two* who are involved in the particular experience, not to another or to the ecclesia or to an “offence” against God (one that is public in nature).

In a comparison of Matthew 18:15-17 and Luke 17:3,4, the instruction of the Luke text is to rebuke the brother who commits the trespass, and *if* he repents (saying, “I am sorry”), the victim is to forgive him. In the Luke situation, the victim is *present* when the trespass is committed. The Matthew text applies more to an offense done behind one’s back, where the victim learns about it later and then goes to the brother who did the misdeed to air the matter. When this difference is kept in mind, these Scriptures make more sense. Luke 17:3,4 says nothing about going to the brother alone, for the offense occurs face to face. The Matthew 18:15-17 situation can be hearsay or secondhand information.

In the case of a trespass, we should ask ourselves, “Is it serious enough to warrant investigation by going to the brother alone?” In other words, trifles are not to be handled according to either Matthew 18:15-17 or Luke 17:3,4. Another criterion to be met is that the trespass must be recent. Also, did the trespasser go voluntarily, of his own volition, to the

victim and ask for forgiveness, which would be the better, more desirable action?

Matthew 5:23,24, which addresses the *trespasser*, is paraphrased as follows: “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you, leave your gift at the altar, and go your way. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” This passage is frequently misunderstood. The *trespasser* must apologize for the wrong he is *conscious* of having committed in word or deed. Not until then will his prayer offering be acceptable to God. Many misinterpret this Scripture, thinking the victim should go to the trespasser, but the *reverse* is true with regard to one’s *prayer life being affected*.

In *Reprint* No. 1693, entitled “Forgiveness Versus Malice,” the following comment is made concerning Matthew 5:23,24. “It should be noted that the one addressed is not the brother trespassed against, but the trespassing brother. He must leave the offering of his gift or prayer, until he has made amends to his brother for the wrong he is conscious of having done him, in word or deed. Not until then will his offering be acceptable to God.”

In the Lord’s Prayer are the words “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive *those who trespass against us*.” The subject is the same as “If thy brother trespass against thee.” Many would feel that the Lord’s Prayer attaches *no* conditions to our forgiving the trespasser, but that is not the case. We are *asking* God to forgive us, so if the trespassing brother *asks* for our forgiveness, we are to then grant it. Bro. Russell answered this situation with one sentence in the same *Reprint* article: “Hence the Lord assures us that unless we forgive those who trespass against us (*when they repent*), neither will he [the Lord] forgive us when we repent.” Thus the Lord’s Prayer has an *implied* condition.

The Pastor also said in the same article, “From these scriptures, it is evident that some of God’s people make the mistake of forgiving transgressors before they repent. It is as much the Lord’s command that we *rebuke* the transgressor, and that we *do not forgive* until he turns again and repents, as it is his command that we do forgive, from the heart, when he does *turn and repent*. And if he trespass seventy-times-seven times, he should be *rebuked* as often (either by word or conduct or both), and should *repent* in words and *turn* in conduct just as often.” In discourses, we often hear that we should forgive seventy times seven, but we do not hear that seventy times seven *rebukes* should be given. *Carte blanche* forgiveness is *erroneously* advocated.

In Matthew 18, right after the admonition to forgive seventy times seven (verse 22) comes the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The king forgave a servant who owed him 10,000 talents *after* the servant *asked* for mercy. In fact, the king erased the entire debt. The following paragraph is quoted from *Reprint* No. 2294, “Forgive and Ye Shall Be Forgiven.” “[The Parable of the Two Debtors is] applicable to the kingdom of heaven class—the church—called to run the race and, by the grace of God, to win the prize of joint-heirship with their Lord in his coming Millennial kingdom. The generosity of the King in the parable, toward his servant who was so greatly in his debt, illustrates God’s magnanimity, mercy, toward us through Christ. The debt, ten thousand talents, was an enormous one, representing in value about twenty millions of dollars: this debt fitly represents our great obligations to God as a race, and our utter inability to meet the obligations. Adam was already ‘sold under sin’ and his entire family was involved in the slavery, when God graciously had mercy on us through Christ and provided for our liberty. The liberated servant, whose prayer for mercy was heard, represents the Christian believer who has been made free from sin.” The entire chapter of Matthew 18 must be read in order to get the proper perspective. Luke 17:1-4 should also be considered.

The same article also states, “We are not to accept one portion of the divine direction and to ignore another portion: we are not to say that our Lord meant it, when he said, ‘Forgive him,’ and that he did not mean it when he said, ‘Rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him.’”

Reprint No. 5134, entitled “Forgive Seventy Times Seven,” makes the following statement, which the Bible teaches as a law: “*Forgiveness is obligatory when asked for.*” However, in very rare instances, a modification has to be made to this statement. It is the same principle as David’s being allowed not only to enter the Holy but also to eat the shewbread, which was an *exception* to the *general rule* of death to any unauthorized person who entered the Tabernacle or Temple. Here the *general rule* is to forgive—and *from the heart*—the transgressor who repents. The *exception*, where forgiveness would be given more slowly and conditionally, would be the categories of gross sin listed in 1 Corinthians 5. In the specific example given there, an old sin had been winked at for a long period of time instead of being handled with excommunication immediately. The class continued to retain the fornicator/adulterer in their midst and *gloried* in their magnanimous spirit. When eventually the party who fornicated with his father’s wife was excommunicated and sometime later said, “I am sorry,” he did not receive full forgiveness instantly.

The categories of sin in 1 Corinthians 5 are so gross that a demonstrated period of time is required to show a real changed heart condition before the errant one is welcomed back and *fully* reinstated to what he had previously. Take an exaggerated case: If a brother killed someone and then said, “I’m sorry,” full forgiveness would not be immediately granted. The *seriousness* of the crime (as in 1 Corinthians 5) is the determining factor. These sins are not personal matters between two individuals but are a reflection on the ecclesia or the Truth movement. Hence they do not receive mechanical, immediate forgiveness but require time to manifest the sincerity of the repentance.

Alcoholism is another example. If a brother or sister ever lapsed into that condition, a whole *series* of wrongs would be committed. Therefore, a period of time would be required to show that one really had given up alcohol after he said he was sorry. It is so easy to revert to alcoholism that *time* would be required.

Adultery is another category. If adultery led to divorce and then to marriage of the two fornicators, true repentance would require separation of the brother or sister from that party, even though, in the eyes of the law and the world, it would be a legal marriage. Dissolving the marriage might seem like an impossible thing to do, but that would be *tangible evidence* of repentance and contrition. A penitent *action* must accompany words of contrition for the grosser sins.

A brawler is also included in the categories of 1 Corinthians 5. These sins are not one incident but a *series* of incidents, a *habit* of behavior. “Brawler” comes under the term “railer” or “reviler” (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10). If repeated evil speaking or reviling is so gross, then surely a series of *physical fighting* (brawling) and/or beating would also be so considered. Likewise, being “effeminate” would not be one act but a pattern or habit of behavior (1 Cor. 6:9). All of these categories are considered a basis for excommunication.

“Abusers of themselves with mankind” means obnoxious behavior of a brother or sister with regard to his or her association with other people, and it can take a multitude of forms that become a persistent pattern of behavior (1 Cor. 6:9). Being a “sexual pervert” (RSV) is only one aspect, and even that category would vary, sodomy being another form. The more embracing King James wording is best.

In summary, there are circumstances when *time and evidence of contrition by certain deeds* are required. Reprints Nos. 1693, 2294, and 5134 are all good and pertinent articles on the subject of forgiveness.

We read again from Reprint No. 1693: “God’s readiness or quickness to forgive and receive into fellowship depends upon the amount of light and favor sinned against.... *In proportion* as any

have tasted of the good Word of God and been made partakers of the holy spirit, etc., and have sinned willfully against light and knowledge (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31), in that *same proportion* God is slow to forgive, and will not receive such back into fellowship, except they bring forth works proving their professed repentance to be sincere. And God assures us that there is a degree of willful sin, against full light and ability, that he will never forgive—'There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.'—1 John 5:16." This excerpt bears out the thought of *slow forgiveness*, not instantaneous, depending on the seriousness of the sin.

These are *unpardonable* sins, and we do not pray for those who commit them. For example, if a consecrated one later denies Christ and the Ransom, we do not forgive him *no matter what*. That party could not be trusted, even if he later said he was sorry. Going to that extent would be like crucifying Christ afresh (Heb. 6:6).

Elsewhere the Pastor suggested that the right hand of fellowship may be withheld. This is *not* excommunication but a situation where you have a grievance against another. You thus show your *reserve* because of the nature of the sin committed against *you*, the *truth*, or certain *principles* of God's Word. Withholding the right hand of fellowship would manifest your disapproval. You do not intimately fellowship such brethren as previously.

Continuing on in *Reprint No. 1693*: "We find no mention in the Scriptures of *forgiving* on God's part without the requirement of repentance. The passage which reads, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34), might be considered to refer to a pardon without repentance; but we remark that these words are not found in the oldest Greek MSS.—the Sinaitic and Vatican." Those who crucified Jesus did know what they were doing—they were putting nails in him, etc.—but *to what extent* they knew, God will determine the penalty. *Many* were involved in the Crucifixion—centurions, scribes and Pharisees, the people who cried out, "Crucify him!" and others—and God and Jesus will assess the *degree* of responsibility of each.

Many are careless in reading the Bible and then make erroneous statements from the platform. We should study the Bible *prayerfully, thoughtfully, analytically, and earnestly* and not speak too quickly on subjects. A *deep* subject should not be treated with a cliché or a repetitious phrase but should be considered in a *balanced* way (in context and with other Scriptures on the same subject).

Matt. 19:1 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;

Matt. 19:2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

Jesus went down to the vicinity of Jerusalem. Great multitudes followed him, and he continued to do a healing work.

Matt. 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

The Pharisees came to Jesus to bait him, to lead him into a trap. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The word "every" sounds strange to us today. Consequently, all the modern translations change "for every cause" to "for any cause" or an equivalent expression (see Phillips, RSV, New English, NIV, etc.). Modern translations are very helpful, but they are not always accurate, for they sometimes add or delete words improperly. Here the King James Version is best, even though it sounds peculiar. The Pharisees deliberately phrased the question in this manner in order to trap Jesus and force him into a corner. In the Greek, the thought is "every" or "all," that is, "for all reasons." In effect, the Pharisees were saying, "The law of divorce has been *so abused* that it is used for every cause. Now what is *your*

thought on this matter?”

How would we have replied to that question back there? The question was, “Is the divorce practice justifiable?” If Jesus answered “yes,” he would be going contrary to his own holy principles, and the scribes and Pharisees knew that he was holy and his conduct was above average. If Jesus answered “no,” it would mean he felt divorce was not allowable under any circumstances. The Pharisees thought Jesus’ gospel of love and mercy might cause him to answer “yes.” Either way—answering yes or no—they felt they would trap him. So what did Jesus do? He answered the question *both* ways: yes and no. First, he showed the importance of not being divorced (verses 4-6); then he gave the only grounds for divorce (verses 8 and 9).

Matt. 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

Matt. 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Matt. 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Verses 4-6, based on the Book of Genesis, were Jesus’ answer until the Pharisees asked him another question (verse 7). “At the beginning [God] made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be ... one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder [divorce].” In other words, Jesus did not believe in divorce—period! As originally instituted, marriage was an *abiding* relationship.

However, while we may be strongly opposed to something, we may *modify* our statements with an *exception*. For example, we might say, “I do not believe in abortion.” Today there are two extreme positions on abortion: (1) There is to be no abortion under any circumstances because life is sacred, and (2) promiscuous abortion is permissible under all circumstances according to the decision of the mother. The true view is *in between* these extreme positions. Abortion is *wrong* unless the mother’s life is in danger or the pregnancy was a result of incest or rape.

The same principle applied to the marriage-divorce question of the Pharisees. There were two extreme positions, and the truth was in between. Divorce is permissible only in the case of fornication. As originally instituted in Genesis, marriage is to be complete and lifelong, and fornication is the exception, as Jesus showed in his answer to the Pharisees’ next question.

Matt. 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

The Pharisees said in effect, “Then why did Moses make exceptions? You are taking a stand against the Law by saying that man should not divorce.” Whatever Jesus answered (yes or no), the Pharisees were ready with further criticism. They reasoned that a man, if he so desired, could put away his wife on any occasion. All he had to do was to sign a bill of divorcement and give it to his wife. They maintained that divorce was permissible for any and every reason.

The “writing of divorcement” (Deut. 24:1) applied if an “uncleanness” was found in the wife. The uncleanness did not refer to adultery, for an adulterer was stoned to death. Also, the writing of divorcement was not to be used promiscuously; in other words, it was not “for every cause.”

The Pharisees *intentionally* phrased their questions in an *unfavorable* way to try to show that Jesus was either too strict and just or too lenient. The questions were stated in a tricky manner, not the way they should have been phrased.

Jesus' original answer showed that the ideal was in Genesis. From the beginning, marriage was meant to be perpetual, but the writing of divorcement was introduced into the Law to provide a way out under certain circumstances because of the weakness of the flesh on the part of either husband or wife. Thus there had to be a *justifiable* cause in order to dissolve the marriage, and the Pharisees did not consider this stipulation in their question. Fornication and adultery are the only grounds for divorce, not incompatibility, mental cruelty, etc. Adultery would, in effect, break the marriage contract.

Having multiple wives ceased, for the most part, among the Israelites from the time of the Babylonian captivity (536 BC) onward. To have multiple wives was not considered adultery because contractual arrangements were entered each time, and the Law spelled out definite obligations that the husband had for a wife. The situation was not at all promiscuous.

When the Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity, they had to, under Ezra, separate from foreign wives. Israelites were to marry Israelites or a proselyte; they were not to marry outside of "the faith." This renewal took place right up to Jesus' day, with the result that a people were prepared for Messiah. The nation had high principles, theoretically speaking, because the remnant returned from Babylon in a contrite attitude. Therefore, a relatively "holy" remnant was on the scene in Israel at the time of the First Advent. Of that class, Jesus called the apostles. That generation was fastidious about the Law compared to former times, that is, prior to the Babylonian captivity. The pendulum swung to a Pharisaical, puritanical, hypercritical attitude toward others (Samaritans, publicans, etc.).

Jesus showed the importance of marriage but left a way out when adultery or fornication occurred. He also stated that a man who married a wife who was put away (divorced) was committing adultery, but the implication was that she was put away for grounds of adultery or fornication. If, instead, her husband had committed adultery, she was free to remarry. If the wife had committed adultery, she could not remarry, and anyone who did marry her would be committing adultery.

This principle also applies to the Christian. If a class excommunicates a brother for fornication, and another class receives him *without proper repentance*, the second class would be seriously sinning. A divorce is serious. If a brother and sister are divorced because of adultery and a class receives the guilty party, that class is in error unless there is repentance and any wrong is undone as far as possible (including the renouncing of a second marriage, if it has occurred, by the adulterous one).

When brethren are divorced, we should know the grounds. If a consecrated individual is considering marriage to a divorced brother or sister, the grounds must be known regarding the divorce lest the first individual sin by carelessly marrying one not eligible for remarriage.

Jesus stressed the contractual obligation that is incumbent upon both marriage partners, but adultery would break the contractual arrangement and so would remarriage. Separation *per se* (perhaps because of incompatibility) is not a proof of adultery or of the breaking of the marriage vow, but remarriage is.

Marriage is a large and involved subject with different aspects. For example, certain acts may be committed *before* or *after* consecration, and depending on which it is, the advice might vary.

Matt. 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to

put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Matt. 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

In the final analysis, Jesus gave an in-between answer that met certain contingencies. Some erroneously feel that verses 8 and 9 favor only the man, but they apply equally *both* ways. When a divorce takes place, several things must be considered. Who initiated the divorce? We should *examine* this matter, even though the one who initiated the divorce might be the innocent party. Conversely, the guilty party may have instituted the divorce proceedings. We must also ask on what grounds the divorce was granted. Only then can we determine where the fault lies. A person might end up the victim of a divorce that he or she did not want and did not give just cause for.

And there is another complicating factor. Although a husband or wife may commit adultery, the spouse may be largely responsible for *withholding* physical marital rights. That would not excuse or justify the adultery, but the spouse would incur responsibility and should not remarry.

The *woman* has the right to divorce her husband and remarry if the *husband* commits adultery. The situation and conditions are stated in the *masculine* sense because the whole marriage and divorce picture is predicated on a type of Jesus and his Church. Jesus *cannot* be unfaithful (represented by the husband), yet he can divorce his Church (pictured by the wife) if “she” is unfaithful. We cannot “divorce” from our consecration, but Jesus can “divorce” us for unfaithfulness. Therefore, the *masculine* gender keeps the original picture intact. The man represents Christ; the woman pictures the Church.

Matters stated in the masculine often mean *both* male and female. For example, “To *him* that overcometh” (Rev. 2:7). Hence divorce is permitted for either the wife or the husband if the spouse commits adultery.

Matt. 19:10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

Jesus, in his reply to the Pharisees who tried to trap him, had just affirmed strongly the sacredness of the marriage vow, showing that it was instituted in Eden and that it was designed not to be broken. It was true that under the Law with Moses, there was a provision for procuring a divorce. And Jesus then gave a loophole for divorce, saying it was permitted when one party committed fornication. That was the *one* exception, for marriage was to be sacred.

In view of Jesus’ strong defense of marriage, the disciples now said to him, “Well, if that is the situation—if a man who divorces his wife not because of fornication and marries another is committing adultery, and whoever marries his ex-wife is also committing adultery—then it is not good to marry.”

Matt. 19:11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

In answering, “All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given,” Jesus was strongly hinting that it is better for Christians *not* to marry. Because of the seriousness of the marriage vow, it is better to obviate the problems and not marry. However, it is important to note that Jesus did not frown on marriage, for marriage *is honorable* in all. Paul’s advice was, “I wish others could be single like me, but such is not the case, for some burn. For those it is good

to marry, and marriage is honorable” (1 Cor. 7:8,9; Heb. 13:4).

Matt. 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

There are three kinds of eunuchs: (1) those who are born that way, (2) those who are made such by others, and (3) those who are self-made. The main purpose or normal reason for marriage is procreation. However, not everyone can go without marrying because of the “burning” situation. Many have physical desires that are satisfied legitimately through marriage, and children are usually the product of this physical relationship.

Those who are “made eunuchs of [by] men” are castrated. For example, in ancient times, stewards over a household were made eunuchs to protect the master’s wife and daughters. Subsequently, the eunuch was given quite a lot of authority commensurate with his ability, and he was, as it were, adopted into the household and given many privileges.

Some voluntarily make themselves eunuchs “for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” This would be self-denial by making a vow or just purposing not to marry or, if marrying, unwisely vowing not to have physical relations. In reading this Scripture, Origen, an early church father and a man of profound understanding and learning, wanted to please the Lord greatly, so he literally castrated himself. That was a very painful thing to do.

“He that is able to receive it [this advice], let him receive it.” Jesus’ advice here is that if one can contain himself, it is better not to marry and thus to be a self-imposed eunuch. Consequently, since the “ideal” is not to marry, we should be careful not to chide or joke about a Christian who is not married, or to urge one to marry who has taken such a stand and made that sacrifice. It takes a particular type of man to remain a eunuch, however. And there is no question that in a good Christian marriage, husband and wife can help each other in their walk in the narrow way. Peter was married.

The advice is also given to try to remain in the state we are in when we consecrate. If married, we are to stay married (unless the unconsecrated spouse departs). If single, we should try to remain single. However, if we marry, we are to marry in the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 7). Young widows are advised to remarry; elderly ones are not. Thus there are many cases to consider on the subject of marriage, but here Jesus gave the general advice that it is better not to marry.

Matt. 19:13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

Matt. 19:14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 19:15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

Verses 13-15 are an interesting event in Jesus’ life on earth. He put his hands on the heads of these little children and offered a prayer. The disciples were disturbed, thinking that the children were bothering him and that his teachings were for the adult mind. However, Jesus contradicted their attitude: “Suffer little children ... to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Notice that Jesus did not go out of his way to bless the children. The situation just arose naturally.

Would we reason that all of these little children went on to consecrate? No. Therefore, the

prayers on their behalf were for certain providences to occur to favorably dispose them to consecration. The parents would have initiated the request for prayer. However, how each child reacted to the favorable providences was an individual responsibility—that is, whether or not the child was amenable to the experiences and ultimately consecrated. And even if the child did not consecrate, the prayer would be that he remain tenderhearted and follow principles of truth and righteousness to the extent possible in his normal life.

Strangely, even unconsecrated parents sometimes realize that having a child is a responsibility and want their child to go to Sunday school, although they do not attend church themselves. They wish more happiness for their children than they have had. Here the parents just wanted their children to have a blessing from the Lord.

“For of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus was not endorsing infant baptism. Rather, the lesson is that Christians should emulate the good qualities of a child: humility, obedience, trust, compliance, teachableness, etc. We are to be “children” in malice but “men” in understanding (1 Cor. 14:20). In other words, we should minimize our faults as much as possible by overcoming them and maximize our good character points by developing them.

Matt. 19:16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

A rich, young ruler came to Jesus and asked, “Good Master, what *good thing* shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (compare Luke 18:18-24). This ruler had *many* earthly possessions, yet he approached Jesus with a proper, respectful attitude and a sincere desire to have his question answered. His motive was *pure* compared to the evil intentions of the scribes and Pharisees to minimize Jesus’ influence and slander his character.

Notice that the word “good” was used twice: “*Good Master*” and “*good thing*.” The rich ruler was using natural logic. Since he wanted to know what *good thing* to do to inherit eternal life, he would go to a *good* person. This reasoning suggests not only that the ruler was humble and sincere, but also that he *admired* Jesus and thought well of him as being a very good person, prophet, etc., with great wisdom. Therefore, calling Jesus “Good Master” was admirable, for the ruler wanted to please God and get eternal life.

Matt. 19:17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Jesus’ response is interesting, for it refutes the Trinity. “Why callest thou me good? there is *none* good but one, that is, God.” If Jesus were God, why would he say such a thing? Only *God* is good in the *supreme* sense. In everything Jesus did, he tried to call attention to God in one way or another (even if the account is silent). The Book of Revelation shows that one of Jesus’ characteristics is to *worship God* (Rev. 22:8,9). He was so intent on doing his *Father’s* will and in speaking the words the *Father* gave him—he so *wholeheartedly* exemplified “holiness to Jehovah”—that God was to be preferred and honored *especially* along the lines of *adulation*. Adulation should be conferred on one higher than Jesus. The *highest* worship and praise go to *God*, even though Jesus is good too. Even in raising Lazarus, Jesus looked to heaven and prayed aloud to the *Father* (John 11:41,42). Jesus always did his utmost to point to the Father.

Matt. 19:18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Matt. 19:19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matt. 19:20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Matt. 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

Matt. 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Jesus saw very good qualities in the rich, young ruler, but the ruler had to make the decision. No matter how much we may like and admire another person and see many wonderful traits, there are some things he has to do of his own initiative.

Jesus' reply must have been quite a shock: "Go and sell *all* that you have, and then come and follow me" (verse 21). Remember, the original question was, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus did not give this extreme answer right away but gave a milder reply first: "Obey the commandments" (verse 17). This reply is interesting. Since it is *impossible* for fallen man to keep the commandments perfectly and thereby gain eternal life, why did Jesus direct the rich, young ruler's thinking into this vein? As Jesus enumerated certain commandments ("Thou shalt not murder," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," etc.), the young ruler, being highly principled, would have mentally answered each one, "Yes, I have obeyed." When Jesus came to the last commandment ("Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"), the rich ruler would have thought, "I have also obeyed this one." Therefore, Jesus got even more specific, implying that *if* the rich ruler *really* loved his neighbor as himself, he would go and sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor. And *if* he *really* loved God with all his heart, etc., having no other gods before the Almighty, he would "come and follow" Jesus.

The Gospels provide insight into the *profound depth of wisdom* Jesus could give instantaneously. It is one thing to sit down and ponder and write and rewrite a matter, but for Jesus to be able to respond instantly with great wisdom to an unexpected question is amazing! His reply shows he had *profoundly meditated* on these principles so that when confronted with questions and taunts, he had an answer.

When the commandments were listed, of the two most important ones, one was *omitted* and the other was given *last*. However, Jesus had already introduced the rich ruler to the *first* commandment when he said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but ... God." By selling all his goods to worship God with all his heart and then following Jesus, the ruler would be obeying both of the two most important commandments. He admitted that Jesus was the nearest person to God that he had seen. Therefore, since Jesus had a closeness with God, if the ruler *really* loved God, he would follow Jesus. Hence Jesus put the rich ruler to the test. Jesus had already pointed to God as the supremely good One. Then came the cost: "Sell what you have and follow me, distributing the proceeds to the poor [this would be loving his neighbor]." Thus *both* of the two primary commandments were included, with the initial emphasis on the most important one to love God wholeheartedly.

Q: Why was the matter stated in such an *extreme* way? None of the other disciples had to sell *all* that they had in the way of material possessions.

A: Jesus replied in this manner because he knew that the *real problem* was the ruler's riches. The ruler wanted to please God and get eternal life, but he did not realize the cost. Jesus repeatedly used this technique. Take the Parable of the Importunate Widow, for example. She besought the judge for help *over and over*. The judge finally gave in because of her *continual* pestering. The point is that Jesus liked to *accentuate a desire that is good* and maximize it. This rich, young ruler had a good streak, but in order to maximize that good streak, Jesus inflamed and

encouraged it, and then put it to the test.

Similarly, the Syrophenician woman kept after Jesus: “[Even] the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” (Matt. 15:27). After that remark, Jesus could not deny her any longer; he healed her daughter. Imagine hearing this uneducated woman make such a profound statement! “Out of the mouth of babes....” is the principle (Matt. 21:16). By Jesus’ *delaying* tactic, the *good* was brought out in the woman. Too quick a response is not always best. To the contrary, a *delayed* approach is sometimes better. Jesus knew that the Law could not give eternal life, but his method with the rich, young ruler delayed the answer and brought out a weakness. Thus Jesus was “working” on the ruler whether the ruler realized it or not, tenderizing him and leading up to a climax.

Jesus was a mastermind to be able to meet a situation like this so impromptu. If he could do this, what must the *Heavenly Father* be like? These incidents give us a tiny glimmer of the wisdom of the Father that is in the Son.

Jesus knew in advance what the young ruler would say: “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” Therefore, Jesus was preparing the ruler for an exposure of his weakness. The ruler even thought he had loved his neighbor as himself. And the obvious omission of the most important commandment to love God was startling. Jesus was leading up to his last remark, which brought in these two most important commandments at the same time: “Sell all you have, distribute to the poor, and follow me”; that is, “If you *really* want to worship God, put your earthly possessions behind you and follow me.”

Actually, all who consecrate put their earthly possessions behind them *in principle* but not literally. We become stewards of the Master’s goods and provide things decent and honest for our families. However, the principle of consecration should be that if obedience to God requires the giving up of all that we have, we will do so. A Christian in the true sense of the word would do this. Because Abraham worshipped and loved God supremely, he was willing to sacrifice Isaac. Incidentally, this test came to Abraham when he was *mature*. A Christian begins *ideally* by forsaking his father’s house, land, and family and going to a land where the Lord will lead him. As he grows in grace and knowledge, the tests get more severe. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac was his most severe test in proving his love for God.

As Jesus enumerated the commandments to the rich ruler, there was a progression from the more concrete ones to the more nebulous ones. The ruler could positively say he had not murdered anyone, committed adultery, or stolen, but had he *always* honored his parents? Perhaps once or twice he had slipped. As for loving his neighbor, sometimes he did and sometimes he did not, but mostly he did. The Apostle Paul was admirable for his wisdom and logic, but he was *no comparison* or match for Jesus!

The ruler had asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, and Jesus had said, “If thou wilt be *perfect*.” Only *perfect obedience* under the *Law* would give life, let alone consecration and following Jesus in the Gospel Age. The rich, young ruler went away sorrowfully, “for he had great possessions” (verse 22). The discussion terminated at that point, for a sensitive area had been touched.

Not many noble, wise, mighty, or rich are called (1 Cor. 1:26). The ruler’s neighbors probably considered him exemplary, but *God* does the calling. Usually He purposely calls those who are not so well esteemed in order to put to foolishness the wisdom of *men*. God can make something *out of nothing*, and He can make something *into nothing*. He calls the humble to put to nothingness that which men admire profoundly. As a result, no flesh will be able to glory in its own presence. Paul’s reasoning is like a sequel to this incident with the rich ruler. Those who know they are “sick” need a physician; those who feel whole are less likely to seek help.

Matt. 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Matt. 19:25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

Matt. 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Verses 23-26 are directly related to the incident with the rich ruler. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. Scholars usually say this statement refers to the Needle's Eye Gate, a smaller gate in the large city gate of Jerusalem. In olden times, a camel had to get down on its knees and be stripped, or unburdened, of its load in order to get through the gate. This explanation is a nice principle, but it does not answer these Scriptures. The principle would be like the rich man having to sell all his properties and possessions and distribute them to the poor, and then going and following Jesus. The actual lesson is even *more poignant*, as clues will show.

For one thing, the disciples, who were more familiar with these gates than we are, “were exceedingly amazed”; that is, they considered it *impossible* for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (see Mark 10:23-27). The Israelites had needles back there, so the disciples understood Jesus to be referring to a *literal* needle. In his own words, “With men this is *impossible*; but with God all things are *possible*.”

Let us consider some helpful examples today. Life begins with a *microscopic* cell. The fetus grows in the woman's womb, is born, grows, and matures to adulthood. A *tiny* seed planted in the ground comes out a *giant* melon. An acorn grows into a huge oak tree, etc. Scientists now realize that there is a genetic code in the nuclear arrangement of the cell. The genetic code is like a time clock that gives instructions to produce different things at different times, for example, an arm, a leg, or an eye with a human being, or blossoms and fruitage with a plant. This genetic code in the cell can be *reversed*. The primary example was Jesus' reduction from the *great Logos* to be implanted in the Virgin Mary's womb *without* a cessation of life. That was a *reversal*. God can manipulate the atom and give it all its instructions.

While we speak of the death sentence as being passed on to all men through heredity, the sentence actually takes place through the genetic code. God *altered* the genetic code after the disobedience of Adam. Therefore, *all* die, unless they can partake of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (as Enoch and Elijah are doing now). With death incorporated into the genetic code, the human race is falling more and more.

The point is that a camel can be reduced to such a small size that the chromosomes can go through the eye of a needle. This is *humanly* impossible but *divinely* possible. Therefore, even a rich man, *if* he has a *right* heart condition, can be made to do the *impossible* by the Lord. God can reduce him to nothing—to humility and perfect submission. Then he, too, can figuratively go through the eye of a needle (enter the Kingdom of heaven), although it is easier for a camel to be made to literally do this.

With God, *all* things are possible. He can put the camel or the rich man through the eye of a needle. In fact, He could put the *earth* through the eye of a needle if He wanted to! That is a *mechanical* action, whereas His dealing with the New Creation is as much *above* His doing this to

a camel as the heavens are above the earth. There really is no comparison. It is *much easier* for God to put a *literal* camel through a *literal* needle than to take a person who has free moral agency in an evil world and instruct him to be fully obedient and submissive to Him. The latter is *much more* of a miracle. The account does not say that a rich man cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven but that it will be most difficult.

Many of the heroes of the Old Testament were “rich”—Abraham, Job, Moses, and David, for instance. Of those Christians who are rich and make their calling and election sure, their *rewards* will be proportionately greater. The rich who have *thoroughly* consecrated will get more, the principle being, “According as a man hath *used* shall it be given unto him” (Matt. 25:29; Luke 19:26). The top ten individuals of the Old Testament were rich for the most part, and their reward among the Ancient Worthies will also be greater. There are 144,000 each of the Little Flock and the Ancient Worthies.

Matt. 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

Matt. 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus’ reply to Peter’s question was that in the regeneration in the judgment age, when he would be seated on his throne of glory, the 12 apostles would have the privilege of sharing in that government and sitting on their own 12 thrones. The *Diaglott* renders “regeneration” as “the new birth day.” The word “generate” means life-giving—that is, that life is generated. The prefix “re” means “again”; hence to “regenerate” means to give birth again, to bring to life again. When Jesus is seated in “the throne of his glory,” the Church will be with him, and this event is still future.

The regeneration is not necessarily the same time period as restitution, for the latter has several beginnings. The “times [*plural*] of restitution” began in 1874 with many inventions, the Harvest message, etc. (Acts 3:21). However, 1874 was only a *technical* beginning. Technically, midnight starts the day, but not until people get up to go to work are they aware that the day has come. Thus the *dawning* of the Millennial day is different from the *beginning* of that day. We are in the Millennial morning and have been since the 1874 midnight, but it is still pitch dark. At dawn, the sun will rise and the world will awaken—and that will be the regeneration time. We are interested in the technical beginning because that is when Christ came. The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins takes place *before* the inauguration of the Kingdom in regard to the “midnight cry,” the door being shut, etc. *Later* in that same chapter (Matthew 25) is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which tells about Jesus’ sitting on the throne of glory in the regeneration time. Times of restitution and seasons of refreshing—*plural*—show there are different time segments of restitution.

Matt. 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Jesus continued his reply to Peter: “Those who forsake other ties that may be in opposition to the Lord—and doing so would *cost* something—will be more than compensated.” In *principle*, they receive “an hundredfold”—not numerically but from the standpoint of *value*. The things of value that a Christian gets *even in the present life* are *abundantly more* than what he gives up. The *dual* blessings (those in the present life as well as getting life eternal in the next age) are stated more clearly in Mark 10:30 and Luke 18:30. One is to exercise faith in making the commitment of consecration, and very few consecrate considering the billions of humanity.

Consider the context. The rich, young ruler had just come to Jesus asking what good thing he could do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus said to sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor and then come and follow him, the rich ruler went away sadly. Thus it was very logical for Peter to now say, “We *have forsaken all* and followed you, so what will we get therefore?” The apostles had left their businesses and occupations to follow Jesus on foot for a period of 3 1/2 years. Whatever he did, wherever he went, they went. Of course they did not necessarily have to liquidate everything, but Jesus was trying to press the rich, young ruler in his *sensitive* area. He had come to inquire and then finally got the lesson. Jesus introduced the lesson gently, taking a little time before touching the “sore spot.” The ruler went away sorrowfully because he saw the price that had to be paid.

Matt. 19:30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

This verse really belongs in the next chapter to start the Parable of the Penny. Thus the parable begins and ends with the statement “the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matt. 20:16). Also, this statement ties in the whole panorama. Matthew demonstrated this principle by putting together the incidents of the rich, young ruler’s question; the apostle’s question (“What about us now that we have forsaken all to follow you?”); and the Parable of the Penny.

Matt. 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

Note: An explanation of the Parable of the Penny (verses 1-16), with additional thoughts, was presented by Bro. Frank in a 2001 discourse. A transcription of the talk appears at the end of this Gospel of Matthew study.

What “day” of 12 hours was Jesus referring to? What is the time setting of the parable? Since *all* of the laborers were on the scene *contemporaneously*, the parable covers a *short* period of time at the end of the age when the rewards are given. To make the parable begin at Pentecost, or even in 1874 or 1878, we would be forced to put the dispensing of the penny *beyond* the veil. This cannot be because there will be *no murmuring* in heaven. In fact, those who have a murmuring spirit will not be in the Church class.

Time helps to clarify prophecy somewhat. We have to make adjustments for the 1914 date—unless prejudiced views are so crystallized that this is impossible. The date 1914 is valid, but not all of the things that were anticipated to occur took place in that year. Therefore, time should stir up our minds to reexamine prophecy if all of our expectations do not materialize.

When does the parable begin? It is a little end time within a bigger end period. The Harvest is the end of the age, and the parable covers the end of the Harvest. The parable may have just begun, or it may still be future. Probably the beginning is a little future from today, that is, from 1984. At any rate, the time of *payment* is future and just before the completion of the Church. The parable could cover a ten-year period, an eight-year period, five years, or whatever. We do not know exactly, but the time will be very short.

Matt. 20:2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Matt. 20:3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

Matt. 20:4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Matt. 20:5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

Matt. 20:6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

Matt. 20:7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

Matt. 20:8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

Matt. 20:9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

Matt. 20:10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

Matt. 20:11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

Matt. 20:12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

The lord of the vineyard instructed the steward to begin paying the *last* laborers *first*; that is, the penny went to the 11th-hour workers first. Almost all of the parables contain a *startling* revelation that runs counter to our reasoning. These statements are a deliberate shock treatment to alert us to a real meaning. What bothered the earlier workers most was not necessarily that the last laborers were paid first, but that they were paid a *full day's* wage. From our *human* standpoint, this would seem to be unfair, especially for the first-hour workers, who went thorough the whole heat of the day, but also for the third-, sixth-, and ninth-hour workers. The 11th-hour workers came in during the cool late afternoon and yet got the same wage. We have to search our hearts to see if we would murmur under the same arrangement.

Many of us have *false* concepts of justice and grace, thinking something is ours by right. Suppose we were seriously unemployed, needing a job for our very survival and for that of our family. We would be thankful for *any* job and for getting a full day's wage. We should start to reason from this standpoint, for otherwise, the view is distorted and disproportionate. It was *grace* that gave the laborers the *opportunity* to work in the vineyard and to receive payment. Had the laborers fully appreciated that point, the reward of the penny to all would not have been a sore point. The whole way through, the parable teaches *grace*, not merit.

Matt. 20:13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

Matt. 20:14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

Matt. 20:15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

While multiple first-hour workers murmured (verse 11), the parable narrows down to *one* murmurer. One of the early (6 a.m.) workers was singled out for a reprimand, one who had agreed to a penny (verse 2). Who is this individual with the "evil" eye? Addressing him as "Friend" reminds us of Judas. Although the concept of a Judas class at the end of the age is

hard to absolutely prove—it is like a cobweb—there are a number of innuendoes and allusions to such a class being right in the Bible Student movement at the very end of the age. Under the severity of the coming trials, these individuals will turn against the truth.

Let us consider the term “friend” in more detail. The Greek *hetairos* is translated “friend” only three times: in the Parable of the Penny (Matt. 20:13), in the Parable of the Wedding Garment (Matt. 22:12), and in Jesus’ words to Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:50). *Hetairos* is used only one other time in the Bible, and there it is translated “fellows” (Matt. 11:16).

According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the word means comrade, companion, friend. The three-time translation as “friend” helps to pinpoint a Judas class or individual at the end of the age and gives a common denominator in each instance. Those of the Judas class may or may not be Spirit-begotten. Two groups will be culpable, as shown in the Epistle of Jude, which deals with conditions at the very end of the age. Judas probably went into Second Death before the Ransom price was paid, but certainly before Jesus ascended and presented his merit to the Father. *Knowledge* makes one culpable for Second Death.

Matt. 20:16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

While all of the workers got the penny, even the murmurers, the last workers were honored with the privilege first. With the parable applying to the consecrated at the very end of the age, the meaning is not necessarily that the last will be the youngest because *all* of the workers were on the scene at the *same* time. Some were simply invited into the vineyard work ahead of others. The implication may be that the last workers are relatively new in *activity*.

When invited, *all* of the workers went into the vineyard, but notice that going into the vineyard is not equated to the penny, which is a reward or favor. That favor was extended first to the 11th-hour workers, the last ones. In fulfillment, those who enter last will have more zeal, enthusiasm, and joy to do the work. Of this last class, many may be young, although the parable does not emphasize age necessarily except that all of the workers were on hand for the entire time period. They stood idle until invited into the *regular Harvest* (“vineyard”) work. As an illustration, various groups such as the Herald, the Dawn, and the Divine Plan have come along at different periods of time and done publishing for witness activity with their own subscribers, literature, and *Volume* offerings. Thus various groups do *independent Harvest* work and activity. And there is a *distinct* “coming in” as a *new* group engages in the work.

Although all of the workers got the penny, not all were in the right heart attitude, the lesson being that it is one thing to *get* the penny but another thing to *use* it. At the end of the age, the feet members will be rebuking Jezebel. The Elijah class will (1) espouse unpopular truths and (2) expose popular errors. With the Bible Student movement containing both Elijah and Elisha, *two classes*, the espousing of unpopular truths and the exposing of popular errors will happen *right within* the movement; that is, it does not pertain to our relationship to the world. Thus will the Elijah class be distinguished. The *Volumes* teach this concept as a *principle* without any explanation.

The Pastor expected a great work at the end of the age. He also expected to die an untimely death through violence, by assassination, and thus told others to keep their distance from him. Actually, he died a natural death only because the end of the age had not yet come. The Scriptures show that the violence to the feet members is yet ahead, and it will translate them into the Kingdom. In truth, it would be a *privilege* to die to enter the Kingdom, to die for Christ’s sake.

Receiving the “penny” will be the *right* to do this last smiting work. However, one will not enter the work (and thus use the penny) unless he has the heart and the zeal to do it. The consecrated, the valid children of God, will get the penny (the right, the privilege), but those

who are *indifferent* will not use it. In the Gideon picture, the 10,000 who went to drink water picture the consecrated all partaking of the truth, but only 300 drank in the proper way so that they were selected to fight with Gideon. The 300 scooped up water and lapped it like a dog, all the time looking forward; that is, they were zealous in the truth and looked forward to the coming battle. In other words, the 300 were handpicked to be with Gideon for that battle. All 10,000 were invited, but 9,700 did not have quite the right heart for the work because they lacked zeal. Stated another way, all 10,000 had the *right* to lap the water like a dog, but only 300 had the *zeal*. All will get the penny, but not all will participate in the work of smiting the Jordan, that is, in giving a *strong*, concentrated message against nominal Christendom. In fact, using the penny will be such a privilege when the time comes that some who *now* have that interest may lose out because of not being in the right heart condition at *that* time. Therefore, *no one* should be *confident* of being chosen. If faithful at the very end of the age, developed in character and ready, eager, and willing, one will be chosen.

Many will see the smiting activity taking place but will hold back. They will have the “penny”—the right or privilege to participate—and will see others giving the strong message, but they will hold back and “murmur” until it is too late.

One reason for holding back would be family. Down through the age, many had a very hard time giving their lives, for the persecutors would take another member of the family, even a child, and abuse the individual in front of the Christian to make him recant. The Christian had to make a decision: would he recant because of family? That was a hard decision but a *necessary* one to be of the Little Flock. Abraham had the desire and the will to sacrifice Isaac, and he *would have carried out* the sacrifice if God had not instructed otherwise following the test. The Little Flock will have the *faith* of Abraham. Abraham had a very *real* experience, and so will the feet members.

Others might hold back for reasons of employment if their job is in jeopardy, but the faithful ones will *not* get the mark of the beast in *any* sense. Those who do not get the mark will not be able to shop or sell in the mart, as it were. Yes, there will be a ban on spiritual things for “cults,” but the ban will extend to other areas as well. Even friendship and fellowship will be “weeding out” factors. In the final analysis, the Great Company will be faithful but *not soon enough*. The foolish virgins will get the oil but *after* the door is shut. They will get the zeal and come to their senses, but the momentary indecisiveness will cost them the chief prize. Eventually, the Great Company will get life as *overcomers*, not denying the Lord, but their response will not be quick enough to be of the Little Flock.

The dispensing of the penny is certainly still future because the setting has not yet occurred where this privilege is available. However, the parable can begin without our being fully aware of its start. Even if we recognize a change, we will not know whether it is the first, third, sixth, or ninth hour. The 12th hour, at “even,” when the penny is given, will be more obvious. If a persecuting experience is attached to using the penny, we should not murmur because the “goodman of the house” is giving us this privilege to really sever ourselves from earthly ties to prove our faithfulness.

Generally speaking, the majority of the penny users will be the last laborers to enter the vineyard, whereas the “group” thinking of the earlier workers will be murmuring. Basically, the 11th-hour workers will be more enthused, although of course some feet members will come from each group of laborers. The 11th-hour workers will be fresh and enthusiastic and *want* to do something for the Lord. To have “the faith of Abraham” means to be willing to forsake *everything*: husband, wife, children, home, lands, etc. That degree of faith and zeal is necessary for one to get *immortality*. The Heavenly Father sacrificed His Son, and we should have the same disposition. If we want to be like Christ, it must *cost* us more and more.

Certainly there have been trials down through the Gospel Age just as severe as what will take place at the end of the age. Hard persecuting experiences have come in *waves* over Christians. In times of relative peace and prosperity, we study and try to develop our characters and get armed so that when the next wave of persecution occurs, we will be faithful with the Lord's help. It is actually a *privilege* to be living now when we see so many prophecies being fulfilled, and it would be a *great honor*, as well as a joy and a privilege, if we could be so faithful in development as to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to use the penny when the time comes.

If we consider the subject from a *negative* standpoint, it would not be very pleasant to live into the great Time of Trouble, which the Great Company will do. Their experiences in the trouble will be just as severe as what the Little Flock suffers earlier. The difference is that the Little Flock will *voluntarily* suffer earlier. And the world, too, will go through dreadful trouble in the great tribulation.

Matt. 20:17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

Matt. 20:18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

Matt. 20:19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

In the Gospels, the apostles are usually called “disciples” because Jesus was instructing them to be teachers, but they were not really teachers until he departed. When Jesus was with them, they were *listeners*, and later they instructed others.

This was at least the third occasion that Jesus told the Twelve he would be killed. Each time he ended with a note of *hope*: that he would be raised again the third day (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:18,19).

“Gentiles” were the Roman soldiers who scourged Jesus when Pilate thought such action would soften the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees to change the death sentence to just a punishment. However, the scribes and Pharisees still wanted blood. Many abused Jesus, including the high priests and the Roman soldiers. He was taken to Annas, to Caiaphas, to Pilate, and to Herod.

Verses 17-19 show that Jesus knew quite a bit about what he would suffer. Even before he came down here, the Father would have told him of the plan and what had to be endured. Thus the Logos *intelligently* volunteered to come to earth, having *advance* knowledge of the terrible ordeal he would have to experience. He *knew* he would be crucified. Of course there was a time—from his transference to Mary's womb up until his baptism—when this information was “blanked out,” but at Jordan, the heavens were opened to him and his mind was flooded with knowledge of his preexistence. The knowledge of his death was withheld from his apostles, however, until he approached the end of his ministry.

Matt. 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

Matt. 20:21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

Matt. 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

They say unto him, We are able.

Matt. 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Matt. 20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

How like a mother to want the best for her children! For the mother to come with John and James Zebedee (“sons of thunder”) to make this request shows her great faith, too, that Jesus would have a Kingdom (Mark 3:17). The request was for John and James to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus in his Kingdom. The other Gospels indicate that John and James had this desire, but the request was implemented with the mother along and participating. In other words, John and James were responsible for the request, for it was *their* desire.

Of course the other disciples were upset, but actually, this desire was *laudable*. It is not wrong to love Jesus so much that we want to be as faithful as possible in order to be as close to him as possible in the Kingdom. Granted, Jesus used this incident to teach humility, but we should all have this desire. The principle is similar to a brother’s wanting the office of a bishop (elder), which Paul said is desiring a “good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). However, after a brother attains that office, then what? How does he discharge the responsibility? And why did he want the office in the first place? What was his motivation?

Verse 23 shows that not all judgment has been given to the Son. The Father has reserved certain privileges for Himself, one being the placement of the members in the body. With matters pertaining to the *Church*, the Father has almost all the say. The call or invitation, who will comprise the Little Flock and their positions, etc., are prerogatives of the Father. With regard to the *world*, Jesus will have almost all the say.

Trinitarians would have a hard time explaining verse 23. From *their* standpoint, this request to sit on Jesus’ right and left hand would really be a request to sit on *God’s* right and left hand, yet Jesus sits on God’s right hand (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1). How would Trinitarians answer that dilemma? Obviously, God and Jesus are two *separate* beings.

Notice that Jesus’ answer was directed to the *two brothers*: “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?” Jesus must have looked at James and John in a way that made it clear whom he was addressing. His reply showed that *great responsibility* was attached to the initial question with regard to sitting on Jesus’ right and left hand.

It is interesting to realize that the *Father* grants the positions of honor. It is also interesting to see how readily John and James said, “Yes, we are able to drink of your cup and to be baptized with your baptism.” In Luke 12:50, Jesus spoke of his own baptism: “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” “Straitened” means constrained (RSV), pained (KJV margin). We should have the same attitude in taking the cup of suffering.

Originally, in the enthusiasm of youth, a Christian wants everything to happen all at once. He is ready to die and go into the Kingdom that very year. But the years go on, and certain complexities and sensitivities develop with regard to life. The decision to consecrate and submit all to the will of God is very important, but we need to *mature through testings* over the years. Although youth is idealistic, it needs maturity, which should be gained as time goes on. This process happens faster with some than with others.

Jesus did not reprimand James and John for their desire, but he did show them the *cost* that is

involved and that the Father makes the selection. Based on other hints in Scripture, Paul and Peter will probably sit on Jesus' right and left hand.

We are all called to be of the Little Flock. Thus, in the beginning, we are greatly encouraged, and the enthusiasm of youth, good health, and idealism all tend to make the goal seem very attainable. However, as time goes on, we begin to see that very few will make the grade. The stark facts are that in the final analysis, it does not depend on how enthusiastic we are but on how *obedient*. Obedience is *better* than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). We are to work out our own salvation with *fear and trembling* (Phil. 2:12). We should aim for the Little Flock, but life in the Great Company will be a blessing too—and much superior to life here on earth.

The words of verse 23, “Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with,” can be said to *anyone* who makes a full, unreserved consecration. We *all* get to drink of Jesus' cup, but whether or not we attain the prize of the high calling depends on *how faithfully* we drink of it. However, only the Twelve were eligible to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus in the Kingdom. Jesus said specifically to the apostles, “Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). Judas would have made the grade if he had been faithful.

“When the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation” against John and James. The ten were probably quite stirred up, especially Peter, a leading spirit.

Matt. 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

Matt. 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Matt. 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Matt. 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Matt. 20:29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

Jesus enunciated a premise of the Kingdom—that being great is predicated upon ministering (serving). Whoever wants to be great should serve in his best capacity. That quality alone does not mean one will make the Little Flock, but it is the proper attitude. Then we are to leave the matter in God's hands as to who is chosen.

For a while, Jesus' response, a lesson on humility, squelched the feeling of rivalry among the apostles. However, at the Memorial, the same words and lesson were again necessary. When the apostles went up to Jerusalem, they had a dispute among themselves as to who should be the greatest (Luke 22:24-30). And this time *all* of the apostles disputed.

The lesson of verses 25-28 had to be deeply impressed on the apostles, and surely the Crucifixion had that effect. To see what God required of Jesus made them realize a similar testing and faithfulness were necessary for any to make the Little Flock. Great tribulation and selectivity were involved.

We drink of an *awesome* cup. Consecration, like marriage, may be entered into idealistically, but both are unknown contracts as far as the experiences we will have. We *mean* the vows when we consecrate (or marry), and the contract is *bona fide*. In time, however, we get experiences that we never dreamed of having. The cup of suffering will *cost* a great deal. Those who have

to suffer most—whether mental, physical, moral, or whatever—will be getting nearer the top grade. In other words, not every member of the Great Company will have to make the choice that Abraham did. Trouble and persecution are an evidence that God is dealing with us; they are an evidence of *baptism* but not necessarily of placement.

Jesus gave “his life a ransom for many.” The Ransom is available *for all*, but *not all* will avail themselves of the opportunity and thus benefit from it. The Ransom is used both ways in Scripture: (1) tentatively for all and (2) only for those who respond properly and are obedient in the final analysis.

Jesus laid down his *human* life rights in the scale of Justice, and those *human* life rights constituted the Ransom. He did not come to earth to be expunged from all life. Rather, a joy, a hope, was set before him for dying on the Cross, and if he faithfully paid the Ransom price, then God could be just and yet the Justifier of men. Jesus gave up his *human* existence *forever* when he died faithfully on the Cross, but the spiritual soul (Greek *psuche*) is another matter.

Jesus knew that he had to perfectly obey the Law, for the Law held a prize of *life* to one who could keep it. That was the *positive* aspect, whereas the *negative* aspect was the necessity for *death* in order to pay the Ransom price. Through his death, Jesus obtained life rights, which he will forever relinquish once they are paid over to Justice. At present, those life rights are only mortgaged—they are on deposit for imputation (loan) to the consecrated of the Gospel Age.

Matt. 20:30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

Matt. 20:31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

Matt. 20:32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

Matt. 20:33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

Matt. 20:34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Verses 30-34 describe an emotional scene that probably took a few minutes. Two blind men sitting by the wayside called for mercy as Jesus passed by. No doubt he heard them but intentionally waited in order to extract their most intense feelings. The multitude tried to squelch their request, but the two just cried out louder, importuning. Finally Jesus stood still and asked what they wanted. Having compassion on them, Jesus touched their eyes and healed them. The two healed men *followed* Jesus—a nice reaction that did not always happen.

Q: Since Jesus had been doing miracles all along for those who cried out, why did the multitude rebuke the two blind men for calling for mercy?

A: Sometimes there is such respect for a person that others do not want to distract him from the more important matters. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. Perhaps the multitude wanted to see his arrival in Jerusalem, and they were eagerly following him, expecting a confrontation there. An interruption by these two blind men would have delayed his objective. The multitude reacted emotionally according to what they wanted and their anticipation. Had the multitude thought on the matter, they certainly would have realized that blindness was a terrible thing to be afflicted with, and they would have wanted Jesus to heal the two men. However, they were so preoccupied with the other thinking that they did not realize what they were saying.

This miracle took place on the outskirts of Jericho. Jericho is unusual, for one entered and exited the city the same way, through a loop. This very ancient road is still used today.

For several reasons, the two blind men were healed *immediately* when Jesus touched their eyes: (1) their faith was *great*, (2) their request was made with *urgency*, and (3) Jesus knew they would *follow* him. Jesus sometimes healed in stages or with a slight delay in order to build up a process of faith—as if to follow the principle “Lord, increase our faith.” (We, too, have periods of faith, but we need *more* faith.) Here, however, the healing was immediate.

In verse 32, Jesus asked the two blind men, “What will ye that I shall do unto you?” Obviously, Jesus knew what they wanted, so why did he ask? The principle was operating: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, the Father will give you” (John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23). The expression of the desire is helpful, and not just the secret harboring of a matter. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and [but] with the mouth confession [or profession] is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). It is one thing to believe in our heart, but the next step is to manifest that belief by an outer demonstration of words or deeds, which lead to salvation. Belief in the heart produces justification; an outward demonstration brings deliverance. Of course sanctification and glorification (or redemption) occur in between these two steps.

Matt. 21:1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

Near the close of Jesus’ ministry, he was approaching Jerusalem where he would soon be put to death. Bethany and Bethphage were situated close to each other, Bethphage being between Jerusalem and Bethany. Bethphage was at the *southern* end, at the *bottom* slope, of the Mount of Olives (if the Mount of Olives is considered a chain, it would include the Hill of Evil Counsel). Bethphage was below the Jewish cemetery near the road. The name Bethphage means “house of figs,” which was an appropriate name because it was near the spot where Jesus cursed the fig tree (verses 19 and 20).

Matt. 21:2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

“Straightway” (*immediately*) upon entering the village, the two disciples would find the ass and the colt. The account is very explicit. It names the two villages, states that two disciples were sent, and explains that the tethering of the animals would be very apparent as soon as the two disciples entered the village at the split in the road (see Mark 11:1-6 and Luke 19:28-34).

Incidentally, the city of Ophel was *ancient* Jerusalem at the time of the Jebusites. Today the “Old City” is the Temple area, but Ophel predates the Temple and was a different part of the Jerusalem vicinity.

Matt. 21:3 And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

Jesus even told the two disciples what to say when their actions would be questioned: “The Lord hath need of them.” The fact that Jesus told the disciples to reply in this manner, with these words, shows the owner of the animals had prayed for an opportunity to do something for the Lord. Hearing these words, the owner acquiesced *right away*.

Matt. 21:4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Matt. 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Matthew quoted Zechariah 9:9 to show that Jesus was fulfilling this prophecy. “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” *Two* animals are indicated here and in Zechariah 9:9. Incidentally, the other three Gospels mention only *one* animal—Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30; John 12:15.

What was the purpose of entering the city with an older female animal (the mother) and the colt? Why *two* animals? Bringing the mother with the colt showed they had not been separated from each other, and therefore, the colt had not been ridden previously, yet Jesus, the *perfect* man, had *perfect* control over that wild, unbroken animal. It was even remarkable that the mother was so calm with her colt being touched and ridden. The calmness, obedience, and subserviency of both the mother and the colt to Jesus pointed out that this was an unusual circumstance. In seeing this transpire, the people would *later* realize that the prophecy was fulfilled. At the time, they simply marveled at the circumstance, knowing it was *contrary* to nature.

It was customary in olden times for kings to ride on an ass. In the presence of Bath-sheba and Nathan the prophet, David (realizing that his son Adonijah was going to be proclaimed king), gave Solomon his mule to make a public display at Gihon, the virgin fount, the upper end of the Pool of Siloam (1 Kings 1:31-33). Moreover, the Old Testament judges rode on white asses, a symbol of authority and judging. Thus not only kings but also judges rode on white asses. The animals were not stark white but were off-white, as was the one Jesus rode on.

Matt. 21:6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

Matt. 21:7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

The disciples brought back the *two* animals and put their garments on *both* the mother *and* the colt. Then the disciples set Jesus on the *clothing* on *one* animal, the colt. Clothing was placed on both animals so that whichever one Jesus chose to ride, he would have a cushioned seat.

The following is a possible spiritual lesson. The fact that clothing was put on *two* animals but Jesus rode only one could show that a *Bride* will accompany him ultimately. With the inauguration of the Kingdom, the saints will come in glory with Jesus to be admired in a sort of “triumphal entry,” spiritually speaking. “Saviours [*plural*] shall come up on mount Zion” to deliver Israel (Obadiah 21). Thus Jesus and the glorified Church will act jointly in connection with administering judgment and justice at the end of the age.

Matt. 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

Matt. 21:9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Verses 8 and 9 tell how the multitude spread garments in the way and cut down tree branches for the same purpose. And the people cried triumphantly, “Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”

It was springtime, so some of the branches would have had a fresh spring fragrance with buds and leaves. Thus the tree branches beautified the way. Both the branches and the garments manifested humility on the part of the people, as well as enthusiasm. They expected Messiah to

become King and deliver them from the yoke of Roman bondage.

According to Young's *Analytical Concordance*, "Hosanna" means "Save, we pray thee." It was as if the people were saying, "Salvation is come from God, from the highest! That which we have been yearning for—this is it!" The great deliverance was anticipated.

John 11 gives the reason for the *extremely enthusiastic* response from the multitude: Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead a *very short* time before. The people were like fanatics, running all over and telling the news. A man had been dead for *four* days, and now he was *alive!* And how did the scribes and Pharisees react? They sought from that time on to *murder* Lazarus (and Jesus)! This attitude shows that some of the scribes and Pharisees will definitely get Second Death—the schemers, the ones who premeditated murder and made the *decision* (as opposed to those who were merely emotionally swayed). It was like a lynching, where emotionalism stirs the mob to put someone to death, but the responsibility lies with the one who made the *suggestion*. That person is far more culpable than those who just get emotionally involved.

Matt. 21:10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

Matt. 21:11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

When Jesus entered the city, those who were there inquired about the uproar: "Who is this?" The multitude who had accompanied him from Jericho, spreading their garments and cutting tree branches in the way ahead of him, knew his identity, calling him "the son of David" and saying, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." The general populace in Jerusalem was unaware of the significance of the occasion and of Jesus' identity.

By crying "Hosanna to the son of David," the multitudes were really announcing, "Hosanna to the Messiah" (verse 9). Those who had accompanied Jesus from Jericho believed he was the Messiah, the one promised from the lineage of David ("until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him"—Ezek. 21:27). The promised seed of David was to be an individual, a son of David. In fact, Matthew's lineage starts out, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*" (Matt. 1:1). Verse 11 does not conflict or contradict. The enthusiastic crowd was merely trying to give a quick identity of Jesus to the people in Jerusalem: "Remember the prophet of Galilee? This is he."

Matt. 21:12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

Matt. 21:13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Jesus went right into the Temple and "cleaned house," overthrowing the tables of the money changers. Imagine a table sitting there with shekels, etc., on it and someone coming in and abruptly and forcefully overturning the table and scattering the money! The action must have been similar to that of Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai and, seeing the golden calf, in righteous indignation *smashed* the two tables of stone with the Ten Commandments. Jesus was doing a judging work, and this is what the people had anticipated, thinking he would subsequently free them from Roman bondage and be their King.

Probably the crates containing the doves served as seats for those who were merchandising in the Temple. Thus when Jesus overturned the tables, the crates would have opened, releasing the doves. Another account says that Jesus took reeds and *whipped* the money changers and

those who sold doves, driving them right out of the Temple. Real *fury* was manifested here. Jesus was NOT always the meek Lamb!

The following is a side lesson. The Temple was Zerubbabel's, but when Herod enlarged the structure, it was called *Herod's Temple*. In the expanded area, allowance was made for a platform, a colonnade, conference rooms, etc., where other activities such as merchandising took place. Even though Herod was not given a divine commission to enlarge the Temple, it was called *God's "house."* Thus we can see how the nominal Church was recognized by the Lord as the golden cup in His hand despite the fact there was much abomination in the system. The professed house of God was made a "den of thieves," a "cage of every unclean bird" (Rev. 18:2). The Temple was ostensibly devoted to God and, therefore, should have been used for that purpose.

The account in John's Gospel regarding the overturning of the tables of the money changers is a different event from what Matthew was describing here (John 2:13-17). John told of an *earlier* incident that occurred in the *beginning* of Jesus' ministry. In other words, there were *two* denunciations of Babylon in harmony with the antitype. In 1878, Babylon was spewed out of the Lord's mouth (this was a fall from *favor*), but in the near future, Babylon will be spewed out in *destruction*.

No matter how many wonderful miracles Jesus did, those with the wrong heart condition *still found fault*. The principle was the same with Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai. The waters of the Red Sea miraculously opened, yet a few days later there was grumbling against God and His leadership through Moses. Knowledge is not the end of the matter if the heart is not right. Education in itself is not the answer, for it must be backed up by *discipline*, and that is what the Kingdom will be—a rod-of-iron (forced discipline) rule.

Matt. 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

Matt. 21:15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

Matt. 21:16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Jesus did "wonderful things" such as casting the money changers out of the Temple and healing the blind and the lame. He spoke and acted with *authority*, teaching the people many things during the four days he was in the area. Each day he gave certain lessons. The attitude of the chief priests and scribes was manifested, for as the multitudes listened so obediently to Jesus, the religious leaders were jealous to the point that they plotted to trap him. They asked him tricky questions (for example, about the woman with seven husbands and when tribute should be paid to Caesar). Jesus' skill in answering the questions angered them even more. They would have dispatched him before the Passover if they could.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise [high accolades that were *due* to Jesus, the true King]." Jesus said that if he forbade the "babes" (literal children plus the common unlearned masses who were "babes" in knowledge) to speak, the very stones would cry out because the praise was *due* (Luke 19:40). The chief priests and the scribes wanted Jesus to silence the shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" They thought he was accepting emoluments due to God.

Actually, this "perfected praise" should have come from the scribes and Pharisees as they saw Jesus' wonderful miracles and his ministry reaching a culmination. They should have accepted

Jesus, for after all, they were the ones who studied the Scriptures, but in view of their silence, the praise had to come forth from another source. Thus the “babes” brought forth or “perfected” the praise that was due. And if the babes had not done so, then the very stones would have cried out.

Matt. 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Jesus went out of the city of Jerusalem into Bethany and lodged there; that is, his headquarters were outside in the suburbs of Jerusalem, three to five miles away. It is kind of touching that although Jesus had some hard experiences in the city each day, he retired at night to Bethany where his friends were, knowing he would have a place of welcome and refreshment. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were there, and that is where Mary anointed him with spikenard. These were congenial surroundings.

The plotting by the scribes and Pharisees to take the lives of Jesus and Lazarus could not just be done peremptorily. Because of the 2 million or so people who were present for the Passover Feast, the religious leaders could not simply send soldiers to dispatch Jesus with a sword. Thus the religious leaders had to tread softly and arrange to seize him *quickly* and in the *wee hours* of the morning. They did not wait for the usual court hours but shortly after 6 a.m. were already going to Pilate for a judgment.

The types of John the Baptist, Gideon, Daniel and the lions’ den, Elijah, the three Hebrew children, etc., all speak of a work at the end of the age. In addition, our Lord’s life near the end of his ministry is a picture of the feet members at the end of the age. A great deal of detail is furnished, a portion of which will now be considered from the standpoint of not merely what will occur but also how to react to that experience.

Antitypical Lessons for the Feet Members: A Review of Verses 12-16

“Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said [in *righteous indignation*] ..., It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:12,13).

We should first think of Jesus’ actions and words in overturning the tables *as a unit*, as something he did at the end of his ministry. Then we should consider his actions and words from the standpoint of the *last members of the body* of Christ. There is an analogy, for they, too, will “overturn the tables.”

When Jesus overturned the tables, the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees were *very disturbed*. This whole incident is a lesson for the feet members; namely, the popular *general* witness will merge into the *smiting* witness; that is, the one work will almost blend into the other. Earlier in this same chapter of Matthew, the multitudes shouted, “Hosanna to the son of David,” triumphantly acclaiming Jesus, but *immediately* afterwards, he performed a work in righteous indignation that greatly upset the clergy of his day. This incident foreshadows something that will happen right in the Truth movement.

Basically, the future “overturning of the money changers’ tables” will affect and *disrupt the financial revenues* of the clergy and the denominations. Not only do the people put donations in the collection plate at church (comparable to the money changers’ tables), but the donations supply revenue for the systems. Jesus’ actions did two things: (1) disrupted the financial revenues and (2) turned the people’s affection away from the established religion of that day. If the feeling of reverence for the clergy was destroyed, those who previously donated would stop doing so—and that is what will happen at the end of this age. The work of the last

members will begin to be popular enough among the people that it will cause nervousness among the clergy. Before the literal city of Babylon fell, its waters were diverted. In antitype in the near future, financial revenues will be disrupted and disaffection of the people toward the clergy and the systems will take place. Before mystic Babylon falls, her waters will be diverted.

“The blind and the lame came to him [Jesus] in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased” (Matt. 21:14,15).

Verses 14 and 15 show the same thing in antitype. Through the popular general message, deaf and blind people will be healed *spiritually*. Those who were blind and lame but wanted to serve God will get their eyes opened as to the *true* religion, the *true* worship of God. Just as when Jesus overturned the money changers’ tables, the religious leaders of Israel were *angry*, so it will be with regard to the feet members. At the end of the age, the popular general message will somewhat take hold on the communicants of the false system and then merge into the smiting message.

Notice the “children crying in the temple.” From the standpoint of the clergy, the antitype of these “children” will be the *immature laity*. The clergy will say, “Look at the *children* giving praise to this *other* group!” If the “children” gave the same “Hosanna” praise to the clergy, they would love it, for they consider themselves to be the *orthodox* channel. However, the clergy will view the praise *unfavorably* and say that the poor children do not know what they are doing and that they need advice and curbing. The “children” will not be such from the standpoint of age but from the standpoint of being the *unlearned*, the *masses*, the *public*, who do not specifically study religious things. The clergy will look upon the public’s diverting their affection and praise to this new source as a *delusion*.

“[The chief priests and scribes] said unto him [Jesus], Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matt. 21:16).

How will Jesus’ statement be applied to the feet members at the end of the age? What is the comparison here? Jesus’ *answers* are highly significant. Jesus replied, “Don’t you know what is written in Scripture: ‘Out of the mouth of babes...?’” If the clergy approach the *feet members* and say, “You are *not* a Reverend; you did *not* graduate from a seminary; you have *no* authority to teach; *stop* these people from listening to you,” what would be the reply? Several tacks could be taken that are basically all the same. The feet members could say, “Jesus and the apostles never graduated from a religious seminary; they were not trained as orthodox teachers. In fact, the apostles were fishermen, yet they gave sermons to the public. If we do not have religious degrees—Doctor of Divinity, etc.—but are teaching the common people, then what is the difference now? Why should we need a degree in order to preach on religious subjects?” The scribes and Pharisees challenged Jesus’ right to preach to and teach the masses, as well as his right to let the people reverence him in that way.

Since the gospel message is for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, the feet members could quote Isaiah 61:1-3, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

Jesus referred to the Old Testament, to Psalm 8:2, to say, “Out of the mouth of babes....” In

other words, he went *back to history*. Today most people are not familiar with the Old Testament, so the feet members will have to go back to the *days of the apostles* and show that the learned, the wise, the mighty, and the noble were not generally called but the meek and the humble. God chose the foolish and the weak things of the world in order to confound the wise and the mighty (1 Cor. 1:26,27). The feet members could give this type of reply because neither the public nor the clergy are knowledgeable about the Old Testament. Thus they will have to refer to the Gospels and the New Testament, to Jesus and the apostles.

Psalm 8:2 seems out of place here. Some of the other Old Testament Scriptures that are quoted in the New Testament are also incongruous to their settings or contexts in the Old Testament. For example, Chapter 51 of Jeremiah refers to literal Babylon but contains verses that *contradict* the historical account. Although the primary application is to something else and the incongruous verses are sandwiched in as a secret code, yet there is a relationship. Similarly, with Psalm 8:2, Jesus introduced a foreign thought.

The “wonderful things [healings]” that Jesus did, the children crying, and his overturning the tables of the money changers were all factors that disturbed the clergy, but even more specific words and actions will become apparent as we proceed with the Gospel of Matthew. There are several ways to study Matthew. One way is to concentrate on what Matthew saw and the principles, teachings, and lessons he presented. Another way is to study the prophecies, and we are now considering a prophetic picture. Not only Jesus’ words and acts but also his parables are highly significant.

Matt. 21:18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

Matt. 21:19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Matt. 21:20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

Matt. 21:21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

Matt. 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

This incident of the fig tree can be treated three ways. The most common way is from a *character* standpoint. At first, it would seem that Jesus was very impetuous—that he was hungry and thus cursed the fig tree because it bore no fruit. Bible Students would reply that the fig tree was typical of the nation of Israel. The time had come for Israel to produce fruit—the early fruit—but since there was no fruit, Jesus cursed the fig tree to portray a lesson.

“And *presently* the fig tree withered away.” The thought is that in one day, within 24 hours, by the next day, the fig tree withered. When Jesus cursed the fig tree, nothing seemed to happen at first, but the next day, the tree was withered, as Peter pointed out (Mark 11:20,21). Therefore, “*presently*” does not mean immediately, as the *Diaglott* suggests, but “soon thereafter.” Neither in the type nor in the antitype does the withering occur immediately, but it happens shortly thereafter.

The fig tree withered from the *roots*—it was a *drastic* withering that showed death and destruction. For such a withering to take place in less than 24 hours was very dramatic. When the disciples marveled at the withered fig tree, Jesus said, “If you have faith, you will be able to

do more than this. You will say unto this mountain [the Mount of Olives or Jerusalem], 'Be thou removed and cast into the sea,' and it shall be done." To have literally spoken these words back there would have been presumptuous, but faith is the exercise of the mind with respect to either the *promises* or the *prophecies* of God. The cursing of the fig tree was prophetic. The nation of Israel was destroyed in AD 69-70. Just 30-plus years later the city was destroyed, the land denuded, and the Temple burned—a *drastic* action! In regard to the end of the Gospel Age, mystic Babylon is the "mountain." As part of the *smiting* message, the Lord's people will say *in faith*, "Christendom/Babylon will be destroyed."

Notice how the popular and the smiting messages blend together here. First, Jesus came into the city amidst "Hosanna" cries and strewn palm branches (picturing the *popular* message). Then he overturned the money changers' tables (the *smiting* work). He healed the blind and the lame (the *popular* message). Next he cursed the fig tree (the *smiting* again). The popular message will precede the smiting message, but they will merge into one another—back and forth; popular and smiting; smooth, good words and then harsh, strong words. "Healing" in antitype means the masses will get a glimpse of restitution work as part of the popular message; they will receive assurance and comfort. Under the circumstance of the future, some will listen.

Matt. 21:23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Matt. 21:24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Matt. 21:25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

Matt. 21:26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

Matt. 21:27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Verses 23-27 can be considered from the standpoint of *principle*, going into the technique that Jesus used in dealing with those who differed with him. However, these verses are also very enlightening in regard to the *antitype*. The clergy will ask the *same* question of the feet members at the end of the Gospel Age: "By what *authority* do you, who are not graduates of a seminary or ministers with a doctorate in divinity, say and do these things? You are presumptuous!"

Here we are told in advance how the feet members will be approached. Jesus replied, "I will answer your question if, *first*, you will answer a question of mine." Then he asked their opinion of whether John's baptism was from heaven or of men. Back there John was extremely popular, and all knew about him. He startled the nation. We could not at this end of the age go back and talk about John the Baptist, so what will the feet members say? They will go back to *Jesus himself*. Just as Jesus referred back to John, so the feet members will refer back to Jesus and ask, "Which seminary did Jesus graduate from? Was the message he taught of men? Was he an ordained minister? Was Jesus ordained of men, or was he ordained of God?" (He was not even a priest according to birth; he was of the tribe of Judah and not a Levite.)

The clergy will reason: "If we say, 'Of God,' then they [the feet members] will say that their ordination is of God and of His Word and that a seminary degree is unnecessary. If we say, 'Of men,' the answer will discredit Jesus." Either answer would bring a rebuttal very displeasing to

the clergy, so as the religious leaders declined to answer at the First Advent, they will probably refuse to answer in the future. And the feet members will respond as Jesus did if the clergy refuse to answer: “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things!” This *advance* instruction helps us to know how to handle the problem in the future.

In the following verses, we find out that Jesus really did handle the situation but not in the way the scribes and Pharisees had anticipated. Jesus used two parables: the Parable of the Two Sons and the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

Matt. 21:28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard.

Matt. 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

Matt. 21:30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Matt. 21:31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

Matt. 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

In the Parable of the Two Sons (verses 28-32), Jesus was still addressing the clergy. One son *initially refused* to go work in the vineyard but afterward changed his mind, repented, and *did go* into the vineyard. The other son professed or *promised to go* into the vineyard to work but *did not*.

The first son represented the publicans and sinners, who were not professed Christians at first, but in the final analysis, they repented and accepted the gospel. They did not have the “orthodox” religious background. The second son represented the clergy, who were ostensibly God’s ministers doing vineyard work, but they were not doing what they should be doing.

This parable ties together the thought that “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected [ordained] praise” (Matt. 21:16). In the final analysis, the repentant sinners praised God, as evidenced by their transformed characters and lifestyle. On the other hand, the religious leaders were not living a life in harmony with their professions.

The vineyard work is *general Harvest* work. “Going into the vineyard” in the Parable of the Penny is the *harvesting* of the *wheat* class, the *general Harvest* work, which the nominal Church is not doing. The clergy want numbers and increased membership and, in fact, do not recognize the laity as their equals. The laity are regarded as “children,” and the building (rather than the Christian) is considered the Church. The clergy do not consider as equal a common person who consecrates his life to the Lord but regard such a one as *laity*. Thus the clergy are not trying to *harvest* the Little Flock members.

From the true perspective, all of the consecrated are “priests”—*fellow priests* running for the prize of the high calling. Therefore, the ministers, in maintaining a superior status over the laity, are not doing proper vineyard work. The clergy are looking for proselytes but not for the seed class, the Little Flock, those who run for the prize of the high calling. They do not even understand the high calling in the sense of being kings and priests in the next age.

Jesus mentioned the need for repentance. Publicans and harlots will go into the Kingdom before the religious leaders because of repentance. The “Kingdom” class are being harvested, and the clergy class will be thrust out as a whole, even though they think they are already in the Kingdom.

Matt. 21:33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

Matt. 21:34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

Matt. 21:35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Matt. 21:36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

Matt. 21:37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

Matt. 21:38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

Matt. 21:39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

Matt. 21:40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Matt. 21:41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Verses 33-41 cover the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. The scribes, Pharisees, and some public were listening. When the question was asked, “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those [wicked] husbandmen?” some of the scribes and Pharisees immediately drew the lesson and replied, “The lord of the vineyard will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.”

The “householder” and the “lord of the vineyard” would be God. The “servants” were the true prophets back there at the First Advent and faithful Christians subsequently, especially those who were martyred in the Dark Ages, plus others such as Arius.

This parable shows that part of the smiting message will be calling attention to the vile deeds committed by the nominal Church in the past. Jesus reviewed to the religious leaders of Israel their history of slaying the prophets, and he added that they would treat the Son similarly. Therefore, in antitype, part of the smiting message will be a review of the Gospel Age and how the clergy were responsible for the religious persecution of the past: torture, the dungeon, the Spanish Inquisition, etc.

At present, the message of nominal Christianity is love, peace, and brotherly kindness, but their history is a fact that they cannot ignore. At the end of the age, it will be necessary to call attention to these things. Moreover, just as Jesus predicted his *own* death by describing the reaction of the husbandmen to the son, so the feet members will foretell their *own* death. They will give a review of the Gospel Age and then imply that they themselves will be received

unfavorably and will be slain. That will be the testimony of this parable. Just as the full force of this parable became apparent *after* the religious leaders crucified Jesus, so the full force of the testimony of the feet members will be felt *after* they are put to death.

The Parable of the Penny is in Matthew 20, and the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen is in Matthew 21, the next chapter. It is significant that both parables emphasize a “vineyard.” The rays of prophecy focus forcefully at the end of the age, one right after another.

Matt. 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Matt. 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Matt. 21:44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Matt. 21:45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

Matt. 21:46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Now Jesus introduced a rather strange subject: the Great Pyramid. “The stone which the builders rejected” is the top stone. The clergy back there were familiar with the Great Pyramid and the history of the top stone, which was literally rejected by the builders. In fact, the builders treated the top stone disrespectfully.

The insertion of the subject of the Great Pyramid gives a further preview of what will happen in the near future. Even the Pyramid itself will be a witness, and what is the Great Pyramid? It is a representation of *The Christ*, Head and body members. In order to have an antitypical lesson down here at the end of the age, the Great Pyramid will have to become a fairly popular message, so that the present generation will at least be familiar with its Biblical or religious slant. Generally speaking, the public will have to know about the Pyramid so that just as Jesus could talk to the people back there and use the Pyramid for a lesson, so down here, at the end of the age, certain things will be pointed out with regard to the Pyramid that will be important from a dispensational standpoint. For example, it will be announced that the Construction Chambers will fall when the Church is complete. When that event actually happens, when the Construction Chambers do fall, the prediction will be called to remembrance.

Jesus was definitely saying that the top stone represents him, that he is “the *head* of the corner [the top stone].” He stated that just as the literal builders treated the top stone when building the Pyramid, so the clergy back there would treat him, the “head” or top stone. And in antitype, the feet members will again admit they will be put to death. They will testify of their own rejection.

In giving the smiting message, then, the feet members will acknowledge that they will be put to death. Those who use the penny, having the Lord’s Spirit and power at that time, will call attention to the fact that even though for a moment their message seems to be accepted, they will be put to death by the clergy. The feet members will know that it is time to depart the scene, that their death is imminent.

The Scriptures say of Jesus, “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his

mouth” (Isa. 53:7). However, that description applied later, for he certainly spoke a lot *before* his apprehension. *After* his incarceration, he refused to defend himself but not before. Had he defended himself after his arrest, his skill might have gotten him out of his trial, and thus his life would have been spared. Surely Jesus, with his ability to reason, could have made fools of the religious leaders, but he *wanted* to die at the *right* time. This was the Passover season, and with the hour drawing near for his departure, he did not want to interfere with the timetable. However, *before* his imprisonment, Jesus did much talking, both gentle and strong. The public gobbled up some of his words, whereas other words were not so well received, particularly by the clergy. For example, verse 45 reads, “And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his [Jesus’] parables, they perceived that he spake of them.” The religious leaders realized that both parables were slanted against them and the “structure” they had built. The nominal professed religion of that day was what they considered the proper orthodox manner of worship, but they rejected the chief one, the *Top Stone*.

Statements such as those made in verses 45 and 46 indicate that some of the chief priests and Pharisees could be culpable of Second Death. They understood the point of Jesus’ lesson, and they knew their hearts were meditating murder. To not stop and rethink their position shows a very hard heart condition. Jesus was giving them an opportunity (just as he did with Judas) to reconsider and realize and wake up to what they were doing.

“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder [a reference to Second Death]” (verse 44). Based on Isaiah 8:14,15, Jesus’ words “Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken” refer to a stone of stumbling. A person who “falls” on Jesus will be broken, but which way? Remember, these lessons were slanted to the chief priests and Pharisees. However, verse 44 could be helpful in the sense of saying, “Now it depends on each of you, as individuals, which way you are broken—whether you are broken to a contrite spirit or whether you receive a very strong experience as the result of taking an evil course.” In any event, the indication was that the clergy were in for *real trouble* in the future. In the Kingdom, the majority will fall on the stone, and the stone will fall on a minority—the prime motivators, the instigators, the schemers. Among the scribes and Pharisees back there, a small number did accept Jesus in the final analysis, others were ringleaders, and the vast majority just went along with the evil plans. Thus there are gradations of responsibility, gradations of guilt and innocence.

Incidentally, we should not confuse verse 44 with the smiting of the image in the Book of Daniel, which is a *class* picture. That smiting will involve *all* nations, *all* Gentile powers. “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces *together*” (Dan. 2:35). The stone (The Christ, Head and body) will do the smiting. Matthew 21:42-44 shows *individual* responsibility, whereas Daniel 2 shows the smiting of Gentile supremacy and thus is a *collective* picture. On the one hand, *nations*, not individuals, are involved in Daniel 2, and the smiting will be *sudden and complete* in the near future. On the other hand, the stone grinding to powder those on whom it falls will take place during the Kingdom—as well as on any persons prior to that time who *individually* merit Second Death. When people are put to death throughout the Millennial Age, this will be the stone grinding them to powder, destroying them.

Matthew 21 is very enlightening to show what kind of experiences the feet members will have, what kind of questions will be addressed to them, and how they should respond. Years ago there was not the interest in or the knowledge of these prophetic subjects. In 1938, Mussolini and Hitler were active, and the brethren who studied prophecy had a completely different view from the Pastor. For example, they did not see the nominal Church coming back into power, and they interpreted the Scriptures with regard to Mussolini and Hitler. When Hitler committed suicide, etc., the prophecies all went down the drain. Right after that, a stigma became attached to the study of prophecy. When Rommel, the desert fox, was active, many said the King would be here that year because they thought Rommel would go to Jerusalem,

but he was stopped by the British. When things did not materialize as expected, the enthusiasm for prophecy turned to repugnance. Discussions halted and ears became deaf to prophecy. Now matters have changed, and many brethren realize that events the Pastor predicted will come to pass. It is just that the *time* element is different from what he expected.

“But when they [the chief priests and Pharisees] sought to lay hands on him [Jesus], they feared the multitude, because they [the multitude] took him for a prophet.” In antitype, there will be a *period of time* where the ones giving the smiting message (Elijah) and those passively associated with them (Elisha) will be allowed to continue on; that is, no one will lay hands on them, as shown by Elijah’s and Elisha’s walking over Jordan dry-shod (2 Kings 2:8-11). It was not until a while later that the chariot of fire separated Elijah and Elisha and the whirlwind took Elijah away.

Matthew 21 provides instruction as to what to do and how to act in righteousness at the end of the age. It is interesting that Jesus allowed those who were *listening* to draw the inference about the wrong attitude of the clergy. And the public got the point, especially when the clergy would not answer Jesus. The antitype of Matthew 21 pertains to the time when we should not meditate beforehand the words that we will speak, for the Lord will give the words. In advance, however, *ahead of time*, we have to meditate on these subjects, but just how the words come out will be guided by the Holy Spirit if our characters are developed in Christlikeness and our hearts are right. We might use our own terminology and our own Scriptures, but here we are given the *type* of approach to use. In other words, we should not answer the questions of the clergy. Of course the questions may be phrased a little differently (and our response too), but basically, they will be along these lines. Jesus’ instruction here is only the beginning. More information will be given in succeeding chapters of Matthew’s Gospel.

For those who enthusiastically study these subjects ahead of time, the Holy Spirit will have something to grab hold of. However, if brethren have no interest now, will the Lord specially bless them when these events transpire? With Gideon, *enthusiasm* was necessary to be part of the 300. Thousands were called to do a hard smiting work, but only 300 manifested enthusiasm by properly drinking the water, looking *ahead* to the real issue at hand. At the end of the age, a rebuke will be the message of the day. John the Baptist *rebuked* King Herod and Herodias. The three Hebrew children *rebuked* King Nebuchadnezzar, refusing to bow down when given a chance to recant. There will be a confrontation with *authorities*, in some instances religious, in other instances civil. Therefore, we need to be familiar with all of the various types so that whatever experience we have as an *individual*, we will be able to handle the question(s) addressed to us. We must think on these issues *NOW!* When we are *actually under trial*, it will be hard to think of a good answer, but if we study these things now, the Holy Spirit will direct. We are to take no thought when we are in prison, but we do take thought *in advance*. The demise of the feet members will be important, and the quicker the better.

Harmonizing the Gospel Accounts of Jesus’ Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem

The Companion Bible advances good reasons why there were two triumphal entries into Jerusalem, but these reasons can be refuted and actually used to corroborate the *one* entry into the city. (See Appendix 153, “The Two Entries Into Jerusalem.”) The premise is that certain discrepancies in the four Gospel accounts can only be harmonized by concluding there were two entries. According to the premise, one entry (recorded in Matthew 21:1-9) took place *before* the other, which is recorded in Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:30-34; and John 12:12-15. In other words, the commentator says that Matthew recorded an entry earlier than the one described in the other three Gospels. Differences in the accounts, and hence *supposed* justification for the two-entry theory, are as follows:

1. “In Matthew, the Lord had actually arrived at Bethphage. In Luke, he was ‘come nigh’; in

Mark, they were approaching.” Matthew states that Jesus had arrived (*past tense*), whereas Luke and Mark say he *is* approaching.

2. “In Matthew, the village [where the disciples got the colt] lay just ‘off the road.’ In Luke and Mark, it was *below* them and *opposite*.”
3. “In Matthew, *two* animals were sent for and used; in Mark and Luke, only one.”
4. “In Matthew, the prophecy of Zech. 9:9, which required two animals, is said to have been fulfilled. In John 12:15, the prophecy was not said to have been fulfilled, and only so much of it is quoted as agrees with it.” That is to say, Matthew’s quotation of Zechariah 9:9 has two animals, and so did the original prophecy in Zechariah, whereas John’s account mentions just one and quotes from Zechariah 9 *only that portion* pertaining to the one animal.
5. “In Matthew 21:10,11, the entry seems to have been unexpected, for ‘all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?’ But if there was only one entry, the two accounts are inexplicable seeing that the later ... entry [mentioned in Luke and Mark] was prepared for. Much people heard that he was coming and went forth to meet him (John 12:12,13). The latter, therefore, was the great formal entry of the Lord, called the ‘Triumphal entry,’ which took place on what is called ‘Palm Sunday.’”

These are all *powerful* reasons to think there were two entries, but they can be answered and rebutted. We formerly accepted this explanation, but recently one troubling Scripture caused a reexamination of the four Gospel accounts; that is, Mary anointed Jesus’ feet in preparation for his burial *six* days before the Passover (John 12:1-3). This incident occurred *prior* to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. If there were *two* entries and the anointing occurred six days before the Passover, the double entries would not fit timewise into the *five* remaining days. (Evidently, the author of the Companion Bible thought the anointing occurred in between the two entries, but this thought does not quite square with the Scriptures.)

On the tenth day of Nisan, the Passover lamb was selected, and on the 14th day, it was slain. On the tenth day, the lamb was taken into the home, and in the antitype, on the tenth day of Nisan, Jesus made his entry into Jerusalem.

Rebuttal for Supposed Justification Points Nos. 1 and 2 Above

“When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and *were come* to Bethphage” (Matt. 21:1).

“When he *was come nigh* to Bethphage and Bethany” (Luke 19:29).

“When they *came nigh* to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany” (Mark 11:1).

In the Jerusalem area, there is a point on the road where the village of Siloam can be seen way down below. No doubt Jesus pointed to it, saying to the disciples that they would find the animals tethered there at a certain house. Matthew said the village was just off the road. That is true—it is just off the road but *not* on the same level. As one goes around a curve, Siloam is off to the left and *way below* (down off the road to the left).

This point of land approaching Jerusalem is one of two spots. As a person walks past the first spot, toward or into the Mount of Olives, the road goes into a deep ravine and then comes out to another point where Jerusalem is right below. Here one is not facing Siloam but Jerusalem proper.

Bethany and Bethphage are both spoken of, and both are on the Mount of Olives, although they are two *different* places. Jesus was on the borderline of these two places when he gave the instruction for the two animals to be procured. Both towns are *off* the road; that is, the road is not in either town, but it gives *access* to the two towns. Off the road are little streets that lead

up the Mount of Olives in different directions. Therefore, the road is on the outskirts of *both* Bethphage and Bethany. The point on the road where one could look down was *in between* Bethphage and Bethany. From there, one could go into either of the two towns, and both towns were on the Mount of Olives.

Therefore, the thoughts of being “off the road” and “below” do not conflict at all. Hence the expressions “were come” and “came nigh” (that is, were approaching) are both accurate and refer to the *same* event. The matter could be stated either way. Jesus and the disciples were “come nigh” from the standpoint that they were not actually in the town of Bethphage but were at the point where a street led into Bethphage. But they also “were come” because they were at the junction point for going to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives.

Rebuttal for Supposed Justification Point No. 3 Above

Matthew 21:1-7 proves conclusively that *two* animals were sent for. “Ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt *with her*.... The Lord hath need of *them*” (verses 2 and 3). Both the ass and the colt were brought back to Jesus, and the disciples put their clothes on “them,” that is, on *both* animals (verse 7). Then Jesus had the option of riding either animal. The other Gospel accounts mention only the colt because that is the animal Jesus elected to ride. The older animal, the mare, being present with the colt would emphasize to the public that the colt had *never* been ridden previously. The contrast was more apparent that he was riding an *untrained* animal. Thus it was manifest that Jesus had complete mastery over an *undisciplined* animal (“a colt ... whereon never man sat” —Mark 11:2). The mare, or mother, followed along and was present.

In the New Testament, the Greek can be read *either* way: “Upon an ass *and* a colt, the foal of an ass” (*two* animals) or “upon an ass, *even* a colt, the foal of an ass” (*one* animal). The context, among other things, would determine which thought is correct. In the Old Testament Hebrew, there is no such liberty of changing “and” to “even.” However, the Hebrew interlinear for Zechariah 9:9 uses “*even*,” and almost all authorities agree. The literal Hebrew is “upon a colt, a son of she-asses.” “She-asses” is a collective noun such as the “tree” Adam was told not to eat of. That was a particular kind of tree, and the tree was part of a *grove*. The tree of life in both Genesis and Revelation is a “wood,” a *grove* (Greek *xulon*), not a single, solitary tree. The principle is the same with the colt in Zechariah 9:9 in regard to “she-asses.” The collective noun shows that the main focus is on the *colt*, who is a foal of an ass. In the past, the judges of Israel rode on white asses, which indicated their authority. *Two* animals were present, but Jesus rode on only *one*. Matthew mentions both animals, but the Old Testament and the other Gospels emphasize only one, the *colt* on which Jesus actually rode.

Rebuttal for Supposed Justification Point No. 4 Above

Zechariah 9:9 concentrates on the *one* animal, the colt. Jesus would ride on the *colt*.

When Tyndale first translated the Bible in England and Luther in Germany, they translated the New Testament *ahead* of the Old Testament. Hence the Old Testament King James was translated to fit the New Testament instead of the reverse. The order should have been the other way around, since the Old Testament was the *source* of the prophecy. The Gospel accounts merely give the fulfillment of the *Old Testament* picture.

Rebuttal for Supposed Justification Point No. 5 Above

With regard to the “unexpectedness” of Jesus’ entry and identity, consider that approximately 2 million people were present in Jerusalem for the Passover. Not *all* of them could have known that Jesus was in the vicinity. The many who did know his identity and that he was there either went out to meet him or followed him from Bethany. However, many others had come to Jerusalem from *other lands* and were unaware.

Many Jews were around Lazarus’ house in Bethany the evening before because they knew that

Jesus was there and that he had raised Lazarus from the dead. The next day, when Jesus left that home to enter Jerusalem, those Jews gave him a tumultuous welcome (see John 12:9,12,13). It was the raising of Lazarus that led the people to cry, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel!” In addition, many in the city were alerted and came forth to meet Jesus. Nevertheless, considering how many Jews were present for Passover in Jerusalem, not all of them knew of his presence or even about him—period! Therefore, the fact that some did not know about Jesus (Matt. 21:10) does *not* negate a *one-entry* conclusion when the other Gospels say all were in expectation of him and went forth to greet him.

How Events Actually Occurred

“Then Jesus *six days before the passover* came to *Bethany*, where Lazarus was which had been ... raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and ... Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.... Much people of the Jews ... knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also.... But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews ... believed on Jesus” (John 12:1-3,9-11). In other words, these Jews went to Lazarus’ home to get a confirmation that he indeed had been dead and was now alive. They went away convinced that what they had heard was true, and they believed that Jesus had miraculous powers.

“On the *next day* much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem [from Bethany], Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written” (John 12:12-14).

Mark 11:11 does not tell that Jesus overturned the money changers’ tables at that time. “And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and *when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.*” Mark 11:12-15 then states, “And *on the morrow*, when they were come from Bethany, he [Jesus] was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.” Thus the Mark account enables us to *harmonize* the events, for it distinctly says that Jesus went into Jerusalem once and looked around, and then went out at eventide and returned the next morning to cast out the money changers. Although the other Gospel accounts are not as clear, they say the same thing in effect.

Matthew 21:12-17 records that Jesus went into the Temple and cast out the money changers. This event was not the same occasion as verses 10 and 11, which read, “And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.” Verses 1-11 tell about Jesus’ Triumphal Entry the day before. There is properly a paragraph mark at verse 12.

The Matthew account is not clear whether Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers on the same day that he triumphantly entered Jerusalem on the white ass or the next day. Hence there is no contradiction—there just is no definiteness one way or the other. It is Mark’s Gospel that straightens out the matter by making the distinction, as follows:

1. Jesus entered Jerusalem the first time on a white ass and looked around.
2. Jesus entered Jerusalem the second time (the next day) and overturned the tables.

Luke 19:29-40 tells about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on the colt. Verses 41-46 describe the incident with the money changers. Again, as with Matthew, Luke does not say this happened on the next day, but the lack of a reference does not prohibit it either. The account simply does not say.

The Gospel of John gives no explanation or mention of the money changers at all.

In summary, the Mark account makes the distinction. On the day Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly, he did *not* overturn the tables of the money changers. This action took place the *next* day. The other three Gospels do not give a clear chronology.

Synopsis Harmonizing the Gospels

Sunday, six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, to the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Up until 6 p.m., this was the ninth day of Nisan.

After supper (that is, after 6 p.m., which was the beginning of the tenth of Nisan), Mary anointed Jesus' feet. This was the start of Monday according to Hebrew reckoning, and also five days before the Passover. The next day, which was a continuation of the tenth of Nisan, Monday, and still five days before the Passover, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt.

The following table sets forth the dates and the time reckoning from the standpoint of the *main* part of the day:

Sunday, 9th of Nisan, 6 days before Passover
Monday, 10th of Nisan, 5 days before Passover
Tuesday, 11th of Nisan, 4 days before Passover
Wednesday, 12th of Nisan, 3 days before Passover
Thursday, 13th of Nisan, 2 days before Passover
Friday, 14th of Nisan, 1 day before Passover
Saturday, 15th of Nisan, Feast of Passover (beginning the evening before)

The table makes several factors obvious, as follows:

1. Traditionally, Jesus died on a Friday. (Incidentally, it is proper to accept tradition where Scripture does not contradict.) The date was *Friday*, April 3, AD 33. The John account tells that the Feast of Passover at the time, which was on a Saturday and hence on a sabbath, was also a *holy* day. In other words, the 15th of Nisan was both a *weekly sabbath* and a *holy day sabbath*. Therefore, the 14th, the day Jesus died, had to be a *Friday*. Thus two lines of evidence support the traditional *Friday* as the day of the Crucifixion.

2. However, the traditional Palm Sunday is a problem. It is not correct, for it cannot be justified by Scripture. Jesus did not enter Jerusalem until Monday, the 10th of Nisan, five days before the Passover. The following verses apply, describing Jesus' Triumphal Entry: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; and John 12:12-19.

3. On the next day, which was Tuesday, the 11th of Nisan, four days before the Passover, Jesus cursed the fig tree and overturned the money changers' tables. The appropriate verses are Matthew 21:12-22; Mark 11:12-19; and Luke 19:41-46. John's Gospel is silent.

4. On Wednesday, the 12th of Nisan, three days before the Passover, the fig tree was discovered to have withered. These verses apply: Matthew 21:23-46 and Mark 11:20-33 (plus probably the next chapter, Mark 12).

In summation, this order of events shows that there was *one* Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on a colt and that the fig tree was cursed one day and dried up from the roots the

next day.

Matt. 22:1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

Matt. 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

Matt. 22:3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, also called the Parable of the Wedding Garment, is covered in verses 1-14. The circumstances under which the parable was given are that Jesus had already made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, and during succeeding days, he enacted certain things, this parable being one of them. He had also overturned the money changers' tables and had objected to the women carrying water who took shortcuts through the Temple precincts.

The parable can be applied several ways, but we will consider a dispensational standpoint. The "certain king" is God, who sent out invitations for the marriage of his "son" (Jesus). The event, the marriage of the Lamb and the Bride, will take place at the end of the Gospel Age.

God "sent forth his servants [prophets such as John the Baptist] to call them that were bidden [the nation of Israel] to the wedding." To be called, or "bidden," is a great honor. Not all who are called, however, accept the invitation, as shown by the last part of verse 3: "and they [the nation of Israel] would not come." Only a relatively few individuals from that nation responded. If Israel had accepted the call, the Church would have been complete from that nation alone. In other words, Israel would have inherited the spiritual as well as the earthly promises.

Matt. 22:4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

Matt. 22:5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

Matt. 22:6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

"He [the king, God] sent forth other servants [the apostles and messengers]." Verse 3 refers to the *Jewish Age* prophets; verse 4, to the *Gospel Age* prophets (apostles and messengers). Thus the parable carries through two dispensations, and the results were the same: as a nation, Israel rejected Jesus and the call. Therefore, the command of the king (God) was to go out into the "highways" and bid as many as could be found to come to the marriage (verse 9).

"My oxen and my fatlings are killed." This expression indicates that a feast had been prepared and that all things were *in readiness* (compare Luke 14:16,17). Had the Jewish nation accepted Christ, the Kingdom would have started back there. The reason the Time of Trouble, the resurrection, etc., have not taken place is that God had in mind the calling of a Church. Restitution did not occur right after Jesus' resurrection because the Little Flock had to be found and developed first, but the parable indicates that if Israel had been ready, there would not have been the Gospel Age waiting period. Thus the "oxen" and "fatlings" emphasize the readiness and the agreeableness that *if* the Jewish nation had accepted Jesus, the Little Flock would have been *all Jewish*.

Excuses were given as to why each could not accept the invitation to attend the wedding. (Compare verse 5 and Luke 14:18-20.) Something more pressing had to be taken care of at that moment. In other words, the Jews wanted to do other things first and thus procrastinated. And many did not consider the invitation worthy of consideration—"they made light of it." Today also, many feel that the calling of the Church is a fantasy, that it is daydreaming to say the Church will be kings and priests in the next age. Some ridicule these hopes and call them vain imaginations. Farming, merchandise, etc., were (and are) considered more meaningful, more valuable, more *real*. It was thought foolish to look for rewards in the *next* life—to look for "pie in the sky," for dessert and pleasure in the future. The nation of Israel wanted the tangible things "here and now," whereas actually, as the Apostle Paul said, the *unseen* things are more real (2 Cor. 4:18).

And further (verse 6), some among those who declined the invitation went on to kill a number of the servants, showing an especially hard heart condition. Of course the religious leaders were this element. The average or common people merely declined, but the religious leaders resented Jesus' work and perpetrated *murder*.

Matt. 22:7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

When Israel as a whole rejected Jesus and refused the invitation, the king (God) was angry and sent forth "his [Roman] armies" to destroy "those murderers, and burned up their city [Jerusalem]." Just as with Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus centuries earlier God had used heathen armies (Gentiles and unbelievers) as His arm of judgment against Israel, so He did with the Romans in AD 69-70.

Therefore, in verse 7 of this parable, Jesus was predicting the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman "armies." Later he said, "When ye shall see Jerusalem [en]compassed with *armies*, then ... let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it [the city] depart out" (Luke 21:20,21). Verse 7 shows that Jesus had considerable advance understanding and knowledge of history during his earthly ministry.

Notice the word Jesus used to describe those who would kill him: "murderers"! And this he said *before* he was crucified—in fact, it was said while he was in the *height* of renown.

Matt. 22:8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

All was in readiness for the wedding, but a delay ensued because "they which were bidden [the Jewish nation as a whole] were not worthy."

Matt. 22:9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

When the Jewish nation as a whole refused the invitation of the apostles, the call went out "into the highways," that is, it was extended to the Gentiles.

Matt. 22:10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

The servants "gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." During the Gospel Age, the call is to "repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Many accept the Christian religion but do not go on to consecrate. These would be the "bad," the *tares*. Therefore, another way to state verse 10

is to say that the servants “gathered together all as many as they found, both tares and wheat.”

The Parable of the Dragnet shows the principle. As Jesus sat on the seashore, a net was drawn to shore. In the net were a multitude of fish, which were sorted, the bad from the good. The sorting pertains to the Harvest work of separating the wheat from the tares, but there are *degrees* of “bad” and “good.” For example, *prior* to the calling, one could have been immoral in the sense that Mary Magdalene was; another could have been like the Mary who was trying to live a righteous life and thus was selected to be Jesus’ mother. However, Mary Magdalene consecrated and became “good.”

And there is another way of considering “bad” and “good.” In the net are those who are acceptable and those who are unacceptable. The Little Flock are acceptable, or “good,” in the highest sense, whereas in comparison, the Great Company are unacceptable, or “bad,” as far as obtaining the prize of the high calling. Moreover, the unacceptable ones, who do not obtain the crown of life, include not only the Great Company but also those who go into Second Death and others. Although the Parable of the Dragnet was spoken in utter simplicity, it implies a *separating* work, a judgmental work.

Matt. 22:11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

“The king [God] came in to see the guests” and noticed “there a man which had not on a wedding garment.” Verse 11 shows that *God* does the calling; the bidding originates with the Heavenly Father. Although Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” the ones he calls were *previously* called by the Father (Matt. 11:28). Jesus said, “Whoever the *Father* gives me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37 paraphrase).

Matt. 22:12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

The king (God) said unto him, “Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?” And the individual was speechless. The question is, Did the “friend” come in with a wedding garment and then *discard* it, or did the man *never* put on a wedding garment to begin with? If we did not know the Pastor’s reasoning, we would have to admit the parable sounds more as if he came in *without* a robe. The point is that the parable was *intentionally* expressed in such a manner by Jesus so that it can be taken *both* ways.

Consecration is the means of obtaining a wedding garment. Other pictures show that unconsecrated individuals can come in among the consecrated and even misrepresent their stand. There is nothing to stop the unconsecrated from attending meetings and fellowshiping with brethren. In fact, very often they are encouraged to attend with the hope that someday they will consecrate.

After all, a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” can be either (1) a person who did consecrate but lost the Holy Spirit because of willful sin or denial of the Ransom, or (2) an individual who never made a proper consecration but who poses as being eligible for the marriage. We do not know the *motives* of one who consecrates. Incidentally, if we address those whom we know are not consecrated with the terms “brother” and “sister,” we are actually encouraging them to think they are on the same level as the consecrated.

“Friend” is the same Greek word (*hetairos*) that is used in Matthew 20:13 and 26:50, meaning “comrade,” that is, not a friend in the true or close sense. These are the only three places in the New Testament where this word is translated “friend,” and in each case, it relates to a Judas class.

Jesus gave the Parable of the Wedding Garment for two principle reasons:

1. He wanted to show that when Israel crucified him, judgment and punishment would come upon the nation. This *past* application pertains to the first part of the parable.
2. The startling account of a man coming to the wedding without a garment, as discovered by the king, shows that at *this end of the age*, some of the Lord's people, who represent Christ, will be put to death and a judgment will come upon Christendom, resulting in its destruction. Furthermore, at this time, a *Judas class* will develop just as Judas was present during the First Advent, leading up to Jesus' last moments. The "friend," or "man," in the parable pictures this class. There may be one particular ringleader, but others, a *class*, will be involved. This thought is *sobering*. With Jesus, Judas was actually present at the Memorial.

In the last chapter, Matthew 21, we considered some of the questions that will be addressed to the Lord's people at the end of the age and how we should be prepared to answer them. For example, "You did not attend a seminary, so where do you get your authority to preach?" Many of these parables instruct the Lord's people at the end of the age so that they will know how to respond when questions are addressed to them *personally*. It is sobering to think that *amidst* the Lord's people, *amidst* the consecrated, some will be involved in their betrayal. Judas betrayed for money, probably not thinking Jesus would be killed. He wanted the money and then expected Jesus to escape with a miracle.

As stated, the man found not to have on a wedding garment pictures both those who take off, or reject, the robe of Christ's righteousness and those who come in without the robe. *Both* bad and good were called to the feast; *both* bad and good were in the room together. The Parable of the Wedding Garment is more embracive than just showing the truly consecrated. In the feast is a *mixed* class.

The man without the robe, who is the focus, the main point of the scene, pictures a Second Death class, but if we consider the roomful of guests as a whole, we see that the guests were *both* bad and good. The argument that one *must* have a garment before entering does not hold water. Other pictures, too, show both conditions—that some will reject the robe and some will circulate among the consecrated, posing as consecrated, *never* having had a robe of righteousness.

Why was the man "speechless" when exposed? Some can take off the garment without realizing it. For example, one who goes into universal salvation and considers himself so *loving* will not realize that this deviation causes him to lose God's favor. On the other hand, if some never had the robe on but are misguided into thinking they are eligible for the high calling because they are among the consecrated and the barriers between consecrated and unconsecrated have broken down, they, too, will be "speechless" when pointed out.

Many live and die thinking they will be Little Flock, whereas they are really only Great Company. However, in the parable, the matter is different with the Second Death element, for they are *exposed*—and thus speechless. Of the others, of the *many* who are called, only a *few* will actually be Little Flock and get into the wedding itself.

Just as with Judas, the Judas class will *originally* somehow feel justified in their actions. They will rationalize in their minds that they are not really doing such a bad thing, but after the betrayal, the grievousness of their act will be revealed to them as well as to others. Incidentally, some of the remarks in this study are based on other Scriptures that, strictly speaking, this parable does not point out.

Q: Didn't the Pastor write that the number of guests was complete in 1881?

A: Yes, and he applied the denials of the Ransom by Barbour and Patton to removing the wedding garment. That application would fit in *principle*, and it would correspond to sorting the fish in the dragnet as it is being pulled to shore, which is a *process of separation throughout* the Harvest period. However, the setting of the Parable of the Wedding Garment is peculiar in that it focuses on the very end of the age—the parallel of the feet members' experiences to those in the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry with regard to Judas, the Memorial, and the Garden of Gethsemane. The thrust is the *Judas class at the very end of the age*.

Although the general call ceased in 1881, and the Church would be complete *if all* those called by that date had made their calling and election sure, the Parable of the Wedding Garment goes a step further. The finer distinction is that of the guests present at the end of the age, there is a sufficient number who *will make their calling and election sure*. The number is not conjectural.

The fact that the Little Flock are called "guests" here instead of the Bride should not cause a problem because all through the parable, the picture is one of being *invited* to the wedding. Invitations are sent out just to come to the wedding. This picture is totally *independent* from what will actually take place; that is, the Bride will be married, and the Great Company will attend the marriage feast, or supper. Many analogies are used to teach a lesson or get a point across without being literal. Another example is where Jesus told us to be like faithful *servants* who, *after a wedding*, are looking for their lord (the bridegroom) to return from the wedding (Luke 12:36). The emphasis there is *eager anticipation and hope*. In reality, those servants will be part of the *Bride* class at the wedding, but the lesson is on *attitudes* of watching and waiting.

Matt. 22:13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The "friend" was bound "hand and foot." In this parable, "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth" represent Second Death. Who are the "servants" that cast the betrayer(s) into Second Death? Normally, we do not think of the consecrated on this side of the veil doing a judging work of this kind, but there is a sense in which they will be involved, plus an additional explanation.

First, let us consider how the Pastor regarded the "angels" of Matthew 24:31, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The Pastor felt that *human* agents were involved in both the spreading and the receiving of the gospel message. And based on the thought that light (truth) binds error, he applied the "binding" to a work the Lord's people do on this side of the veil.

It is true that as the wrongdoer seeks to justify his misdeeds, each attempt only implicates him further in the error. Thus the wrongdoer commits blunder after blunder until finally his wrong course becomes obvious to others. Therefore, the repeated attempts at justification really only, in the final analysis, expose the person more clearly as being on the wrong side of the issue and have the effect of binding him until, finally, he goes out of the truth. Such a one is not necessarily remanded to Second Death, but he forsakes the way. Having lost his support and credibility, he ceases to be a threat and is immobilized as far as effectually hindering the work or movement as a whole. A lot of truth is in this reasoning of the Pastor, as far as the principle is concerned. The clear-cut distinction between right and wrong is seen later, sometimes much later. However, *more* is involved here in Matthew 22:13 in regard to the "servants."

The "servants" of verse 13, who will bind the Judas class hand and foot and cast them into outer darkness, include the *holy angels*. In addition, the consecrated will become aware of the

Judas class, as shown in the type. The other apostles saw Judas betray the Master in the Garden of Gethsemane, and word spread to the rest of the disciples. Shortly afterwards, Judas destroyed himself by committing suicide. In betraying Jesus, Judas sealed his destiny as Second Death. Therefore, his suicide was incidental to the act of betrayal.

Similarly, the Judas class at the end of the age will also be revealed. The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins shows that the betrayal will be shock therapy to the Truth movement. When the foolish virgins became aware of their lack of oil, they went into the marketplace and got the oil. They returned—but too late to enter in to the wedding. The question arises, What in the marketplace filled their vessels with oil? Many Christians, being unaware of their lethargy and lack, can be foolish virgins without knowing it. However, a shock will come, causing them to ask, "Lord, is it I?" As a result, they will rededicate and re-energize themselves. Several Scriptures indicate that in the Great Company's wilderness experience, the flesh will be destroyed, but the spirit will be saved (1 Cor. 5:5). When the Great Company see this Judas class in the future, they will realize how easily they could question their own consecration and where they stand with God; that is, they will be shocked into more definite decision making. They will put aside compromise and prudence. Casting restraint aside, they will pursue their course with diligence. Had they voluntarily, of their own volition, reacted this way earlier, they would have entered in to the marriage.

As already stated, the "servants" of verse 13 are not necessarily confined to human beings in the present age. God will not come in a physical sense to see that the feast is ready with all the guests and address the man as "Friend." Even though *God will cause* the man to be exposed, He will do it indirectly. The parable implies that this class will be revealed just as Judas was, for the other guests heard the question "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" (verse 12). God will reveal the Judas class through Jesus, the holy angels, and perhaps a human instrumentality as well. Thus the "servants" can be angelic as well as human.

Q: With regard to the feet members still being on this side of the veil and binding someone "hand and foot," wouldn't it be only in the following sense? Since we *know* Judas is going into Second Death, we *know* that someone doing a similar activity would also go into Second Death, and we can state this fact with certainty. However, the feet members could not take punitive action—they would merely *expose* the individual. On the other hand, the holy angels would have some control over the experiences that the Second Death class will have to undergo.

A: Yes, that thinking is correct.

When Judas betrayed Jesus, the former was bound "hand and foot." He could not go back among the disciples because they would not trust him. And he could not even return the money. He was betwixt and between—and thus was tied hand and foot. When he tried to give back the money to get reinstated, the elders and chief priests used the money to purchase a cemetery. Judas had lost *all* influence because of the betrayal. He was not acceptable to either the professed religious leadership (the scribes and Pharisees) or the brotherhood. The Judas class at this end of the age will have a similar experience. Moreover, Judas committed suicide because he was in *anguish*. After he saw what his actions led to, he realized he was guilty of putting a *just* man to death. Back there the "just man" was Jesus. Down here the "just" will be the feet members. The Judas class will have a pricked conscience in realizing that *their* actions resulted in innocent ones being put to death. Awareness that they are "*murderers*" will hasten the Judas class to their destruction. In summary, in the Parable of the Wedding Garment, to be bound "*hand and foot*" signifies *complete* immobilization, *total* rejection—Second Death.

Matt. 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Although verse 14 is a contrast of the Little Flock and the Second Death class, the picture also

includes other “bad” guests, for example, the Great Company and those who are sympathetic to the man found without a wedding garment. *Many* are called to the wedding feast, but *few* are found acceptable for the Little Flock. Thus the parable has a greater depth than is first seen. The individual, or “friend,” is the main point, but there is enough detail to suggest that the parable includes the Great Company.

Matt. 22:15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

Matt. 22:16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Matt. 22:17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

Matt. 22:18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Matt. 22:19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

Matt. 22:20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

Matt. 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.

Matt. 22:22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

In verses 15-17, the Pharisees directed a trick question to Jesus: “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” Jesus’ reply, covered in verses 18-21, was essentially, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”

The Pharisees had planned this trick question in advance. They “took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.” This information displays a maliciousness on their part. They got their disciples, along with the Herodians, to pose the question to make it appear innocent instead of premeditated and deliberate. The Pharisaical leadership wanted the question to seem spontaneous. Of course Jesus was aware of the plot and of the malicious intent behind it.

Why were the Herodians brought as part of the plot? If Jesus had answered, “No, it is not lawful to give tribute unto Caesar,” then the Herodians would have sided with the Pharisees, for not rendering tribute would have been *contrary* to Roman law. In other words, the chief purpose in bringing the Herodians was to have *witnesses* hear the question and Jesus’ answer and thus have evidence to call to the attention of Herod.

The various experiences Jesus had prior to his death were designed to be specially instructive and helpful to us as Christians at the end of the age. Jesus’ experiences during the last week of his earthly ministry are a type or parallel of the experiences of the feet members. Similar questions will be addressed to the Church.

In what way will a question similar to this one with regard to rendering tribute to Caesar be addressed to the feet members? There will be question(s) along the lines of voting and supporting civil government. The question was a *political* issue, and not strictly a religious question. Thinking Jesus would answer “no,” the Pharisees, through the Herodians, intended to report Jesus’ response to the government. The Pharisees knew that if they could enlist the

enmity of the government in support of their cause against Jesus, they would be more successful in stopping him.

Voting is a popular issue. Churches are now urging political leaders to take a stand against abortion and to support the right to life. Abortion is a very sensitive and emotional issue, and many political leaders are being forced to take a stand. Serving in the armed forces is another issue the nominal Church leaders support. By thinking on these issues, we are trying to alert ourselves to the possibilities that might arise. The Scriptures tell us not to think beforehand the words we will speak, but that instruction pertains to the *night* before, not to years or months in advance.

As a general rule, Bible Students do not vote, and they do not serve in the armed forces. These points will become an issue as time goes on. Voting registers will no doubt be searched by computer. Names not on the registers will be obvious as *nonvoters*.

Christians pay taxes and so did our Lord (a coin was obtained from a fish). Wanting ammunition against Jesus, the Pharisees tried to use taxes as a *political* issue. With the feet members, the issue will be even more tangible because we do not vote or support the military.

Bro. Russell said that *if* a law were passed requiring us to vote, we could comply with the law and try to select the best candidate. Morally, we would concur with this reasoning. Probably, however, voting will not be made mandatory in this country because voluntary voting makes it easier to spot dissenters. Should there be a mandatory requirement in the future that everyone must register to vote, we could comply. As far as actually voting, however, the authorities cannot literally watch a person, or the secrecy of the ballot would be destroyed. Also, with regard to conscientious objection, a Christian could register as a citizen of the United States. Then, after registering according to law, the Christian could take a conscientious objector stand. Incidentally, it would be permissible for a Christian to swear allegiance to this country to get a passport or for another reason *if the clause were added*, either verbally or in writing, “subservient to God’s will.”

Notice the clever way the trick question was introduced: “Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.” Unless armed with the Holy Spirit, we would naively be less aware of the strategy involved, but notice how *dangerous* flattery is, especially depending on the source. We should think, “What is *behind* the flattery?”

In essence, the disciples of the Pharisees were saying, “You are very courageous and independent and not fearful to give us an honest reply on the matter, so tell us frankly what you think.” Jesus did not give his opinion immediately but used the strategy of a temporarily *delayed* answer. He asked for a coin, which had the image of Caesar on it. The Roman coin, the penny, was the equivalent of a day’s wage. (Here is the “*penny*” again.)

When the coin was brought, Jesus asked whose image and inscription were on it. Of course the Pharisaical disciples answered, “Caesar’s.” To a certain extent, Jesus was getting them off guard so that his actual reply would be a shocker. Otherwise, the truth would have been uttered too quickly.

In regard to the antitype, if either voting or the military issue is brought up, what should we say? Normally, as individuals, we are less apt to be on guard for a *private* question from a neighbor, friend, etc., but this question was in front of an *audience*. In such a situation, we would automatically be more careful and reserved. Before giving our opinion, what should we do that would be analogous to the strategy Jesus used? Matthew 21:23-27 describes another occasion when some of the chief priests asked Jesus questions: “By what authority do you

teach? Who gave you this authority?” Jesus replied, “I will answer your question if you answer my question.” In other words, Jesus used a “question” strategy: “Was the baptism of John from heaven or of men?” The chief priests realized that either a yes or a no answer would cause them problems, so they did not answer, and neither did Jesus answer their question. If we are questioned on either military service or voting, we should refer back to *Jesus and the apostles* and ask, “Did they take part in the Hebrew or Roman army? Did they vote? Did they attend and graduate from a seminary?”

After the Pharisees’ disciples brought the coin and said it bore Caesar’s superscription, Jesus said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s. What tremendous reasoning!

The Pharisees’ disciples “marvelled” at Jesus’ ability to sidestep the anticipated answer. They were unprepared for his type of reasoning. Earlier the Pharisees had been embarrassed, so now they sent their disciples to ask a seemingly innocent question. If embarrassment occurred this time too, the Pharisees themselves would not be exposed to the humiliation.

“When they [the Pharisees’ disciples and the Herodians] had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.” Their reaction suggests another experience, which is recorded in John 7:45-47. Soldiers were sent out to apprehend Jesus, but after they heard him give a sermon, they returned empty-handed. The chief priests and Pharisees said, “What is the matter with you? Why haven’t you brought him?” Not being prepared for the response Jesus gave, the officers answered in awe, “Never man spake like this man.” They were sent with the one purpose of seizing Jesus, but his sermon disarmed or weakened their determination. If they apprehended Jesus and the charges did not hold, the arrest would boomerang back on them, for the Roman government was *very severe*. For example, if a prisoner escaped, the prison keeper’s life was forfeited, as well as the lives of the guards responsible for the prisoner’s custody. Therefore, the soldiers respected authority. When they were sent out by the Pharisees, *religious* leaders, to apprehend Jesus, they were afraid the charges would boomerang into their own execution. If Jesus was found innocent, the Pharisees would deny their part, and the soldiers would suffer the consequences. Thus the soldiers were afraid the charges would not stick.

There is a debate among scholars as to whether the soldiers guarding Jesus’ tomb were Roman or Jewish. The Romans probably thought it was advisable to set a guard because the religious issue was causing insurrection. It seems very likely that the “temple guard,” a Jewish institution, was commissioned by Pilate. Since the Jews had liberty to more or less direct this force, the temple guard was subordinate to the priesthood, yet Pilate had some control in that he had to give consent before the tomb could be guarded. Therefore, the truth is in between the two opinions of the scholars.

The *order* of Jesus’ reply, mentioning the rendering unto Caesar *ahead* of the rendering to God, suggests that, as far as possible, we are to obey the laws of citizenship. To use a common expression, we are not to have a “chip on our shoulder.” We should be amenable except when a principle is involved. For a principle, we must take a stand.

The disciples of the Pharisees flattered Jesus in the hope that he would extend himself beyond caution through overconfidence and thus get in a trap. If he had said, “I believe taxes are in order, and I pay taxes,” that statement would have ended the matter too, but they wanted him to elaborate, for with many words, there could be a problem for Jesus. By his asking the question “Whose is this image and superscription?” the others were put on the defensive. This helpful advice has guided Christians down through the age who have had confrontations with governments. A good reply would be, “As far as possible, we are orderly and obey the laws but not if a law conflicts with the Word of God.” However, if a Christian has a chip on his

shoulder, he may die not wholly for Christ but largely because of his own foolishness.

It is amazing how Jesus, when suddenly confronted with an issue, gave an answer that has stood the test of time. He could instantly make up a parable with great depth, and his answers were superhuman. Jesus' reasoning was much deeper than the Apostle Paul's, but his liberties were curtailed because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given.

Matt. 22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

Matt. 22:24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Matt. 22:25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

Matt. 22:26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

Matt. 22:27 And last of all the woman died also.

Matt. 22:28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

Matt. 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

Matt. 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

Matt. 22:31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

Matt. 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Matt. 22:33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, had probably used this reasoning before in making fun of the subject and those who believed in it. Their question was as follows: "If a man died not having any children, his brother should marry the wife to raise up seed unto his deceased brother. There were seven brothers, and each in turn died after having married the wife. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven?" The Sadducees thought no one, including Jesus, would be able to answer this question.

The Sadducees knew the Bible to a certain extent, that is, as far as the letter of the Law was concerned, but they did not believe much of it. They can be compared to higher critics, who do not believe in such doctrines as the Virgin Birth. They do not accept the Bible as God's Word.

Notice that the Sadducees extended the hypothetical question to seven brothers, whereas they could just as easily have said three brothers. They purposely exaggerated in order to make a mockery or a joke of their "riddle." And how dramatic to say, "Last of all the woman died also"!

Jesus replied, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Why did he

answer the Sadducees' riddle with this simple statement? Notice the *strong, aggressive* manner of the reply to some who were *educated* and felt they *knew* much more Scripture than the average person. All of the people, including the Sadducees and the Pharisees, respected Moses to a greater or lesser degree. Therefore, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, took a respected teaching of Moses to point out the ludicrous thought of a resurrection. Just like higher critics, they took only the Scriptures that suited their purposes. The Sadducees thought they had posed a clever, unanswerable question.

Jesus did answer their question but first spoke *aggressively* to them: "Ye do err...." The Sadducees were taken aback by his reply and put on the defensive. Jesus was implying that their question was foolish. If the Sadducees had really known the Scriptures, they would not have asked the question.

Jesus' answer to the Sadducees' question was, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." The marriage vow ceases with death. When people are raised from the tomb, they will no longer be considered married. Husband and wife are to be faithful "until death do us part" (unless, of course, the contract is Scripturally broken by adultery). Luke 20:35,36 gives the real thrust as applying to the age beyond the Millennium. "All" will be awakened from the tomb, but only the "worthy" will get a full resurrection (raising up) and thus attain to that next age. There will be marriage in the Kingdom (Ezek. 44:15,22) but not in the age beyond. If Jesus had taken this tack, his answer would not have been as forceful, for the public was not knowledgeable regarding the Scriptures.

Instead Jesus stressed that the Sadducees' question was foolish. If they had known the Scriptures, they would not have asked the question because in the resurrection, the marriage relationship ceases. The fact that Jesus often delayed an answer shows some reserve on his part. Spiritually speaking, the "Mastermind" was weighing his response. At times, his delayed answer consisted of a parable.

Then Jesus went one step further in instructing the Sadducees. Knowing that they did not believe in a resurrection, he asked them a question, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." For God to be "the God of Abraham," who was dead, meant that Abraham would have to be resurrected. Jesus was addressing the Sadducees in their own line of reasoning. They *historically* believed that God was the God of Abraham back in *Abraham's day*. Jesus called the Almighty God "the God of Abraham," yet Abraham had not received his promise (nor had Isaac and Jacob). To believe only *historically* and not in God's resurrection *power* to be used in the future minimized Him. In essence, the Sadducees were discrediting God by not believing in the resurrection.

Not all of the multitude fully grasped the power of Jesus' reply, but they were "astonished" at its *strength*. There was no hesitation, and he knew what he was saying. He spoke with authority. He answered the Sadducees' question by saying, "In the resurrection, there is no marriage," but a reasoning person who meditated on Jesus' words could see the *power* in his additional remarks.

With regard to the Sadducees' question, the "multitude," or *people*, marveled, whereas with the question about paying tribute to Caesar, the *disciples of the Pharisees* marveled. Apparently then, (1) the Sadducees were not receptive to Jesus' answer but were annoyed and angered by the implication that their question was foolish; and (2) the Sadducees had posed this question often enough that the people were familiar with it, and Jesus wanted the people to have the answer plus supplementary information.

“Ye do err” was spoken *firmly* but *gently*. Otherwise, to shout the words would have raised an atmosphere of combativeness. The answer followed immediately: “In the resurrection, there is no marriage.” The Sadducees erred not only in asking a foolish question that could be answered so simply but also in not believing in the resurrection.

It is one thing to give an answer, but Jesus gave an answer that was both *definitive* and *constructive*. His calmness would have impressed the multitude. Like a skillful warrior, he warded off blows with *ease*, giving the impression of assurance and control. No wonder the multitudes followed him!

These incidents with Jesus seem to indicate that whoever is privileged to be in this particular position to witness at the end of the age will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to not have the spirit of fear. *Fear* is the great danger when all forces seem to oppose. “You call yourself a Christian, and you *dare* to disagree with us?” God’s Holy Spirit will be needed to speak out to educated, intelligent men at that time. The spirit of fear will have to be overcome *before* this situation occurs, and it may occur suddenly and spontaneously. “Neither fear ye their fear” (Isa. 8:12). Many of the Lord’s people will compromise because of the spirit of fear. (The Great Company will have to overcome the spirit of fear ultimately in order to get a resurrection at all.) Elijah smote the waters with power. If the reply is to be meaningful, it must be done with *poise* and *authority*. Weakness at that time would be ineffective. It is the same with animals—the aggressive animal has the advantage. A man can be more than a match for an intruder with a knife, but if the man is sleeping and then is awakened abruptly by the intruder, he will be weakened by the element of surprise and the lack of preparedness. In other words, a “giant” can become the victim of a small attacker under the right circumstances. The *momentary* paralysis of the prey gives the lion his opportunity.

We should pray in advance to overcome sudden paralysis. Our prayer should be that we will be found worthy to escape the things coming in Armageddon and also that we will be able to go through the earlier trials successfully, even though they may result in our demise.

Matt. 22:34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Matt. 22:35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

Matt. 22:36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Matt. 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Matt. 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Matt. 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matt. 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

A lawyer among the Pharisees asked Jesus a question to tempt him: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.... And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Back there a “lawyer” was religion-oriented; that is, he was a Pharisaical lawyer.

The fact there was no rebuttal implies that the lawyer could not reason against Jesus’ reply. If

Jesus had selected any one of the Ten Commandments, he would have been trapped. This incident shows that in addition to being asked civil and political questions, the feet members may be asked *religious* questions.

Mark 12:28-34 is the parallel account. There the “lawyer” was called “one of the scribes,” which would be the same thing from two different aspects. Mark added a little more of Jesus’ response, which began with, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” Then a follow-on dialogue by the scribe-lawyer was included: “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” Jesus replied, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that, no man dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

Originally, this scribe-lawyer did try to tempt Jesus, but apparently, he was *honest of heart* and thus recognized the wisdom of Jesus’ answer. Because evil was not ingrained in him, he was favorably swayed by Jesus’ answer.

It is not just repetition to love God *four* ways: with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. For instance, a person with a stroke might still be able to worship God unbeknownst to others. Certain thoughts could still be circulating in the person’s mind.

Matt. 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

Matt. 22:42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

Matt. 22:43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

Matt. 22:44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Matt. 22:45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

Matt. 22:46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “What do you think of Christ? Whose son is he?” They answered, “The son of David.” Jesus then asked, “How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” No one could answer Jesus, nor did they ask him any more questions.

This question was different in that Jesus initiated it. *He* was the aggressor and asked the initial question and thus put the Pharisees on the spot. This incident will be helpful to the feet members because it touches on the *Trinity*. Instead of waiting to be put on the defensive, the feet members may be able to offset, at least for a time, the issue of the Trinity by directing the question(s) themselves and thus temporarily show the fallacy of the doctrine. The Trinity will be *the test* of the future, for practically all of the religious leaders can agree on that teaching. When the feet members see this circumstance arising, they may be able to *initiate* the questions. Otherwise, if the clergy initiate the question(s), the feet members will be put on the defensive.

Jesus asked a question about David, but the people today are not knowledgeable about the Old Testament. This quote from Psalm 110:1 brings out the distinction between the Father and Jesus. Two “Lords” are mentioned, but one is higher in rank than the other.

In the antitype, the feet members will have to use Scriptures that are oriented to the New Testament. We could concentrate on Scriptures that show Jesus was elevated from a lower to a higher nature. Even this text from Psalm 110:1 could be used to show that the power is inherent in the *Father*: “The LORD [God] said unto my Lord [Jesus], Sit thou on my right hand, till I [God] make thine enemies thy footstool.” The *Father* delegates the power. The *Father* does the honoring of Jesus and will make the enemies become Jesus’ footstool.

The Trinity teaches that Jesus is God, that he is part of a triune God, and that when he ascended, he merely went back to his previous position in honor and power. Therefore, this distinction in Psalm 110:1, where the Father honors Jesus and elevates him to a new position, would be a little sticky for Trinitarians to handle.

Other Scriptures could be used, for example, Hebrews 2:10. Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, was made “perfect through sufferings.” Surely *Almighty* God did not have to be made perfect. Also, Jesus said, “Why do you call me good? There is none good except the Father” (Matt. 19:17 paraphrase). The Holy Spirit at that time will direct and enable the feet members to speak whatever Scriptures are most propitious for the moment or occasion. The atmosphere will determine which answer is most appropriate. As we go along, we should notice and store in memory the texts that would perhaps be helpful at that time.

“Christ” is Greek, and “Messiah” is Hebrew, both meaning “the Anointed.” The Jews thought in terms of Messiah. Therefore, Jesus would have asked, “What think ye of Messiah? Whose son is he?”

Another tack can be taken based on a weakness in the church creeds. The Trinitarian doctrine says that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal, meaning that the Son always existed and that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in power and authority. The “coequality” is an inherent weakness, for other instances and Scriptures show that the Father is greater than the Son.

Psalm 110:1 indicates a *time* element; Jesus has to sit on the Father’s right hand *until* the Father makes Jesus’ enemies his footstool. Jesus has to await the time and circumstance that the Father dictates. In addition, the Father’s superiority is shown by His *delegating authority* to Jesus—the authority to reign.

Another good Scripture to use to show that God is of *superior* status to Jesus is 1 Corinthians 15:25,28. “For he [Jesus] must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.... And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [God] that put all things under him [Jesus], that God may be all in all.” Jesus will reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. Then he will turn the Kingdom over to the Father so that the *Father* can be *all in all*—and Jesus will be “*subject unto*” *God* too!

Trinitarians misuse John’s Gospel and epistles to prove the Trinity. John’s writings are the most *misunderstood* books in the New Testament. For example, when someone says, “That is not very Christlike,” the thought is, “That is not very humble, meek, and submissive,” yet a study of the life of Christ shows what should and should not be done, as do the writings of Paul and John. It is true that Jesus and John said to “love one another,” but John also thundered in the same breath, “He ... is a liar!” “He is antichrist,” etc. (John 13:34; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 2:4,22). And Jesus spoke *strongly* against hypocrisy and other sins, calling the scribes and Pharisees “whited sepulchres” and “generation of vipers” (Matt. 23:27,33). Being “Christlike,” therefore, *includes*

using strong words on the appropriate occasion.

Verse 46 tells that Jesus' question stopped the Pharisees on that occasion, but it certainly did not stop their *enmity*. They were determined that Jesus would die.

Matt. 23:1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

Although the circumstance of verses 1-39 occurred at the same time that Jesus was in the Temple area refuting the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 22:41), it was different in that Jesus was doing the teaching, and it was *aggressive* and *condemnatory* teaching. Previously, Jesus healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, etc., but here he was really lashing out at the *hypocrisy* of those who were the representatives of God: the *religious* leaders. This circumstance shows that there will be a time and place for the feet members to do likewise. It occurred back there—and will occur again in the future—just prior to apprehension and imprisonment.

Matt. 23:2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

Matt. 23:3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

Matt. 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Jesus was more or less addressing those who had a hearing ear: “the multitude” and “his disciples” (verse 1). To them, he pointed out the shortcomings of the religious leaders. Notice, however, that he did not render outright condemnation of everything but condemned their *performance*. Likewise in antitype, the *performance* of Christian duties will be under attack. To worship God, to honor and love Him, to go to church, etc., are all *commendable*. We could say we admire the reverential attitude of Catholics but then point out that all the fancy robes and titles are not Scriptural. To be called “Father” is *contrary* to Scripture. We could say that the very title of the priest, “Father,” is completely antagonistic to the instruction given in the Bible, and the word “Pope” comes from the Latin *papa*, which means “Father of fathers.” Moreover, Jesus used the title “Rabbi,” so Catholics and Jews are both wrong, and Protestant churches err in having “Reverends.” The feet members will address these issues, to some extent at least, when opportunities of peace and quiet are afforded. Notice that Jesus' discourse, covering 38 verses, was *long*, so conditions were conducive to listening to him.

Q: Will verses 2 and 3 have a parallel with the feet members? We are not taking orders from the present clergy.

A: Back there the Jews were obligated to keep the Law because Jesus had not yet died (and in fact, in the final analysis, Jesus *magnified* the Law). Today, however, the clergy have church canons or laws that are of *men*, not of the Scriptures. Therefore, we could not say that the practices the clergy advocate today are correct. Nevertheless, they could be commended in some respects. For example, “While such and such a thing is admirable, it is much more admirable to stick closer to the Scriptures. Titles are *unscriptural*. The highest title Paul used was ‘apostle.’ Not only were there only 12 apostles, but usually they were just called by their first names: Paul, Peter, John, etc.—and not St. Peter, St. Paul, Holy Father, or Very Reverend. Even Jesus himself said, ‘Why callest thou me good? there is none good but God’—his *Father*.”

Matt. 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Matt. 23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

It was not wrong for the Pharisees to have phylacteries (little rolled-up Scriptures that were worn on the arm) or fringe on the corners of their garments (see Deut. 6:8 and Num. 15:38), but it was wrong to do these things to get the love and respect of *men*. (The principle is the same with money. Money is not evil, but the *love* of money is.) Someone had to sit in the chief seat, but the danger was the *desire* to be there for the honor of *men*.

The high priest had bells and pomegranates on the hem of his garment. The underpriests had simple worked garments of linen and no special ornamentation. As time went on, the clerical element not only began to wear different colored garments but also multiplied the offices of the church. The Scriptures mention only deacon, elder, and brother—and not “bishop” in the sense of *archbishop*. The thought of *archbishop* was dangerous because it meant a bishop *over* bishops. Then cardinals and popes were added.

A phylactery was supposed to be a Scripture rolled up and tied with a tassel and then worn on the arm as a symbol—all done with simplicity. However, the phylacteries became works of art with embellishments that attracted attention and were intended to mark the individual as better and more religious than his fellows.

Matt. 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Matt. 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Matt. 23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

Matt. 23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

The titles “Teacher” (Rabbi), “Master,” and “Father” can be used but *not in a religious sense*.

Q: How should the Christian address the leader of a Jewish synagogue, a minister, and a priest?

A: “Your honor” would be a proper term of address. “Brother” could be used if the party was Christian and had consecrated his life. We should not call any man “Reverend” or “Rabbi” in person, but these titles are permissible to use for identification purposes such as in newspaper-fashion quoting.

Q: At the end of the age, when the feet members are in an auditorium or in a public situation and not dealing on a one-to-one basis, how could they get a minister’s attention directly and immediately without using an unscriptural title?

A: “Your honor” is evasive and yet respectful. In writing about a minister or a leader of a Jewish synagogue, the Pastor used “Reverend” or “Rabbi.” As an illustration, “Rev. William Howard Smith” would be meaningful in print, whereas “William Howard Smith” would not.

“Be not ye called ... neither be ye called” is the main emphasis in verses 7-10. Christians should not allow themselves to be called either “Father” or “Master,” and the leaders of Jewish synagogues should not let others call them “Rabbi.” From this standpoint, there is a little more leniency with regard to others; that is, if others refer to certain ones with these titles, we may at times be forced to give some cognizance of the titles, but that does not mean we approve of them. Another factor to consider is the degree of deference attached to the title. Of course we would not kneel or render obeisance to any of the clergy—even under psychological pressure.

Titles used for the sake of identity are one thing; deference to another human being along religious lines is another thing.

Comment: The prohibition is strong in regard to the title “Father.” “*Call no man your father upon the earth.*” That command was not given with “Rabbi” and “Master.”

There is not the same responsibility on the Jew as on the Christian, for the Jew is not reading the New Testament, nor does he claim to be guided by it. However, the principle behind Jesus’ lesson was that the teachers accepted emoluments and honors from those they instructed, whereas they should have pointed to God—to *His* Law and teaching. A teacher’s duty is to direct others to the *real* teacher: *God*.

It would not be proper for anyone in the Bible Student movement to call himself “Pastor” today. Even with Bro. Russell, the title of “Pastor” has created an atmosphere over many years where brethren may indeed be Russellites. If the Bible said one thing and Pastor Russell said another, some would consider the Pastor’s view right. This should not be the case, for he was *not* an apostle. There is a happy medium of recognizing a person as unique in his knowledge and capability but not considering him an authority in the sense of a “thus saith the LORD.” It is all right to point out what Bro. Russell said on a certain Scripture, but we should not consider his comments the *end* of all arguments. The apostles were simply called by their first names. On several occasions, Paul did have to say he was an apostle because he was not recognized as having any more authority than any other prominent elder. Since Paul was given a specific message by Christ himself, that situation could not be tolerated. To have been silent and have allowed others not to recognize his apostleship would have vitiated not only Paul’s authority but also the fact that there are *only 12* apostles.

Matt. 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Matt. 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

“Whosoever shall exalt *himself*.” What others say is another matter. If the public recognized someone and addressed him as “Pastor __,” we would not be responsible for *their* words. That would not be exalting ourselves, which is the main thrust here: “Be not *ye* called.” The account does say, “Call no man father,” so the other side of the issue is also considered, but the bulk of the teaching is, “*Do not exalt yourself.*” Paul was put in certain circumstances where it would appear that he contradicted this principle, but he did not. It was necessary that he tell about his learning and trials to show that he was more of a true Christian than were his critics.

Matt. 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Verses 13-33 were *very condemnatory* to the scribes and Pharisees. “Hypocrites!” “Blind guides!” “Ye fools and blind!” “Ye generation of vipers!” Jesus especially pointed out the *hypocrisy*. Notice that the first three verses begin with “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!” Thus there are occasions where stern talk and reprimands are in order. A hymn speaks about desiring to be humble and more Christlike. The beautiful hymn represents the *usual* demeanor of the true Christian—but *not* when laws and principles are violated. In the latter case, there is an obligation to speak up. In other words, there is a time for *thunder*.

Seven times in this chapter, Jesus said “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” and an eighth time he said, “Woe unto you, ye blind guides.” All eight statements were made on the *same* occasion. These *stinging* accusations were not said in a meek and gentle voice.

The scribes and Pharisees “shut up the kingdom of heaven against men”; they neither went in themselves nor suffered others who were entering to go into the Kingdom of heaven. In other words, they did not accept Jesus, and they resisted his ministry. Not only were their hearts hardened, but they forbid others to listen to him as well.

Even prior to Jesus’ First Advent, back in Israel’s history, the scribes and Pharisees considered themselves a separate class that was higher or more elite than the common people. If the nation of Israel had been faithful, any of the Israelites, not just the scribes and Pharisees, could have been the kings and priests of the next age. Instead the nation rejected Jesus, and only isolated individuals responded.

In our day, this denunciation would apply to those who have closed the door to the high calling. Down through the age, there was the *one* heavenly hope, which was proper, but when 1914 came and went, some made the cutoff date 1914. Then the date was changed by some to 1916 and by others to 1918 depending on the group. The *teachers* of this error will be held accountable, more so than those being taught. Those who embrace this belief today without a history of the Bible Student movement do not know any better, but the *older teaching* element, who were sitting in the seat of authority, knew the history and thus will incur a strong retribution.

In the strictest sense, the Kingdom of heaven is the Little Flock. Therefore, on the *broader* level, the condemnation of verse 13 applies to any of the clergy who forbid their congregations to hear present truth, for not hearing could keep them out of the high calling. The principle is the same as the scribes’ and Pharisees’ discouraging or forbidding an interest in Christ.

“Neither do the scribes and Pharisees go in to the Kingdom of heaven” (paraphrase); that is, in antitype, many who *teach* about spiritual things will themselves not be of the Little Flock. This criticism applies especially to the Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose followers feel they know the New Testament and the Scriptures, yet the vast majority do not have the hope of the high calling. Colporteurs go out with this viewpoint, trying to instruct and undo those who have the hope of the high calling. How incongruous! At least with the younger Jehovah’s Witnesses, there is an immaturity and an ignorance, but the older ones have no excuse.

In antitype, this scathing denunciation will be part of the strong *smiting* message at the very end of the age. Jesus spoke similarly on one or two earlier occasions, but this time was different in that he was in the heart of enemy ground, as it were. He was speaking in the central seat of authority—in Jerusalem—where there was *strong* opposition from the scribes and Pharisees. He was not out in the countryside on a mountain but in the arena or lions’ den, so to speak.

Matt. 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

How did the scribes and Pharisees devour widows’ houses? They took advantage of adverse conditions and grieving emotional circumstances to seize houses, lands, and money. In short, they were greedy. The scribes and Pharisees made a *practice* of taking advantage of the emotionally distraught condition of a woman who had lost her husband.

Moreover, the scribes and Pharisees “for a pretence made long prayer.” What hypocrisy! There are times and occasions for long public prayer, but they are *rare* (for example, historical occasions and moments of crisis, such as with Daniel and Solomon). If someone utters a long prayer in his “closet,” no pretence is involved, for no one is there to see or hear; hence this condemnation was in regard to *public* prayer. “God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Eccl. 5:2). We are not to sermonize in public prayer. However,

private importuning, sometimes with emotion and halting words, may be long and is perfectly acceptable.

Jesus' condemnation of long public prayer was tied in with devouring widows' houses. With long faces and lengthy prayers at funerals, for instance, the scribes and Pharisees could appear (and pretend) to be very concerned, where in reality they took advantage of the bereaved one. This condemnation also applies to the Mass and Mass cards—prayers over and over in return for money.

Matt. 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Jesus then made an unusual statement. The scribes and Pharisees traversed sea and land to make one proselyte and then made the proselyte twofold more the child of Gehenna than *themselves*. Back there a lot of proselyting was done, and today, in the antitype, that is also true.

What made the convert *twice* as bad as the preacher? What is the implication? The fact that the preacher may be teaching wrong doctrine is bad enough, but when wrong doctrine is backed up by a bad or hypocritical example, the convert will be worse off. He will be “turned off” or soured and thus become careless in keeping his own vows. In fact, he might even go as far as turning against God—acting as if the Lord were responsible. This condemnation is enlightening to show that Second Death has a *broader* application than brethren often think. Thus “*twofold*” refers to (1) wrong doctrine and (2) a bad example. The point is that it is more difficult for the convert to take steps of retrieval because of the improper conduct on the part of the “preacher.”

Actually, the doctrine may not be all that erroneous, for Jesus had said, “Whatsoever they [the Pharisees] bid you [to] observe, that [you should] observe and do” (verse 3). This statement suggests that in some cases, the doctrine was not too bad, but the religious leaders burdened and pressed *imperfect* individuals who were trying to keep a *perfect* Law. One with a tender conscience got despondent and even desperate to the point of giving up hope of being faithful. Instead the Pharisees should have helped and encouraged the people, but, no, they just kept increasing the burdens. The conscience-stricken individual in antitype goes more and more to the priest, who increases the desperate situation instead of helping it.

Comment: Today the failure of elders to take a strong stand against gross immoral conduct (and consequently, the failure of classes to act) could result in the errant brother not repenting, and hence either he or others may become twofold the child of Gehenna. The sinning brother should be forced to face up to the sin he has fallen into. Instead, because of the lax standard, the excuse is frequently made, “His consecration was never accepted.”

Many different circumstances arise. For instance, in recent years, the Episcopal Church has been very responsible for the admission of practicing homosexuals and women into the priesthood. Those who advocated such practices and taught that they were permissible brought condemnation on such individuals who became priests. Conditions go from bad to worse with such liberal thinking. Religious leaders think they are magnanimous and broad-minded, but the Bible sets forth certain limitations. Then, too, if the clergy smoke and drink, the congregation, instead of trying to cleanse themselves, become confirmed in their sins because of the bad example. The person who drinks too much does not see that refraining is his responsibility.

In the early Church, certain Asian philosophies and teachings that entered Christianity opened the sluice gates of error. *Unbelievable* practices were adopted.

Matt. 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

Matt. 23:17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

Again and again the emphasis of Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees was on *money* and *greed*. The Temple was *God's* house, which Jesus purged when he overturned the tables of the money changers. The Temple and the institution of the priesthood represented the religion of *Jehovah*, but all kinds of sinful practices were introduced such as changing money from Roman "unholy" coins to Jewish money and selling animals in the Temple precincts. Jesus had such a high respect for the Temple that he was indignant over the traffic taking place within. Here he was making the point that it was more important to swear by the Temple, which represented *God*, than to swear by money or *mammon*. The emphasis the Pharisees gave was to the contrary, completely backwards. They devoured widows' houses and greedily acquired money, respect, authority, lands, etc. The Temple, built according to *God's* institution, was greater.

Matt. 23:18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Matt. 23:19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Matt. 23:20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

Matt. 23:21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

Matt. 23:22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of *God*, and by him that sitteth thereon.

Verses 18-22 give the same principle. The scribes and Pharisees felt that money or the gift (Corban) was more important than the Temple and the altar, yet the latter were built according to *God's* instructions (Mark 7:11). And it was wrong to swear by heaven, for that was *God's* heaven, *God's* universe.

Those who swore by the Temple swore by "him [*God*] that dwelleth therein." The Temple was *God's* sanctuary or meeting place with men, with the priesthood being in between the two parties.

Matthew 5:22 states that one who says to a brother, "Thou fool," is in danger of Gehenna. However, there is no contradiction with Jesus' words in Matthew 23, for here he was denouncing the practices of the *collective* priesthood, not of an individual. There were a few right-hearted Pharisees, but the vast majority were not. Jesus' criticism was directed against the hypocrites, not the Israelites indeed. The priesthood as an institution was of *God* and, therefore, good. Jesus did not criticize the Temple, the altar, or the ceremonial institution but *collectively* the ones who filled the office of the priesthood. Since the great majority were hypocrites, a *class* denunciation was in order. Jesus was not singling out one individual.

Q: How would we harmonize Matthew 5:34, "Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is *God's* throne," with verses 20-22 in regard to swearing by the altar, the Temple, and heaven?

A: There are several points to consider. Sometimes one is required by law to give an oath of affirmation; this is permissible for the Christian because it is *not a practice*. Many people commonly, frequently, and repeatedly invoke God's name as a practice or habit, and the invocation has no meaning. The Lord's name or His institutions roll off their tongues glibly and with abandon. On the contrary, that which is rare, judicious, and prudent and used in moderation is much more meaningful than when one is garrulous. For example, "God bless you" should be used only when appropriate, not commonly. Some people take oaths every day. "I swear by so-and-so that I will do such and such" is also not proper, for Jesus said to let our yea be yea and our nay, nay. Our words should not have to be backed up by an affirmation, for we should mean what we say. Only on a rare occasion did God use an oath, such as to affirm the Abrahamic promise; He humbled Himself to come down to our level of thinking and to try to get through to our dull heads. However, a person who *habitually* does this robs the oath of its meaning. People think that cursing calls attention to and emphasizes their words—but what a *terrible* expense!

In summary, then, verses 13-33 are a *class* denunciation versus an *individual* condemnation in Matthew 5:22, a one-on-one confrontation. Here is an example of why two or three witnesses are needed—lest a matter be misconstrued or seem to be contradictory.

Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Verse 23 is both amusing and deplorable. A tithe was 10 percent. When herbs were donated to the Temple, the scribes and Pharisees used a knife to count out little, *tiny* seeds. The seeds were *meticulously* counted so that 10 percent could be given, yet the scribes and Pharisees ignored the "weightier matters of the law," the *principles*. The *letter* of the Law was followed but not the principles. The counting of seeds was not wrong in itself; the *imbalance* of attention was the problem. More (or at least equal) attention should have been devoted to the principles of the Law: *judgment, mercy, and faith*. And notice that these "weightier matters" were of the *Law*—the New Testament was not under discussion here. Therefore, we should *meditate* on God's Law in order to better understand His *character* and *thinking* on matters of mercy, for provision was made on behalf of the people, animals, strangers, etc. Justice was also shown. For example, on a sabbath, rest was to be given not only to the nation but also to animals and servants.

The next thing is faith, which is a belief in things *unseen*. Faith was taught in the Law in many ways. For example, the Israelites needed *faith* to believe the Abrahamic promise. Although the Israelites did not understand the numerous ceremonies in the Law, they had to obediently follow the procedures just because God said to—and that required *faith*. Animal sacrifices, meal offerings, peace offerings, trespass offerings, etc., all took *faith*. The right attitude would have been, "God must have had a reason for telling us to do such and such, so we will obey."

Remember, too, that Jesus did not destroy the Law but *magnified* it. "These [things] ought ye to have done, and *not to leave the other undone*." Many Christians do not have the proper focus. The Law is not archaic—it is God's arrangement, and we should study it. The Law, as well as the New Testament, is important for the Christian. Because of the improper focus, many view Jesus more highly than God. They think of God as severe and without mercy and of Jesus as loving and speaking peace and liberty. Instead we should notice that Jesus manifested his love for the Father in many things he said and did, pointing out how wonderful the Father is. Thus if we love Jesus, we should love *even more* the One he loved and revered. Faith puts the higher priority on the Father. Regarding Jesus more highly than the Father is largely due to a *false* concept of the Old Testament.

Matt. 23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

What *biting sarcasm!* Verse 24 is based on the custom of using a sieve to strain soup or a liquid. The scribes and Pharisees removed a gnat with the sieve, so to speak, and then swallowed a camel. The *balance* should be proper from the Lord's standpoint. It was not wrong to strain out a gnat, but diligent attention should also have been directed to religious matters.

An example in our day of straining at a gnat could be excessive criticism of sisters for doing things like making temporal arrangements for a Bible conference. Down through history, there were rare occasions when the Lord used a woman for a particular work because no men on the scene were suitable. In other words, the men were not taking advantage of their privileges.

Matt. 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

The *outside* of the cup and the platter was made clean, but within was a fullness of extortion and excess. Externally, everything had to be absolutely clean, but the inside of an individual was far more important.

Matt. 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

"Thou blind Pharisee [singular]." Jesus still was not addressing an individual, but he was bringing the lesson down to a practical example. It was like saying, "If the shoe fits, wear it."

Jesus was saying, "First, clean the inside of the cup and platter, so that the outside will be clean also." He did not find fault with cleaning the cup and the platter but said to clean the *inside first*.

Matt. 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Again, what strong language! Jesus was saying, "You are whitewashed on the outside but full of dead men's bones on the inside." How can any Christian think that Jesus was always so gentle? The God of love and the Jesus of love acted and spoke *strongly* according to the circumstances. There is a time and place for speaking softly and a time and place for speaking *strongly*. Today it is almost considered wrong to be a prophet. In the Old Testament, the prophets denounced improper conditions, but now we are expected to *always* be meek and humble. There are times when conditions should be denounced.

Matt. 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Jesus' words were *unbelievably strong!* And consider that at this time, the scribes and Pharisees were lying in wait to *murder* him. Before Jesus got to Jerusalem, Thomas had said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Thus Jesus and the apostles knew what he was getting into, yet when he arrived, he spoke *strong* condemnation. There is a time for tact and wisdom, and there is a time to throw all caution to the wind. Jesus knew this was not the time to use tact and wisdom because the hour of his death was approaching. Stratagem and evasion were no longer in order.

Matt. 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Matt. 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Matt. 23:31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Notice that Jesus did not accept the Pharisees' reasoning. From a worldly standpoint, their words *seemed* to be a proper point: "How do you know but that we would *not* have murdered the prophets if we had lived back there?" However, Jesus was showing that such murder was in the bloodstream. No matter what the Pharisees said, the fact that they were the *children* of those who had killed the prophets meant that they had inherited the same weaknesses, which they were not resisting.

Jesus was saying, "The testimony against you Pharisees is that you are the children of the fathers. That very fact shows you would have acted similarly had you been on the scene at the time." The antitype pertains to the Catholic Church. Papacy claims that the Inquisition would never have occurred today. People believe this statement because persecution is not occurring at the moment, but the very fact that the *same* erroneous doctrines and faith are held means the *same* persecution will occur again. Currently, the Catholic Church is in a position of weakness, but when the system gains control, will they manifest compassion for true Christians? No, they will enforce conformity and revert back to their previous habits. Thus the system is no different today. We can say *confidently* that the Catholic Church will do the *same* things in the near future in spite of all the nice language that is being used by both the church and the head of the church, the pope.

The clergy of the Catholic Church are ostensibly solicitous for the poor and the oppressed, but at the same time, they accept veneration, kisses, money, etc. The clergy are not even taking the poverty vows of some of the old monks. (The monks had a wrong concept of Christianity, but at least they denied themselves.) Today the higher clergy live sumptuously, travel extensively, accept reverence due to God, and dine luxuriously at banquets—and at the same time, they pretend to be so friendly to the poor.

Matt. 23:32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Matt. 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees "serpents" and said, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers [your fathers' cup]"; that is, "Whatever you would do, do it." Revelation 22:11 reads, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." In other words, a middle or in-between condition is completely unsatisfactory. A decision must be made one way or the other.

Jesus treated Judas the same way. Knowing the heart condition of Judas, Jesus did little things to prick his conscience but then said, "What you must do, do quickly" (John 13:27 paraphrase). Jesus was saying, "Make the decision, for indecision is no good."

Jesus mentioned Gehenna again: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Among the scribes and Pharisees were the ones who actually *planned* Jesus' death. Thus some were more culpable than others. Jesus was addressing the specially obnoxious class among the scribes and Pharisees.

For "generation," the *Diaglott* has "progeny," which gives the thought of an *inherited* trait rather than just a reference to the current generation then living. The scribes and Pharisees

were the *children* of those who had killed the prophets.

Matt. 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

Jesus predicted that subsequently the scribes and Pharisees would do to Christians the same things that were done to the faithful ones of the Old Testament. Imagine being scourged in the synagogue (the religious center)—what shame and humiliation!

Matt. 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Matt. 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Matt. 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Matt. 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

The “righteous blood” of Zacharias was shed when he was slain “between the temple and the altar.” There has been debate over *which* Zacharias this was. In 2 Chronicles 24:20,21, a Zacharias (Zechariah) was killed in the *court* of the Temple precincts, but since he was said to be the son of another, not Barachias, and since the account does not specifically state that the slaying took place between the Temple and the altar, he is ruled out. The early Church fathers believed Jesus was referring to a *contemporary* at the time of the First Advent, and this belief seems to be correct, namely, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

In the antitype for verses 35-38, the feet members will say that trouble is coming on Christendom in the near future because of all the blood shed down through the Gospel Age. This shed blood, from the time of the First Advent onward, is crying out for vengeance, just as the earlier blood from Abel to Zacharias cried out. Zacharias was slain before Jesus’ ministry began. Zacharias and his wife were elderly when John the Baptist was born. John’s mother would have died relatively early in his childhood, and his father was killed, so John was left an orphan. When Herod issued the decree for the babies two years old and under to be slain, John’s parents, being too old to accompany him, gave John into the custody of someone else to flee to the desert for safety. Then John was reared in the desert.

The pronouncement “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” applied to AD 33, just prior to Jesus’ crucifixion. In antitype, our day, the application is to the *very end* of the age. (The application does not reflect back to 1878, when Babylon was cast off as the Lord’s mouthpiece.) The antitype predicts the *actual destruction* of Babylon. To the nominal systems, the feet members will say *with confidence*, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

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

Matt. 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

This event took place during the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry. In the *Fourth Volume*, Matthew 24 is called “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy.”

Matt. 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Jesus said, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” These words were fulfilled in AD 69-70 when the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed by Titus.

How would we answer the objection that the Western (Wailing) Wall still stands today? The part that dates back to Herod’s day is a buttress wall built by Herod to enlarge the Temple area. Therefore, strictly speaking, the Western Wall is not the Temple proper of Zerubbabel but an addition by Herod. When the Temple was destroyed, it was leveled, and only the substratum remained. Even with the outer city walls, Herodian masonry still exists on the floor level, the substratum.

When the Temple was destroyed in AD 69-70, most of the rubble was cascaded or dumped down into the Tyropean Valley. As a result, the valley was filled up, and the remaining wall was buried or covered.

Matt. 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

In order to view the Temple complex in its beauty, Jesus had to be on the Mount of Olives; that is, he had to be far enough away to see the Temple complex as a whole. The disciples admired the stones of the Temple (Mark 13:1). The stones were beautifully beveled in a way that was characteristic of Herod. (Herod rebuilt the Temple of Zerubbabel and further enlarged it.)

Luke 21:5 mentions “gifts” in connection with the Temple (“some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts”). From the Mount of Olives, the disciples could see the Gate Beautiful (now called the Golden Gate) embellished with heavy gold leaf. Also, they could look over the gate to the Temple proper. The doors were a gift from Egypt. Both the embellishments and the fine stone work were being admired.

What caused the disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew) to state how beautiful the Temple was (Mark 13:1,3; Luke 21:5) and then to ask, “When shall these things be?” In other words, “When will the destruction of the Temple take place?” Previously, in advance of Matthew 24, Jesus had mentioned that the city and the Temple would be destroyed (Luke 19:41-44). As he beheld the city and wept over it, he said, “The days shall come ... that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” This advance clue pertaining to the destruction of the city had saddened the disciples, especially in regard to the beautiful, costly Temple.

Another factor leading to the disciples’ question is that Jesus had just said, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,” and the disciples considered the Temple to be the “house” (Matt. 23:38). These words also saddened the disciples, for the Temple was the pride, the jewel, of Israel—the Holy City and its Temple.

From verse 3 on, Jesus stressed other things and never did answer the disciples’ question regarding when the Temple would be destroyed. He did not answer because they might confuse the destruction of the Temple with the Second Advent. They might think the end of the age had come, whereas the destruction of the Holy City was a separate incident that occurred

much earlier.

There is an interesting parallel with the end of the age; namely, the feet members can say with certainty that Babylon is desolate and that the houses of idolatry will be destroyed. The Second Pyramid is to be leveled because it misrepresents and distracts from the value of the Great Pyramid (Zech. 4:7). The Dome of the Rock mosque and the Vatican will be leveled. Whatever structure of false religion that would distract from the true will be destroyed, whether great or small in the eyes of man.

The other two questions were:

1. What shall be the sign of thy presence?
2. What shall be the sign of the end of the age?

Although only four disciples “privately” asked Jesus these questions in a confidential mode, the other seven (minus Judas) were listening—or at least some of the others. Jesus’ voice in answering outdoors would have been easily heard. No doubt Matthew was one of those listening, for of the four Gospel writers, he gave the most complete account, especially when Matthew 25 is included.

As will be seen, Jesus’ answer to the first question “What shall be the sign of thy presence?” included both his *invisible* presence and the *imminence* of that presence. Incidentally, a sign would not be needed if Jesus were to return *visibly*, for all would then know it. But it makes sense for the question to mean “What shall be the sign of your *invisible* presence? How shall we know that you are here?”

Matt. 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Matt. 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

In other words, before Jesus began his discussion, he warned the disciples against being deceived. Indirectly, the fact that *many* would say, “I am Christ,” implies or infers that the Kingdom was not imminent, that time had to elapse first. “Take heed, beware, lest you be deceived because *many* shall come” indicates that *before the true announcement or occurrence would take place, there would be many deceptions.*

Earlier the disciples had asked, “Wilt thou at this time establish the kingdom?” Jesus answered in effect, “No, the Kingdom will not come as soon as you think!”

Matthew states that the deception would consist of some actually assuming to be the Messiah, the Anointed One. They would claim *they* were Messiah. But Mark 13:6 and Luke 21:8 omit the word “Christ” and simply say, “Many shall come in my name, saying, I am; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.” Hence the deception would not always be that another would represent himself as *Christ* but would represent himself in a high capacity as *pointing to the way of truth*. Jesus was saying that these would be *false* announcements. The “man of sin,” which is the chief of the deceptive systems, is pointed out in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4. Although Roman Catholicism says that Jesus is the Messiah, the system deceives, nevertheless.

Thus *two kinds of religious deceptions* are pointed out by the differences in the Gospels (“I am Christ” versus “I am”). The *Fourth Volume* gives examples of false Christs—*individuals* who claimed to be Messiah. Gamaliel’s advice (Acts 5:36,37) to the Pharisees, etc., who wanted to put the apostles to death was, “Such action is not necessary. If they really do represent God, we better not interfere, but if their words are false, their counsel and work will come to naught. Look at what happened to Theudas and Judas [false Messiahs in Jesus’ day].” The Pastor also named Sabbathai Levi, who was on the scene in Smyrna years later. A modern-day false Christ

is Father Divine. He uses the Trinity aspect, saying that Jesus came first as the Son and that now he has come as the Father (*Father Divine*).

However, the religious *systems* have deceived many more than any individuals claiming to be Messiah. Jesus was saying that various deceptions, especially the religious institutions, would arise in the Church's history before the Kingdom Age. The denominations—Roman Catholic, Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, etc.—all at one time taught that those who did not follow them were not in the truth and were, therefore, doomed to perdition. Each of the denominations claimed to be the *only way*. Only in more recent years have the nominal systems realized the public was fed up with this type of reasoning, and they have since become more lenient toward each other. Nevertheless, others today have the same attitude that only they are right. The Jehovah's Witnesses are an example. Some, like Armstrong, even claim to be apostles. Religious institutions in the past have deceived millions.

Instead of being dependent upon nominal Church membership, a Christian's relationship is a personal one between that individual, Christ, and the Heavenly Father. The making of one's calling and election sure is based upon faithfulness to Christ and to God, and not upon identity with a particular group.

The story of the Gospel Age is that deceivers as individuals and also as institutions would precede the end of the age. Verses 23-26 show that deceptions will also take place at the end of the age.

Matt. 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Down through the Gospel Age, actual wars and rumors of wars occurred. These also had to precede the end of the age. Thus, later, after the Holy Spirit had been given and these words of Jesus were meditated upon, the disciples realized that much time had to elapse before the end of the age could come.

Basically, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of remembrance, the remembrance of spiritual things. It calls to mind the words of Jesus, the apostles, the prophets, and of course the Father in His Word. John 14:26 reads, "But the Comforter ... shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Thus when the disciples later thought back on what Jesus had said in Matthew 24, they realized that the Kingdom was a distance away and that they probably would be off the scene. Peter especially realized this and so did Paul, who had a vision of the third heaven. However, the apostles did not realize that *almost 2,000 years had to pass first*.

Matt. 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

Many use verse 6 to describe conditions since World War I, when the world became involved in conflict, plus the "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" of verse 7. Today the news media and television make us more aware of these kinds of occurrences, whereas, in truth, such troubles have taken place endlessly down through the Gospel Age. Even in the Old Testament there was a seven-year famine in Israel at the time of Joseph versus a five-year famine in Ethiopia in recent times. The Apostle Paul took collections on his missionary journeys to send back to the Jewish brethren who were in famine in Israel and elsewhere during the years of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. (In fact, it would have been natural for those Christians living in the first century to consider the famine that occurred after Jesus' death and resurrection to be a precursor to his Second Coming and the establishment of the Kingdom.) Then, too, a tremendous earthquake destroyed Pompeii, Italy, in AD 79.

Therefore, verses 6 and 7 describe the story of the human race ever since the First Advent until our day. “In divers places” does not mean everywhere, but here an earthquake, over there a threat of war, etc. This has been the history of the Gospel Age.

Matt. 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Mark 13:8 says, “These are the beginnings of sorrows.” “Sorrows” in the *plural* represents the *series* of spasms of a woman in travail. In contrast, 1 Thessalonians 5:3 refers to the *singular* birth pang: “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as *travail* upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” (See *Diaglott* interlinear, which has “the birth-pang” for “travail.”) This text refers to *the* birth (death) pain of the present order. Here in Matthew 24:8, the same Greek word *odin* is used in the *plural* form, signifying a *series* of travail spasms.

Verse 8 is a flashback to verses 6 and 7. Wars, rumors of wars, nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places are all the “beginning of sorrows,” for “the end is not yet.”

In verses 4-8, Jesus was saying, “Be careful! Do not be deceived! From my day on, there will be many false Christs, many wars and rumors of wars, many pestilences, etc. All these are the *beginning* of sorrows.” In other words, verses 4-8 are a synopsis of the Gospel Age not including the end time, for “the end is not yet.” Thus we are getting a picture of the Gospel Age *up to the end period but not including it*.

We are speaking of Matthew’s account here. The other accounts will be compared later.

Q: Have these things occurred ever since the apostles went off the scene *until* the Harvest, or will these things continue and increase in intensity right up to the great Time of Trouble?

A: These things will not necessarily get worse and worse, for the great Time of Trouble involves other factors. It will be of a completely different nature than just these things occurring in greater and greater degrees. For instance, the mass materialization of the fallen angels will have to take place, as in Noah’s day. The fallen angels are held in bondage until the judgment of the great day. Then they will be released as a test, that is, to see what they will do. The Scriptures show that they will inundate the earth, and certainly that is not a cumulative trouble but a unique experience.

Before the Flood, the evil angels materialized and had children, who became great men in *brutality*. The population was evil and grew increasingly so day by day. But the *Flood* itself was the *great* trouble, and it wiped out the *evildoer*. The presence of the fallen angels on earth was a period of terrific trouble, but the Flood was far worse and completely different, for it was a *divine judgment*, whereas the materializations were not. The angels materialized because they wanted to. Through *self-choice*, they left their first estate and preferred to be here on earth rather than in heaven. In contrast, the Flood was built into the structure of the earth and its atmosphere. It was designed by the Creator to occur when the ring of water eventually collapsed. The collapse was perfectly timed to occur as a *divine judgment*.

Q: Sometimes verses 6 and 7 are applied to the Harvest period but not to the very end of the age. For example, the frequency of earthquakes has greatly increased. Wouldn’t that be a factor?

A: No one can make such a statement with certainty. Today we can measure earthquakes of all intensities worldwide, but up until a few years ago, man could not do that. In fact, past earthquakes were far more severe than those we have today. Entire civilizations were

destroyed, as on the Isle of Crete. Moreover, when scientists examine evidences of earthquakes that occurred in the past and look into the history of various nations, their attempts to assign a year to a particular quake can be quite inaccurate because their chronologies are way off.

And consider the pestilences. Pestilences have been greatly reduced in the Harvest period through medications, antibiotics, etc. For example, the Black Plague was devastating. In Oxford University, England, two out of three students died, and half of the population of that nation expired. We have had nothing like that pestilence in the last 100 years. Right after World War I, one out of ten died from an influenza, but those figures are far lower now. Also, in the past, the mortality rate in time of war was much higher than it is today.

Our media—collecting news items from *around the globe*—make things sound worse today, whereas past civilizations suffered considerably more. A higher percentage of the population was affected. Ever since the flu outbreak following World War I, the casualty rate has been decreasing.

Verses 4-8 provide a thumbnail sketch of the history of the Gospel Age from the time the apostles asked Jesus the questions (verse 3) up until the beginning of the Harvest. The Harvest is the end of the age, and that is Matthew's point (Matt. 13:39). However, based on what the other Gospels say, there is an extension *into* the Harvest period of wars, rumors of wars, etc. But Matthew's account is written a little differently. Matthew gives a picture of the history of the Gospel Age, whereas Mark and Luke include other things to bring us through the Harvest period to its end.

Verses 6-8 tell the problems that would exist *prior to* the Lord's Second Coming. Verse 8 indicates the Gospel Age would be a *period* of great sorrows that would precede the answer to the two questions: "What shall be the sign of thy presence? What shall be the sign of the end of the age?" These sorrows (the series of troubles) are only the *beginning*, not the ending.

"Travail" is a *period* of suffering. The suffering of the Gospel Age has been caused by war, famine, earthquake, etc. The travail of verse 8 is a series of spasms, but in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "travail" is an improper translation. The thought is of a "birth pang" (singular). It is unusual for that word in the Greek to be in the singular.

In regard to the "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" of verse 7, some feel that the word "pestilences" is omitted in the oldest manuscripts. This is true in Matthew, but the word is found in Luke 21:11. The omission in Matthew 24 is probably due to a transcriber's oversight. Also, in Mark 13:8, although "pestilences" is not used, the word "troubles" is there, thus broadening the picture.

Actually, the translators did not know whether to use "plagues" or "pestilences," for although a disease is a plague, a plague is not necessarily a disease. For example, plagues include monsoons, sandstorms, floods, and other outstanding troubles. The broader meaning was intended, although "pestilences" were a common form of plague down through the Gospel Age.

Ancient manuscripts were written on lamb or goat skins that were dried and stretched. The Sinaitic was written continuously—that is, without punctuation or verses—and in all capital letters in Greek. Either a brush or a flat pen was used for the characters. A problem is that with age the letters tend to flake off or fade, making those portions difficult to read. "A," "D," and "L" in the uncial Greek look very similar, so that fading and flaking cause real confusion in certain instances. Only diligent study of grammar and context will straighten out the confusion.

In the Greek, the words "famine" and "pestilence" are almost identical, the former being *limos*

and the latter *loimos*. Furthermore, *kai* is used very, very frequently. A fatigued copyist could easily mix up the two words. And that is what happened in Matthew 24:7 in the Sinaitic Manuscript—a whole line was omitted: *kai loimos*.

Matt. 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

This statement can be regarded two ways depending on the thought conveyed by the word “then.” “Then” can mean “subsequently,” or it can signify a flashback to what was just said, that is, a *review* in the nature of being *repetitive*. “Then” occurs a number of times in Matthew 24 and *usually* in this latter sense. Matthew 24 is not consecutive throughout. Therefore, *context* determines the meaning of “then.”

Matt. 24:10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Verses 9 and 10 pertain to persecutions and betrayals by family members and friends that occurred down through the age, especially at the hands of Papacy during the Inquisition. Hundreds of thousands were violently put to death during the terror of the Dark Ages. Jesus spoke these words to comfort those Christians who would suffer, so that when persecutions and betrayals happened, the brethren would not think it strange.

Matt. 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

The term “false prophets” reminds us of the false prophet of Revelation 16. The *Fourth Volume* couples verse 11 with verse 5; that is, some *individuals* would claim to be Messiah, and some false religious *systems* would arise and deceive. “Prophet” means “teacher.” In other words, “false prophets” are false religious systems that teach false doctrine, the chief system being Papacy, the “Jezebel” of Revelation 2:20. The Church of Thyatira was criticized because it “sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a *prophetess*, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” The antitypical Jezebel was tolerated to teach the Christian Church *false* doctrine.

The fact that Matthew 24:24 again mentions “false Christs” and “false prophets” shows that this chapter covers different time periods. Verse 5 warned that the Christian should not be deceived when many would come saying they were Christ. Verse 11 warns of false prophets. But in a later period, *still future*, false Christs and false prophets will show “great signs and wonders” that will deceive those who are not forewarned—deceptions related to a *geographic, visible* representation of what will seem to be Christ (Matt. 24:23,24). Matthew 24 contains both distinctions and generalities, and each must be put in the proper place.

Matt. 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Daniel 7:25, in different words, teaches the same thing: “And he [the little horn, i.e., Papacy] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, ... and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [for 1,260 years, from AD 539 to 1799].” The little-horn power was very oppressive to those not in agreement with it, and for such a *long* period of time that many grew weary of well doing. God looked for those who persevered in *faith* to be part of the Little Flock. The experience was necessary back there because the consecrated had less doctrinal knowledge, and where there is a paucity of doctrine, the test is especially along the lines of character and faith, hope, and love.

Matt. 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

We will consider the use of the word “end” here versus its use in verses 3 and 6. “End” in verse 3 is *sunteleia*; the others (including verse 14) are *telos*. *Sunteleia* means “the full end (of the age)”; *telos* can mean either just “the end” or “the full end” depending on context. *Telos* means “tail,” which can refer to the whole tail or to just the tip of the tail.

From a *personal* standpoint, to “endure unto the end” means to be faithful *unto death*, to the end of one’s individual course, or Christian walk. Or verse 13 can be considered as applying to the *class* back there who persevered through the great suffering of that long period of time. But the most practical application is the *personal* standpoint. In other words, because of iniquity, the love of many waxed cold—but *he who endured to the end* was saved.

Matt. 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Verse 14 gives us a *time* perspective. “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Verses 9-13 describe a *period of time* until the gospel would be a witness in all nations.

When the disciples asked in verse 3, “What shall be the sign of your presence and of the end of the age?” Jesus did not just strictly answer their question but told them about the *whole* age. He used that occasion to give them an outline of the history of the entire Gospel Age. Thus he went far beyond their question by also telling them what would happen in the interim before the end of the age. This information was needed, for they themselves were soon to be hailed before synagogues, etc. In fact, all of the apostles had abrupt deaths except John. Many disciples also died through persecution. Jesus died in AD 33, and 33 years later Nero was on the scene persecuting Christians. Therefore, Jesus’ words here (and in Luke 21) were especially helpful to the early Church, as well as down through the age.

Verse 14 alerted the early Church not to expect the Kingdom very soon. (Although the import of Jesus’ words did not sink in at the time, the Holy Spirit later called them to remembrance.) Before the end of the age could come, the gospel had to be preached in all the world for a witness. Certainly the disciples in the first century knew that that had not happened yet. They realized the experiences described in verses 9-13 would take place up to the time the gospel would be preached in all nations for a witness.

Matt. 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand):

In Daniel 8:13,14, two saints were speaking: “How long shall be the vision concerning the daily [continual] sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” Answer: “Two thousand and three hundred [2,300] days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

Daniel 9:26,27 reads, “And after [seven and—verse 25] threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince [Titus] that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [Temple]; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he [Messiah] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [the 70th]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the [typical] sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for [because of] the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that [which is] determined shall be poured upon the desolate [AD 70].”

The Daniel 8:13,14 citation had a natural as well as a spiritual fulfillment. *Natural*: Those in the early Church knew about the natural application but not the spiritual, because the spiritual

fulfillment was not then due. With regard to Daniel 8:13,14 saying that the “sanctuary” and the “host” would be “trodden under foot,” the early Church thought of an alien power coming in and destroying the Temple and trampling the people (suppressing them in bondage). Daniel 9:26,27 gives more specifics, that is, a definite time period of 69 weeks. In the *midst* of the 70th week, Jesus would be cut off in death, that is, 3 1/2 years after the end of the 69th week, the time when Jesus consecrated at Jordan.

Prophetic students tend to jump to conclusions based on the time period in which they live. Just as those living in the first century thought the trouble would come exactly at the end of the 70th week, or AD 36, so those living at the beginning of this century concluded the great Time of Trouble would occur in 1914. Both dates are important—AD 36 and 1914—but not for the reasons anticipated in regard to the trouble.

Daniel 9:26 states that an alien power “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This prophecy would seem to harmonize with Daniel 8:13, which says that the sanctuary and the host would be trodden underfoot (be despoiled), but Daniel 8 is spiritual and natural, whereas Daniel 9 is *only* natural pertaining to the end of the Jewish Age. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 69-70 prefigured an experience to come upon Christendom. The trouble on natural or literal Israel foreshadowed the trouble to come on spiritual Israel.

Daniel 11:31 reads, “And arms shall stand on his [Papacy’s] part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.” This verse refers to a *spiritual* daily sacrifice being taken away in the Gospel Age and an abomination that makes desolate being put in its place. This occurred in 539, when the doctrine of the Mass (Transubstantiation) replaced the ever efficacious sacrifice of Christ. Jesus’ death on Calvary is remembered and thought about every day; it is “daily” in the sense of being ever fresh, ever efficacious. Papacy took the doctrine of the *individual’s* being able to pray to God for forgiveness of sin through Jesus’ name and said that one had to go through its priesthood, testifying sins before a priest in auricular confession. Based on prescribed “Hail Marys,” reading beads, and certain remuneration, etc., one could then be forgiven of sin—supposedly.

Thus attention was diverted away from Calvary to the doctrine of the Mass. In other words, the Mass became the focal point and not Jesus. The Mass is based on the premise that when the words “*Corpus meum*” are pronounced, the bread actually becomes Jesus’ body and the wine his blood. But the Scriptures say that Jesus died once for all and that he cannot be crucified afresh (Heb. 10:10).

The doctrine of the Mass was prefigured by what happened to Israel’s Brazen Altar, the altar where the people brought their offerings. Some kings made innovations, and one king actually had a new altar made for the people and then took the authentic Brazen Altar for himself personally. This substitution was obnoxious in God’s sight, for the simplicity of Christ in the plain altar was replaced with an ornate one. We are reminded of the statuary and candles of the Vatican, which are distractions from the real purpose of the Christian.

Daniel 12:11 states, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” Daniel 11:31 prophesied that the abomination would be put in the place of the daily sacrifice, and this substitution took place in AD 539. Daniel 12:11 assumes that the starting point (AD 539) is known, so 1,290 is simply added (539 + 1,290) to obtain the year 1829. But notice the next verse: “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty [1,335] days.” The 1,290 and the 1,335 days are co-related, with the 1,335 days occurring a little later. Adding 1,335 to 539 brings us to the year 1874, the beginning of the *parousia*, our Lord’s (secret) Second Presence. In other words, “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the

Second Presence.”

These time periods were not in the first century. Not until 539 was the doctrine of the Mass set up, empowered, and made more mandatory. In that year, the pope was given great authority by the emperor Justinian, who said the Church of Rome was the *true Church* (as opposed to the Church of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople). The bishop of Rome was recognized as the head of the Christian Church. Hence the Church of Rome was *set up in power in 539*; it began to speak authoritatively from that year.

Therefore, when Jesus said in Matthew 24:15, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,” we do not know whether he was referring to Daniel 8, 9, 11, or 12. Actually, all are involved. Luke 21 applies Daniel 8 and 9 to the *first century*. Matthew 24 is a later period of time.

Luke 21:20-24 has a *natural* application in the first century. “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

When Jesus gave his “great prophecy,” it probably took three to four hours, of which Matthew records the most. Each Gospel records what were *individually* considered to be the salient points—hence the differences. Mark wrote on behalf of the Apostle Peter. As amanuensis, Mark recorded certain details that Matthew omitted. And Luke wrote down still other details. Matthew uses the same words as Luke regarding “Let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matt. 24:16), and so does Mark 13:14, but Luke zeros in on the *natural* fulfillment. Clues are the following: “in the land,” “wrath upon this people,” and “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:23,24). Luke refers to Daniel to justify that this “desolation” was the trouble in the first century at the hands of the Roman armies.

Luke 21:9 says there will be wars and commotions, “but *the end is not*; [it is] by and by.” The Greek is very abrupt, so the translators correctly supplied the word “is,” and “it is” should also be supplied. (The Greek said, “The end yet by and by.”) In other words, “The end is *not yet*, but it *will occur* by and by.”

Luke 21:12 is significant: “But *before* all these [wars, commotions, nations and kingdoms rising against each other, and great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences of verses 9-11], they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you.” Luke *reverses* the order of Matthew 24 because the natural application of the first century is being discussed.

In addition, valuable thoughts are expressed whether this persecution occurred during the first century or *later*, that is, down through the Gospel Age. For example, we are not to meditate in advance on what we will say. However, we must get the background understanding *before* we are incarcerated. Then, if an opportunity is afforded for speaking publicly, the *Holy Spirit* will supply us with adequate and appropriate words for the occasion, that is, what to do and say under the given circumstances. “For I [the Holy Spirit] will give you a *mouth* and *wisdom*, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist” (Luke 21:15). Enemies will react the same way they did with Stephen, the first Christian martyr. His face was like that of an angel, and he testified eloquently, yet they put him to death. The enemies will not give in, but they will not be able to “gainsay” or offer a proper rebuttal to the words spoken.

Luke wrote his Gospel on behalf of the Apostle Paul. Since Paul had witnessed Stephen's death, these thoughts from "Our Lord's Great Prophecy" particularly impressed him. After his conversion, Paul went to see Peter and James, the Lord's brother, for 15 days to find out more information about Jesus. From Peter, he learned about the details of Jesus' ministry. From James, he gleaned details of Jesus' family life prior to his baptism at Jordan. Paul gave that accumulated information to Luke to write down. In addition, Luke accompanied Paul on many of his missionary travels and kept an up-to-date diary.

In Luke 1:1-4, Luke said that he was on hand as an eyewitness from the beginning and that he would set everything in order accurately. Then Luke tied in events with historical facts and dates (for example, Luke 1:5 in regard to the days of Herod). In the Book of Acts, Luke did the same thing. Therefore, Luke had his own personal experience plus Paul's enlightenment.

Compare Luke 21:16,18. After saying that some of the consecrated would be put to death, Jesus added, "But there shall not an hair of your head perish" as a new creature. "Hair" symbolizes consecration.

The expression regarding wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, etc., embraces a *long* period of time. Luke zeros in on the natural application, Matthew and Mark on the spiritual. When all of the Gospels are pieced together, it becomes apparent that a *double* fulfillment was intended in these pictures.

In both Matthew 24 and Luke 21, a valuable *clue* is given. Matthew 24:14 tells the importance of the gospel being preached to all nations *before* the end comes. In other words, this condition had to be attained *before* the end period could begin. The Luke clue is 21:24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Also a time period, this verse refers to the "seven times" or $360 \times 7 = 2,520$ years from 606 BC to AD 1914 (see Leviticus 26). Thus the two clues, one along one line and the other along another line, bring us up to a period of time roughly commensurate. Altogether, we are told about the first century, the middle of the Gospel Age, and the end.

The gospel being "preached in all the world for a witness" does not mean all nations would be converted prior to the end of the age (Matt. 24:14). Therefore, this verse would be fulfilled sometime after the Bible societies published the Bible in all languages in the early 1800s. Furthermore, this verse does not mean that present truth had to be preached before the end could come. It was the *Bible* that had to be preached. Pastor Russell said these conditions existed before the Harvest began; that is, the conditions *made possible* the Harvest because by the printing of the Bible, people could become familiar with the Scriptures and thus be in a position to certify the truth. They could "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21). Thus the Bible societies *preceded* the Harvest message itself.

The "gospel" pertains to being a follower of Jesus and hoping to be in heaven; that is, it refers to the high or heavenly calling. The Scriptures clearly say that the Christian who is obedient to Christ and faithful will reign with him. All Christians down through the age grasped the concept that if they suffered with Christ, they would reign with him and be given great honors (Rom. 8:17). That is the "Kingdom" class, not restitution. The New Testament (and especially Jesus in the Gospels) says *very little* about restitution—the emphasis is on being a follower of Jesus. Incidentally, if restitution were included in the "gospel" preached to all nations, the Harvest would have begun *later*, for restitution is the lost coin found *after* 1874.

Review of Luke 21:9-24

Verses 10 and 11 say that nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and that earthquakes, famines, and pestilences would occur in diverse places—plus fearful sights

and great signs from heaven. However, verse 12 tells that *before* all of these, severe persecution would come upon the Christian. The advice was that the Christian was not to unduly premeditate what he would say or do because in that hour the words would be given by the Holy Spirit.

The trouble referred to in Luke 21:20-24 occurred in AD 69-70. Verse 23 reads, “Woe unto them that are with child [that is, pregnant], and to them that give suck [infants and young ones who breast-feed, for older children would suffer like the adults], in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.” Notice the end of the verse: “There shall be ... wrath upon *this* people”; that is, God’s wrath would be upon the nation of Israel because of their rejection of Jesus. Verse 24 continues, “And they [*the Israelites*] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and *Jerusalem* shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Thus the emphasis in Luke 21 is on the *natural* picture, whereas Matthew 24 and Mark 13 stress the *spiritual* aspect primarily.

Let us consider again the expression “the times of the Gentiles,” which refers to the “seven times” of Leviticus 26, which are calculated as follows: 7 x 360 (a lunar year) = 2,520 years from 606 BC to AD 1914. In 606 BC, the Temple of Solomon was destroyed, as well as Jerusalem and the Jewish polity with the removal of the crown from Zedekiah. Notice, the account does NOT say that the treading down of Jerusalem and the Times of the Gentiles commenced in AD 70, even though the same things happened at that date (i.e., the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed, and the Jewish people were led away captive into all nations, the Diaspora having begun). In other words, while Gentile Times began in 606 BC, they were still counting in AD 70 and beyond—until their expiration in 1914. The AD 70 trouble was just an additional experience *during* the Times of the Gentiles.

Because the Jewish people subsequently suffered so dreadfully under Hitler and the Nazis, some brethren have a problem seeing that Gentile Times ended in 1914 and that “Jerusalem” is no longer being trodden down. Notice, however, that Jesus was not speaking of the *Jewish people* but of *Jerusalem*. As a result of British commander General Allenby’s being in the Middle East in 1914, there was a confrontation with Turkish authority. In 1917, Jerusalem was captured without a battle, as it were, and a treaty enjoined so that Jerusalem was no longer in a downtrodden condition and the Jews could return to Palestine en masse. The foreign yoke was broken!

Back to Matthew 24

Verse 14 states that after the gospel was preached “for a witness” in a *worldwide* fashion, then “the end” would come. With regard to the “abomination of desolation” of verse 15, four texts in Daniel were examined: 8:13,14; 9:26,27; 11:31; and 12:11. The first two citations (especially the ninth chapter) are more related to the AD 70 destruction when the Roman army encompassed Jerusalem. But the 11th and 12th chapters are emphasizing a higher picture, a spiritual one.

Matt. 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

In Luke 21:20, the fleeing was *literal*—the Lord advised Christian Jews to flee to distant mountain refuge when they would see Jerusalem surrounded with armies. And those outside the city were instructed not to enter back into Jerusalem but to flee also. This advice, so specifically given, was followed by those with faith back there in AD 70.

Now the *spiritual* application will be considered in Matthew 24. Regarding verse 15, in AD 539 the “abomination of desolation” (the doctrine of the Mass, or Transubstantiation) was established in power. It had existed previously, but in 539 the Mass became more entrenched and powerful. The 1,260 days (years) date from that point, and the year 539 is a focal starting point for many of the Daniel prophecies.

From the spiritual standpoint of verse 16, what does it mean to flee from Judea into the mountains? Judea is a symbol for Christendom, and particularly the nominal Church systems. Thus the flight would be out of the nominal systems into a different condition. The ones who are being asked to flee are the Lord's people in the systems who recognize that the "abomination of desolation" is the Mass and that it is standing "in the holy place" (Matt. 24:15). This message was especially pronounced in 1878 when the Pastor pointed out that Papacy was the Man of Sin, etc., and the call went forth to come out of Babylon: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

What "mountains" are to be fled to? (This term is an allusion to a mountain complex and hence is in the plural.) In Hebrews 12, the Apostle Paul suggests that Christians should flee to Mount Horeb in connection with their covenant and the end of the age, and he mentions that there will be a great earthquake. The apostle points out that back there in his day, Christians had not yet come to the condition of eternal security that would occur at the end of the age. Therefore, the spiritual "mountains" to be fled to are the Kingdom of the Lord, that is, the *holy* mountain.

The Bible refers to both Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai. This mountain actually has two primary peaks, like the toe of a boot and the high back. From the front, however, *three* peaks are seen. On the higher peak in back—400 feet higher—Moses received the tables of the Law and then read them from one of the three peaks, the one called Ras Sufsafeh. The peaks are actually all *one* mountain complex styled "Mount Horeb" in Scripture. A two-mile road circuits this whole complex. Somewhat similarly, the Adirondacks and the Catskills are mountain complexes. Also, Mount Ararat consists of two peaks: Greater Ararat and Lesser Ararat. Therefore, either the singular or the plural form can be considered here in Matthew 24:16, for this is just a general flight. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help," the Psalmist says (Psa. 121:1). That "hill," or mountain, is the Lord Himself and His Kingdom, His direction.

Matt. 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Who is on the housetop? Who is being instructed not to go down into the house to get any possessions? What *principle* is involved here? If one sees a *proper* course in life (i.e., if one sees that the Lord has condemned a particular system or arrangement), then the longer one delays decision making and action based on that decision, the greater the danger that action will not be taken. If one procrastinates, he may never come out. A delayed response leads to rationalization and hence *inactivity*. The point is that when the Lord issued the command to come out of Babylon and it was recognized, those who obeyed *promptly* were more apt to be rewarded than those who hesitated because of wanting to make arrangements whereby there would be a minimum loss of friendships. Along natural lines, if one wants to minimize his losses, he tries to preserve his most precious possessions—as in a fire, for example. But *spiritually speaking*, to delay is dangerous.

The "housetop" in olden times was a prime position where one could go to commune privately with God in prayer. Also, from there, one could watch and have a good vantage point. Thus those "on the housetop" are the "cream of the crop." One illustration is that Peter was on a housetop praying when he had a dream related to the call of the Gentiles into the gospel Church. It was customary for the Jew to pray two times a day, morning and evening, at the highest elevation available. Jesus did that by climbing a mountain. Verse 17 is saying that from the housetop position, the Christian was (or is) to *flee*.

Matt. 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

The “field” is the Christian world. Hence this verse is a call to the evangelist, the active Christian, the mission worker, to flee to the *truth* recognized and to obey it accordingly. Physically, one can stay where he is, but he should disassociate himself spiritually from the system of Babylon.

Matt. 24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

Why did Jesus say, “Woe unto them that are with child”? He made this statement because such Christians feel a responsibility to nurture the spiritual babes, and to flee would leave the babes unattended. For example, if a Sunday School teacher has a class of adolescents and is attached to them and is trying to nurture them in the Lord and in knowledge, it is extremely difficult to separate under that circumstance and to obey the call to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4). The Master is suggesting that obedience (flight) is much harder for those in such positions. Those in the field are also nurturing spiritual babes and will, in addition, have to accept a severing of financial ties if they obey.

Jesus is suggesting that many would be like the rich, young ruler who could not make the one decision that the Master required and went away sorrowing. The implication is that obedience under the condition of being with child and giving suck is much more difficult.

Matt. 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

The “sabbath day” is the 1,000-year period of the Seventh Day, beginning in 1874. It is the “Seventh Day” since the fall of Adam. The usual literal sabbath is 24 hours long, but a sabbath can also be seven days long, and here it is 1,000 years in length.

Matt. 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

When verses 20 and 21 are combined, the thought is, “Pray that your flight will not be in the time of great tribulation, which will occur on the ‘sabbath day.’” In other words, “winter” is the “great tribulation.” The opposite of winter is summer. In Hebrew, the day was divided into two parts: morning and evening. And the year was divided into two parts: winter and summer. At the time the Lord was speaking, it was “summer” under the favor of the gospel sun. In Jeremiah 8:20, the Great Company speaks of summer as being over: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” When that time comes, the Great Company class will recognize that the summer of special favor has terminated, and the winter Time of Trouble, darkness, and clouds has come.

The point is that the great tribulation will occur (1) in the winter (2) of the Sabbath Day. These *two* conditions are necessary to pinpoint when the great Time of Trouble starts. It will begin when summer has ended. In other words, in the 1,000-year sabbath period, there will come a point in time when “winter” will start. Pray that your flight will occur prior to that “winter.” Luke 21:36 says, “*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [the Time of Trouble] that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*” In this regard, Jesus warns us to WATCH and PRAY ALWAYS!

Matthew 24 and Luke 21 discuss two *different* times of trouble. In AD 70, Vespasian surrounded Jerusalem in a siege. But when the emperor in Rome died, Vespasian returned to Rome. Of the several contenders for the throne at that time, Vespasian emerged the victor. When Vespasian departed for Rome, he left his son Titus in charge. With this change of authority, the siege around Jerusalem was temporarily relaxed, allowing those who believed Jesus’ words to flee. The length of this interim period is unknown—it may have been only one week or even one

day. Those who hesitated and/or did not seize this opportunity to flee were doomed once the cordon was again tightened. None escaped after that time.

The point is that Jesus gave *advance notice* in Luke 21, and those who took his advice, acting on faith, were able to escape with their lives. Matthew 24:20 identifies an even greater Time of Trouble as occurring *future*, down here at the end of the age (“in the sabbath day”), and Jesus’ instruction is to flee *before* the “winter” Time of Trouble.

Q: We have been discussing these verses the way Bro. Russell explained them, which certainly is valid, but wouldn’t an *additional* urgency to flee be seen by those who are on the scene *later* in the Harvest period, that is, when Papacy, Protestantism, and the civil powers croak the unclean message in unison? At that time, Papacy will again be elevated and thus “stand in the holy place.” Wouldn’t this *future* application be a *third* way of interpreting verses 15-20?

A: There is no harm in so viewing these verses, and certainly the principle would apply. *Urgent* action will be taken by the faithful—they will take a stand. And that is where problems will occur. The Great Company class will suffer, but not for Christ’s sake in the sense of being part of the sin offering. They will not be quite as alert and responsive as the feet members. Which is worse—to be taken out by the civil authorities and shot against a wall or to be in a period of mob violence? The first condition would be preferable, and there would be joy in knowing that one had been responsive to the Lord’s dealings and that the sufferings were meritorious. The Little Flock suffers voluntarily, whereas the Great Company will be *forced* to suffer under very distressing conditions of anarchy and injustice, that is, in a time of *no law and order*.

The great Time of Trouble is still future. In verse 20, the word “flight” is very important. The call since 1878 to come out of Babylon has been an *invitation*. There is no compulsion—one must make that decision *himself*—whereas the “flight” in the “winter” will be a *forced flight*. The Great Company *will have to flee* when the nominal Church systems *fall*. When the Harvest (or summer) is over, those in the systems will be forced to flee. Thus it is advantageous to flee earlier, while it is still summer. Those who do not immediately flee from the housetop position but go down to take things out of the house, spiritually speaking, are those who are too self-centered in their possessions in the present life.

Just as we can extend certain principles of Matthew 24:15-19 into the future based on the knowledge that Papacy will come into power, so we can say that “Babylon” is not just the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations but that it will even be, in time, the Bible Student movement itself. As individuals, we should follow the Lord’s leadings and not be wed to an institution, organization, or individual. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil [and the good too] thereof” (Matt. 6:34). We are to take things day by day, step by step. Consecration is a *daily* matter. If we are truly following the Lord and matters develop unfavorably, we must take a stand no matter what is involved—the immediate family, the immediate fellowship we are identified with, the ecclesia, etc. We must take the same action as we would for “Babylon.” “These [the 144,000] are they which follow the *Lamb* whithersoever he goeth” (Rev. 14:4). True, the Lord has used, and still uses, institutions and individuals to a certain level or extent, but *none* of them are on a par with *obedience to Christ*. Reverence to God, to His Word, and to Jesus are *inviolable*.

The spiritual flight at the end of the age is a *progressive* matter too. At consecration, we make a vow to follow the Lord from that moment until the end of our course. And that consecration is progressive, just like baptism. Until we finish our course, our consecration is not finished, and neither is our baptism. Thus consecration is ongoing and progressive from the moment our vows are made. Similarly, the *invitational* “flight” has a chronological beginning and then continues so that, hopefully, we will not have to “flee” after the “winter” Time of Trouble has begun. It is like saying that even though we fled Babylon and are consecrated, we should keep

seeking out the best sources of meat. We are to get more and more instruction from God's Word and never stop. We must keep on fleeing to more and more truth, devotion to the Lord, obedience, character, etc. We should keep growing in knowledge and grace. Both are needed to get to maturity as a Christian (that is, as far as we are capable of doing, for we each have limitations).

Matt. 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

What is the thought of "for the elect's sake"? "*By means of*" or "*through*" the elect, those days will be shortened because the Church, glorified and with Jesus at that time, will stop the trouble. The word "sake" is not in the original Greek, so it should be italicized in the King James as a spurious word. "But through the elect those days shall be shortened." In other words, the elect, the Church, as well as Jesus, are the *instrument* who will cut short the trouble. Obadiah 21 reads, "And saviours [plural] shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S." This prophecy about cutting short the trouble is addressed particularly to Israel, but by inference the stoppage will be worldwide. The trouble will be stopped in connection with the rescue of Israel at the end of the age. If that rescue did not take place, not only would Israel be destroyed but all mankind; that is, "no flesh [would] be saved."

The Greek word *dia*, translated "*for the elect*," can be rendered "*by the elect*" or "*through the elect*." This Greek word, which can be used with the ablative or the accusative case, has various meanings. Therefore, it should be translated with the word that best fits our vocabulary according to the meaning of the context. The word "but" has a larger thought; namely, "If it were not for the elect shortening those days, there would be no flesh saved." It is *through* or *by* the elect—and not on their behalf—that the days will be shortened. The Church will be the benefactors, and *not the recipients* of the benefaction. The elect class will be the *instrumentality* for cutting short those days and thus terminating Jacob's Trouble by delivering Israel.

"Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." This trouble is yet future. It will occur after all the elect are beyond the veil. The trouble we see in various locations in the world today is not the great Time of Trouble, for the real trouble will shatter the nations like a potter's vessel, causing the *complete* destruction of the social order. Troubles to date are merely an overthrow of one Satanic government and its replacement by another Satanic government. When the true smiting occurs, it will be accomplished by the *Lord's* stone (The Christ). Hence the Church will be instrumental in the trouble as well as the salvation. As we look around the earth today, we see evil men crushing other men. This is not the Kingdom. After the stone smites the image, it will start to GROW. At present, things are getting darker. When the stone smites, it will get still darker—and then lighter as the stone grows. In addition, many Scriptures stress the suddenness of the trouble. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then *sudden destruction* cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus *with violence* shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found *no more at all*" (Rev. 18:21). Papacy will be lifted up as a millstone and then *hurled* into the sea. Today we see Papacy being lifted up and the Protestants too, not their being cast into the sea. And Satan is getting stronger every day too, with more and more influence in the church systems. When the trouble comes, it will be greater than anything before or since, including the French Revolution, Noah's day, the Jewish trouble in AD 70, the Holocaust, etc. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21).

The simplest illustration is the Flood. In those days, the fallen angels materialized and took human wives, and violence was in the earth. In other words, incidental to and preceding the

Flood, there was the prevalence of evil, but all that evil was not *the* trouble. *The* trouble was the Flood. The big difference is trouble caused by men and/or fallen angels versus trouble caused by *nature as ordered by God*. In exactly the due time, the Flood cascaded in and drowned the entire human race except for Noah and his family. The hybrid race was all destroyed, and the fallen angels dematerialized and left the earth; however, they were not allowed to return to heaven. Thus, to the fallen angels, the door down here was closed (no more materializations) and also the door to God's holy heaven. They were confined in earth's atmosphere called *tartaroo*. It was like the great big genie of Aladdin's lamp being reduced and squeezed into a little bottle. And so all of the fallen angels have been squeezed down around this tiny planet.

The future antitypical "flood," a *miraculous* display, will be the destruction of the corrupt system. The anarchy will be terrible, but God will not rise up to the prey with mighty demonstrations of power until the setting of Jacob's Trouble when He delivers Israel. At that time, Isaiah says, darkness will be on all people, but God will arise "upon thee," that is, on Israel (Isa. 60:2). The first world ended with the loosing of water in a *literal* flood, and it was the *God of nature* who had so timed this flood. God said *He* would bring the Flood, but He would wait awhile—120 years (Gen. 6:3,13,17). Even the *loosing* of the fallen angels will be something God does. They are imprisoned in chains of darkness *until* the judgment of the great day. When that prison door is opened and the incorrigible fallen angels are loosed and cascade into the earth, that will be like a flood. *God* will do that—it will be a *supernatural* occurrence. The *materialized* fallen spirits, just like the Flood of Noah's day, will be *the* trouble.

"The enemy shall come in like a flood" in Jacob's Trouble (Isa. 59:19). The forces of Gog will spread out over the land like a mighty cloud, but more is implied than just the people from the north coming down against natural Israel. The fallen angels will be loosed en masse, and an evil thought will come into the mind of Gog. What is the first thing the fallen angels will do when they materialize? They will go after the Lord's people—first the Great Company, who may die in just one day. The fallen angels will go after anyone called a "Christian," anyone who maintains that stand.

When Babylon falls, the people will leave the churches for one reason or another. Some will be "burned" as tares, not wanting persecution. Tares claim to be Christians out of prudence, not moral conviction, whereas the Lord's people who remain after the Little Flock is complete will flee for moral reasons. The Great Company will have to obey to even get life.

After the Great Company, the fallen angels will go against *natural Israel*, the natural people of God, wanting to completely exterminate them. Therefore, it will be necessary for the elect to step in—not only to save the Holy Remnant but also to prevent all flesh from being destroyed. Only eight people survived the Flood of Noah's day. In the coming "flood," more will be saved. A billion? more?—we do not know. But *if the trouble were not cut short, all would die*. Incidentally, a nuclear holocaust feared by many—as terrible as it would be—is exaggerated as regards killing all flesh. The materialization of the fallen angels is *worse by far* than bombs or plagues.

The fallen angels will first direct their efforts at the Great Company, who will die as a class *suddenly*. Of course some individuals will die in the interim between the completion of the Little Flock and the sudden execution of the remainder (the majority) of the Great Company at the hands of the fallen angels. The feet members will also die as a class suddenly, but earlier. At the end of the age, the nominal systems will cut them off so that none will be left. The faithful, zealous feet members will put their own heads in the noose, as it were, by speaking out. This is like Jesus—he *intentionally* went to Jerusalem at the end of his ministry, knowing the Pharisees were lying in wait to kill him. He went to the slaughter as meek as a lamb, for he knew it was God's will and he was ready to die under that circumstance. It will be the same at the end of the age when Babylon is in power. Those who stick their heads out will be targets right away.

Although the coming trouble is an unpleasant subject, that is what these verses are saying. The trouble will be “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” The future trouble will be worse than *anything* in the past or *anything* to occur subsequently.

Q: Would the three backgrounds of the feet members be portrayed—and clues given as to their identity—by Matthew 24:40,41 and Luke 17:34-36 in regard to the rapture? In each case, two are on the scene, and one will be taken from (1) a “bed,” (2) “grinding,” and (3) the “field.”

A: We will look into that suggestion subsequently.

Mark 13 describes a similar situation, but notice verse 18: “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter”—period! The emphasis is clearer than in Matthew 24. Verse 19 is interesting too: “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.” This makes the matter very plain, for otherwise Matthew 24 might convey the thought of “age,” that is, that the Flood of the first age is not included. Mark 13 plainly includes *all* dispensations—past, present, and future.

“And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days” (Mark 13:20). In this verse, we have the liberty of understanding the tense as *future*. This technique is commonly used in the Old Testament where many prophecies yet future are spoken of as already fulfilled. The *context* determines the perspective in which the *future* event is being viewed. Sometimes the prophet is transplanted in time as if he were living in our day; then he states a future event as if it is already in progress or already past.

Matt. 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

Matt. 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Verses 23 and 24 will take place in the *Harvest* period—when “the end” comes (verse 14). The Harvest is the end of the age.

If we compare verses 5 and 11 with verses 23 and 24, we see that verses 5 and 11 applied more to *systems* than to individuals and took place *down through* the Gospel Age.

Verse 23 does not follow verse 22 timewise because verse 22 discusses the height of the Time of Trouble. Signs, wonders, and deceptions will *precede* the trouble. Therefore, in verse 23, the word “then” means a *flashback and review*, for the deceptions will occur *just prior* to verses 20-22.

The warning of verse 23 is especially directed to the Little Flock, for verse 24 shows that some of “the very elect” will still be on the scene at this time. In other words, the feet members will be here during the deceptions of “false Christs” and “false prophets.” Stated another way, verses 23 and 24 describe incidents that will occur just prior to the great Time of Trouble and just prior to the rapture of the feet members.

In verse 24, the word “very” is spurious, but the thought is correct and the meaning is the same either way.

Matt. 24:25 Behold, I have told you before.

Matt. 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth:

behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

Matt. 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

The thought in the Greek is “For as the *sunlight* rises out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the presence of the Son of man be.” The reference is *not to the orb* of the sun but to *sunlight*. The sun arises in the east and makes its transit west. If the actual *physical body* of the sun were being referred to, there would be a contradiction with the advice given, for we are being told not to expect something we can point a finger to and say, “There it is!” Jesus will NOT appear in a “desert” (a geographic place or location) or in a “secret chambers” (a room or seance). Thus verse 27 refers to the bright shining, not to the sun itself. As the sun arises in the east and diffuses its light over the whole horizon unto the west (half of the globe is always in sunlight), so shall the presence of Jesus be.

In present truth, we have been beautifully indoctrinated as to why Jesus will not appear visibly in either a *physical* sense (“in the desert”) or a *mystical* sense (“in the secret chambers”). Our risen Lord is no longer the man Christ Jesus but a glorious spirit being on the divine plane. We have been alerted not to expect a visual body in Jesus’ Second Coming. (See the *Second Volume* chapter entitled “The Manner of Our Lord’s Return and Appearing” for a comprehensive explanation.) Since we have been so indoctrinated, what is Jesus telling us? It will seem as if he is *visibly appearing*. Jesus is forewarning us not to be deceived, for *he will not appear visibly in a geographic location or elsewhere*. The suggestion is that *startling deceptions* will occur in the future—so startling that unless we are *thoroughly indoctrinated otherwise* (that is, regarding the true manner of the Second Advent of Jesus), we will be at least *partially deceived temporarily*. The deception will be *so magnificent to see* that all except the Very Elect will be deceived.

It is also suggested that this deception will be accompanied by miracles. Hence not only will there be a *visual appearance* but *miraculous, supernatural, occult powers* will accompany it—as if the appearance is coming from another planet. When something is “supernatural,” normal logic cannot explain it away.

What is the distinction between a “sign” and a “wonder”? A “sign” is something spectacular and more visual—a *visual display*. A wonder refers to the *miracle-working power* accompanying the visual demonstration. Thus the deception will have a *double force*.

In verses 25-27, Jesus is saying, “Lo, I have told you before that I will not appear in the desert or in the secret chambers.” Hence there is the possibility of a *purported* occurrence of the Messiah’s making his appearance as coming in the desert. (In the past, many came from the desert such as John the Baptist, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.) We are not told specifically that the visual display of Jesus’ supposed coming will cover heaven or be seen in the desert. Instead the account gives a *double warning*—that *whatever arises* and purports to be the Messiah, the Christ, whether it appears in the “desert” or is visible in the heavens, **BELIEVE IT NOT, FOR IT IS A DECEPTION!**

It is impossible for us on this side of the veil to see Christ here or there; that is, it is impossible for him to be visibly identified with a geographic location or place. Jesus communicates with his people through the Word of God. God told Moses, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exod. 33:20), and Jesus is now the express image of the Father. If Jesus came in his power and glory, the appearance would be too overpowering for man to see. The people would be knocked down and blinded. If in Daniel 10:7-12 just the appearance of an *angel* caused the prophet to lose strength and fall down, what would be the effect of the appearance of a spirit being with the divine nature? The appearance would be so much *more glorious* than even an angelic spirit being that a human being could not stand it. The point is that

Matthew 24 is hinting of a visual deception in the future accompanied by *miracle-working* power—a *deception so powerful* that all will be deceived except the Very Elect. This means that, at least temporarily, even the Great Company will be deceived. Only the Very Elect will be grounded well enough not to be deceived.

In Detroit, a vision of Mary appeared on the side of a *Protestant* church. Mary appeared weeping and the vision lasted intermittently over a period of several weeks. People kept vigil night after night outside the church from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. “Mary” wept in connection with future events. The brethren in that area had good opportunities to witness. An emergency tract was prepared, and for a while, they held meetings near the location.

The possibility of an “angel from heaven” appearing is also brought out in Galatians 1:8, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” The suggestion is that an angel will appear as a guide, as Christ, but the appearance will be identified as a deception because of the preaching of another gospel. The Little Flock will not be deceived at all. However, the Great Company will be momentarily deceived and then subsequently enlightened by the activities of that supernatural power. In other words, that supernatural power will produce certain effects or results, and when those results are seen to be negative and out of harmony with the Scriptures, then those of the consecrated not as thoroughly grounded in truth will understand—but *not initially*. The deception will be so powerful that all will be deceived except the Very Elect. This Scripture in Galatians suggests the possibility of *Satan himself* coming and being mistaken for Jesus. We are not to marvel if “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). Moreover, of Jesus it is said, “Whose coming [presence] is after [during, alongside of, or accompanied by] the working of *Satan* with *all* power and signs and lying wonders, And with *all* deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that *perish*; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:9,10). The Greek word *kata*, translated “after,” has two basic meanings: “during” and “alongside of.” In other words, the Adversary is operating during or alongside of Jesus’ presence. Stated another way, two opposing forces, Christ and the Adversary, are operating contemporaneously but separately. The *Second Volume* explains this Scripture along one line and gives an excellent translation based on the Greek. Other translations do not catch the exact thought because the translators did not expect Jesus to be an *invisible* being at his Second Advent. The point is that Satan will be involved in the Lord’s Second Advent in a very dramatic fashion with *all* power, *all* manner of lying signs and wonders, and *great delusions and deceptive power*.

The following in 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12 is also good: “And for this cause God shall send [permit] them *strong* delusion [a *frenzy* of delusion, a working of error], that they should believe a lie: That they *all* might be damned [condemned] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” This text brings us down to the end of the age and also shows that *even among the consecrated*, those who are reckoned as being unfaithful (and thus will go into Second Death) will believe a lie and thus be condemned. In the Old Testament, there is evidence that Satan will be personally involved in the deception. Isaiah 14:16,17 reads, “They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?” (The Revised Standard Version is especially good for Isaiah 14:12-20.) In the beginning of the Kingdom, the world will be apprised of Satan’s influence in order that it can be contradicted. Psalm 52:7 is related: “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.” (See also Psalm 52:1-6.) The inference is not just that Satan will deceive but that he will be the *embodiment* of that deception (2 Thess. 2:9). He will pose as an angel of light in a special sense, as it were, coming down from heaven.

Verses 23-26 suggest that there will be *multiple* deceptions. Notice the plural words: false

Christs, false prophets, great signs and wonders, and deceptions in *both* the desert and the secret chambers. For example, some will be deceived by a supposed appearance from another planet. But the capping deception—the deception to supersede all others—will be the one by *Satan himself*. Down through the Gospel Age, Satan has used many forms to deceive those groping after God. To the intellectual class, he appears in one manner, to the superstitious he appears in another manner (weeping icons, for instance), to the irreligious he uses the Ouija board, etc. (Incidentally, the Ouija board is a very powerful deception, for it leads step by step until one is deeply entrapped with occult powers.)

If we knew all of the particulars of the coming deceptions in advance, they would lose some of their powers. However, it helps to consider *all* possibilities. For one thing, we must know the *true manner* of our Lord's Second Advent—that it is *invisible* and that when the Kingdom comes, the Church will be glorified and *with Jesus*. Consider again the warning of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 24:25 (“Behold, I have told you *before*”) and Mark 13:23 (“But *take ye heed*: behold, I have *foretold* you *all things*”).

In verse 26, what does “go not forth” mean? The thought is, Do not pursue *either physically or mentally* any deceptions of Jesus *visibly* appearing in a geographical location or *mystically* appearing in a seance or other occult setting. *Do not investigate* the matter when you know it is a deception of the Adversary. Do not get involved. Notice: “secret chambers” (*plural*) and “*all power and signs and lying wonders*” and “*all* deceivableness of unrighteousness.”

Some personality will appear in the desert—a maharajah type perhaps. In the secret chambers will appear a mystical vision or apparition of some sort that talks and communicates. One would have to enter into a seance-like arrangement in order to be in a conducive climate to see this miraculous power demonstrated. Also, to be protected, we should keep in mind that the ones who recently sought after the vision in Detroit did not enter into a room but merely went to the place where the vision of Mary had been purported to occur. We must avoid all such investigation. Fortunately, mankind so far has been safeguarded to a certain extent because the visions have been few and far between and people forget, *BUT in the future*, these great deceptions *will be continuous and overpowering and will take control*.

Hence the value of the Vow: “I vow to Thee that I will be on the alert to resist everything akin to Spiritism and Occultism, and, remembering that there are but the two masters, I shall resist these snares in all reasonable ways as being of the Adversary.” We are to have **NOTHING** to do with occult doings, not even out of curiosity.

The public has been conditioned to be ready for—and to be gullible for—“someone” to communicate with them from outer space. Any supernatural being is *assumed to be wiser* than a human being and more apt to bring peace. However, spirit beings can be *fallen* just like us. Not only is the human race composed of imperfect beings, but the spirit world has fallen spirits who are also *imperfect*. Our government is constantly sending beams out into space, fully expecting, sooner or later, to get some kind of communication from a more intelligent form of life elsewhere in the universe. Thus the people are primed for a deception from the fallen angels. Scientists say we are fools to think we are the only ones, the only life, in the universe. The Russians are also sending signals into outer space, trying to receive a response from afar.

It is significant that more and more women have been entering the clergy. They would be especially susceptible to occult powers and deceptions, as has been true of women ever since Eve succumbed in the Garden of Eden.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” The fact that the light shines from east to west (verse 27) shows it is related in some way to the sun. The Greek *astrape*, translated “lightning,” means “bright

shining.” *Astrape* is usually translated “lightning,” but it should not always be so rendered. See Luke 11:36, where it refers to the “bright shining” of a candle. “If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the *bright shining* of a candle doth give thee light.” The Greek *astrape* can also refer to the countenance of angels: “His countenance was like *lightning*, and his raiment white as snow” (Matt. 28:3). However, this is a mistranslation, for the account says the angels appeared as “young men.” How could one look at an angel’s face and see that it was like that of a young man if the face were like lightning? The features would not be discernible because the lightning would be overpowering. But if the thought is a “bright shining,” the features could be seen as being young. Thus, depending on the context, “lightning” may or may not be the correct thought.

To think of the *physical sun* as being the analogy (instead of *sunlight*) would nullify the previous argument where Jesus said, in regard to his Second Coming, that pointing to a specific location, vision, etc., would be a deception. He was saying in effect, “You should not believe the cry, ‘Lo, here is Christ or there,’ or ‘Behold, he is in the desert or in the secret chambers’; rather, my presence will be like the sunlight, which shines from east to west.”

Matt. 24:28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

The “carcass” (carcass) represents the dead humanity of Christ. One of the cardinal features of the Harvest message is the understanding of the necessity for Christ’s death to offset sin. The dead humanity of Christ explains this beautifully. The Harvest message explains the doctrine of the Ransom. The reference is to the *freshly slain* Lamb, not to a *putrefying* carcass. The Book of Job tells us that the eaglets drink up the blood of a freshly slain carcass (Job 39:30).

Characteristics of an Eagle

Job 39:27-30 presents God’s view of the eagle. “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence, she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.”

The narrative could not be referring to an old carcass. Otherwise, the blood would coagulate and dry up. The eagle prefers *freshly slain* meat (as opposed to a vulture or a crow, which will eat putrefied flesh). Only if there is a scarcity of food will the eagle feed on decaying meat.

The eagle sees “afar off,” suggesting prophetic vision in the Christian, an interest in prophecy. The eagle is well known for keen eyesight (having an “eagle’s eye” is a saying). Also, an eagle can look *directly* at the sun.

An eagle is *perpetually hungry*. Every day it has to eat several times its own body weight in order to survive. *Hunger plus keenness of vision* go hand in hand. “Blessed are they which do *hunger* and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be *filled*” (Matt. 5:6). The sight is related to the appetite. Hunger seems to accentuate and clarify vision.

An eagle lives on the rock, the strong place. Symbolically, the Rock is Jesus. This dwelling place provides a high vantage point, that is, seeing things from the *divine* standpoint (as opposed to using natural human wisdom or understanding).

The little eaglets want to grow up. Paul said that as babes, we should desire the sincere milk of the Word. Why? So that we may GROW. The “milk” of the Word would be the basic doctrines that give us life and nurture us, but the meat goes beyond the milk to *stronger* truths.

The mother eagle builds the nest with downy feathers and thorns so that as the young eaglets get more and more active, the thorns will prick now and then. Think of Jehovah as the Great

Eagle and the little eaglets as representing us. The mother eagle mounts up and spreads her wings—she stirs up her nest and then stretches abroad her wings. The allusion is to the adult eagle who realizes the time has come for her young eagles to fly. Therefore, she removes the down of the nest so that the brambles will be exposed. The young eagles, wanting to escape the thorns and get more comfortable, climb to the edge of the nest.

Let us consider the nation of Israel for a moment, for God dealt with natural Israel along these lines. He made Egypt uncomfortable for the Israelites by letting Satan have more say. The taskmasters were so severe and unmerciful that the Israelites cried to the Lord for deliverance from the “iron furnace” of affliction (Deut. 4:20). True, they were delivered into a barren land, but they were fed and clothed as well as being independent from the yoke of bondage. God likens His dealing with Israel to an eagle’s removing the down from the nest to make it uncomfortable.

The eaglets climb to the top of the nest and then tumble out into space until the mother catches them and bears them up, returning them to the nest. (The wings need to be exercised to increase the blood flow and gain strength.) As the eagle bears its young, catching them as they fall through the air, so God assisted Israel. Also, as a nursing mother nurtures a baby, giving it milk, so God helped Israel. He dealt with them tenderly.

All of these lessons apply to the Christian as well. The eagle pictures God’s providence and instruction and also shows that discipline is needed. God does not baby the Christian.

Matt. 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Compare the parallel verses in Mark 13:24,25. Notice the words that introduce verse 29: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days...” What “tribulation” is being referred to? It is the tribulation of the great deceptions, which will end with the feet members being taken home through persecution.

The Pastor gave a different application to verse 29. He applied the signs and wonders from two standpoints: (1) a *natural* occurrence and (2) a *spiritual* happening. In the natural application, he cited a tremendous eclipse of the sun on May 19, 1780, and later a spectacular shooting-star display on November 13, 1833. These occurrences were very startling (see the chapter entitled “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy” in the *Fourth Volume*). Some of the falling stars were as large as a full moon—imagine! The meteoric shower was most impressive. The eclipse and shooting-star phenomena took place here in this country, especially in the Northeast. And this is the Land of Liberty where the Bible had special prominence and where Bible societies particularly flourished. These signs and wonders tended to alert the Christian that something would happen. They were helpful in stirring up men to investigate the Bible. Some even thought the end of the age was coming. Thus an interest in prophecy was stimulated.

But there is a *problem* in giving such a fulfillment to verse 29; namely, the sun, moon, and falling-star phenomena occur AFTER the tribulation, not before. For this reason, the Pastor tried to show that the signing of the Declaration of Independence in America in 1776 was a great event and that the French Revolution (1789-1799) was an outgrowth of the American Revolution. Other Scriptures do point out the time of the end as dating from 1799 rather than 1776. The year 1776 was like a trigger, for it is true that when the French masses saw the example of America seceding from Britain, they took courage and precipitated a revolution that was much more violent. We had war in this country, but France had anarchy. Several Scriptures point out 1799 as the end of the 1,260 days.

The Pastor was probably disposed to thinking this way because the dark day was such a startling event, but he could not place it *after* the trouble of 1789-1799. That is why he put such emphasis on the date 1776—because the dark day occurred in 1780, which was *before* the French Revolution, not after. From the standpoint of 1776, the eclipse and the shooting stars both occurred right after the tribulation, relatively speaking. But since the trouble was really from 1789 to 1799, the chronological order of verse 29 does not fit the Pastor’s interpretation.

Therefore, we would conclude that the “tribulation of those days” will be the future time of the false Christs, false prophets, great signs and wonders, the claim “Behold, he is in the desert,” etc.—deceiving all but the Very Elect. As we will see, this interpretation fits the sequence of the rest of verse 29.

When the Little Flock is gone, what will happen? Babylon, the ecclesiastical heavens, will fall. Papacy (the “sun”) and its canon law (the “moon”) and the hierarchy (the “stars”—cardinals, bishops, etc.) will cease (“be darkened,” “not give ... light,” “fall”). The pope himself is the papal (“sun”) light. In contrast, the *true* light is in the face of Jesus Christ and in the gospel, and the *true* Church is likened to “stars” (the seven messengers of Revelation 1:20) and “candlesticks.” The *false* light is the pope, who claims to be the vicegerent of Christ (that is, in Christ’s stead). In fact, in some places he says he is in *God’s* stead. “Who ... exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as [a] God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4).

Thus Babylon will fall “immediately after the tribulation of those days [upon the Lord’s people],” the tribulation being the deceptions with great signs, wonders, and all manner of lying powers. The sequence is (1) deceptions, (2) death of feet members, and (3) fall of church systems. The Apostle Peter tells us the same thing in saying that “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved” (2 Pet. 3:12).

Q: Could there not also be a *future natural* application based on Zechariah 14:6, Joel 3:15, and other Scriptures?

A: Yes! The natural sun and moon will also undergo strange phenomena. For instance, there will be one day where around the clock, it will be neither day nor night. Thus, while the earlier (1780 and 1833) natural occurrences awakened an interest in studying the Scriptures, the *real* thrust of verse 29 is *still future* (both natural and spiritual).

Q: Will the Great Company be gone at the time verse 29 is fulfilled, for there will be no light in the world?

A: No, they will be here. These heavens being darkened are the false heavens, not the true. Moreover, just as there were literal signs in the natural heavens when Jesus died (for example, the sun was darkened), so there will be when the feet members go off the scene.

Actually *both* the *true* (gospel) “sun,” etc., and the *false* (papal) “sun” will be darkened in the coming days of anarchy. During the anarchy, there will be no respect for God, although the primary anger will be directed against “*their* king and *their* God.” “And they shall pass through it [the land], hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse *their* king and *their* God, and look upward [to the *true* God]” (Isa. 8:21). The people will be completely disillusioned by the efforts of man. The suggestion, too, is that the world will be given *false* hopes previously, but those hopes will be dashed to pieces. Great famine will occur because of the disorientation of all society. We are so organized today that if food is prevented from getting to the supermarket, we will go hungry. In the old days, people just went to the backyard to pick vegetables or to the chicken coop, but not today. Today we are dependent upon mass transit. But the operators of mass transit will

not convey food unless they get money, and the money will become worthless. And there will be no police force, no fire department, no truck drivers, etc. What a dilemma for mankind! They will have to go back to primitive conditions. If the people in Ethiopia had to eat grass and green leaves, so it will probably happen in some of the wealthy countries. Isaiah 8:21 stresses a venting of anger at “their” institutions, not against the true ones.

Basically, we should take a negative view of the sun, moon, and stars because the true Church will go off the scene in the trouble immediately preceding. The “tribulation of those days” is different from the time of anarchy (the “great tribulation, such as was not ... no, nor ever shall be” of verse 21).

Severe trial will come on those who do not succumb to the deceptions. In “those days,” after the tribulation on the feet members, will come the real Time of Trouble, in which all institutions fall. Not only will the people curse their king and God, but when they are hungry and starving, they will not be interested in studying the Bible. They will be thinking of their own immediate families. The whole focus of attention will be different. The people will be angry at the dashing of their hopes by false religious and civil institutions. (They will not be angry at Jesus—they just will not be interested at that time.) Eventually the people will look “upward” to God—like a drowning person yelling, “Save me! Help!”

The true gospel will be darkened. A time (an “hour”) will come when no man can work and the true Church will be imprisoned (John 9:4). However, this darkening will occur earlier, when the nominal Church is in the ascendancy. At that time, the truth will be darkened, and it will *seem* as if all the powers of evil are triumphing over the power of good, the true light. But, actually, when that experience has had the effect of developing the Little Flock, then next will come the collapse of the false lights (verse 29).

Matt. 24:30 **And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

After the institutions have fallen, after the Time of Trouble, the next outward event will be the establishment of the Kingdom. In the *Volumes*, Pastor Russell gave one interpretation of Matthew 24:30, but a *later* and different thought appears in the *Sermon Book*, page 420, in the chapter “The Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven.” In other words, he *changed his view* on this verse, as follows:

“Various suggestions have been made by scholars respecting the import of this prophecy by the Master. Some guessed that the sign would be a Cross in the sky. Others thought that it would be Christ Himself, who would appear in some wrathful form to humanity, causing fear and dismay.

“We cannot say that the sign of the Son of Man in heaven will be His Parousia. [Earlier, in several places, the Pastor had said it was the *parousia*; therefore, he was changing his view here.] On the contrary, the Parousia of Christ will not be known to the tribes, or families, of the earth in general, but will be known only to the most saintly ones of the Church of Christ. Consequently, the sign of the Son of Man must in some sense stand related to His Epiphania, or shining forth in the ‘flaming fire’ of judgment, which the whole world of mankind will recognize.”

Thus the Pastor plainly stated later on that the sign of the Son of man is not Jesus’ *parousia*. Unfortunately, the majority of brethren think that part of verse 30 has had a fulfillment.

Now to show the matter another way. “They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of

heaven with power and great glory.” The pronoun “they” refers to the tribes of the earth. When Matthew 24 says, “you,” it is talking to the *Christian*. But in verse 30, the emphasis is on “they,” not “you.” Therefore, this verse is given from the *world’s* standpoint—when they recognize the establishment of the Kingdom. In speaking of this time, the Prophet Isaiah said (40:5), “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” When Jesus appears to the world, it will be *in power and great glory*. Certainly that is not true now!

Verse 30 is a *more direct answer* to the question asked earlier in verse 3, namely, “What shall be the sign of thy presence?” Jesus gave two answers:

1. One answer was for the *Church* while the Church is still here in the flesh. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (verse 14). This answer helps the Church to be prepared.
2. The other answer pertained to the *world’s* recognition, which will come later. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven” (verse 30).

Thus there are two periods of the presence: the *parousia* and the *epiphania*. We are still in the *parousia* period where Jesus is invisibly and secretly present, as revealed to us through the Word of God. The *epiphania* period applies to the subsequent revealing to the world.

Verse 30 ends another sequence. Verses 1-14 are the first sequence. Then come reviews of what happened during the Gospel Age and some advice, with an updated application to the end of the Gospel Age (verses 15-19). Verses 20-22 discuss a future event. Verses 23-28 are a flashback telling what happens *prior* to the great Time of Trouble. Verses 29 and 30 pertain to the trouble on through to the establishment of the Kingdom.

Matt. 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

“And he [the Son of man] shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet.” Since a “trumpet” is a message, “a *great sound of a trumpet*” is a *prominent* message.

The “angels” of the Son of man are sent with a prominent message to gather together the elect “from the four winds,” “from one end of heaven to the other.” The elect are gathered from the four corners of “heaven,” from the *entire* “heaven,” as it were, for a square with its four corners is a symbol of *completeness*. Or it could be said that the “four winds” signify the four cardinal points of the compass, again showing the whole “heaven.” With the elect being gathered “from one end of heaven to the other,” the emphasis is on the four extremities, the *entire ecclesiastical heavens*.

The “trumpet,” which pertains to the message of truth about Jesus’ Second Presence, gathers the elect from different sectarian groups. Christians leave their respective denominations and are attracted to the Harvest message. They are extracted from the various branches of the spiritual or ecclesiastical heavens.

Mark 13:27 reads, “And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.” Whereas Matthew 24 stresses the two ends of “heaven,” Mark 13 mentions “earth” and “heaven,” and thus provides further understanding. Matthew 24 is talking about the nominal spiritual heavens (this is lateral or horizontal), while Mark 13 emphasizes the vertical aspect. In other words, the elect in the nominal systems, who are on the higher plane (such as on the “housetop”), as well as those who are on the lower plane (not in churchianity but outside the systems in earth’s society), are all gathered during the Harvest. When the two accounts are

combined, the emphasis is not on the beginning of the gathering but on the *completion or accomplishment of the gathering*.

In connection with the gathering of the elect, there are various stages. The call to “Come out of her, my people” is a gathering (Rev. 18:4). God’s people come to, and feed on, the Harvest message or the “carcase” (Matt. 24:28). But that is not the end of the story. The Christian is called to come out of Babylon to a message, but from this message, each is to make his calling and election sure. When this happens, the Christian is gathered to the “barn” condition; that is, he is fully harvested beyond the veil (Matt. 13:30). Therefore, the emphasis is on the accomplishment of the gathering *in its entirety*. The elect are gathered from one end of heaven to the other, and from top to bottom—the gathering is a *fully accomplished work*.

Notice verse 30. Chronologically, the fulfillment of verse 30 regarding the “Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” will occur after verse 31. Verse 31 is a flashback. The apostles asked Jesus when his Second Presence and the end of the age would be. Verse 30 answers *part* of this question, the part pertaining to the “they” class (the tribes of earth, the world, the unbelievers), who will *mourn* when the fiery judgments reveal Jesus. Verse 31 is saying that *almost contemporaneously* with the appearance of the sign of the Son of man in heaven, the elect will all be gathered. When he appears, we shall appear *with him* in glory (Col. 3:4).

Luke 21 shows even more clearly that the Church will be complete just prior to the great Time of Trouble and Jesus’ revealing to the world. Luke 21:26-28 reads, “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” If the word “begin” had been omitted, the thought would be quite different, suggesting that the trouble would *precede* the Church’s deliverance. Many in the nominal systems believe that when Jesus appears in heaven as a literal sign, then all the saints will be caught up bodily to meet the Lord in the air. But the word “begin” is in the text: “when these things *begin* to come to pass.” The Church goes *before* the appearance of the sign of the Son of man in heaven.

Who are the “angels”? The answer depends on what is meant when the text says that the Son of man shall gather his elect. If the gathering is primarily to the Harvest message, the “angels” would be human messengers. But if the gathering is to the barn of heaven, the “angels” would be *literal*. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares emphasizes the beginning and the progressing of the Harvest, but Matthew 24:31 tells of the *results* of the Harvest, when *all 144,000 have been reaped*. We are told in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that the feet members will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (to join the saints already raised and with Jesus). The last members will be *collectively* caught up—as Elijah was caught up in the chariot of fire by the whirlwind. Being “caught up” means being “gathered.”

Also suggested is that the last members at the very end of the age will be attracted to the truth not as they originally were but in a different sense. The bulk of the Harvest is over, complete, but the gleaning work remains. A great message was involved in the gathering of the bulk. For example, “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then [afterward] we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:16,17). These two verses cover the whole Harvest: (1) from 1878 when the dead in Christ were caught up, (2) through the living members who remain, and (3) down to the rapture of the feet members later. The words “first” and “remain” are extremely significant, for they indicate that some *remain* and are still here. A *time period* occurs between the dead being raised and the feet members going home. Revelation 14:13 adds more detail:

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow [continue with] them.” This text applies to the individuals who die(d) since 1878 and up until the rapture. “Blessed are the dead which die [as individuals] in the Lord.”

Thus the picture is comprehensive. The sleeping saints were raised first, in 1878. Blessed are the faithful individuals who have been dying ever since. The climax will be when the feet members who remain are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. “Together” means both *collectively* and *at the same time*. That way no one will have the honor of being the last saint. The *Elijah class* are caught up at the end, not individuals.

The “great ... trumpet” of verse 31 will complete the gathering work, and the feet members will go beyond the veil to complete the Church. Just as in the general Harvest a worldwide, very pronounced message attracted people to the truth, so at the *very end* of the age, a worldwide message—loud and great—will alert Christians to the conditions at hand and their corresponding responsibilities to not get the mark of the beast. Just as Gideon led *three* bands of 100 each, so at the *very end* of the age, those who rightly respond, including some who will come out of Babylon at the last minute, will comprise the feet members. Thus the “great sound of a trumpet” is still a message, and the *last* message will be prominent just like the *first* Harvest message.

Matt. 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

The “fig tree” represents the Jewish nation, as shown by several Scriptures. Jeremiah 24:1-5 mentions two baskets of figs, and Jeremiah 8:13 also connects figs with the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus cursed the fig tree, picturing the nation of Israel.

“When his [the fig tree’s] branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves” refers to the year 1878 when the first Jewish colony, Petatikva (meaning “Door of Hope”), was established in Israel under the Zionist movement. Leaves come out in stages starting with the green bud, and this was the earliest sign of green life. In 1878, the Jew could purchase real estate in Palestine for the first time in almost 2,000 years. As a result of General Allenby’s victory, which broke the Turkish yoke, England encouraged the establishment of a homeland for the Jew in Palestine via the Balfour Declaration of 1917. And in 1948 Israel was recognized as a nation once again; this was the “blossoming,” not the initial putting forth of a leaf. A “blossom” signifies fruit.

Luke 21:29,30 includes an additional thought: “Behold the fig tree, *and all the trees*; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.” Notice the phrase “and all the trees,” meaning the springing forth of other nations too. When Cordell Hull and others started to form the United Nations, the number of existing nations was far more limited than today. A ratio was figured out to keep the superpowers (England, France, Russia, and the United States) as the top echelon. In the General Assembly, every nation, large or small, had one vote. But the organizers never foresaw the number of new and additional nations that would develop afterwards, thus upsetting the balance of power. All the little nations in Africa want their independence; they are really tribes, but each gets one vote in the United Nations. These Third World new nations keep clamoring for their rights with tremendous squabbling, confusion, and deafening noise so that the UN is unworkable today. This modern phenomenon—that in a relatively short time so many little nations have blossomed forth with their independence just as Israel did—is a sign of the nearness of the Kingdom (“summer”). “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:31). This verse in Luke is telling us that the Church will still be here in the flesh when “the fig tree, and all the trees” shoot forth. Since 1948 we have seen the development of many new nations (“trees”).

Luke 21, Matthew 24, and Mark 13 are now beginning to narrow down and constrict to more specific information pertaining to *our* day. We are living in the time when these things are happening.

Matt. 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

The progression in Matthew 24 is “summer” (when the Church is still here), “winter” (the great Time of Trouble when the Church is gone), and “summer” (when the Kingdom is established)—see verses 20 and 32. The “summer” of favor at the end of the Gospel Age is followed by a “winter” of trouble and then the “summer” of the Kingdom.

Luke 21 is the same sermon as Matthew 24 except that Luke’s narration stresses some different aspects. Luke 21:33 shows the emphasis Jesus placed upon statements uttered earlier in the chapter. “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” The ecclesiastical heavens and earth’s present social order will pass away, but Jesus’ words stand and *will be fulfilled*. This prophecy is of the *utmost importance*, and all the *minutiae* of detail will come to pass!

Luke 21:34 warns, “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” To repeat, Luke warns us to *take heed against surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of this life*. “Surfeiting” is dissipation, a “hangover” from gluttony. The Lord’s people are cautioned *not to be distracted* from the momentous occasions about to take place, from the nearness of their own change, and from the need to be more zealous in making their calling and election sure. In other words, we are admonished not to let the spirit of the *world* become the spirit of the *Church*. The world is dedicated to sports, pleasure, music, etc. The minds of the people are occupied with worldly things and distractions of one kind or another. “Cares of this life” would be anxieties over family or business (for example, worry about the status of a job). We must take heed lest these things distract us.

Jesus is warning: “Do not let the spirit of the times become the spirit of the Church. Do not be intoxicated with the pleasures of this life.” In the phrase “cares of this life,” “this life” refers to the daily, normal life of the flesh. It is normal to have some cares, but do not let them become overburdening.

Luke 21:35 reads, “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” Jesus is referring to a contagious spirit that affects the whole human race except a Christian who takes heed. The implication is that this spirit could creep into the Church unless one is on guard against it.

And Luke 21:36 states, “*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*” “To stand before the Son of man” means to have his approval as one of the 144,000, as one of the saints. This would be standing intimately in Jesus’ presence—an honor the Great Company will not have.

Matt. 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

What “generation”? The generation that sees “all these things” (verse 33). In Scripture, a generation can have various time lengths: 40, 70, 80, 100, and 120 years. Which time length is applicable here? In the wilderness, 40 years was a generation to the Israelites. In David’s day, a

generation was 70 years. In Genesis 15:13,16, a “generation” was 100 years. “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them *four hundred years*; ... But in the *fourth generation* they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” In other words, if four generations are 400 years, then one generation is 100 years.

However, none of these time spans fit except the “120,” for the others, dating from 1878, have all come and gone without these things being fulfilled. The year 1878 is the date the fig tree put forth its leaves, and thus it is the point from which to reckon the “generation.”

Genesis 6:3 identifies 120 years as the “generation.” “And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be *an hundred and twenty years*.” At the end of the 120 years, the Ark was to be built and *completed*, it was to be *entered*, and the *Flood* would come, causing the destruction of the social order. That this 120 years is the time applicable to the “generation” of Matthew 24:34 is further corroborated in Matthew 24 itself, as well as elsewhere. “But as the *days of Noe* were, so shall also the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:37). Verse 37 is a valuable clue, for it suggests that that which happened in Noah’s day is a close analogy to the end of the Gospel Age, to the time of Jesus’ presence.

Elsewhere in Scripture, the “120” is suggested in connection with this completion work. Jesus said in John 4:35, “*Say not ye*, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” The 30 days in a lunar month are calculated thus: $30 \times 4 = 120 \text{ years}$ (a day for a year). Moses died in the *prime* of life at age 120; that is, he did not die a natural death, but his life was terminated at the height of physical strength (Deut. 34:7). Since Moses pictures The Christ, he could not physically enter the Promised Land because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). In the flesh, Moses could see the Promised Land from Mount Nebo (Pisgah), but he could not enter it. Thus the Lord’s people look forward to, and see by the eye of faith, the “Promised Land” of heaven, but they must cross Jordan (die) first before entering (inheriting) the Kingdom.

Matt. 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Matt. 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

At *that* time, even Jesus did not know the day and the hour, but he did know the *year*, and so can we know the year now in the end of the Harvest. We can be quite sure Jesus knew the year back there because of the detailed information in the chapter. (To have plainly stated the year, day, and hour would have allowed the *enemies* of righteousness to capitalize on the information for selfish purposes.) We need to (1) search the Scriptures and (2) watch prophecies being fulfilled. We should not interpret Scripture in the light of prophecy, but prophecy in the light of Scripture. Otherwise, all kinds of bizarre fulfillments will be predicted.

Matt. 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the *presence* [Greek *parousia*] of the Son of man be.” Jesus’ “presence” (*parousia*) is compared to Noah’s 120-year presence before the Flood. (Noah lived *after* the Flood and *before* the 120 years began to count, but the reference is only to the 120 years.) “And the LORD said [of Noah], ... yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years” (Gen. 6:3). In other words, man would survive for another 120 years.

In the verses next to be considered, verses 38-44, Jesus narrowed down the picture from the

year, to the day, to the hour. As the end draws *nearer*, we might even be able to *almost* calculate the day, but not the hour. Verse 42 mentions just the “hour”: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what *hour* your Lord doth come.”

Matt. 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

Matt. 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matt. 24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

The “field” is the missionary field. Those employed in the Christian field are very *zealous* to give their life in such sacrifice. They are more than just nominal Christians, generally speaking, for they are putting their lives on the line.

Matt. 24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

This verse pertains to grinding out spiritual food in various ways (for example, Sunday School teachers, elders, those who print literature, etc.).

In verses 40 and 41, *two* are on the scene; *one* is taken and *one* is left. What are these verses saying? One will be taken to be of the Little Flock, and the other will be left to, hopefully, then end up as Great Company. (Note: Even the true Christian is a “nominal” Christian from the standpoint that he is a professed Christian who bears the name of Christ. However, among nominal Christians, there are both wheat and tares, both true and false.)

All during the Harvest period, one has been dying here and there and been raised to be part of the Little Flock. But why, here, does the ratio break down to one and one? *Two* are there, but *only one* is taken. The suggestion is that one might be taken, but not his best friend. A husband could be taken, but not his wife—or vice versa. The two are supposedly working *together* in the “field,” “mill,” or “bed” (see Luke 17:34-36); one will make his calling and election sure, and one will not.

And where are the “more than conquerors” taken? Verse 28 mentions the “carcase,” but that had to do with coming away from nominal relationships to a more serious identity with Christ. That condition continues until the elect, the feet members, are gathered to the *very source*: to meet the *Master himself in the air* (1 Thess. 4:17), to come into *his very presence*. First comes the attraction to the Harvest spiritual food down here. There follows a period of development, and finally comes the *sudden rapture* of the feet members. Thus verses 40-42 pertain to the rapture, which will occur during “clouds,” or sudden trouble. The last members will be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

The analogy of a “snare” in Luke 21:35 also signifies the suddenness of the trouble. “For as a snare shall it [the trouble] come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” A snare takes an animal suddenly by surprise.

Matt. 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Matt. 24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Matt. 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

“In such an *hour* as ye think not.” Notice that verse 44 does *not* say, “in such a year [or time].” The “hour” is stressed rather than a year date.

There will be no last single member of the body of Christ but a *collective* group, so as not to detract from the Head. A group will die *at the same time* at the *very end* of the age. However, this does not preclude individual feet members dying a month earlier, five months earlier, a year earlier, etc. The point is just that the very last members will die collectively. Therefore, an individual does not know whether he will die as part of the last group or earlier (assuming he is one of the feet members). In other words, a *year date* could be known in advance (1998?) but not an hour or a day.

The suggestion is that a *surprise* will come on those Christians who are put to death at the very end of the age. Consider John the Baptist from the standpoint of a *principle*, not necessarily as a type. While in prison he had some doubts until Jesus reassured him. John wondered why he was there and if Jesus was really the Messiah. Subsequently, a party was going on, during which a request was made for John the Baptist’s head. John did not know the precise hour. He was probably sitting in a dungeon with no light when all of a sudden the prison keepers came, opened his cell, removed him, and took him to be beheaded. Similarly, certain individual feet members will experience surprise. Jesus warns us to be ready, but there will still be an element of suddenness and surprise.

“For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” What “coming” is Jesus referring to here? It is when he comes to get the last members to complete the Church for the marriage. In other words, this “coming” is not the *parousia* but the rapture.

Incidentally, when the *parousia* began, it was not understood as a subject—not until several years later. The Lord *having come* found a faithful and wise servant. The *precise hour* that the *parousia* began is not as important as the fact of Jesus’ arrival. The same priority was demonstrated at the First Advent. At that time, for one to be used by the Lord, it was important for him to identify Jesus as the Messiah, but it was not as important to know the hour of Jesus’ birth or even the hour of his baptism at Jordan.

The word “cometh” is *erchomai* (not *parousia*). There is *only one* Second Presence but *several* “comings.” Jesus comes on a white horse, with a chain in his hand, seated, standing, etc. He comes to break into Satan’s house, he stands at the door knocking, etc. All of these activities are different aspects of the Second Advent. Similarly at the First Advent, there were various “comings”: Jesus came at his birth; he came at Jordan as Messiah the Prince (Dan. 9:25); he came as a king meek and lowly, riding upon the foal of an ass (his entry into Jerusalem at the end of his ministry); etc. Hence a number of prophecies pertain to *different events* occurring *during* the First Advent. Various events are also prophesied regarding the Second Advent, and they cannot be distorted or bent to all begin in 1874—any more than all the events of the First Advent could be forced to a fulfillment in one year. In other words, the *parousia* has various “comings.” In verse 44, Jesus comes to take his Bride (to steal her as a thief).

The “coming” in verses 37-39 is *parousia*, which is *different* from the “coming” of verse 44. “But as the *days* of Noe were, so shall also the *presence* of the Son of man be. For as in the *days* that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until *the day* that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the *presence* of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:37-39). There is a distinction between “days” (plural) and “the day” (singular).

The *days before the Flood* were the 120 years that Noah was building the Ark. When the Flood came, Noah was 600 years old—600 *full* years (Gen. 7:6,11). Thus Noah was 480 years old when God instructed him to start the Ark (600 – 120 = 480). God told Noah that He would tolerate man’s evil and corruption for yet 120 years and then He would terminate the situation. For the next 120 years, Noah actively preached righteousness and prophesied of the coming Flood, that is, from his 480th year to his 600th year.

Genesis 5:32 says that Noah was 500 years old when Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born. In other words, the three sons were not born until *after* God had given the pronouncement to Noah regarding the Flood coming in 120 years, and Noah started to build the Ark *before* his three sons were born. Thus they grew up under the influence of Noah’s preaching of righteousness, and the plans for building the Ark were given *solely* to Noah. As his three sons grew up, they participated in the construction. Noah needed their help to lift the heavy beams into place, but first, a number of years were required to gather the lumber, dress it, prepare it, provide the tar, etc. Just as stones for the Temple were quarried *in advance* of the assembly, so the trees for the Ark were probably all cut and prepared first. The three sons came along at the right time to assist Noah in assembling the parts for the Ark.

Comment: The fact that the plans for building the Ark were given only to Noah and before his sons were born fits the antitype of Jesus’ getting the scroll *before* the Church was legally recognized and developed.

The sons were schooled in righteousness and in selecting upright wives. Noah, his sons, and the wives were all “perfectly generated”; that is, they were of pure Adamic stock. Thus there was a screening or Divine Providence with regard to the selection of their wives. With the fallen angels taking wives of their own choosing, violence filling the earth, and the giant hybrid race domineering over the human race, the inference is that in connection with preparing the Ark, a shield of protection surrounded that area. Noah and family were in the circle of God’s providence. On their own, they would have been *no* match for any fallen angel, so we know that an “iron curtain” protected them from being unduly disturbed. Nevertheless, Noah could hear through that curtain the jeers of those who made fun of him. Any fallen angels or their hybrid progeny who wanted to harm Noah and family were thwarted in their efforts. Other examples are Job and Israel, who had a “hedge” around them (Job 1:10; Isa. 5:5). With Job, Satan said sarcastically, “Just let me do a little here and there, and I will show you how good Job is!” In Noah’s case, there was noninterference all the way through.

Verse 38 tells that the people went right on doing the normal activities of life—eating, drinking, marrying—and there is nothing wrong with these activities. The emphasis is not on the debauchery aspect, which Peter brought out. Jesus was simply saying that the people were *unaware* of the impending Flood. It was a reality—it was *really coming!*—but the people were oblivious. Noah preached about the coming Flood, but the people contradicted and mocked him. They found the fact amusing that Noah was building an Ark on dry land when it had *never even rained before* (Gen. 2:5,6).

If the people in Noah’s day had had a foreview of what the atmosphere would look like after the Flood and could have compared it to the heavens that existed prior to the Flood (the hothouse effect), they would have seen the contrast. After the Flood, there was a clarity of vision instead of the previous translucent, hazy atmosphere. But the people were willingly “ignorant” or unaware (2 Pet. 3:5). After the ring of water broke, the atmosphere was clear. Before that, the hazy atmosphere was “normal” to the people, for it was what they had grown up under and was all they knew.

Even the angels probably did not know the Flood would occur, for there was no precedent. True, they had witnessed rings of minerals and materials cascading down on the earth in earlier

eras. In the Vailian theory, the heavy minerals collapsed first, then the less heavy minerals, and finally the lighter ones. As these rings kept collapsing, water was left, but the angels did not think of the water ring collapsing. A satellite going at the right speed can theoretically stay in orbit forever if there is no friction. However, the obliquity of the spherical earth (the flattening at the poles) causes an imbalance, an imperfect orbit, so that rings could collapse according to God's timetable.

Verse 38 contrasts the days of Noah (plural—a *period* of time) and the day (singular—a *point* of time) that he entered the Ark. Genesis 7:1-4 says that Noah went into the Ark for seven days. The thought is that Noah *fully* entered the Ark on the *seventh* day. For the first six days, he went in and out, leading animals into the Ark, stocking food, etc. But on the seventh day, he entered into the Ark and *God* closed the door (Gen. 7:13-16). (Evidently, there was no handle on the door, so God shut them in.) And so, at the end of the age, God will shut the last members into the Church; that is, Jesus will do this as God's representative, for Jesus "openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Rev. 3:7).

The logistical problems regarding the Ark are greatly alleviated if we realize that *baby* animals were loaded—baby elephants, water buffaloes, rhinoceroses, lions, etc. They were more docile and thus easier to load than adult animals. Also, *much* less food was needed as well as space. Even after a year in the Ark, the animals were not fully grown.

Another point. The Flood was not universal. It covered the entire *civilized* earth, not the whole planet. Reasons for the Flood not being universal are as follows:

1. The water was 15 cubits over the highest mountain. If the entire earth had been covered, the water would have been more than five miles deep in many places, for the Himalayas are more than 27,000 feet high. Where would all that water drain to?
2. The earth *sank* in the localized area at the same time that the rains came. Thus the Caspian, Black, Mediterranean, etc., seas all drained into the sunken portion, with the rain, to cover all the civilized cities. The 15 cubits of water above the highest mountain means that the Ark could float freely and not scrape land even though loaded with cargo.
3. Had *all* of the planet been covered with water plus 15 cubits, the oxygen level would have been so thin that man could not have breathed.
4. Some fish cannot live in saltwater; other fish cannot live in fresh water. Therefore, if the Flood had been universal, all fresh-water fish would have died with the mixing of the waters. The large oceans would have caused all water to be predominantly saline. Since fish were not taken into the Ark, they would have died. In fact, some did die, but only in the *localized* area where the Flood was.
5. In many places in Scripture, the word "all," as in "all the earth," means "*part*" (for example, "all the kingdoms" in Matthew 4:8).
6. The usual thought with regard to the Ice Age is that ice 10,000 feet high gouged out the Grand Canyon and went across the United States to Long Island to the ice shelf. However, this could not have happened in Noah's Flood, for the temperature would have been too cold—all would have frozen to death. Also, all that ice could not have melted in one year—and where would the water have gone? (The rain cascaded down on the poles and ran into the designated area.) Therefore, the ice gouging took place in *previous* floods—before man was created.

The mastodons lived under very warm, carboniferous conditions (carbon dioxide hothouse conditions). They can still be dug out of the ice and snow in Siberia, which is the location of a

huge graveyard. Water that came in and inundated large animals quickly froze, turning to ice. Subsequently God created animals that are familiar to us today.

Not only was the earth flooded with water from above, but much water rushed in down here. In other words, there were *two* sources of inundation, namely, (1) rain plus the collapse of a ring or veil of water from above and (2) water rushing in from ocean beds down here (2 Pet. 3:5,6). The level of the earth in the Flood area changed radically, causing a great depression into which the water rushed. (That principle is shown today by little islands appearing and disappearing overnight in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Earthquakes cause the land topography to change.) It is a marvel that the Scriptures are terse and yet so comprehensive!

Comment: The antitype will also have *two* sources of inundation: (1) trouble arising from the anarchistic people down here and (2) trouble caused by a flood of fallen angels materializing.

See Young's *Analytical Concordance*, page 11, "Hints and Helps to Bible Interpretation," Item #29, regarding "all" meaning "part."

In verses 40 and 41, the two are together; one is taken and one is left. These verses apply especially to the *very end* of the age when certain ones will be selected to go when the Lord comes to take his jewels home. In a general sense, this has been true since 1878, but in a special sense, the verses are applicable to the rapture, when the whole "family" goes into the Ark together.

Q: Luke 17:34-36 lists *three* categories of those who will comprise the feet members to be taken collectively at the end: (1) Two will be in *one bed*; one shall be taken, the other left. (2) Two will be *grinding together*; one shall be taken, the other left. (3) Two shall be *in the field*; one shall be taken, the other left. Could these be clues as to the *three* backgrounds of the feet members? Perhaps the "one bed" is a description of those in the Bible Student movement, for these brethren are more doctrinally agreed on present truth. Possibly those "in the field" are those outside the systems in a more independent condition. Then "grinding" would be those under the auspices of the systems who leave at the end, in the nick of time, so as not to submit to the Church-State system.

A: This interpretation seems harmonious and may be the case. Off the top of our head, we do not see anything to contradict the thought.

Comment: It is interesting that the translators supplied the gender: male and female (men and women). The original just says "two shall be" in one bed, in the field, or grinding together. The lack of gender is more appropriate.

Matthew 24:39 reads in part, "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." The *period* of time will come to a *terminal* point in the future just as it did in Noah's day. It was a 120-year period of time—*until* the Flood came. That was a 120-year *parousia* period in the days of Noah. The Lord's coming to take his Bride class home (verses 42 and 44) corresponds to an antitypical terminal point of the 120 years, which started with the beginning of the *parousia* in 1874. Thus there are two comings with regard to *parousia* and two comings with *erchomai*.

Luke 17:26,27 is similar to Matthew 24. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." However, verse 28 introduces another picture pertaining to Lot. In substance, verse 28 is very similar to that which pertains to Noah, except that additional points are brought in about buying and selling, and planting and building. Verse 29 confirms the thought in Matthew 24 regarding the *day* the Flood came. "But the *same day* that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire

and brimstone from *heaven*, and destroyed them all.” Here a *sudden* point of time is contrasted with the *days* of Lot. Before, it was the *days* of Noah being contrasted with the *day* the Flood came. Here the *days* of Lot are contrasted with the *day* that fire and brimstone cascaded from heaven on Sodom.

In Luke 17:30 the Lot picture substantiates what Matthew 24 is saying, but in addition, a new word is introduced: “when the Son of man is *revealed*.” Matthew 24 contrasts *parousia* with *erchomai*, whereas Luke 17 contrasts the presence (“the days of Noah” and “the days of the Son of man”) with *apokalupto*. The Greek *apokalupsis* is quite different from *parousia*. *Apokalupsis* is *future*—when the Son of man is revealed to the world in the Time of Trouble, in “flaming fire” (2 Thess. 1:8). *Judgments* will reveal that a new power or control is taking over. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9). The fiery judgments will reveal to man God’s displeasure.

Q: Is there a distinction between Noah and Lot? Noah was plainly shut in the Ark *before* the rain ever started, but Lot was leaving Sodom as the fire and brimstone were occurring, so wouldn’t Lot picture the Great Company?

A: Yes. And Lot’s wife pictures the Second Death class because she looked back; that is, she was sorry she had left Sodom and longed to return. The antitype would be the consecrated who regret having taken that stand and thus turn aside or away from their consecration. When we make our decision for the Lord, we are not to turn back. Consecration is a reasonable service. Once the hand is put to the plow, we must leave it there. Consecration is a contract unto death.

Sodom and Gomorrha picture, respectively, Catholicism and Protestantism—or just Babylon. We know they picture a nominally religious class because of the following:

1. Revelation 11:8 mentions Egypt and Sodom. “And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” The account is telling about the situation or interplay between Christendom and God’s true people that occurred during part of the Gospel Age. The two witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) suffered mistreatment much as Jesus did, and also the Church, for 3 1/2 “years.” The Bible was kept in sackcloth and ashes for 1,260 years, Jesus was crucified at the end of his ministry of 3 1/2 years, and the Church was persecuted for 1,260 years by *spiritual* “Sodom”—the *nominal* Christian element.

2. In Isaiah 1:10, God likened natural Israel to Sodom because the people were sick from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet. In *Old Testament* times, the Israelites were the nominal people of God. However, the Book of Revelation speaks of Sodom and Egypt from the Gospel Age standpoint, for there has been a *nominal* equivalent in the *Gospel Age*. Both Israel in Old Testament times and the nominal Gospel Age Christian elements are spiritually compared to Sodom in the days of Lot.

Lot’s fleeing in Luke 17 is a parallel to Matthew 24:20, “Pray that your flight be not in the winter[time] of the sabbath day” (paraphrase). The flight of Lot is quite different from that of Abraham. Abraham witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha from afar off—that is, *from above*, looking down. He looked down and saw Sodom being destroyed.

Matthew 24 and Luke 17 do not emphasize the sinful conditions that prevail. The activities are eating, drinking (not drunkenness), marrying, planting, building, etc. In Luke 21:34, where Jesus said to “take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares,” he was speaking of the *innocent* things of life. The Christian should be more awake and aware of the urgency of the times.

Comment: Abraham desired Lot to be saved, and yet Lot lingered and held back. Lot is an appropriate type of the Great Company.

Reply: Lot was practically pulled out of Sodom. The two angels hurried him out of the city.

Luke 17:33 reads, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” This is a *very strong* verse coming right after the allusion to the Great Company and the Second Death class. Those consecrated who remain after the Church goes off the scene will witness the fall of Babylon. Those still in the system will come out as Babylon collapses. Verse 33 is directed primarily to the Lot class, who must realize that they are consecrated to the Lord and that flesh and blood cannot inherit even a secondary place in the Kingdom of God. They must die and be changed to get spirit nature. Not just the Little Flock but all those who have dedicated their lives to the Lord will realize that the time is coming when they will terminate their course on earth. They should not anticipate living through the Time of Trouble. Therefore, those who unduly seek to preserve their lives in that sense will lose *all life* in the final analysis. Prudence will be very dangerous at that time. The consecrated remaining should expect a change and realize that they are like the scapegoat class in the wild wilderness condition. If they make strenuous efforts to preserve their lives, it will show that the spirit of their consecration is not thorough. Those who seek to save their lives (and thus lose them) will *remain* dead—they will have no resurrection. Those who seek to save this life inordinately will in effect, by pursuing such a course of prudence, lose all life. It will be a very sobering situation. The consecrated who remain after the Church is gone should realize they can still be at the marriage supper, and they should look forward to that event as their goal and destiny.

The words introducing Luke 17:34-36 are significant: “I tell you, in THAT NIGHT....” Jesus is referring to the trouble that will come on the Church *ahead* of the world’s trouble. Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: THE NIGHT cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). The nominal systems will put a clamp on the promulgation of present truth just as they did with Jesus. He was apprehended (1) to stop him from talking and (2) to put him to death. The religious authorities wanted to effectually minimize and stop his ministry and shame him with an ignominious death, thus sending his entire ministry into disrepute. They felt his followers would forsake him if they dealt with him in this way, but they underestimated the POWER of Jesus’ message—that his followers were willing to die too. That was the right attitude. Satan thought the whole religion would collapse with Jesus’ crucifixion, but it did not.

While the principle has been true during the Harvest period that two could be close companions and only one would be taken with the Harvest message, these Scriptures have a further primary dispensational meaning. As we get closer to the end of the age, we are approaching the nighttime, the time when the truth will be stopped and the feet members will go home. This is a more *specific* application than the general principle applying since 1876 or so. These verses refer to the change of the last members of the Church. The three mentions of *two* being together, one being taken, and the other left, suggests the feet members will be taken *collectively*. There will be a *collection* of individuals from different sources.

The question arises “Where, Lord, will they be taken?” Jesus replied, “Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together” (Luke 17:37). It is true that *during* the Harvest period, the eagle class are attracted to the carcass, the doctrine of the Ransom (of how Jesus’ death will be efficacious for the salvation of both the Church and the world). They are attracted to what others consider repulsive: the death of Christ and what it entailed. But the *context* of verse 37 shows the attraction is to the *Lord in heaven* (in the air). The One who did die, the One whose dead humanity as the man Christ Jesus was sacrificed forever, is the One our

consecration is based upon and the One whose death, having a value, is fed and acted upon in this life. However, the time will come when the last members will actually meet the risen Lord in the air. This time is referred to here, for verse 37 is talking about the rapture of the Church.

Comment: The Scriptures are marvelous! The order of Matthew 24 shows plainly that there is a feeding on the carcass *during* the Harvest, but by climaxing Jesus' thoughts in Luke 17 with a similar expression, the account provides the further (or later) meaning of the rapture. The Scriptures unfold more and more unto the time the daystar arises (2 Pet. 1:19).

Comment: On the one hand, Noah was prepared in advance. God gave him instructions, and *for 120 years*, he did as he had been told. On the other hand, Lot waited until the last minute to flee Sodom, and so does the Great Company in antitype.

In Luke 17:29, the emphasis is on a judgment coming from God. "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone *from heaven*, and destroyed them all." There is a difference between *divine* wrath and the wrath *of man* (man's inhumanity to man). Divine indignation will be the real Time of Trouble, even though God may use man to accomplish it in some instances. The trouble is more than just the law of retribution.

Matt. 24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

We intentionally repeat Matthew 24:43 in order to consider it in detail. The "goodman of the house," the householder, is Satan. The "thief" in this instance is Jesus. Verse 43 is saying that if Satan knew in what hour Jesus was coming, he would not let his house be broken into (see RSV—paraphrased). The Pastor assumed this verse applied to the *initial* coming of Jesus in 1874, to the beginning of the presence, but such an application has several problems. The word "coming" can refer to any of *several* events during the Second Advent, just as it did at the First Advent. Which "coming" is referred to here?

First, however, let us consider what "house" is to be broken into. It is Satan's *personal headquarters* in earth's atmosphere where his power is especially entrenched. Here is an example: Russia and the United States both exist on the same planet with two entirely different philosophies. Yet the two countries with their citizens are thousands of miles apart. Satan, the prince of the power of the air, and his angels are in earth's atmosphere, confined to *tartaroo*. The returned invisible Lord is also in earth's atmosphere. How can two antagonistic powers occupy earth's atmosphere at the same time? There is no problem—they do this the same way that two antagonistic powers can simultaneously occupy the surface of the earth. Just as Russia has its capital, Moscow, in a certain area of earth's surface and the United States has its capital, Washington, DC, in another area, so Satan and his angels have their headquarters in one part of earth's atmosphere (probably over Rome), and Jesus and his angels have their headquarters in another part of earth's atmosphere (probably over Jerusalem). Thus two alien powers coexist above, and two alien powers coexist down here.

Jesus had no problem returning to earth's atmosphere in 1874. Satan could not in any way have prevented Jesus' coming here. And all down through history, the holy angels have materialized off and on, even though Satan was the god of this world. Consider the Apostle Paul. Angels appeared to him, and he had visions. Also, at the time of the French Revolution, Jesus came here to stabilize conditions lest worldwide anarchy break out prematurely (Rev. 10:1,2). The fact that Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection did not mean he could not come here at any time if he so desired, but his *abode* was in heaven ("whom the heaven must receive [*retain*] until the times of restitution"—Acts 3:21). It wasn't that Jesus could not come, but that he could not come for any length of time. Now that he is here for his 1,000-year

Second Advent, it does not mean that he cannot go back to see his Father for the entire period. The following illustration is helpful. We have an ambassador in Moscow who represents our country. That ambassador is in Moscow most of the time, but he can return for vacation and consultation. Similarly Jesus' being in earth's atmosphere for 1,000 years does not mean he is in prison down here. He can return to the Father just as an ambassador goes back to headquarters to get further instruction. Jesus can go back and forth, but Satan, being confined in chains of darkness, cannot. He is limited as to what he can do.

In other words, it is very difficult to see how the Adversary could be a deterrent force to the personal coming of Jesus. Therefore, the usual explanation of this verse does not fit. The point is that the "house" Satan would not have allowed Jesus to enter is *his own personal headquarters*—the area in earth's atmosphere where Satan and his evil angels are resident. That area is to be broken into, and Satan will be bound for the duration of the Millennium—until the Little Season when he will be loosed.

Verse 43 cannot refer to Jesus' coming in 1874 because he came into earth's atmosphere on other occasions in the past when Satan, the god of this world, could not stop him. And holy angels likewise have come during Satan's operation as prince of this world. Daniel 10:13 says that the prince of Persia (Satan) withstood Gabriel for 21 days until Michael came to assist Gabriel and overpower Satan. Thus there is no problem in Jesus' coming here, or for the Logos (or Michael).

The point is that if Satan could know in advance the very moment Jesus will come to his personal headquarters to bind him, the Adversary would be prepared and would put up a strong fight, thus throwing off God's timetable. The timing of the divine plan would be disrupted by such a confrontation. Therefore, Satan will not know in advance the moment his house will be entered.

See Matthew 12:29 in regard to Satan's binding. "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he *first* bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." If this verse were a reference to 1874 and the beginning of the *parousia*, then Satan would have to be completely bound now, for Satan must be bound *before* his goods can be spoiled. If Satan is bound, then why are we cautioned to put on the full armor of God to withstand his wiles at the end of the age (Eph. 6:13)? And if Satan's binding is not a personal binding but a binding by the influence of the truth, then how can he be loosed for the Little Season when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Rev. 20:3,7,8; Hab. 2:14)? The view that the *parousia* is referred to in these verses (Matt. 12:29; 24:43) does not hold water. But to see these verses as a *future* event eliminates the problems.

Also, if Matthew 12:29 refers to the *parousia*, then Satan had to be bound before the seventh messenger was ever selected and before the Laodicean period began. How nice it would be for Christians of the Laodicean period to make their calling and election sure without the Adversary tempting them because he was bound! It is only logical that if Satan's spiritual domain is first entered and broken up, then his influence down here is subsequently negated.

To get around these problems, some have tried to say that Satan's binding is *progressive*. They say Satan is not bound but is *being* bound. However, if he is being bound, he must be getting progressively curtailed. Otherwise, the English language is a mockery. If Satan is being bound, it would mean he is more and more bound as time goes on, yet Matthew 12:29 makes very clear the fact that Satan is bound *first*, that is, *before* his house is broken into. "First" means *first*.

Moreover, the parallel Scripture in Luke 11:22 shows there will be a personal confrontation between Jesus and Satan. Jesus will *personally* overcome Satan, bind him, and then destroy his house. "But when a stronger than he shall *come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him*

all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.” Revelation 20:1-3 reads, “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having ... a great chain in his hand. And he *laid hold on ... Satan, and ... cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.*”

The progressive application does not make sense. Its proponents reason that the house is *being* destroyed and Satan is *being* bound, but the word “first” cannot be ignored. Satan is bound *first*, and the progressive view changes the English language. This in-between explanation is not satisfactory.

Actually no one down here knew (or knows) exactly when the *parousia* occurred. It took place in the fall of 1874 between September 25 and October 3, so the Pastor took a date in the middle: October 1. The brethren learned about the fact that Jesus *had arrived* rather than being aware of the *moment* of his initial presence. Thus Jesus was here for a little while before his presence was revealed or made known through the unfolding of prophecy.

In Luke 12:36-38, *three* time periods of expectation are suggested: “second watch,” “third watch,” and an implied first watch. “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the *second watch*, or come in the *third watch*, and find them so, blessed are those servants.” There was a time when many of the Lord’s people thought that the Church would be gone in 1914. Let us call that the “second watch”—not that it necessarily was, but just to establish the principle. Obviously, the expectations were not realized at that date. Inferentially, then, Jesus will come to take the last members home in the “third watch.”

Nighttime

1st watch as a point of time	=	9 p.m. (1878)
2nd watch as a point of time	=	12 midnight (1914)
3rd watch as a point of time	=	3 a.m.

The Millennial day began at midnight, but 3 a.m. is *predawn*, *before* the sunrise, before the Sun of righteousness arises. The Kingdom will be inaugurated at 6 a.m.—at dawn, at sunrise.

Mark 13:35 gives *four* times of expectancy: (1) “even,” (2) “midnight,” (3) “cockcrowing,” and (4) “morning.” “Morning” (dawn, sunrise) would be too late for the Master to get his last members in the rapture, so it can be eliminated. Three other times remain, but two have passed, so again the third is when Jesus will come in this sense.

Note: The four times should be considered more from the standpoint of a *year*, not a day or an hour. A lot can happen in one year.

The four quadrants of time break down as follows:

Even	=	6 to 9 p.m.
Midnight	=	9 to 12 midnight
Cockcrowing	=	12 midnight to 3 a.m.
Morning	=	3 to 6 a.m.

Notice that 3 a.m. in the “third watch” is the *point* of time common to both the Mark and the Luke accounts. (In the Mark 13:35 text, 3 a.m. occurs at the end of the third watch and the beginning of the fourth watch.) At that point in time, Jesus will come for the last jewels.

Back to Luke 12:36-38. Some are troubled as to how the Church can be likened to servants

awaiting the Master's return *from the wedding*. They object because the Church is supposed to be *at the wedding*. However, the emphasis is on the *readiness* of the household. In order to please their Master, the servants watched *very diligently* for his return so that they could give the Master a warm welcome. Thus there is no contradiction. The emphasis is on watching, waiting, and praying—on being *ready*. Mark 13:34-37 confirms this thought by presenting it just a little differently. “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

An alternate explanation of the four time periods in Mark 13:35 is as follows:

Even	=	6 to 9 p.m.	(1844)	(1844-1878)
Midnight	=	9 to 12 midnight	(1878)	(1878-1914)
Cockcrowing	=	12 midnight to 3 a.m.	(1914)	(1914-1998?)
Morning	=	3 to 6 a.m.	(1998?)	(1998-2001?)

Here the *beginning* of the fourth quadrant and the *end* of the third correspond to the “third watch” of Luke 12:38. At any rate, Jesus is saying to WATCH, for we will not know ahead of time the hour for the invisible rapture.

“Cockcrowing” represents an important testing, for at that time Peter, who pictures the Great Company, denied Jesus three times. Also, in the beginning of the fourth watch (again this was 3 a.m.), Jesus walked on the water. Peter walked out to meet him amidst the angry, raging sea and started to sink. When he reached out, Jesus saved him, picturing the rapture. The waves symbolize the time of trouble on the Church.

The pressures on the feet members will be very great. Just as Jesus was betrayed by Judas (the Second Death class), denied by Peter (the Great Company), and crucified (put to death by Satan), so the feet members will have similar experiences. Knowing this *in advance* should be helpful. If these subjects are not being studied ahead of time, how can we be prepared?

The term “time of trouble” is too nebulous. *Which* time of trouble is being referred to? The true Church's (the heel members)? The nominal Church's destruction? The trouble on the Great Company when they wash their robes in the tribulation? The world's trouble? Jacob's Trouble? Jacob's Trouble is the climax of the world's Time of Trouble. The two will merge together, but the trouble will be focalized in Israel.

Matt. 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Matt. 24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

We say that this “faithful and wise servant” is an *individual*, Pastor Russell. Suppose someone brings up the argument, based on Luke 12:37, that the “servant” of Matthew 24:45 is a *class* of individuals (plural). Luke 12:37 is *clearly plural*: “Blessed are those *servants*, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make *them* to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve *them*.” How would we answer the argument? Moreover, in the Revelation promises to each church, the matter is stated in the *singular* but means a *collective plural* (the whole Church): “To *him* that overcometh....”

For the following reasons, Matthew 24:45 refers to just *one* individual:

1. Even in Luke 12, if we continue on to verses 42-44, the matter is also presented in the

singular. The fact that plural is contrasted with singular shows that *both* are true, but there is *one unique individual*.

2. Luke 12:37 says that the servants (plural) *will be served*; they will be fed. On the other hand, Matthew 24:45 says that the servant (singular) will have charge of all the goods and *will do the serving* of meat in due season.

3. Revelation 3:14 shows there is a seventh messenger. If all of the previous six messengers were individuals, the seventh would also be an individual.

4. A ruler over a *household* (of others—plural) must be an individual. This ruler (singular) gives *them* (plural) meat in due season.

5. The mention of servants (plural) in Luke 12:37 occurs in a context dealing with a time later on in the Harvest when the advice is to watch for the Lord to come for the rapture of the feet members. *One individual* who is selected in the *beginning* of the Harvest is contrasted with *servants* (plural) who are studying and being served *during* the Harvest.

Unfortunately, many have been swayed by the thought of a *class* of individuals (plural) and thus reject the concept of *one individual dispensing food uniquely*. *One individual serves others* (plural). There is *one ruler* over the household of *servants* (plural).

The sooner a Christian can recognize that there is *one individual* and then partake of the food being served, the better. It helps to consider conditions at the First Advent. Some made their calling and election sure without knowing Jesus personally. They lived contemporaneously with Jesus but never saw him. It was sufficient to merely recognize him as Messiah. However, if they had the *opportunity* of knowing him but deferred further exploration or contact, their chances of making the Little Flock grew more and more minimal as time went on. In other words, the longer a person defers, the greater the chance that *mañana* will become permanent, for “tomorrow never comes.” Thus it becomes important to recognize that there would be an unusual ministry of an individual at the Second Advent and that others would be blessed by it. Jesus would make an individual a steward over all his goods, and that individual would, in turn, feed the household.

In principle, others during the Harvest period may do something like this but in *localized* areas. The “faithful and wise servant” was a steward over the “*household*,” which is a larger ministry. The Lord has used remarkable servants besides the seven messengers—for example, Tyndale in Luther’s day. However, the Lord particularly used Luther, and Luther’s ministry had a more widespread effect *worldwide* while Tyndale’s ministry pertained especially to England. Pastor Russell had a *general* stewardship, not a localized, one-nation stewardship. Thus individuals other than the seven special ones were used down through the Gospel Age but not as rulers in a stewardship arrangement that was more widespread in influence. In principle, an elder is responsible to the ones he exercises an influence with.

Matt. 24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

“He [the Lord] shall make him ruler over all his goods.” This Scripture has been grossly misunderstood. Many brethren use as a cliché the statement that Pastor Russell was not only the seventh messenger and a steward with a worldwide ministry, but that nothing is due to be understood except what he said, that we should not search any further or have any other ideas, for he was ruler over all of the Lord’s goods. The “goods” are considered to be all the truth. This very subtle error has bound many to close their minds to any reasoning on multiple subjects. Moreover, experience shows that many do not even know the Pastor’s thoughts, as in the *Reprints*, for example, or even the *Volumes*.

“Stewardship” means a responsibility for publishing truths abroad, but *not the whole Bible*. Several arguments support this statement:

1. We are to live by *every* word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, and the Pastor did not write on every Scripture (Matt. 4:4).
2. The Pastor was not an apostle. Although he had the honor of being the special seventh messenger, we cannot equate his words with those of the Apostle Paul or any of the other apostles. Therefore, in order for us to accept his writings, they must be verified by a “thus saith the LORD.”
3. In the second foreword to the *Fourth Volume*, he said that the Book of Revelation would become meat in due season. Originally he intended to write on Revelation, but he realized that the book had not sufficiently opened to him as a whole and thus stopped with the *Sixth Volume*. He firmly believed from the Scriptures that Revelation would become meat in due season, yet some brethren have ridiculed a study on Revelation because the Pastor did not write on it. They think the six *Volumes* are all that we need. Others say the Pastor wrote on Revelation piecemeal and we have to put all of the fragments together, yet he even made the statement that *someone else* would have to write on the Book of Revelation.

Pastor Russell did not have a monopoly on the light of truth. Proverbs 4:18 tells us that “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day.” The light *continues* to increase. However, the type of ministry the Pastor introduced is unique in that he literally furnished the keys to open up Scripture. His suggestions opened *so many topics*. He did not explain all the details, but he supplied clues to enlarge the concepts previously fettered by sectarianism.

Sometimes the Lord blesses an individual who is yearning to understand a particular Scripture and has been applying himself diligently—even for years—by opening that Scripture to him. The understanding is a reward, yet others tend to regard it as pride. Such an attitude is foolish, for the Lord does reward various individuals by opening their minds on certain points of truth, doctrine, etc. A systemized teaching is one thing (where *many* Scriptures are taken and woven into a pattern), but the clarification of individual Scriptures is another matter. Nourishing, succulent tidbits are available to those who hunger and thirst for understanding.

The Pastor was a faithful and wise servant whom others, if they were wise, discerned for his superiority. During his ministry, many were awed, but as soon as he died, problems occurred and the Truth movement became fragmented.

The Pastor often collated or put forth thoughts from other individuals. For instance, one chapter in the *First Volume* is not his, and in the “Man of Sin” chapter in the *Second Volume*, he freely took the thoughts of Gratton Guinness. He said this himself, and he encouraged brethren to send thoughts and comments to him, many of which were published in the *Reprints*. Pastor Russell introduced the Great Pyramid as a Biblical subject, but John Edgar, coming along a little later, used these keys and had *far more knowledge* of the subject. The Pastor wrote that the Pyramid was a confirmation of the Bible and that it proved many points of the chronology already advocated. He was the pioneer even though the Edgar brothers corrected him on some points. The *pioneer* in any great endeavor should be respected, be it Russell, Sir Isaac Newton, or whoever. But others came along subsequently and were very boastful with regard to their claims for fame.

In Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the word “goods” means “the things existing.” In other words, the Pastor was ruler over the truths existing *in his time*, that is, *concurrent* with his

ministry. In his day, the Pastor was the most dominant personality in connection with the Truth movement—and properly so.

Matt. 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

Matt. 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

If the “faithful and wise servant” is an *individual*, then so is the “evil servant.” Although there was literally an evil servant, an individual—for example, Judge Rutherford?—the way verses 48 and 49 are worded suggests that the one who was faithful and wise could become an evil servant unless he took heed along this line. And Pastor Russell regarded these verses as a warning of what could happen to him—that he must be careful to maintain the status of a faithful and wise servant—whereas actually the application was to someone who followed him.

By omitting the word “evil,” Luke 12:45 sounds even more like a warning to the faithful servant: “But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken.” However, enough details are supplied about the evil servant that we can identify him.

Where or how did the evil servant say, “My lord delayeth his coming”? The evil servant did this in his *heart*, for he did not directly state that he did not believe the Lord was present. This verse reveals his *inner thinking*. The JW movement today is an offshoot of this wrong thinking.

Matt. 24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

Matt. 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” means disappointment. Those who followed the teaching of the evil servant and were led astray only to later awaken to the truth of the situation experienced great disappointment. It is hard to see why some brethren stayed in the Watchtower Society so long. For one thing, the Judge said character development was not important, the Pyramid was a wives’ fable, and the Tabernacle was of the Devil.

The weeping and gnashing of teeth does not necessarily apply to the Judge. The effects of his ministry were such that it resulted in others having a terrible experience. The Judge said the faithful and wise servant was neither an individual nor a class but an *office* (like the presidency). Therefore, when the Pastor died, the Judge supposedly came into the office and became the wise and faithful servant. This thinking was contagious because Johnson reasoned similarly. He agreed that the faithful and wise servant was an office and claimed to be the third or epiphany servant. Moreover, he was supposed to be the last, all the others coming afterward being of the Levite, Jonadab, etc., class.

In regard to the weeping and gnashing of teeth, many identified themselves with the Watchtower by giving over all their belongings and money and then living and working there. When they realized error was coming out, they had no independent means of support. One prominent brother cried because he was old and, not having a penny to his name, could not take a stand. Many were like prisoners—without money or profession—and could not get out. The mistake was in not keeping a measure of reserve.

No matter how helpful, brilliant, or holy in walk an individual is, we always need to have a measure of reserve, and no one should be offended. We should have this reserve even in

regard to an individual we feel we are being blessed by, for our first responsibility in our consecration is to be a follower of *Christ*. If that is our sole guideline, then our respect for others is predicated on their *nearness to Christ*. The moment one deflects, we should disassociate ourselves. That would be having a proper reserve. Some do not want others to have any reserve—they want others to be 100 percent for them or their organization. We should be careful of *anyone* who has this attitude. Sometimes the thought is not expressed in these words, but instead a person will say he wants 100 percent *cooperation*. Others are expected to be blind robots. Back there the Judge instilled such an idea, and many were caught in the net. Later the error and evil were revealed, and those involved could not help but see certain things. They had wasted time, effort, and money in being *wed* to the individual or institution.

Probably the judgment of the evil servant is more severe than the “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” which applies to those under his influence for a time but not associated with his practices. The evil servant was cut asunder and appointed a “portion with the hypocrites.”

Although the evil servant did not speak audibly but *in his heart* that the Lord did not come in 1874, he did try to change the Jubilee cycle, which pointed out the Lord’s presence. He said the terminal date of the Jubilee cycle was 1925. In other words, he did not say anything outwardly, but by making that change to 1925, he was automatically revealing what was in his heart. He thought the Ancient Worthies would come then, and he began the Seventh Day (the 7,000 years) there.

Q: Concerning the starting points of the 120 years in antitype, does Matthew 24 teach *two* starting points (1874 and 1878) and hence *two* completion points?

A: Yes. There are two aspects with regard to Noah’s going into the Ark: (1) when he entered the Ark and (2) when the Flood came. The first aspect pertained to the specially approved class (of eight individuals) being shut in the Ark (comparable to the Church going home), and the second aspect pertained to the trouble (or Flood) on the world (comparable to the great Time of Trouble when the fallen angels will be loosed en masse just before God’s deliverance of Israel and the establishment of the Kingdom). In the end of the Gospel Age, there will be a time period between the rapture of the feet members and the trouble to come on the world followed by the Kingdom Age.

NOTE: The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins appears below as it progressed during the class study. In Part 1, the usual interpretation of the parable was presented and discussed, but during the week that followed—and in answer to prayer—further understanding and enlightenment were forthcoming. The result, Part 2, is an updated interpretation that proved to be a great blessing for those who were present.

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins - Part 1

Matt. 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

This chapter, Matthew 25, is still a part of “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy.” It is a continuation of the *long* discourse Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives when the disciples were looking at the Temple and asked him the questions of Matthew 24:3. Therefore, just by reasoning on the unfolding of Matthew 24, we can conclude that this parable has its setting down near the end of the Gospel Age. And the marriage of the Church is the highlight of the parable.

The time setting is the Millerite or Adventist movement. In 1844, the “ten virgins ... went forth to meet the bridegroom.” The Millerite movement lasted from 1829 to 1844, at which time those following its teachings expected the Lord to return *physically*. In showing their sincerity,

they sold their homes and property in anticipation of that date. They were great Bible readers, but when they “went forth to meet the bridegroom” in 1844 and Jesus did not return as expected, there was great disappointment. It was a process to a culmination.

Verse 5 tells us what happened. *The Bridegroom tarried*—he did not come at the anticipated date. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” When did the ten virgins slumber and sleep? They slept between the disappointment of 1844 and the realization of Jesus’ secret invisible presence around 1876. (Jesus returned in 1874, but his return was not discerned for about two years.) Matthew 24:46 indicates this delayed realization in the Greek: *Having come*, Jesus found a faithful and wise servant to distribute food to the household. “*Having come*,” not “just arriving,” shows Jesus had already been here a little while.

“They *all* slumbered and slept.” Elijah’s sleep in 1 Kings 19:5-8 is comparable to this sleeping. After the 1,260 days of drought, Elijah went down to Mount Sinai. Near Beersheba, he fell asleep. When he awoke, he was given a meal that was to last him 40 days.

Matt. 25:2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Matt. 25:3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Matt. 25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

The difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins is that the latter had an insufficiency of oil. Along with their lamps, the wise virgins took *separate* vessels; that is, *in addition* to their lamps having oil in them, the wise brought along an extra supply of oil in separate containers. The foolish virgins had lamps containing oil *but not the additional supply*.

Matt. 25:5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

But when the Bridegroom tarried, *both* the wise and the foolish virgins—*all of them*—slept. In other words, all Christians are interested in the Second Advent, but some are more diligent in examining the prophecies and preparing. Some are more eagerly expecting Jesus. This attitude is shown in the parable by the wise having “vessels” containing an additional supply of oil.

“Oil” represents the Holy Spirit. To have an additional supply of the Holy Spirit means to have additional enthusiasm and interest above the ordinary amount of zeal, plus an understanding of the Bible itself.

Q: If the wise virgins had more zeal and more of the Holy Spirit, why did they become drowsy and sleep?

A: The sleep is mentioned from the standpoint that *all were disappointed* when Jesus did not return physically in 1844. All were in expectation of him, and all were disappointed. The difference is that the wise continued to trust the Lord and went back to the Scriptures for more understanding. In a sense, the foolish were consecrated to a date, and their disappointment had a corresponding loss of zeal. However, for all, the disappointment was such that they sorrowed. In their remorse and discouragement, the subject of the Lord’s return lay dormant. They were “turned off” because of their disappointment. Nevertheless, the wise class continued to believe that at some time, Jesus *would come to take his Church home*. Realizing that the mistake was in their expectations for the date 1844, they kept pressing on and continued to examine the Scriptures. Some subsequently realized they had made a mistake of 30 years. Those who saw the mistake (the “wise” class) looked for fresh evidence.

Matt. 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out

to meet him.

What is “midnight”? It is the end of one day and the beginning of the next. Specifically, “midnight” is October 1874, the beginning of the seventh 1,000-year period.

An announcement occurred at midnight with regard to the beginning of Jesus’ Second Advent, the *parousia*—an announcement that the Bridegroom was present. (The word “cometh” is spurious.) Nevertheless, there was a *time interval*, for the virgins were to go forth to meet him.

Jesus also announced his presence to the Church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” In this last period of the Church, Jesus is pictured as knocking at the door. To do this, he would have to be *present*, not coming at a future time. At the First Advent, John the Baptist said, “There standeth one *among you*, whom ye know not” and “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:26,29); that is, Jesus was right there—*present!*

Following the disappointment of the Millerite movement, a magazine was published called *The Midnight Cry*; it pointed out the date 1874. This journal was associated with the Truth movement in the early days when the Pastor and a few other individuals were the nucleus.

Matt. 25:7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

Consider the experience of the brethren at the beginning of the Harvest. All of the virgins were asleep. Then at midnight a cry went forth: “Behold, the bridegroom!” Hearing the cry, all arose with their lamps and trimmed them. However, the period of “trimming” covers a *long* period of time—from 1876 when the brethren first became aware of Jesus’ Second Presence right up to our day and even a little beyond.

Matt. 25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

The foolish virgins’ comment “Our lamps are gone out” should be “Our lamps are *going out*” (see King James margin). Their lamps were flickering and giving a feeble light because of insufficient oil.

Matt. 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

What does “trimming” a lamp mean? After an oil lamp burns for a long time, the wick carbonizes. That end needs to be broken off lest it retard the flame. A brighter illumination is the result. All of the virgins woke up and wanted to go forth to meet the Bridegroom following the announcement of his presence. However, the foolish virgins found they were having a problem; namely, the oil supply was inadequate, and their lamps were flickering. The illumination was weak because of a lack of fuel. Not having an extra reservoir of oil in separate vessels (as the wise had), the foolish virgins found that their lamps were going out. Thus they asked the wise virgins for some of their oil. The answer was “no,” for the wise needed all of their oil for themselves. In addition, the wise virgins suggested to the foolish virgins that they go to the marketplace to buy some oil.

Matt. 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

This verse says, “The bridegroom came.” There are different “comings,” and this one refers to the rapture, when Jesus comes for the last members. Other “comings” include Jesus’ initial

arrival and his sitting down and feeding the household of faith with truths new and old. Thus there are several aspects of the Second Coming, just as there were at the First Advent. Jesus “came” when he was born as an infant. He “came” at his baptism at Jordan and again, later, riding on the colt of an ass, etc. In other words, the prophecies of the First Advent pertain to certain *points* of time. The Second Advent began with the initial act of Jesus’ coming, but some years later it will be marked by the closing of the door and the taking of his Bride. In the near future, the wise virgins will go in to the wedding.

Matt. 25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Matt. 25:12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

The door is still open. To date, Jesus has not made the announcement “I know you not.” Therefore, we are still in the period *between* the midnight announcement and the closing of the door and going in to the marriage. The lamp trimming takes place during this entire time, and the wise and foolish classes both exist at present. *Both* anticipate the coming marriage. The distinction between the two classes is the amount of oil each has.

The trimming of the wick would be the trimming of the dross of the old nature. *Both* classes trimmed. However, in the trimming, not only was the carbonized portion cut off but oil was added. In the Tabernacle, the lamps of the lamp stand were trimmed daily and supplied with oil for the ensuing day. The priest did this at 9:00 in the morning and again at 3:00 in the afternoon so that the lamps were burning around the clock. Although the foolish virgins in the parable trimmed their lamps, they lacked a sufficiency of oil. Or, stated another way, all of the virgins trimmed, but only the wise had enough oil to refill their lamps.

Q: What are the “lamps”?

A: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). In other words, the “lamp” is the Word of God.

As shown on page 25 of *The Keys of Revelation*, the candlestick (or lamp stand) in the Tabernacle had seven branches. The lamp stand could be considered the “lamp,” but so could the little almond-shaped vessels on top of the branches that contained the oil and had a wick protruding from their snouts.

Zechariah 4:1-3 also describes a lamp stand with seven lamps on top of seven branches. Suspended over the lamp stand was a large bowl of oil that served as a reservoir. From the bowl, seven pipes extended downward. Each pipe was a conduit for the oil to go to a lamp, there being seven lamps in all. The oil from the two olive trees (picturing the Old and New Testaments) went to the bowl and then through seven pipes to seven lamps on the seven-branched lamp stand. The “bowl” represents Jesus, who, as *Head of the Church*, supplies the oil. (In Revelation 1:12,13, Jesus is seen walking amidst seven *separate* candlesticks.) Down through the Gospel Age, he supplied oil to each of the seven messengers to the Church. The two olive trees, which are *of God*, are the *source* of the oil, the Holy Spirit, which is supplied *through Jesus*. God’s Spirit is in *His Word*. The Holy Spirit has gone to Jesus, who opened the scroll and enlightened his Church down through the age with regard to things to come.

The seven little vessels on top of the lamp-stand branches represent seven individuals, the seven messengers, who received dispensational enlightenment through the seven pipes. The seven pipes are the seven channels of distribution of information to the Church. Seven messengers were used down through the Gospel Age, and a pipe came from Jesus to each of these seven churches.

The lamp, then, can be the *individual Christian*. Each individual is the container, and the Holy Spirit is *in* the container. The wick represents the human nature that is to be consumed, purged away, as the new nature of enlightenment develops. The lamp *stand*, then, can be thought of as the Word of God, the “lamp” unto our feet (Psa. 119:105). From this different perspective, the Word is supplied to the vessel (lamp) on each of the seven branches. The information comes from God’s Word. “Our lamps are trimmed and burning” are words in a hymn. God’s Word does not need trimming—it is the dross of our old nature that needs trimming. Thus there are different ways to view the “lamps,” and it is a *complicated* subject based on a coordination of the Tabernacle, Zechariah 4, and Revelation 1.

Back to the viewpoint of Matthew 25. Verses 3 and 4 state that the virgins took their lamps with them. What do the “lamps” represent? The “oil” is the Holy Spirit. *All* of the virgins had a lamp and a supply of oil, but the wise had *more oil*. The “lamp” is the Word of God in the Christian as an individual—that is, each Christian’s *understanding of the Word of God*. The parable is a simplified picture with just virgins, lamps or vessels, and (by inference) an additional reservoir of oil. (Wicks are not mentioned.) When the lamps of the foolish virgins were going out, what were the wise virgins doing? It is inferred that they were filling their lamps with oil from their extra supply. *All*, both wise and foolish, had the *same* problem. They *all* woke up and trimmed their lamps, and they *all* needed more oil—but the wise had an extra supply of oil and were thus able to replenish their lamps and keep them burning steadily and brightly.

A *Manna* comment deals with this subject: What does it mean to say our lamps are trimmed and burning? The wick is likened to the human nature, the oil is the Holy Spirit, and the lamp is the Bible. September 9: “It is the duty of every child of God to be very active in the dissemination of the Truth—in letting his light shine, and in keeping it trimmed and burning. ‘Trimmed and burning!’ What does it mean? It means that we must give very close attention to the words of life that we may come to an exact knowledge of the Truth, and that we must carefully and faithfully trim away every vestige of error as fast as it becomes apparent to us—whether it be an error in doctrine or in our daily walk and conversation—so that the pure light of divine truth may shine out with as little obstruction as possible through the medium of a clear and transparent character.”

In verse 9, the foolish virgins were told to go to the marketplace of experience to buy the extra oil. “The wise answered, ... go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.” Verse 9 refers to the difficult experience at the end of the age where some will sell the truth. Those actions will shock the foolish virgins into a realization of their need for more of the Holy Spirit so that they themselves will not betray the Lord. Those who “sell the truth” in the Time of Trouble on the Church will desert the truth and go into the world—and even worse, there will be a Judas class. Others will just be drowsy, and the Time of Trouble on the Church will alert them to the need of cleansing themselves, of washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb. As a result, this class will become reinvigorated with truth and zeal, and thus be aroused to fulfill their consecration vows—but after the door is shut. This period is equivalent to the wilderness experience of the scapegoat (Lev. 16:10,21,22). What happens will shock the Great Company into a realization that they have been tardy and negligent in connection with their consecration vows, which they will renew. They will be given an invitation to come to the marriage supper. “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9).

“And buy for yourselves.” We *each* have to work on our *own* faith and character structure, and not depend on others. Others may be used by the Lord to alert, to inform, to instruct, etc., but each has to work out his *own* salvation. *Each individual* has to make the truth *his own*.

When one realizes he has been overcome with the cares of the world, family, business, or whatever, it is just like a new conversion and he becomes very zealous. For instance, knowing what would happen with Peter, Jesus said, “When thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren”

(Luke 22:32). Peter *had been* converted—he had consecrated and followed Jesus for 3 1/2 years *before* this incident. But, nevertheless, Peter still needed a certain realization. He had been a little too confident about what *he* could and would not do—and then he denied the Master three times. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead resulted in such a transformation in Peter that he became the *leading* apostle until Paul came along. Thus there are different types of conversion: (1) the *initial* giving of one's heart to the Lord, and (2) sometimes later on if one realizes he has been slack or negligent along certain lines that are quite serious and then takes the proper step of repentance. This latter "conversion" is like a complete renewal. The foolish virgin class will go to (that is, be shocked by) those who "sell" and, as a result, become renewed. They will "buy" the necessary oil and return—but too late to be of the Bride class.

Verse 10 reads, "And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready [the wise virgins] went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." To be "ready," we need to know not only types, shadows, chronology, etc. (the letter of the Law), but also faith, obedience, character likeness to Christ, etc. (the spirit of God's Law in Christ).

The shutting of the door is still future, so this parable is very informative about what is happening at present. Both the wise and the foolish virgins are trimming their lamps (verse 7). Incidentally, *all ten virgins* heard the announcement "Behold, the bridegroom!" but of them only a certain portion go in to the marriage—the "wise," who are "ready," having extra oil in their vessels.

Verse 11 states, "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." This event will take place *after* the door is shut—and after the foolish virgins *realize* it is shut. However, the pleading "Lord, open to us" means they *want* the door to be *opened*, which is quite different from those in the Johnsonite movement, who *blithely* accepted the supposed fact that the door was shut and had no desire for it to be opened. The JWs are another group that is not concerned. Its members are wed to the organization and thus are indifferent to the supposed close of the high calling. They do not see the necessity for a personal relationship with Christ. For many years, they did not sing hymns at their meetings, believing that singing was a form of idolatry. Their writings lack tenderness. They say "King Jesus." The organization has no emphasis on the high calling and being with Jesus.

In short, verse 11 is showing that an emotional trauma will take place. The foolish virgins will *plead* to get in when they realize the door is shut. That is a *big* difference from anything that has happened to date! This very sad time ties in with Song 5:6, where the Great Company opens too late to the Beloved. "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." The little sister (picturing the Great Company) made excuses when Jesus came to the door—the cost was too great to bestir herself. When she finally arose and did what she had been debating, it was too late. She came to her senses, but after her Beloved had left. However, the fragrance of his having been there lingered on the handle of the door lock. Then she went out and tried to find her Beloved. Here, then, are a class who are *not satisfied* when they are too late. They will plead, "Lord! Lord! Open to us!" *Disappointment* is registered and *desire to get in*. This event is not yet fulfilled.

The expression "gnashing of teeth," which means *extreme bitter disappointment*, applies to three categories depending on context (see Matt. 8:12; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28; etc.). The phrase can apply to those who are *utterly* rejected or to those who are partially rejected.

Comment: In verse 12, Jesus answered and said, "I know you not." He knew the foolish virgins but not in the sense of their being Little Flock.

Reply: Yes. He was saying, “I do not recognize you as being part of that class.”

Q: Does verse 12 tie in with Matthew 7:21-23? “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.... Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [*lawlessness*].”

A: Many feel that to be of the Bride class depends on *works*. With too great an emphasis on works, the tendency is not to listen to the Lord’s instruction. Works are important, but to be of the Little Flock includes much more. By belonging to a particular group, fellowship, or organization, many wrongly feel they will be judged faithful and get in to the marriage. To be faithful, we cannot follow an individual or an organization, and we cannot justify ourselves by works. “Though I have the tongue of angels and give my body to be burned and give all my goods to the poor, that alone will not profit my attaining the Little Flock” is the thought. The “lawlessness” of Matthew 7:21-23 is not strictly listening to Jesus’ advice.

Q: Does Matthew 7:21-23 apply to the Great Company?

A: That question must be studied as a subject. Two classes will experience such disappointment. Matthew 25:1-12 goes into only one class: the foolish virgins, who will be saved. In other Scriptures, a Second Death class is treated.

Verse 11 shows that the foolish virgins are *virgins*—they are *really dedicated* to the Lord, and Jesus is their Master. “Lord, Lord, open to us” is an honest, true confession, but the foolish virgins will not be worthy of the marriage because they do not strictly listen to all of Jesus’ commandments in detail (called a “law” in some cases).

Notice that Jesus opened the door and he will close it. The door was opened at Pentecost. When it is closed, the fact will be known—and by just as startling an event.

Matt. 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Verses 1-12 are the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. In verse 13, Jesus is talking, saying in effect: “I have just given you the parable. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when I will come to take the Bride home.” This warning about the rapture is a repeat of what was said in Matthew 24:42,44. Verse 13 is a verification that Jesus is not referring to the beginning of the secret presence in 1874 in those verses.

What a *long* discourse Jesus gave—all of Matthew 24 plus the three parables of Matthew 25!

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins - Part 2

“Part 1” treated the “orthodox” view of the parable. However, certain points in the parable merit reconsideration.

One point is that ten virgins went forth and the Bridegroom *did tarry*. After the tarrying, all of the virgins slumbered. Next came the midnight cry followed by all of the virgins arising and trimming their lamps and the admission by the foolish virgins that they did not have a sufficiency of oil. Then came a separation between the wise and the foolish virgin classes—the foolish went to the marketplace, the wise to the wedding. When the wise went in to the wedding, the door was shut. The foolish virgins returned and found that the door *had been shut* in their absence; they remonstrated and tried to get in.

Since the study last week, a question was brought up as to whether this parable could be advanced forward somewhat in time from the usual interpretation. The suggestion was made that the wise and foolish virgin classes are contemporaneous throughout the parable—that the *same* virgins are involved in this parable from beginning to end. In approaching the parable from that standpoint, we did not see such an application. In the Parable of the Penny, the time periods are succinctly mentioned, and all of the laborers have to be contemporaneous because all receive the reward at the same time at the end. Another problem that arises instantly if the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is advanced is that the year 1914 occurred *more than 80 years ago* and, therefore, cannot be considered a contemporaneous picture with all of the participants still being on hand.

However, the question did provoke a lot of thinking during this past week. There was a reserve with regard to changing anything in this parable because of what seemed to be a *strong* application, but some points have to be considered more carefully.

The following was one reason for the reserve. In the Old Testament, Elijah (picturing a class) slept twice under the broom tree. (The Elisha class is not pictured there.) After the second sleep, the angel said, “Arise and eat because in the strength of this meal, you will go 40 days to Mount Sinai” (1 Kings 19:7,8 paraphrase). The 40-day (year) time period seemed to fit in with the sleep of the wise and foolish virgins. (The parable mentions only *one* sleep, whereas the Elijah picture tells of *two* sleepings, and it was the *second* sleep of Elijah that had been equated with the *one* sleep of the wise and foolish virgins.)

The reserve for changing the parable was also based on the fact that a newspaper called *The Midnight Cry* appeared shortly after October 1874. This newspaper was equated with the parable, which tells that at midnight there was a cry, “Behold, the bridegroom!” Also, on the covers of the monthly *Watch Tower* magazines, underneath the name *Zion’s Watch Tower*, was the phrase “Herald of Christ’s Presence.” For 40 years, the magazine was published that way. Thus it was like saying the cry pertained to Christ’s *presence*. This thought beautifully dovetailed with Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” This application of the cry “Behold, the bridegroom” fit in so powerfully with other pictures that it seemed it just could not be changed.

Another point: If the Parable of the Ten Virgins were pushed forward, there would be, in effect, a *third* slumber. This fact, with all of the aforementioned reasons, served as a brake in not changing the parable. But now let us consider some other points from another standpoint—from the standpoint of TODAY.

Here is the question: Could these happenings of the past have providentially occurred *to lock this subject* until a later date? The answer seems to be yes, and the reasons will become apparent as we proceed.

Matthew 24 tells about a faithful and wise servant. The Lord, having come, made this servant a steward over all his goods. In other words, the Lord *had already come*, and *then* he found the servant and made him his steward. Next the account talks about an evil servant. Thus in the *previous* chapter—that is, prior to the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew—the Lord’s presence is clearly indicated.

In last week’s study, the ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom at the beginning of the parable were assigned to the Millerite movement, and that is the so-called “orthodox” view. The *Third Volume* tells about how thousands expected Jesus’ physical return in 1844 but were disappointed. Notice, however, that in the parable, the closing of the door is still future.

Therefore, if the parable began with the Millerite movement and has not yet ended, it covers a long period of time, and in the middle of this time period, some very extraordinary events occurred that are not even mentioned if the orthodox interpretation is given. If we meditate on this point, it is rather striking, and it definitely raises questions. For instance, *MORE virgins went forth in 1914 to meet the Bridegroom than in 1844.*

Notice that in Matthew 24:42,44, the “coming” of the Lord that is referred to is the *rapture*, the marriage. Notice, further, that in the Matthew 25 account of the wise and foolish virgins, the announcement is not “Behold, the *Master* [is present]” but “Behold, the *bridegroom* [is here].” In other words, we are suggesting that the midnight cry refers to the *wedding* rather than to the *parousia*. *The parable can be advanced.*

The Millerite movement is still taught in Scripture in regard to the 1,290 and the 2,300 days. The movement began in 1829 (the 1,290 days) and ended with the cleansing of the sanctuary in 1846. Therefore, since the Millerite movement is taught elsewhere in Scripture, an advancing of the Ten Virgins Parable does not change the chronology aspect the least bit. Moreover, the presence is still taught in Scripture based on chronology and the 1,335 days, or the year 1874. In other words, an important consideration is that if the parable is advanced, what would the update lead to or violate? For years, there was a reserve, a reluctance, to advance the parable, and yet nothing would be violated by so doing.

Next point. In 1914, there was a great disappointment; that is, in the Truth movement, there was a *bigger* disappointment than in the Millerite movement because more people were involved. The brethren expected to go in to the *wedding* in 1914; they expected the *marriage*. But what happened? The *Bridegroom* (not the presence) *tarried*. Jesus is still present and has been since October 1874, but the time for the marriage to take place is another matter.

Whether or not the word “cometh” is inserted in verse 6 really does not change anything. If the word is used, the thought would be “Behold, the Bridegroom is now coming in connection with the *wedding*” (rather than referring to his arrival in 1874).

Advancing the parable does change some pet ideas. For example, it was unusual that for 40 years, the magazine went forth entitled *Zion’s Watch Tower, Herald of Christ’s Presence*. Even the *Dawn*, around the early 1940s, added the subcaption “Herald of Christ’s Presence,” so the cry is still going on in regard to the *presence* of our Lord. The Millennial Age began in October 1874, and the reasoning was as follows: October 1874 was the “midnight” hour, the technical beginning of the *Millennial* day, just as midnight literally begins a new 24-hour day. That premise is still true, but the reasoning was so interwoven with the Ten Virgins Parable that it was hard to consider the parable separately and thus advance it. However, the parable itself contains certain clues that are shockers when we meditate on them. Therefore, we set forth the following reasoning.

The “*midnight* cry” could be the 12th hour of the Parable of the Penny (Matt. 20:1-16). Technically, 6 p.m. was “even” back there, but it was also the end of the working day. Some laborers entered the vineyard as late as the 11th hour, but the 12th hour ended the workday. At “even,” the lord of the vineyard came to give the reward. (The 12th hour ended the day under Roman reckoning, as opposed to 6 p.m. under Hebrew reckoning.) The 12th hour of the Parable of the Penny *just precedes* the time when no man can work. The use of the penny will constitute a *fatal* witness, which is not the popular message but the message that involves the death of the Gideon (last members) class. Another factor is the hour of power of the beast and the Adversary. Just as it seemed that Satan was supreme when he had Jesus nailed to the Cross and the disciples were scattered, causing confusion and disheartenment, so it will be with the feet members. Through additional liberty, the forces of evil will seem to utterly prevail not only with the Church but also with Israel later on. Satan will appear to have the upper hand,

and men's faith will be tried right to the core in regard to their relationship to God, but this seeming defeat will turn into a *glorious* triumph—for the Church *and* for Israel.

Verse 7: The very first thing to happen after the midnight cry is that the virgins awoke. (They had been slumbering—see verse 5.) All of the virgins “arose” (awoke) and trimmed their lamps. The hour of the beast is fast approaching when the nominal Church will come into power. Soon we will see the forces gathering in a *very realistic way* (not in an imaginary or theoretical way). The end of the Church will really be in sight. When this occurs, *all* of the virgins will know that the end is *very close*. Even those who *now* do not believe the nominal Church is coming back into power will see that they had a misconception regarding the whole subject. All of their consecrated lives, they have denied and preached against the nominal Church's return to power, but when it is actually happening, they will *know* they were wrong. Wouldn't that make them search their hearts as to how and why they have been deceived on the subject? Thus there will come a *trimming of the lamps*.

Verses 7 and 8: When the wise class see this event happening, they will want to make sure they are in the proper heart condition too—not just the foolish virgins. The wise virgins will also want to hone the truth. Thus all of the virgins will trim their lamps, but the perspective and attitudes will differ between the wise and the foolish classes. In trimming their lamps, the foolish virgins will find an *inadequacy of oil* because they have not sufficiently studied the subject of prophecy. Because they *do not anticipate* the Church-State system, it will come upon them *suddenly*. Consequently, they will need information. They will have to be indoctrinated in regard to what they missed during the many years that they stressed the importance of character to the *neglect* of prophecy.

Verses 10-12: Later on, the foolish virgins will come back with the oil, only to find that the *door is shut*. They will try to get in, crying, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” but Jesus will not open the door for them. In the fulfillment, when Babylon falls, it will be obvious that the door *had PREVIOUSLY been shut*. The fall of all the nominal churches will be evidence that the door was shut earlier. People will no longer go to church. Angry and disillusioned, they will be preoccupied with trying to get food and the necessities of life. In effect, it will be like a voice from heaven saying to the consecrated left behind, “The Bride has made herself ready, but there is a blessing if you come to the marriage supper” (Rev. 19:7,9 paraphrase).

The point is that if the whole parable is advanced, it fits beautifully. In fact, it seems to fit even more pointedly in that the parable is brought a little closer in connection with the time period that is involved. For instance, we have the Millerite movement, the Elijah pictures, and the Daniel prophecies. And then in the parable, instead of the going forth to meet the Bridegroom being from 1844 to 1874 (verse 1), it would be from 1874 to 1914, followed by disappointment. An advancement of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins dovetails with the Parable of the Penny and with the four places (Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and Jordan) that Elijah went after the cave experience of seeing the wind, earthquake, fire, and still, small voice. The disappointment of the parable, then, would be the 1914 date rather than the Millerite movement.

Comment: We use Psalm 119:62 to show that the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies will occur at a *crisis or turning point*: “At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.” Therefore, “midnight” can also signify a crisis or turning point in the parable and *does not* have to pinpoint 1874 as the start of a new day. “Midnight” will be a crucial turning point for the feet members.

Comment: Advancing the parable makes more sense in regard to verse 7. Otherwise, that *one verse* covers such a *long* period of time (from 1874 to a date yet future). The advancement makes the parable move more quickly right up to the climactic action.

Reply: Yes, from the announcement “Behold, the bridegroom cometh” to the completion of the parable is a shorter period of time if the parable is advanced.

Comment: And advancing the parable gives more emphasis to the more recent explanation of “go ... to them that sell.” It puts everything later in the Harvest period and thus makes the parable *very dramatic* at the end of the age.

Reply: “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). Many will sell the truth in that crisis period. They will not have made their consecration valid enough to endure the fire, the trial of that experience. The Great Company will retain their integrity *but under pressure*, whereas the Little Flock will do so voluntarily.

Comment: Advancing the parable gives more thrust to verse 13, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” Verse 13 is almost identical to Matthew 24:42,44, which refers to the rapture.

Reply: Yes. Consider the date October 1874. That date came and went, and nobody knew of Jesus’ secret presence beginning at that time until a few years later. Therefore, if Jesus is saying, “Watch lest that day come upon you suddenly,” he must be referring to a *later* “coming.” Not until 1876 did anyone realize the presence had begun, and not until 1878 did the Pastor even begin to write, so how could there have been a watching for the “coming” of the October 1874 *parousia*? The *parousia* was understood *after* Jesus came, not before. Verse 13 is telling us to watch regarding the *wedding*—that day and hour we know not.

Comment: It has been a puzzle how the “bridegroom” could come *before* the Harvest message had even been given. Advancing the parable gives time for the Harvest message to go forth before Jesus’ appearance as the *Bridegroom*. Jesus came in October 1874 to give a *message*. Later he “comes” as the *Bridegroom*.

Reply: Yes, the “virgins” would thus have more understanding before the parable takes shape. There would be more indoctrination, for which the virgins are responsible.

Q: Please explain what “selling the truth” means.

A: As one illustration, advice is given to the Laodicean Church: “Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich” (Rev. 3:18). Among other things, “buying the truth” is giving our heart to the Lord and surrendering the right to life on the human plane in the next age. In that surrender, we get the “gold,” the hope of immortality. We are to feed on the precious promises whereby we become partakers of the divine nature. “Selling the truth” would be changing our mind, forgetting our consecration, and going back into the world. Therefore, Proverbs 23:23 instructs us to “buy the truth, and *sell it not*.”

The feet members will have an experience based on what happened in Jesus’ day. When Judas betrayed the Master, he sold the truth. For a miserable 30 pieces of silver, Judas betrayed Jesus, thinking Jesus would escape and he could retain the money. But the betrayal did not turn out that way. When Judas saw that a just man was being condemned to die, he went out and hung himself. This indicates that, based on other Scriptures, a class will turn against the truth at the end of the age. Originally, this class is *of* the truth, but they will turn *against* it either to avoid persecution or to gain new friendships or whatever. This opposition to the truth by those who had *previously* consecrated will be witnessed by the Great Company class and shock them into renewing their consecrations. Even now, when we see a consecrated person go back into the world, we are greatly saddened. But when *betrayal* occurs (not just going back into the world but being an *enemy* of the truth), it is a different matter.

When the foolish virgins go back to the marketplace and see others betraying the feet members, they will be shocked into making a decision. Questions will confront them: “What are you going to do? Are you going to follow their example and likewise betray the consecrated, or are you going to revitalize your consecration and get reinvigorated?” Some will fall by the wayside, and others will become just as zealous as the Little Flock ever was. They will try to get in the door to the marriage—but *too late*. Because they fail to heed the admonition not to get overcharged with the cares of this life and not to let their hearts get overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, the Great Company will pay the price. Later they will come back and rejoice. First, however, they will try to get in the door but find it is too late, for they cannot change events. After their disappointment, comfort will come from messages such as the one about the marriage supper in Revelation 19:9 and Habakkuk 3:17-19. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.” This text shows a reinvigoration and rededication by the Great Company. They *will get life* on the spirit plane, but first, they will have to be pressurized into making their decision. They will have to go to “them that sell” in the marketplace in order to get the oil.

When we read the Bible, sometimes we are told what *to do*, and sometimes we are told what *not to do*. Both types of instruction are needed. And so, for rounded-out instruction and development, the Bible gives the wrong course as well as the proper course.

Parable of the Talents

Matt. 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Matt. 25:15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Matt. 25:16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

Matt. 25:17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

Matt. 25:18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.

Matt. 25:19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Observations for verses 14-19:

1. A *long* period of time is involved. A man traveled to a *far* country and did not return for a *long* time to reckon with the servants.
2. *Different* amounts of talents were distributed. The amount was according to each servant’s *ability*; that is, not only were the talents distributed *unequally*, but they were distributed *justly* (according to each man’s ability).
3. The man distributed the talents to his servants for the purpose of using and multiplying them. In other words, the servants were *stewards* of the talents.

Verse 14: If the supplied words are deleted, this verse reads, “For as a man travelling into a far country called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.” Since verse 14 seems to tie in with the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, does not this relationship suggest that the hiding of the one talent and the one pound represents the conduct of the foolish virgin class? The end of the Parable of the Talents corresponds to the end of the Ten Virgins Parable, but the starting point of the Parable of the Talents is much earlier. With the terminal points being similar, two *different perspectives* are given for the *same ending* time period.

Verse 13 says to *watch*, for neither the day nor the hour of the Son of man’s coming to take the feet members will be known in advance. Then the Parable of the Talents starts abruptly. In other words, Jesus’ “coming” will occur as the Parable of the Ten Virgins is ending—when there is a *reckoning*. Of course the Parable of the Talents starts way back in the beginning of the Gospel Age, but it leads up to a reckoning day, when the Lord will come and inquire what has been done regarding the stewardship of his goods.

Verses 15-18: Five talents, two talents, and one talent are mentioned. The servant who was given five talents gained five more for a total of ten. The servant given two talents ended up with four. But the servant who got one talent, instead of doubling it and having two talents, ended up with only the original talent he was given. He “went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.” Certainly one lesson is the *importance of some type of ACTIVITY in the Lord’s service*.

Verse 15: What is the meaning of the talents being distributed “to every man *according to his several ability*”? Why did the servant with only *one* talent hide it? Wrong as well as right conclusions can be drawn. Wrong: All wealthy brethren will get into the Kingdom and not the poor. Wrong: All the poor will get into the Kingdom and not the wealthy. The lesson is to show the *importance of having even one talent*. If the person with only one talent is responsible, how much more responsible is the one who has five talents! The responsibility increases for those who have more talents. (A “talent” was a monetary value, a metal weight in coinage.)

What is “ability”? Example: One person can play the piano beautifully while another person can hardly distinguish one note from another. Thus there are different types of talent. One person excels at public speaking, while others have money, time, the ability to exhort, etc. But another type of “ability” is the *opportunity* to do something. One might have the capability, a certain natural talent, but lack the opportunity to use it. For a talent to be used, the Lord must open the door (grant an opportunity).

The suggestion is that each of the consecrated is endowed with *something* by nature, *some kind of talent*, and then given opportunity to use it. Our zeal, enthusiasm, and interest are big factors with regard to the opening of the door of opportunity. If we are uninterested, the Lord will not give special opportunities. Some who are not given an opportunity consider that to be the Lord’s providence for them. Well, yes and no! Many of the consecrated have *forced* the door of opportunity to open prematurely. Instead they should have said, “O! to be nothing, nothing, only to lie at his feet,” and then waited for the Lord to open the door. That is a different attitude from a “salesman.” It is not always easy to discern God’s providence, but each individual should try to detect the Lord’s leading because things can be forced. For example, a brother can be very popular and well esteemed yet not be following the Lord’s leading.

Therefore, a “talent” is a natural yet God-given capability along some line and the opportunity to use it in the Lord’s service. A talent can be drawing, music, speaking, teaching, singing, etc. There are all kinds of talents, and each has its place—in its place.

Q: What is meant by the one-talent person burying his talent in the *earth*?

A: He used his talent in a worldly pursuit—either for selfish purposes or in another direction, but *not in the Lord's service*. A “burying” circumstance would be to become overcharged with the cares of this life and with “surfeiting” and “drunkenness.”

Q: Can the talent be thought of as a treasure the Lord gives us? For instance, can a talent be an understanding of truth? Some are better able to grasp truth right in the beginning, but if they do not use it, they will not continue to progress at the same rate. If we hide what the Lord gives us, we will not get any more.

A: That statement is true in principle. See verse 29: “Unto every one that hath [used] shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not [used] shall be taken away even that which he hath.” A “talent” involves a lot of things. Some people have money or a position of authority whereby they can benefit the Lord's people.

Comment: The one with five talents lost no time. He went right out and traded and got five more. The two-talent servant acted likewise, but the one-talent servant went immediately to bury his talent. He hid it until such time as he would have to give it back, and expended no time or effort on it.

Reply: The one talent was hidden for safekeeping rather than for use.

Comment: This parable seems to deal exclusively with *outward works* rather than character growth or an increase in spirituality in the Lord. The servant buried his one talent in the earth, that is, in the *world*. One cannot do something spiritually minded in the world, but he can use a talent in a worldly activity. The Parable of the Talents pertains to the natural abilities we have that can be developed and used in the Lord's service. We are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, not on earth. Back in Old Testament times, there were no trusted banks in which to deposit money, so a person's “bank” was where he buried his money. The purpose was for *self-preservation*, as opposed to using one's talents outwardly.

A lesson is that everyone has at least *one* talent, even if it is not obvious. Each person should examine himself and ask what it is. A “talent” may not be spectacular (and usually is not), but everyone can do a little something. For example, visiting the sick requires effort, sacrifice, and time. If someone is really sick, not much can be said to him or her—it is too hard for the brother or sister to concentrate—but prayer can be offered at the bedside, a hymn can be sung, etc. The principle of “faith without works is dead” applies to the one-talent servant who buries his talent.

Matt. 25:20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

Matt. 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Matt. 25:22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

Matt. 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Both the five- and the two-talent servants doubled their talents, and their lord commended

them alike: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

Q: How do we “double” our talents?

A: If one has a talent and just uses it for self (or for the “earth”), it remains *one* talent. But if the Lord gives opportunity to use that talent for someone else, then that talent is doubled (1 + 1). The talents are to be used in *outward* service rather than inward or downward. That would be the doubling—not how large the crowd is that one deals with, but just the outward aspect. Self + *others* = the *doubling*.

Possession of a talent is one thing; the opportunity to use it is another. Some feed pride with their talents and perhaps look for large numbers of proselytes. In contrast, consider Moses. He was a very talented person, but he had to wait 40 years before using his talents. Capability and opportunity are both in the “talents.” However, the one who buries a talent is not even looking for an opportunity to use it, so an opportunity can pass him right by. There is a danger in forcing an opportunity to feed one’s ego, but the other extreme is to be too “humble,” to not feel the responsibility to use the talent, preferring to take a back seat always. The latter instance is too negative. Visiting the sick can be an obvious opportunity, but many times we should wait—and watch—for the Lord to open the door.

Matt. 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

Matt. 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

Matt. 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Matt. 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Matt. 25:28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

Matt. 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Matt. 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

To paraphrase: Then the one-talent servant said, “Lord, I know you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not strawed. I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth.”

The Lord answered, “You wicked and slothful servant. You should have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I would have received the talent with usury. Take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten talents, for unto everyone who has used, more shall be given, but from the one who has not used shall the talent be taken away. Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Verse 25: The admission “I was afraid” shows that this class have a fear of sacrificial death, being all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:15). They fear what others might think or do

with regard to activity in the Lord's service.

Verse 24: "Reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed." The other servants started out acknowledging that their Lord had given them the talents and then told what they had done with the talents. However, the one-talent servant was immediately on the defensive—as if he were attacking the Lord: "Because you are such and such a way, I had to do what I did." He knew he had not faithfully used the talent, so he was trying to defend himself. The multi-talent servants in the parable recognized the responsibility of stewardship—that they were to use what they had—whereas the one-talent servant just wanted to keep his talent "safe."

At first, we might think that not many would have this perspective of the Lord being a hard man, reaping where he has not sown, etc., but actually *all* of the servants in the parable would have known this. When we consecrate, we know the purpose of that consecration; that is, we know right from the beginning that we must develop Christlikeness, be a steward over the Lord's goods, and so forth, *regardless of how many or few our talents are*. In other words, all know the purpose initially; the difference is that some consider the talents a *privilege* and use them, whereas others *hold back*. The talents are distributed according to each man's ability, and they are to be used, not wasted. All who consecrate know that Jesus is their Master and that theoretically they have no will of their own. All know this initially, but in practice, as time goes on, attitudes may change until the day of reckoning. At that time, fright becomes a factor with those who have been careless or negligent regarding their covenants of sacrifice. They become defensive, trying to justify a lack of use earlier.

Verses 28 and 29: Notice that the one talent of the unfaithful servant was given to the ten-talent person (to the servant who had doubled five talents and not to the servant who started with two talents). "To him who has used *much, more will be given*" is the principle. Why give the talent to the servant with the most talents already? All things being equal, the Christian with the most talents who *faithfully uses them* will receive the greater reward because the greater the number of talents, the greater the degree of responsibility—and the harder it is to use them all faithfully. In regard to Kingdom honors, "one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41). This Scripture pertains to the reward later, not to the present life. The one who originally had five talents gained another five (for a total of ten) down here. *Later*, after the reward, he was given another talent.

Being faithful is more difficult for an individual who has a lot of money or a position of power, among other talents, when he consecrates. That is because his mind can get distracted in more directions. However, if he faithfully uses all of his talents, he merits a greater reward than the one- or two-talent person. For this reason, the seven messengers to the Church get special rewards, and of course the apostles too.

Verse 14: "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods [talents]." The *Lord* gives us our talents to start with, so everything belongs to him. As the hymn goes, "All I have and all I hope for [are not my own but], thine for all eternity."

Not my own, my time, my talent,
Freely all to Christ I bring,
To be used in joyful service
For the glory of my King.

We should be good stewards, for what we have belongs to the Lord. He gives it back to us to be used in his service as there is opportunity.

Parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27)

Luke 19:11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

Luke 19:12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Luke 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

Luke 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

There is a relationship between the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Pounds that is usually not considered. Since both of these parables were given near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry (Luke 19:28; Matt. 26:1,2), these themes were on his mind, and we should pay attention to them. On several occasions, the subject was fragmented, but finally, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave a long discourse (Matthew 24 and 25).

What is *common* to both parables?

1. Both show the responsibility of *increasing* and *using*.
2. Both deal with amounts of money (representing other things, of course).
3. Jesus went away and returns.

What is the *difference* between the two parables? In the Parable of the Pounds, Jesus gave *one* pound to each of ten servants. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus gave *five* talents, *two* talents, and *one* talent, respectively, to three servants; that is, each received an amount *according to his ability*. This difference in the two parables indicates a different lesson despite other similarities.

Verse 13: "Occupy till I come" signifies "Take over until I return." Jesus left at the beginning of the Gospel Age and returns at the end.

Verse 14: The nobleman's "citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." As a whole, the Jewish nation rejected Jesus at the First Advent. The "citizens" would be those of the nation who *hated* Jesus, his message, and everything he stood for, in contradistinction to the remainder of the people who had lesser knowledge and thus only hearsay prejudice.

Conversely, those in the parable who obtain the pound agree to have the nobleman reign over them. This willingness shows that with the consecrated, the reign of Christ starts *at the moment of each individual's dedication*. The reign of Christ in the believer's heart begins when he consecrates—not in 1874 but at any time down through the Gospel Age. (This "reign" over the Church must not be confused with Jesus' *future* reign over the world.)

Luke 19:15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Luke 19:16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

Luke 19:17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

Luke 19:18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

Luke 19:19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

Luke 19:20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

Luke 19:21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

Luke 19:22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

Luke 19:23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

Luke 19:24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

Luke 19:25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

Luke 19:26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

Luke 19:27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

The time will come when the nobleman rewards or punishes according to increase or lack thereof. The first servant gained *ten* pounds with his pound—and his reward was *proportionate* according to *how much he had gained*. In other words, one who consecrates with one pound and increases it to ten pounds gets *ten times* more glory and honor in the sense of a greater stewardship. He gets ten cities to rule over.

Q: The usual definition of the pound is that it represents justification, but in what manner is *justification* increased from one to ten?

A: That question will be treated later.

The Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Pounds are the *same* subject viewed from *two* standpoints. Paul increased both the pounds and the talents—the *inward* and the *outward* aspects of Christian development—respectively. With regard to the pounds, knowledge gained must be used. “Trading” is involved or getting “usury” (interest).

In reading the Parable of the Talents, some evangelists think that getting others to accept an “altar call” is using the gospel committed to them and hence is increasing talents. There is a measure of truth in this thought, but evangelists could have such success and still not be acceptable in the Lord’s sight as part of the Little Flock based on other factors. Many forms of service are available: visiting the sick, letter writing, prayer, exhortation, encouragement, etc. The point is to *get involved*, governed of course by the Word of God.

As for the pounds, one can gain the fruits of the Spirit, but each fruit can have a greater increase. For example, one who has faith can get *more* and *more* faith. The same is true of hope

and patience. The Christian life *always* has room for improvement. Improvement is an increase, and the reward is proportionate. The point is that character development is *active* in some way. For instance, “faith *without* works is dead” (James 2:20). God is pleased to see faith *with* works. Similarly, knowledge should be *applied*, and character development should be *used*.

Notice that in the Parable of the Pounds, the reward for the Little Flock is *cities*, not nations (see Luke 19:17,19). The apostles had a larger jurisdiction, a regional one, for they laid down advice for all. In the Kingdom, their jurisdiction, which will be according to character traits, is described as sitting on 12 thrones. The *whole world* will be divided into 12 layers of apostolic authority. Humanity will also be divided into 12 categories based on character or personality traits. The Church class, and especially the apostles, will have other types of recognition as well—a variety of duties. The Church, under Christ, will have executive, legislative, and judicial authority in the Kingdom. The promise is that the Church will be prophets, kings, priests, and judges. Therefore, the promise that the 12 apostles will sit on 12 thrones embraces more than just 12 personality traits—it includes powers in other directions as well. Church and State (civil and religious powers) will be combined in the Kingdom.

In both parables, the main thrust or lesson is on the *one-talent* and the *one-pound* person. All the other lessons and observations are in order, but the *climax* of each parable is what happens when the Master comes to the servant who *did not increase* the one talent or the one pound. Both are criticized. The one-talent servant buried his talent in the earth, meaning he used his capability in *worldly pursuits*. The one-pound servant laid up his pound in a napkin, meaning he made *no progress*. He was justified, lived honestly, was polite, attended meetings, etc., but an examination of his life showed no outgoing benefit to others. Some, God forbid, who profess consecration later go back into the world (and stay there) or commit gross immoral sins (and remain in them). The excuse is often given that his or her consecration was never accepted, but we have no right to make such an excuse, for the individual may well be in this one-pound category. The individual professed consecration earlier, and the consecration (immersion) was witnessed. Just because there is no progress does not mean we can excuse the individual by saying the consecration was not accepted.

God would never have called us unless we were capable, *by His grace*, of making our calling and election sure. With His help, *we can make it*. If we do not measure up, we will lose the positions we would have had in the Kingdom, and others who do measure up will fill those positions.

The Parable of the Pounds, then, is talking about the one-pound person who is *unfaithful*. Nadab and Abihu represent two *Second Death* classes. Nadab pictures the class who are conspicuously cantankerous, rebellious, critical, etc., whereas those of the Abihu class are not conspicuous. It is *not apparent* they are of the Second Death class. They might have nice, sweet personalities and seem to have the love of the Father. They appear to have the spirit of love and kindness, but from God’s standpoint, they do not pay attention to His instructions. They are disobedient—not heeding the commandments of Jesus. If gentleness and kindness were all that is required, we would not need a whole Bible. Christianity is more than just a polite, kind veneer. Obedience is essential, yet those of the Abihu class, because of their pleasant personalities, are not recognized by brethren in the present life as going into Second Death.

Galatians 4:19 shows that a minimum standard is required to get life: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again *until Christ be formed in you*.” The Apostle Paul was very concerned and desirous that each of the consecrated would develop to this degree and thus get life. Hence the one-pound person is in danger of not attaining this minimum standard.

Once one consecrates, he must be developed up to the point where it can be said that Christ is formed in him. That is the *minimum level* of character development required to get life. Paul

wanted the brethren to keep maturing until they got to that point, which is called the “quickenings.” The quickening stage is the point in pregnancy where the fetus begins to move. At this stage in pregnancy, a *greater potential* for life can be seen.

Once the minimum standard is reached for one to be of the Little Flock, he could die right away and get his reward. But sometimes one’s present life here on earth is prolonged to give that individual an opportunity for even *more* fullness of development—and consequently an even fuller reward. No doubt Paul reached the mark of perfect love quite early in his life—and he had the desire to go beyond the veil—but his delay in doing so was of benefit to the Church as a whole. As a result of his stewardship, he is proportionately blessed.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 shows there is a danger at the end of the age of *not loving the truth* and thus going into Second Death. “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; *because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*”

Compare the following two Scriptures. “I feared thee, because [I know] *thou art an austere [hard] man*” (Luke 19:21). “Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that *thou art an hard man*, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed” (Matt. 25:24). At the time of consecration, *all* know this. The responsibility is comprehended in the beginning. Marriage is an illustration. At the time of marriage, each party says, “I do,” and that “I do” applies to sickness, poverty, etc.—*all subsequent circumstances*. We get involved in marriage without knowing what it will lead to as the years go by. The same is true of consecration. We give our hearts to the Lord but do not know ahead of time what our experiences will be. The consecration (and marriage) step is taken by *faith*. And the commitment is *binding*.

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

The expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” occurs several times in Scripture. In each case, the meaning is determined by context. We will now consider various usages.

1. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus is addressing his disciples, the spiritual class. Three categories are mentioned: (1) prophesying, (2) casting out devils, and (3) doing many wonderful works. Evidently, those speaking felt they were part of the Kingdom of heaven class, and they expressed *surprise* when they were shut out. However, Jesus never recognized them as having reached the *plateau of development* necessary for attaining the Little Flock. (Strictly speaking, the Kingdom of heaven is just the Little Flock.)

Notice that “iniquity” is mentioned: “Depart from me, ye that work *iniquity.*” The Pastor furnished the key for understanding this expression when he spoke about believers who subsequently consecrate. Before consecration, they were estranged from the Lord through “wicked works” even though, at heart, they were not wicked. “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Col. 1:21). In other words, the estrangement ceases at the time of consecration. The *Diaglott* calls “wickedness” lawlessness. Hence Jesus does not recognize as part of the Little Flock those who work “lawlessness.” A Christian may *think* he is doing God’s will but not be paying strict attention to the instructions in the Bible. He assumes he is doing the Father’s will, whereas, in fact, he is not obeying as he should. Consequently, he loses the prize of the high calling because he does not attain the necessary plateau of development.

Matthew 7:21-23 can also have a loose application to the tare class. Either way Second Death is not indicated. The lesson is the loss of a chief blessing because of working lawlessness instead of working according to the express wishes of the Master, as recorded in the Word.

2. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:24-29). This parable brings us down to the shutting of the door (a reminder of the Ten Virgins Parable). The point is to strive to enter in the strait gate *before the door is shut*.

Notice that the Master *is already here*—he rises up from a chair, as it were. He is not coming from a long journey but is already present. The fact that the Master rises up and closes the door shows this event takes place during the *parousia* of our Lord, that is, during the days in which we are living. This time setting is emphasized in another way too. When the Master closes the door, those who are shut out begin to say, “We have eaten and drunk in thy presence [*parousia*]”; that is, they ate and drank *spiritual refreshment* during the time of Jesus’ *parousia*. Moreover, “thou hast taught in our streets”; that is, Jesus gave them instruction. This parable has a strong application at the *end* of the age.

Jesus says to *strive* to enter the gate before the door is shut. In other words, he is stressing (1) effort and (2) opportunity. It takes *effort* to enter the gate while the door is still open, and the entering must occur while the *opportunity* still exists. Many will seek to enter the strait gate but not be able to because they will find the door has already been shut—and locked.

In regard to the plea “Lord, Lord, open unto us,” the same address “Lord, Lord” is used in Matthew 7:21. And in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the foolish say, “Lord, Lord, open to us” (Matt. 25:11). Jesus would have given this parable with *animation*, *mimicking* those shut out. Such dramatization riveted these sayings on the apostles’ minds so that they could record them.

Luke 13:24-29 is similar to Matthew 7:21-23 in that both apply to the Great Company and, incidentally, to the tares. Again, no Second Death class is shown. This subject was introduced by one right in Jesus’ company, by one sympathetic to and very interested in the topic, and not by a scribe or Pharisee (Luke 13:23).

The “workers of iniquity [lawlessness]” are not evil. The problem is that they do what *they* think the Lord’s will is without strictly paying attention. The motive is proper, but they are *foolish virgins*. For example, they have *their own idea* of what God’s love is, but the *Scriptural* idea is necessary.

The Great Company (and the tares) will experience “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” i.e., *extreme disappointment*. They will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God and themselves *thrust out*. In the final analysis, the Ancient Worthies will have a higher reward than the Great Company, even though the Great Company has a greater opportunity in the Gospel Age. The “Kingdom of heaven” is the Little Flock, and the “Kingdom on earth” will be represented in the Ancient Worthies. The Great Company will be messengers, or go-betweens, for the Little Flock and the Ancient Worthies.

The parable is made intimate: “*Ye shall see.*” In other words, the foolish virgins will be alive and on hand when they realize they have lost the crown and been thrust out.

Q: Matthew 8:10-12 mentions the “kingdom of *heaven*” in relationship to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. How would we understand the term in this context? “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the *kingdom of heaven*. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

A: When the Kingdom of God or heaven is established on earth, when God’s will is starting to be done down here, the Ancient Worthies will be involved *with* the Kingdom of heaven but not be *in* it. They will be the legal earthly representatives. The Pastor’s writings enable us to understand the vocabulary God is using.

Luke 13:28,29 and Matthew 7:21-23 are closely related. Both speak primarily of the Great Company class and secondarily of the scribes and Pharisees, a chaff or *tare* class. Both classes will be thrust out of the Kingdom. Some of the “tares” are the scribes and Pharisees of *our* day plus nominal believers. The Second Death class is not included here.

Matthew 8:10-12 is addressed to the centurion whose servant was subsequently healed. No Second Death class is involved here either. The “children of the kingdom,” who were to be “cast out into outer darkness” and experience “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” were the Jews who did not accept Jesus at his First Advent. Jesus was referring to the trouble that came on them in AD 69-70, the trouble regarding the downfall of their priesthood when the Temple fell and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. Subsequently the Jews could not even trace their priesthood. They did not know who the descendants of Aaron were because families were separated in the Diaspora: husbands from wives, parents from children, etc. If the Orthodox Jews of our day knew who constituted the priesthood, their temperament is such that they would have stormed Dome of the Rock years ago regardless of the consequences. However, because of the uncertainty about the priesthood, a sign near the Temple Mount states, “No Jew is allowed in here.” If a Jew entered and was not of the priesthood, he would be polluting the Temple area. However, the Jews in the Kingdom, especially the scribes and the Pharisees, will realize when they come back from the grave that they are not even part of the arrangement on the earthly plane because they did not really obey God’s will according to the instructions in His Word. Otherwise, they would be Ancient Worthies.

The Great Company will get a conscious feeling of being rejected. Many who are very confident they will make their calling and election sure speak derogatorily of other consecrated brethren. When, in the Kingdom, these confident ones find they are not of the Little Flock, they will be greatly disappointed. The initial shock will be great. Not only will this be true of the ones who are still here when it becomes apparent that the door has been shut, but it is also true of those who have already died. When they went into death, they expected to be of the Little Flock, but they will discover otherwise. Some of the consecrated speak very strongly, thinking they are faithful and others are beneath them, but they will find the *reverse* is true. That will be a very severe experience—finding out that they are not involved except as “messenger boys,” and that the Ancient Worthies and those who made the Little Flock are the leaders and rulers on earth or in heaven. At the end of the Kingdom, the Ancient Worthies will get spirit nature *far above* the Great Company. During the Kingdom, the Ancient Worthies will be *temporarily* restricted until they finish the task of leading many to righteousness. Ultimately they will shine as the stars while the Church shines as the sun (Dan. 12:3). The disappointment of the Great Company will be something like flunking an exam and everyone who did pass knowing about it. Momentarily it will be a discouraging experience.

Q: In Matthew 8:12, what does the term “outer darkness” mean?

A: The “children of the kingdom,” the ones to whom the promises were made, were the Jewish people. The scribes and Pharisees, being in leadership positions, occupied “Moses’ seat” (Matt. 23:2). They never believed that God’s Temple would be completely destroyed and that they would be taken into foreign nations. Hence they were in “outer darkness” (confusion) as to the reason for the events. Troubled and perplexed, they did not understand what was happening. The Scriptures tell us they were cast off from favor and why, when they would be recovered as a people, etc., but the Jews do not understand because they do not accept the New Testament. Therefore, they are in “outer darkness” in regard to what the Lord is doing in this age. “Outer darkness” is intense trouble and confusion.

3. A portion of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares reads, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:41,42). Of the element being gathered out, it is possible that two classes are involved: (1) “all things [seducers—*Diaglott*] that offend,” and (2) “them which do iniquity [those working lawlessness—*Diaglott*].”

Notice that with other parables interspersed, this is a delayed explanation of the parable given in verses 24-30. “The Son of man ... shall cast *them* [‘all things that offend’ and ‘them which do iniquity’] into a furnace of fire.” As a consequence, “there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” It has already been observed that the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” does not necessarily apply to those who are the most offensive or the most culpable of indignation, but that different classes can be involved with this experience. With some, the phrase means Second Death. With others, it just means sharing a bitter experience. Verse 43 says, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” the “righteous” being the Little Flock. This parable is usually generalized, which is important, but based upon the general application, we can now glean more details regarding the destinies of the classes who are described. We know that the tares are involved and that they will be burned (their professions will be destroyed). However, the Great Company will also be burned—not their foundation but the wood, hay, or stubble *structure* that is built upon that foundation—yet they will be saved as individuals (1 Cor. 3:12-15). The foundation is solid, but the superstructure, or house, above the foundation will be burned if it is not built of durable metals: gold, silver, or precious stones.

Thus three classes are referred to in verses 41-43:

1. Little Flock, the “righteous” who shine as the sun, the mature wheat
2. Great Company, those who do lawlessness, the unripe wheat
3. Tares, “all things that offend,” the imitation wheat

The tares (imitation wheat) and the Great Company (unripe wheat), the foolish virgins who go to the marketplace of experience, will both share in the trouble. The immature wheat will be plucked out of the fire, their souls being saved (Jude 23).

The point is that the expression “wailing and gnashing of teeth” in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares does not represent Second Death. That has been true in each case so far (Matt. 7:21-23; 8:10-12; 13:41,42; Luke 13:24-29). Nevertheless, the expression does indicate a destruction of something. The false profession of the tares will be destroyed. They will no longer claim to be Christians but will have opportunities in the Kingdom to get life—even though they will be ashamed and have certain sorrow and anguish.

4. Next to be considered is the Parable of the Dragnet: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they

drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:47-50). Both the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and the Parable of the Dragnet take place at the end of the age. After the net was full, it was drawn to shore, and a sorting or severing work began. Notice that when the net was cast into the sea, it gathered fish “of every kind.” In this mixed multitude of fish that were drawn to shore, there was a weeding-out process, the primary purpose being to determine the “just,” that is, those who meet with divine approval. In this case, the “just” apply to the Great Company (the immature wheat), as well as to the Little Flock (the mature wheat). The tares come under the term “wicked.” However, if the term “just” can be enlarged, then perhaps the term “wicked” can also be expanded to include the Second Death class, in addition to the tares.

“Wailing and gnashing of teeth” signifies *bitter*, extreme disappointment and chagrin—also anger in certain instances. To “gnash” means to grind the teeth, which indicates a strong emotion of sorrow, pain, or anger. For example, the Holy Remnant (especially) will “wail” when they find out that Jesus, a *Jew* like them, was their Redeemer (Rev. 1:7). *Great sorrow* is implied. In some instances, a little fear will be mixed in with the “wailing” sorrow.

The tare element profess to be Christians but are not. The “fire” will be a humiliating experience that destroys their profession, and the humiliation will be in proportion to their former boasting.

5. A portion of the Parable of the Wedding Garment reads as follows: “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:10-14).

Notice that these parables have a certain similarity. The wheat and the tares grow together until the *end* of the age, and then comes a separation. The dragnet mixture is sorted at the *end* of the age. Now a wedding garment inspection takes place in regard to the marriage at the *end* of the age (Matt. 22:10).

Now notice the specific wording in this parable: “Bind him [the one without a wedding garment] hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The *additional* detail “bind him hand and foot” indicates Second Death. Moreover, the parable does not specify whether the individual came in wearing a wedding garment and later removed it, or whether he never had on a wedding garment to begin with. Hence *both* classes are included. The one who never had on a wedding garment would be *more* than just a tare, for he actually thought he was eligible for the wedding and, therefore, was surprised at being questioned. The individual (picturing a class at the end of the age) was a wolf masquerading in sheep’s clothing, pretending to be a sheep.

“And he was speechless.” The man without the wedding garment was stunned because of *sudden exposure*. He was with the other guests who were properly attired when he was suddenly confronted. Other Scriptures show that this man represents a class who think and act as though they are fully consecrated, and thus participate in the fullest sense, yet have never made a consecration to the Lord.

A mixed group attended the meetings even in the Apostle Paul’s day. Those who attended

consisted of either those already consecrated or those considering consecration. However, that aspect is not what the parable is discussing. Jude shows that the class without the wedding garment may even be *teachers* in the Church. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

The designation "friend" reminds us of Judas, who was *not* Spirit-begotten yet merited Second Death. It is possible to have the Holy Spirit in *another* sense, as Judas did; that is, he had *knowledge* that Jesus is the Redeemer. Before Pentecost, the apostles did not have the robe of Christ's righteousness. Jesus had to die first as a sin offering—he had to furnish the sacrifice that would make them acceptable to God. Based on his sin offering, others can have a standing before God. Death, resurrection, ascension, and presentation to the Father all had to take place before the robe of Christ's righteousness was given to the believers. Therefore, Judas never had the robe, yet he clearly went into Second Death.

Clues that the Parable of the Wedding Garment signifies Second Death for the one without the garment are as follows:

1. Like Judas, he is called "Friend."
2. He has no wedding garment.
3. He is bound hand and foot.
4. He is cast into outer darkness.
5. Weeping and gnashing of teeth follow.

There is *no hope* for this class. Remember, Judas sorrowed but did not properly repent. Knowing he was guilty of the betrayal of a just man, he tried to return the money he had gotten for the betrayal, but the chief priests and elders would not divide the money between themselves because it was contaminated. It is interesting that a class actually involved in Jesus' death felt that Judas was more culpable than they because he had sold his own Master. Because they did not want to be contaminated with the "blood money," the chief priests and elders used it to buy a cemetery for the dead (Matt. 27:3-8).

Judas did sorrow but not in the right way. Thus there are different kinds of sorrow. Politicians sorrow when they lose an election because of some mistake they made, but that is not repentance. In *contrition*, Judas should have run to Jesus wherever the Master was and begged for forgiveness. Instead he went to the scribes and Pharisees with the money. On the other hand, Peter wept bitterly and was forgiven because he had a *godly* sorrow.

Let us consider the statement "many are called, but few are chosen." The Second Death class not only are not "chosen" but are out of the picture altogether in the final analysis. Matthew 6:23 states, "If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!" This type of "darkness" is *more* than just going into the world—it is *full* darkness. The same thought is expressed in Matthew 5:13, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour [that is, becomes saltless], wherewith shall it [ever] be salted [again]? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." It cannot be renewed. Hence this class lose their tang, their enthusiasm for truth, etc., and are used for base purposes (they are "trodden under foot of men"). Salt that had lost its flavor was used in the Temple services to absorb the blood from the animal sacrifices. The salt was cast on the ground and thus was "trodden under foot."

Q: Did Judge Rutherford lose his robe because of his actions regarding the Watch Tower takeover?

A: He technically removed the robe from the standpoint of espousing a doctrine that, in effect, denied the Ransom. In his writings, he removed the robe. He taught that character building was passé, that instead one was a "character." Imagine! Many heard or read such statements in

his presence yet did not get right up and leave him entirely. Thousands stayed in the Society.

As already stated, “gnashing” the teeth means to grind the teeth. The normal use of the word implies pain and/or anger, but *what kind* of sorrow is indicated? An emotional trauma is one example. In *bitter* disappointment, one is tense and the teeth automatically clench together. This generalized term will mean somewhat different things to different classes along the lines of sorrow or anger. The Great Company will certainly experience bitter disappointment. The world will be angry.

6. “The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:50,51). This strong statement of punishment sounds like Second Death, for being “cut asunder” would mean to be cut off from *all* favor.

Criticism can be either *constructive* or *destructive*. We should analyze the words and deeds of others as well as our own to see whether they are injurious to the profession of faith we are following. To call attention to something we see that is injurious to the truth or the brethren with the result that certain brethren are offended would not constitute smiting fellow servants. We should each examine our own heart to see why we do what we do—we should search out the causal factors. To call attention to a truly wrong action or deed is not smiting brethren.

What happened in the Society is that the leadership appointed to Second Death those who differed with them. When some found fault with Judge Rutherford’s character, he reasoned that we are still in the flesh and that we do not build a character but we *are* a character. His advice became so foolish that many left. To put fear in those who remained but were considering leaving, he appointed to Second Death the class that had criticized him. Hence some began to doubt their own thinking and decided the judge’s reasoning was more capable. In essence, then, many were kept in the Society out of fear. There is no question that he smote those who differed with him and told those still in the Society not to have any fellowship with the ones who had left. Any who disobeyed were reprimanded. Therefore, Rutherford did a judging work, and any who were sympathetic to him and followed the same course of action were also guilty of smiting brethren in a very real sense.

In a Society meeting, at least in the past, those present were expected to read from the magazine and to *stick* to the lesson. *All* questions and answers had to be according to that magazine, and any other course was considered dangerous. Unfortunately, that attitude has somewhat crept over into *Volume* studies—that everything has to be according to the *Volumes*. Printed questions and answers were and are used, but if we analyze the questions, we see that the wording practically tells us the answers—right out of the paragraph. In the past, many meetings were led that way. The questions were often answered with just a “yes” or a “no,” and there was no discussion. The question could just be turned around and read as a statement for the answer. Those who so answered were considered diligent students, very much in harmony with present truth. However, the purpose of *Volume* studies should be to exercise the mind on the subject under discussion from all angles. Our pure minds should be stirred up to find a plausible and truthful answer.

Many in the Society became very confident about their position and good standing with God because they sold so many books. Wall charts recorded the number of books sold by each individual, and one’s prominence or elevation in the movement was dependent upon book sales, not on character development. Leaders and teachers who were in this attitude of mind then took liberties in their personal lives, yet they died without a “weeping and gnashing” of teeth. Hence the expression would not apply to them, but many who sat under their leadership and saw, as time went on, what was happening did weep and gnash their teeth over being led

astray. They were angry with themselves, bitterly disappointed, and felt they had wasted years of their life listening to flawed information. Finally they did leave.

Thus the “evil servant” leadership went into Second Death, but those sitting under the leadership eventually experienced weeping and gnashing of teeth if they were rightly exercised. In other words, those who go into Second Death do not all, like Judas, weep and commit suicide. Many who die with confidence will not get a resurrection. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Some who go into Second Death are self-deceived. The Nadab and Abihu picture shows *two* Second Death classes.

Jesus frequently used the expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Each time it has to be analyzed in context in order to pinpoint the meaning.

Let us consider in more depth Matthew 24:50, “The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.” What is the application? Earlier in the chapter, the “coming” refers to the *parousia*, and later it pertains to the rapture, the call to the wedding or the closing of the door. But still another “coming” is when one is visited with death. At some point in a person’s life, he is cut off in death and then merits the judgment of his prior actions. Judge Rutherford changed the date of the *parousia* to 1925 by altering the Jubilee cycles, but he lived through that date. During that time, a *huge* billboard erected near Yankee Stadium to advertise a public meeting said, “Millions now living will never die.” The leadership of the Jehovah’s Witnesses thought that in 1925, the Ancient Worthies would be resurrected, so a house was built in California to receive some of them, but 1925 came and went without the expected event. Thus the “coming” of verse 50 is related to the “cutting asunder” of Judge Rutherford, i.e., to his death. He had false expectations, so when the judgment came, it was in regard to cutting him off in Second Death.

The following *Reprint* excerpts pertain to the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins:

Reprint No. 5522 on August 15, 1914 (just prior to World War I). “This parable shows ... that in the *end* of the age a separation, or division, will take place in the *true* church of Christ, regardless of what may be the attitude of the world or of the nominal church.”

Reprint No. 4692 on October 1, 1910. “One of the special lessons of the parable is to show that amongst the pure, the wise, the consecrated people of God, there are two classes. For a time these will be all together—unseparated. But in the fulfilling of this parable, certain circumstances and conditions and truths will develop and separate these two classes of saints, virgins.”

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins was not fulfilled when the Society split because both classes left. For the most part, those who stayed in the Society gave up the spiritual calling. Therefore, the fulfillment of this parable is *yet future*. Among the *truly consecrated*, a division will take place. Elijah was separated from Elisha, and both were aware of the separation when it occurred. Hence *both classes will know* in the antitype.

Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

Matt. 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

The setting of this parable is when The Christ is complete and glorified and the Kingdom has been inaugurated. We should keep in mind that the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats is still a continuation of “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy,” which embraces Matthew 24 and 25.

“All the holy angels” are the risen saints, the 144,000, the glorified Church class. Similar Scriptures are:

1. 2 Thessalonians 1:7—“When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his *mighty angels*.”
2. Jude 14,15—“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his *saints*, To execute judgment upon all.”
3. Mark 8:38—“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the *holy angels*.”

Verse 31 implies the reign will begin at that time. “Then [at that time] shall he sit upon the *throne* of his glory” and exercise the prerogatives of his office.

Matt. 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

A gathering work is being described. “And before him shall be gathered all nations [*peoples*].” The separating work is to be accomplished *gradually*. A shepherd separates the sheep from the goats when he is ready to move to another place.

Matt. 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

The sheep are separated to the *right* hand of *favor*. The goats are separated to the *left* hand of *disfavor*. Hard-and-fast, simplistic definitions cannot be given throughout Scripture. Here the “goats” are unfavorable, whereas in the Tabernacle arrangement, the Lord’s goat and the scapegoat represent classes dedicated to the Lord. Hence we must study the *context*.

Matt. 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

The titles “King” and “Son of man” both refer to Jesus, and the term “King” suggests his *reign*. The chief lesson of this parable is that in the Kingdom Age there will be a dividing work between those who inherit life and those who go into Second Death.

This verse will be fulfilled after the final testing of the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom. It harmonizes with Revelation 21:7, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Only those of the world of mankind who pass that final test will be considered *sons* of God. They will enter into the age beyond the Millennium, in which there will be no death.

The Kingdom has been prepared for the sheep “*from* the foundation of the world.” Ephesians 1:4 is proof that this parable refers to the world and not to the Little Flock: “According as he [God] hath chosen us in him [Jesus] *before* the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” The inheritance of the Little Flock was set up *long before* the inheritance for mankind. The term “foundation of the world” refers to Adam’s creation. God designed Adam to be a king, but Adam lost that privilege when he sinned. The privilege will be restored to the sheep class at the end of the Millennium. Psalm 8 shows that God’s purpose is to bring man into harmony with Him.

“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy

glory above the heavens.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

“For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

“All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

“The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”

Despite the text “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16), it is erroneous to say that saving the world (and/or restitution) is God’s highest priority. The high calling has the greater emphasis. The calling is to the sanctification and development of the *Church*, to become members of the *Heavenly Kingdom class* that will eventually bless the earth. Order of priority: Church first, the world second. The “kingdom prepared ... *from* the foundation of the world” is not on the same level as the Kingdom prepared “*before* the foundation of the world.” God’s attention was first on Jesus, then on the Church, and finally on the world of mankind.

Matt. 25:35 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Matt. 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Matt. 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Matt. 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Matt. 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

These verses reveal some of the criteria by which judgment will be made to determine who are sheep and who are goats. In other words, some of the *ordinary* courtesies of life, in one department or another, will be the determining factors for getting life.

Q: Micah 4:4 states that everyone “shall sit ... under his [own] vine and under his [own] fig tree.” Will this occur during or after the Millennium?

A: Consider Isaiah 11:9. Some of these prophecies will be fulfilled *during* the Kingdom, but in

the final analysis, the *ultimate* security cannot be realized until after the judgment work is completed. Only then will death no longer be a threatening factor. However, the preparation for that rest will take place in the Kingdom Age.

Each individual who gets life will be a king in the sense that Adam was. Hence each will have his own domain, as it were, his own “vine and fig tree,” or property. In the ultimate sense, this will occur after the testing of the Little Season at the end of the Millennium.

Verses 35 and 36: The “prison” is not literal but refers to the figurative “prison house” of death. Thus these verses are figurative as well as literal. Those coming back from the grave will literally need food, liquid to drink, clothes, and various types of service and assistance. But there is, in addition, a figurative or spiritual application. Comfort, encouragement, explanations of God’s plan with Jesus as the Mediator, and so forth, will have to be provided to those who are resuscitated. With the Kingdom being a “reconstruction” era, good “neighborliness” will be required. Those who are more established will help those who are less established.

In regard to the prison house of death, the Pastor suggested that those who are living will pray for those not yet resuscitated from the grave. How much consideration a person has for others—how much earnest interest—will help to measure his worthiness or unworthiness for life. An attitude of “hospitality” will be required, an attitude of wanting to *help* others. In the Kingdom, one’s heart condition will be revealed to a certain extent by the deeds rendered to others.

Notice the emphasis on “I” (referring to Jesus). The point is that service rendered to others will be like serving Jesus himself. We have this same principle in the Christian Age. When Jesus appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus, our Lord said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?” In other words, a persecution of Jesus’ followers is equivalent to persecuting Jesus himself. “Inasmuch as you are doing it unto *them*, you are doing it unto *me*” is the thought. The spirit of *togetherness in Christ* will be a characteristic of the Kingdom Age as well as of the Gospel Age. Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:40 illustrate this principle: “He that receiveth you receiveth me.” Recognition of Jesus’ followers is like recognizing or receiving Jesus himself.

As the deeds listed in verses 35 and 36 are performed, their merit will accumulate. In the Gospel Age, we are told to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. Those “treasures” are all the things we do down here of good intent and in harmony with God’s Word. The same concept of “accumulation,” therefore, applies to both ages. The parable indicates that in the Kingdom the accumulation of good deeds will occur in a casual way. The sheep class will simply be rendering assistance and kind deeds—not because of the reward but because doing so is a *genuine* expression of their thinking.

Matt. 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Matt. 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Matt. 25:42 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

Matt. 25:43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Matt. 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Matt. 25:45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Matt. 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Keep in mind that this is a *parable*. The parable shows both classes (sheep and goats) inquiring as to when they did or did not do the deeds that qualified them for everlasting life or Second Death, respectively. No doubt those who get life will later ask and consider how they inherited everlasting life. In the illimitable future, it would be only natural for them to look back and reflect many times. However, those who go into Second Death will not have an opportunity in future ages to so reflect, for they will be nonexistent, blotted out of existence.

Each one who goes into oblivion will not be given a personal reprimand and made cognizant of the reasons for his Second Death destiny. Remember, a parable is not an exact statement of all facts. However, a parable *always* has a central theme, a very important lesson. In this parable, the lesson consists of what determines the inheritance of life and what determines the inheritance of death. In the Kingdom, the rendering from the *heart* of kind, ordinary deeds and courtesies will be the determining factor for a favorable judgment.

Q: Doesn't the parable indicate some *surprise* on the part of both classes in regard to their judgments? It seems as if the sheep and the goats toward the *end* of the Millennium will not be aware of where one another stands with the Lord (just as we are not to judge now who are Little Flock and who are Great Company). The goat class will be rendering *outward* obedience and appear to be sheep until the test in the Little Season exposes them. Moreover, wouldn't the goat class be *self-deceived*? They would think they were on the road to getting life.

A: Yes, to a large extent, the goat class will be unaware of their destiny. However, a more *ostensible* revealing of a goat nature will occur with those who do not survive to the end of the Millennium; that is, with those who are cut off almost immediately for absolute refusal to obey and with those who are cut off after 100 years for failing to make sufficient progress. At the *end* of the Millennium, the goat class, who are described as numerous (like the "sand of the sea"—Rev. 20:8), will be destroyed instantly, just as fire came down from heaven and destroyed Nadab and Abihu, or just as the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and Dathan and Abiram and their families (Rev. 20:9). Thus, at the end of the Millennium, there will not be time for the goat class to think out their judgment—they will just experience it, period! When the fire comes down, the destruction will be instantaneous with no time for a review of one's life and misdeeds. Therefore, the parable cannot have a literal interpretation along these lines as regards the great majority of those who will go into Second Death, this being at the *end* of the Millennium. Without question the judgment described will especially take place at that time. The *principles* will be revealed, but not the particulars, regarding all who lose life.

Consider the person who will be given a 100 years' trial but does not make good under those circumstances. The reasons may be revealed to such individuals. Since the 100-year trials will have different starting and ending points depending on when each person comes forth from the grave, they will be ending *throughout* the Millennial Kingdom, and a consciousness or awareness of having done wrong might take place when such individuals are made to de cease.

Q: Many will be alive throughout most of the Kingdom period depending on when they come forth from the grave (and assuming, of course, that they pass their 100-year trial). Thus they will live on to the test of the Little Season. Wouldn't even those of the goat class have had to literally do many of the deeds in verses 35 and 36 in order to survive that long? Would the thought be that they will do these deeds but that their hearts will not be in them? They will be

doing these deeds only for the sake of expediency.

A: Yes, the goat class will render outward perfunctory obedience in order to live until the Little Season.

In the Kingdom Age, three categories will go into Second Death:

1. Those who *refuse* to listen to the voice of “that prophet” (Acts 3:23). Being that hardened and incorrigible, they will be summarily cut off.
2. Some will be cut off after a 100-year trial for not making sufficient progress.
3. The rest will be cut off at the end of the Millennium when the testing of the Little Season exposes them as pretenders, hypocrites.

Although Hebrews 6:10 applies to the Gospel Age, it brings out the principle stated in verse 40 of the parable. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” Things should be done on behalf of others, not just for self.

Summary Thoughts on Matthew 24 and 25

The comprehensiveness of “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy” is shown by the following points:

1. Jesus gave the signs of the end of the age as regards the *Church*.
2. He gave the signs of the end of the age as regards the *world*.
3. He gave clues as regards two of the three destinies of the consecrated:
 - a. Little Flock (Parable of the Ten Virgins and Parable of the Talents)
 - b. Great Company (Parable of the Ten Virgins and Parable of the Talents)
4. He gave clues as regards the two destinies of the world of mankind in the Kingdom, namely, everlasting life and Second Death (Parable of the Sheep and the Goats)

Matthew 24 and 25 embrace a time period from Jesus’ day to the end of the Kingdom. When the apostles asked three simple questions—What shall be the sign of thy presence, what shall be the sign of the end of the age, and when shall these things be (the temple stones being thrown down)?—Jesus responded with a *tremendous* sermon. He answered their questions—and *much more!* He explained the “sign of the Son of man” in two ways: (1) The world will be made aware of his presence through *visual* demonstrations of *divine* power. When Jesus comes in *power and great glory*, the world will know. (2) But the Church knows of his presence earlier. To them it is a *secret* presence—an invisible, secret, thieflike presence where he comes for a period of time to get his crown jewels.

Matt. 26:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

Matt. 26:2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Verses 1 and 2 are valuable because they tell that Jesus gave his great prophecy, his sermon on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24 and 25), two days before the Feast of Passover, very near the close of his earthly ministry.

Matt. 26:3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

Matt. 26:4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.

Matt. 26:5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

The chief priests, scribes, and elders assembled at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, to consult on how they might murder Jesus. Today many try to say that the scribes and Pharisees were not responsible for Jesus' death. These statements, which appear in worldly journals, try to exempt not only the Jewish people from responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion but sometimes the priesthood too. However, the Bible *contradicts* this reasoning by telling that the scheming took place right in the *high priest's* palace!

People are so willing to be loving, kind, and generous that they will even sacrifice God's Word. This attitude of trying to placate everybody can dangerously interfere with the truth on any subject because it creates an atmosphere that prevents calm, cool investigation.

If the priesthood and the others did not want to kill Jesus *on* the feast day, then they intended to do this *before* the feast day.

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

Matt. 26:7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Matt. 26:8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

Matt. 26:9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

Matt. 26:10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

Matt. 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

Matt. 26:12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Matt. 26:13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Verses 6-13 are an account of a woman anointing Jesus with precious ointment from an alabaster box. Actually, *three* anointings of Jesus are recorded in Scripture, as follows:

1. Luke 7:36-50. A sinful woman anointed Jesus in a Pharisee's house early in the Master's ministry. The woman cried, and when her tears flowed on Jesus' feet, she used her hair to dry his feet and then anointed them with the oil.
2. John 12:1-8. This anointing was done by Spikenard Mary six days before the Passover.
3. Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:1-9. This anointing took place at Simon the leper's house two days before the Passover.

Therefore, Jesus was anointed *twice* during the last week of his ministry, as clarified by the following details:

1. The time element is a factor. One anointing took place *six* days before the Passover; the other, *two* days before.
2. The Matthew and Mark accounts tell of Jesus' *head* being anointed; in John, his *feet* were anointed. The account of Jesus' head is the more important anointing, for if the symbolism is applied to Jesus personally, the anointing of his feet represents the conclusion of his ministry.
3. Both anointings the last week took place in Bethany, one in Simon the leper's house and the other with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in another house.
4. No name is mentioned (just "a woman") in Matthew and Mark, whereas in John, the anointing was done by Mary.

Summary: Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:1-9
 Two days before Passover
 Head anointed
 Simon the leper's house
 "A woman" did the anointing

John 12:1-8
 Six days before Passover
 Feet anointed
 House where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were
 Mary did the anointing

In the Matthew and Mark accounts, the alabaster box of spikenard was full, for the box (the seal) had to be broken (Mark 14:3). Among people of means, an alabaster box was a standard item. The cost of the ointment was 300 pence (Mark 14:5). The quantity of spikenard in John 12 was full as well, because it was "a pound" and it also cost 300 pence. The Parable of the Penny shows that a penny was a day's wage, so the 300 pence was equivalent to a *year's* salary, allowing for weekends and holidays. Ordinarily, the anointing of someone's head or feet would have been considered a waste of money, but not when it was done for Jesus (or even for a prophet).

These two anointings were done the *same* week, and each time the disciples reacted similarly: "To what purpose is this waste? The ointment could have been sold for much and given to the poor." And *both* times Jesus gave the *same* lesson: "Let her alone. She did the anointing for my burial. You have the poor with you always, but me you have not always." Obviously, the lesson was important.

Considering the amount of money involved and the reaction of the disciples, we note also that Judas seemed to be the most disturbed (John 12:4,5). And who was Simon the leper, in whose house the Matthew-Mark anointing took place? He was the father of Judas (John 12:4). We know that Simon had the type of leprosy described in the Old Testament as being all over, yet the victim was *clean* (Lev. 13:12,13). Otherwise, Jesus and the disciples would have been disobeying the Law to enter his house.

What did Jesus mean when he said, "You have the poor always with you"? He was saying, "You can help the poor *anytime*, for they always exist. You have plenty of opportunity to help someone who is poor, but you do not have plenty of opportunity to help me, for I am about to die." Thus there was a big difference—the poor they had always *but not* Jesus. And even if they had taken all of their wealth and given it to the poor, it would be like pouring money down the drain, for there were too many to really help.

And there is another point. Women back there had certain limitations on service. Being more sensitive to this restriction, Mark inserted a detail that was omitted by Matthew: "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8). What other way could this woman have shown her

affection for the Master? Some might consider this expenditure wasteful and sheer lunacy, but since she could not go out and preach the gospel like a man, using the spikenard was her way of showing devotion and affection for Jesus.

Jesus said that what this woman did would “be told for a *memorial* of her,” yet *no name* is given. Therefore, it will be even more significant in the resurrection when she is identified. “She hath wrought a *good* work upon me,” said Jesus.

In regard to the two anointings during the last week of Jesus’ earthly life, one on his head and one on his feet, there is no antitype for the anointing of his head, for Jesus is the Head of the Church. However, many Scriptures indicate that there are feet or tarrying members of the body of Christ at this end of the age. Therefore, the anointing of Jesus’ feet could have an antitype—yet future. What would the anointing signify, and what would its nature be?

Jesus’ feet were anointed with an oil in which was suspended a fragrance such as spikenard. The oil represents the Holy Spirit. Hence the anointing of the feet members suggests that they will be given an extra measure of the Holy Spirit in order to speak out at the very end of the age. Matthew 10:19,20 states, “When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” The feet members will be specially strengthened so that they can speak out. Therefore, if we are imprisoned, we are not to fear. If we are summoned before councils or authorities, we should not take thought, for the Lord will speak through us.

Elijah, at the end of his career, was endued with the Holy Spirit in a very powerful way. He wrapped up his mantle and smote the waters of the river Jordan. The mantle of *authority*, which he folded up in an *organized* fashion and used to smite the river, represents the Holy Spirit in the sense of a *message*—a *compact* message. The effect of the message will be to cause a division of the public. Public sentiment will be *divided* when the issue is brought out. In other words, sometimes, as in this case, the Holy Spirit is a message, or *truth*.

This “anointing” of the feet members, which is yet future, will be a special anointing for their *death*, just as Jesus’ anointing was for his *burial* (verse 12). Technically, the feet members are those members of the body of Christ who live right to the end of the age, and not those who have died throughout the Harvest period. The career of the feet members will be terminated *abruptly* and *violently*.

Q: Is the anointing connected to the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and the fact that the wise virgins have extra oil for their lamps?

A: Yes, that could be read into the parable, although the parable covers a longer period of time than just at the very end of the age. The parable leads up to a decisive point where the foolish virgins sense a lack of oil in their flickering lamps and ask the wise for more oil. That development has not yet occurred—where one class feels they have not been diligent enough in obtaining a sufficiency of the Holy Spirit.

The “anointing” will be a *strengthening*, both inwardly and outwardly, both mentally and emotionally, in order to stand up under the events of that time. In the parable, a *deciding point* occurred with the foolish virgins when they realized they did not have enough oil and said, “Our lamps are going out.” This will be fulfilled in the future. At the end, Elijah’s mantle, another symbol of the Holy Spirit, was transferred to Elisha—but *after* Elijah went off the scene by means of the fiery chariot and horses and the whirlwind. Thus Elisha got the mantle—but too late. The foolish virgins did get oil—but too late to be of the Bride class. These types tie in with the anointing of Jesus’ feet during the last week of his earthly ministry, showing that the

feet members will be given some encouragement.

Consider John the Baptist, who was given encouragement when his disciples returned with an answer from Jesus to the question “Are you really the Messiah?” The fact that John had a measure of doubt suggests that the feet members will have a “down” period in which they will ask, “Are the things we have been studying really the truth as we had thought?” John the Baptist—the *very one* who had introduced and identified Jesus as the Messiah and said, “Behold the Lamb of God”—experienced a period of doubt and discouragement when he was later imprisoned, yet Jesus said that of those born of women, there was *none greater* than John the Baptist. The point is that the last members will have a *fluctuating* experience much like John.

And there is the type of Gideon. Even though he had a test earlier to strengthen his faith in regard to the fleece and the water, he needed an *additional* strengthening later through the dream of the barley cake. Gideon went at night to spy on the Midianites and overheard a man telling of his dream. In the odd dream, a huge barley cake came down from the mountain and squashed a Midianite tent. The Midianite fellow who heard the recounting of this dream said, “That is *Gideon*.” Gideon went back happy, encouraged, and confident of victory.

The types and pictures of the end of the age can be harmonized. In doing so, we get a *fullness of detail* that is not grasped if the pictures are examined separately. First, we should study every little *detail* in each separate type. Then, having studied the pictures separately, we should consider the types *together*. An additional blessing will result. Harmonizing the types gives a three-dimensional aspect, as it were.

Matt. 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

Matt. 26:15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Matt. 26:16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Matthew’s account makes the association that after the 300-pence perfume was used to anoint Jesus’ head, Judas Iscariot was activated to go to the chief priests and agree to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. John 12:6 states plainly that Judas was a *thief* and that he held the money bag. In other words, he was disturbed by the potential loss of money from the treasury by the two anointings, so he went to the chief priests and bargained to get money for the betrayal.

Matt. 26:17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

Matt. 26:18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

Matt. 26:19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

The time was drawing still closer to Jesus’ crucifixion, for in the *same* “day” (after 6 p.m.) that he partook of the lamb, he was crucified. Jesus now said, “Go into the city to such a man”—what man? Mark 14:13,14 tells that the disciples were sent to “a man bearing a pitcher of water”; they were to follow him. “And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?” The disciples were shown “a large upper room furnished and prepared”; there they made ready the Passover lamb (Mark 14:15).

First, it was significant to see a *man* bearing a pitcher of water, for this was considered a woman's job. Next, Jesus did *not* say, "If I may partake of the Passover there," but "I *will* keep the Passover at your house with my disciples." The assumption is that the one who had furnished the upper room and made it ready for the Passover had *previously* brought the matter to the Lord in prayer. By *faith*, he went ahead and made the necessary preparations without any guarantee whatsoever that anybody would come. Now, consider—a large room was needed so that 13 adults could recline at a table. The table, utensils, bolster pillows to lie on, etc., were all furnished. For Jesus to then come along and say, "I will eat the Passover at your house" means that the owner was in the right heart condition and desired that very thing. He would have known Jesus and wanted him to come to his house. His prayer was answered. (Note: The man with the pitcher was not the man who owned the house.)

Jesus would have had a telepathic vision, as it were, in advance. In his mind, he could see the house, the large upper room, the man with the pitcher, etc. Mentally seeing the man going out with the pitcher, Jesus knew that the purpose was to get water and that the water would be obtained at the Pool of Siloam. Jesus also knew how long it would take Peter and John to get there and intercept him (Luke 22:8). Regardless of how rational the explanation may be, all of this was *miraculous*. It is startling that Jesus had this capability of communion.

Of course the disciples were unfamiliar with the man whose house had the upper room. Otherwise, Jesus would simply have said, "Go to so-and-so's house." The disciples "made ready the passover." Since the room was already furnished and prepared, this statement meant that the disciples killed the Passover *lamb* and flayed, prepared, and roasted it.

Incidentally, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Jesus had such a telepathic vision, for after all, the Old Testament prophets heard a voice in their ear telling them things. Jesus, the *greatest* Prophet of all, could have had aural as well as visual perception.

Matt. 26:20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

Matt. 26:21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Matt. 26:22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

Matt. 26:23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

When Jesus said that the one who would betray him dipped with him in the dish, the apostles did not realize that he was referring to Judas. They simply thought, "He means *one of us*." Jesus broke the news suddenly, and the disciples did not have time to reason further at that point. Being very sorrowful, they began asking, "Is it I?"

Actually, Jesus meant that the betrayer was sitting at *his* end of the table. There would have been three dipping dishes, so the statement limited the betrayer to one of four apostles. The Master was at the head of the table, and all were reclining on their *left* side so that they could eat with their *right* hand. Hence six apostles were on each side of the table, six facing Jesus and six turned away from him. (Note: In the *Diaglott*, the Greek is translated "reclined" instead of "sat.")

The *most favored* position was occupied by Judas (to Jesus' left) because he was next to and could see Jesus. Peter's reclining position was second in favor, and John's was third. John's back was toward the Master, so he could lean back on Jesus' breast and not interfere with the Master's

speaking.

The point is that Jesus gave Judas *every possible* consideration to change his mind. In principle, then, we can assume that any of the consecrated who go into Second Death were given every opportunity to have their consciences pricked so as to be retrieved out of that condition. Even the “time” factor was significant with Judas. He was *with Jesus* for over three years, but he had a *wrong* heart condition.

John 13:23,24 reads, “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.” Peter beckoned to John to ask Jesus who would betray him; that is, Peter wanted the question asked confidentially, and he could see John. Since John was leaning on Jesus’ breast, he was in a position to ask the question privately.

The thirteenth chapter of John also shows that the foot washing started with John and went around the table. The apostles were numb with shock that Jesus would do this, and they also felt shame because *they* had not washed *Jesus’* feet. When Jesus got to Peter, this *eleventh* apostle blurted out, “You shall never wash my feet!” Judas was next, so Jesus’ reply was aimed at him: “Ye are clean, but not all.” When all of the facts are added together, it can *never* be said that pressure was put on Judas to betray the Master. He was given *every opportunity to repent*.

Some have drawn a *false* conclusion. They think that because Jesus washed Judas’s feet, we have no right to disfellowship or disregard those in our membership who may have the Judas disposition or characteristic. However, it must be noted that *Judas had not yet betrayed* the Master. Judas had made the arrangements and the 30 pieces of silver were promised, but the money had not yet been given. The giving of the money was dependent upon his delivering the “goods” (Jesus). Judas was to betray Jesus at a place convenient for apprehending him without the multitudes interfering or interrupting the goal of killing Jesus.

The giving of the “sop” was different from “dipping” the hand with Jesus in the common dish. The statement in verse 23 narrowed down the betrayer to the four apostles closest to Jesus, but it did not single out Judas. It was the “sop” statement that pointed out Judas: “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop” (John 13:26). A “sop” was a piece of bread soaked in the flavorful meat juices. *Favor* was shown to the one who got the sop. It was convenient to give the sop to Judas, since he was sitting next to the Master on the left.

Although John 13:26 indicates that Jesus made the “sop” statement privately to John, no doubt John did not have sufficient time to communicate with Peter. Right after Jesus gave the sop to Judas, he said, “What thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). When Judas got up and went out, the others thought he was going to buy something needed for the feast. In fact, he was going out to arrange the actual betrayal.

John was the one who stated that Judas was a thief. Probably he saw indications of this dishonesty during the 3 1/2 years of Jesus’ ministry, but he either gave Judas the benefit of the doubt or just left the reproving to the Master. Although John was observant, he knew that Jesus was *more* so, or perhaps John felt that Jesus was so absorbed in preaching that he did not know what was going on. We really do not know, but when the betrayal occurred, then John’s suspicions were confirmed.

The point is that at the time Judas’s feet were washed by Jesus, he had *not yet gone through* with the deal to betray. If the betrayal had already taken place, Jesus would not have fellowshipped Judas. The Scriptures are clear in regard to one who has committed the deed. Therefore, it is false to reason that we cannot excommunicate anyone because Judas was not excommunicated. Disfellowshipping takes place *after* the fact, not before. Two brethren can read the same thing

and draw *radically different* conclusions.

Psalm 41:9 refers to Judas as “mine own familiar friend.” When he “repented” later, he erred in not going to Jesus. Instead he went to the scribes and Pharisees to return the money, but it was too late—Jesus had already been sentenced and the wheels that were in motion could not be stopped. Then Judas went out and hung himself. Proper sorrow is *godly* sorrow, and repentance (asking for forgiveness) should be directed to the one who was wronged. If we commit a trespass, we must make it right before we offer the next prayer.

Matt. 26:24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Matt. 26:25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

After Jesus said the betrayer “dippeth his hand with me in the dish,” Judas asked, “Is it I?” (verse 23). Jesus replied, “Yes,” but the others could not hear the reply because Judas was right next to the Master, who answered him quietly.

Consider the opportunities Jesus gave Judas to change his mind in regard to the betrayal:

1. Jesus said, “Ye are clean, but not all” (John 13:10).
2. Jesus said the betrayer “dippeth his hand with me in the dish” (Matt. 26:23).
3. When Judas asked, “Master, is it I?” Jesus said yes (Matt. 26:25).
4. Jesus said, “Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed” (Matt. 26:24).
5. Jesus gave the sop to Judas.
6. Judas had the most honored seat (to the left of the Master) at the Last Supper.

In spite of all these attempts to prick Judas’s conscience, he left and carried out the betrayal. He was given every opportunity to renege on the role of betrayer, but he did not. Jesus *did not force* the issue because he knew he had to die for mankind. However, he did what he could to enlighten Judas, and that was as far as he could go. When we see how strongly and repeatedly Judas was warned and given opportunity, we have *no right* to defend him. The Pastor wrote some pretty scathing articles on those who are sympathetic to Judas. Some articles are fairly moderate, but others declare sympathy for Judas to be *despicable*. To defend Judas is to be *more loving* than God.

People like to make a good impression, but compromise can go too far. No doubt Judas did not think Jesus would really be apprehended but would use his miraculous powers to escape as on previous occasions. Judas planned to get the money but thought that Jesus would walk out of the trap. However, when Jesus was apprehended and then was being tried, Judas knew Jesus would be killed. Then Judas was alarmed because he thought, “I am betraying a just man.” Notice that Judas did not even say “Savior” but simply that he had betrayed “innocent blood” (Matt. 27:4).

Matt. 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

As they were eating (not afterwards), Jesus took bread and blessed it. In other words, after they had been eating *for a while*, Jesus instituted the emblems—in the midst of the meal. Instead of using the cup in the normal way on Passover in the Hasidic tradition, Jesus did some very unusual things with the bread and the wine. On previous occasions, Jesus observed the Passover in the customary way, but now he made unique changes.

Q: Matthew and Mark both state that the emblems were instituted while the supper was going

on, but how do we harmonize Luke 22:20, “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood”?

A: The thought in the Greek is “after he had *supped*.” After Jesus *drank* from the cup, he passed it to the others. Although no translation will bear out “supped,” the Bible itself does the harmonizing. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark, two *powerful* witnesses, show that the emblems came *during* the meal. And even extracting clues from John’s Gospel gives support to this premise. Therefore, it is three Gospels against one. Moreover, originally “sup” meant to *sip* (being confined to liquid). Then, as time went on, the thought of *sup* was expanded to mean liquid such as soup and/or eating. Still later, the word became “supper” and was confined to food. Several English words have *radically* changed in meaning over the years. Another example is “terrible,” which originally meant “awesome” and now means “terrifying” or “obnoxious.” And “awful” used to mean “full of awe.”

Matt. 26:27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

In regard to the cup, Jesus said, “Drink ye all of it.” In Luke 22:17, Jesus said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves.” If the two accounts are pieced together, Jesus was first saying in the Luke account, “Here is this quantity of liquid. It is to be divided among all of you.” Then the Matthew account added that all were to drink of the cup. In other words, *all* of the apostles were to consume the *total* quantity in the *one* cup. The “dividing” of the cup meant that it was to be *all* consumed, *entirely* imbibed.

The cup was to be all consumed because it will never again be offered after the Gospel Age is over. However, bread was left over—and properly so—for the world will partake of the bread in the next age. Jesus is the bread of heaven now for the Church and will also be the bread of heaven for the world in the Kingdom.

At the Memorial, it is nice, if possible, to follow the procedure Jesus used by consuming all of the fruit of the vine. Of course with large groups of brethren, this would be difficult to do. And barring illness, it is nice (because of the symbol) to all drink from the *one* cup. Jesus drank of the wine first, before the apostles, but he did *not* partake of the bread. He “supped” the fruit of the vine first and then gave the cup to the apostles to completely consume it.

Matt. 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Jesus said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). Here in Matthew 26:28, Jesus said his blood was “shed for *many* for the remission of sins.” Jesus died for *both* the Church and the world. The Church was the main thrust, or emphasis, at this time, but the world was included.

Verses 26-28 treat the symbolism of the bread and the cup. Basically speaking, the bread is a symbol of *justification*. (Paul gave a secondary picture when he said in 1 Corinthians 10:17, “We being many [grains] are one bread [loaf]”). Bread is food that strengthens and is essential to life. Thus bread is also a symbol of *life*. In addition, the bread represents the *Ransom*, for the robe of Christ’s righteousness is needed before there is any merit in what we do.

The fact that the bread *precedes* the cup suggests the bread is basic, fundamental, and first. The cup, then, is something *additional*. The cup with the wine is a symbol of *death, suffering, sorrow, and ignominy*. The squeezing of the juice of the grape is a *flowing out*. It has been said that blood *in* the veins is a picture of life, and blood *outside* the veins is a picture of death. Bread and wine are opposites in the sense that bread *strengthens and justifies*, whereas the cup pictures an

outpouring of that which strengthens, namely, the bread.

The Pastor suggested an additional thought of restitution with the bread. When we consecrate, we give up that which we could have had (restitution to life here on earth) because we want to be with the Lord. Life in heaven will be much greater than life on earth. Wanting to be followers of Jesus, we sacrifice life down here. Thus we “burn the bridge” behind us, for there is no retreat back to the world, only a looking ahead to the other side beyond the Jordan. Therefore, in a further sense, the bread represents the restitution that could have been ours if we had not consecrated to participate in the Lord’s cup of suffering.

Comment: Some mistakenly assume that those who know present truth but do not consecrate in the present age will be ahead and specially favored in the Kingdom. This is a fallacy, and so is the assumption that life will be easily obtained then.

Reply: As for getting life, there is not that much difference between the present age and the next with regard to high standards being the requirement. Those who will be deceived in the Little Season at the end of the Millennium are described as the “sand of the sea,” that is, a *multitude* in number (Rev. 20:8). Thus many of mankind will not get eternal life. In other words, all will get the opportunity for life, but life is not a guarantee.

Some may count the cost and decide not to consecrate now, thinking they will wait until the Kingdom, but there is no guarantee that they will merit everlasting life at that time. True, all will be resuscitated from the grave, but to get life, one must love and obey God. The *same heart dedication* is required in *any* age in order to get life—one must *love God and righteousness*. This age has more obstacles, but everlasting life on earth cannot be compared to the heavenly reward. Consecration is voluntary now, whereas in the Kingdom, it will be mandatory. At present, the Lord does not pressure anyone to consecrate, but in the next age, *every* knee must bow and *every* tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

One who knows a lot about present truth now but does not consecrate, having counted the cost and declined, will get no special benefits in the Kingdom, for he *misused* opportunities in the present life. In addition to the Little Flock, the Ancient Worthies, Israel, etc., people of the world of mankind will be rewarded in the next age—people who did *not know* the truth previously—if they respond with enthusiasm. Those who decline consecration now will not be penalized, but neither will they get added benefits or honors. They will get the same benefits as the vast majority of mankind—period! They will not be further along just because they heard about God’s plan ahead of time.

The situation is analogous to a marriage proposal. If the proposal is refused by the woman, and the man then marries someone else, the one who refused him would not be specially honored and certainly should not be considered above others by the man. With regard to the Church, *God Himself* is the Author of the call. Therefore, to refuse the privilege of consecration now is to refuse *God*.

Q: Would Matthew 10:41,42 perhaps moderate these statements? “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

A: That text refers to a *reward*, not to a special position of honor. Incidentally, a “cup of cold water” can come from *either* the consecrated or the unconsecrated (the ravens). Three categories are given: (1) prophet, (2) righteous man, and (3) little one. The way (and to whom) the kindness is done will have a bearing upon the nature of the compensation, the greater

value pertaining to rendering a service to a “prophet.” Thus there will be degrees of reward.

The bread and the cup have been considered in a broader sense, but there is an additional thought. In the type, Jesus said, “This is my body, which is broken for you. This is my blood, which is shed for you.” During our Lord’s ministry, he labored with his disciples, exhorting, instructing, and teaching them. In this sense of *daily edification*, Jesus was breaking the bread (his body) for the disciples. The cup, then, would be the *extreme love* where he laid down his life at Calvary—the *act of dying*. It is true that he laid down his life in the breaking of the bread during the 3 1/2 years of his ministry, but the cup, his *actual dying* on the Cross, was the *shedding* of the blood. He “resisted unto blood” when he *poured out* his life at the Crucifixion (Heb. 12:4). Therefore, one follows the other; the cup follows the bread—or stated another way, first the bread, then the cup.

Jesus also said that his blood was “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Hence Jesus wanted us to *specialy* commemorate the cup on the annual observance. The rest of the year we think more on the added lessons—such as restitution and our share in the sin offering (that we, being many, are one loaf and that there is the common union of the blood of Christ). These broader pictures are *secondary* to what Jesus did back there for his disciples and for us, that is, his *personal sacrifice*.

Matt. 26:29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.

Q: We know that divine spirit beings do not have to eat or drink in order to live, but Jesus said he would drink of the fruit of the vine with the apostles in the Kingdom. When Jesus said in Luke 22:16, “I will not anymore eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom,” was he referring to the Passover lamb?

A: Yes. A divine being can have a meal, fruit, beverage, etc. Delicacies are in order up in heaven just as much as down here. The *spiritual counterpart* of these things exists in the *spiritual realm*. Those who are “spirit,” including God Himself, can partake of these things, even though divine beings *do not need* them.

There will be a *memorable counterpart* up in heaven for this Memorial partaken of down here by Jesus and the apostles. The *future feast* will look *back* to the institution of the Memorial but with *great joy*. They will joyfully commemorate what has taken place, with Paul replacing Judas at the celebration. Probably Jesus and the Twelve will be specially honored, but all 144,000 will be present to partake of a cup of *joy*, not sorrow (as at present).

Jesus both ate and drank at the Last Supper. He ate the Passover meal, and he supped from the cup. He had given instructions to Peter and John to find the man with the pitcher of water and subsequently the owner’s house so that he could *eat* the Passover with his disciples (Mark 14:14). Therefore, we know that at the Last Supper, Jesus both ate and drank of the cup. “Henceforth” means “after.” Jesus was saying, “After I drink of this fruit of the vine, I will not henceforth drink of it until the Kingdom.”

This “cup” is the *same* one mentioned in Gethsemane: “the cup which my Father hath given me [to drink], shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). That cup symbolized Jesus’ death. To consider that there were two cups would *weaken* the power of the symbolism.

Comment: Jesus ate with the apostles after his resurrection but before his ascension.

Reply: Yes, he ate fish on the shore of Galilee. There are houses, flowers, birds, brooks, etc., up in heaven—a *spiritual counterpart* to what we have down here. On earth is the *visible*

handiwork of God, but heaven has His *invisible* handiwork, which *natural* men cannot see but *spirit beings* can. There is a certain enjoyment with the rational partaking of food—in moderation.

Matt. 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Matthew's account is very terse, whereas John's Gospel contains more information about what went on after the instituting of the symbols—and Judas was still in the picture. The giving of the sop and the washing of the disciples' feet were not recorded in Matthew, and neither was the long, long sermon that Jesus gave before reaching the Garden of Gethsemane (John 13-17).

Matt. 26:31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Jesus was saying that Jehovah would smite the “shepherd” (Jesus), and the “sheep” (the disciples back there) would be scattered. Jesus was quoting from a prophecy in Zechariah 13:7, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” “The man ... my *fellow*” is Jesus, whom Jehovah likens to His *bosom companion*. Jesus was the Logos, the archangel, before he came down here—the mouthpiece of Jehovah. Then he came to earth in *human* form and was about to lay down his life, as this Scripture indicates. Jesus came to do His Father's will, and it was the Father's will that he die on behalf of humanity in order to pay the price of Justice. Thus God's “fellow,” or “shepherd,” would be smitten. Also, Jehovah would turn His “*hand* upon the little ones.” Accordingly, Christians are to humble themselves “under the mighty hand of God, [so] that he may exalt” them in due time (1 Pet. 5:6). The Son had to suffer humiliation and trials, and so do his followers. God's *hand* pressed on Jesus, and he died. Having been faithful to the test of endurance and faith, Jesus was elevated to the right hand of God on the divine plane of being. Technically since Pentecost, all followers of Christ are being humbled under the mighty hand of God. If faithful, they will reign with Jesus. “If we suffer [with Christ], we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). The term “little ones” started with the apostles but applies to all of the consecrated.

Matt. 26:32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Why did Jesus tell his apostles *in advance* that when he was resurrected from the grave, he would go before them into Galilee? Since most of the apostles were Galileans, he surmised that they would congregate there, back in their familiar home territory. His first appearances were in the Jerusalem area. On one such occasion, when he appeared to the women, he said, “Tell my brethren that they [should] go into Galilee, and there shall they see me” (Matt. 28:10). In Galilee, Jesus appeared to more than just the favored few who were privileged earlier to have special private revelations (Joanna, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, etc.). Therefore, by his going to Galilee, more were able to see him.

Also, verse 32 shows Jesus' foreknowledge. The disciples waited and waited, and finally, rather than do nothing, Peter said, “I go a-fishing.” Seven apostles were fishing when Jesus appeared to them (John 21:2,3).

Matt. 26:33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

Matt. 26:34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Matt. 26:35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Peter was emphatic: “Yet will I *never* be offended ... yet will I *not* deny thee.” In reply, Jesus told him, “This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” “Cockcrow” was so *early* in the morning that it was still in the nighttime of *darkness*. This expression is used in Mark 13:35, “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even [9 p.m.], or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing [3 a.m.], or in the morning [6 a.m.].” Thus there were four watches:

First: 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. (9 p.m. was the signal)

Second: 9 p.m. to midnight (midnight was the signal)

Third: Midnight to 3 a.m. (3 a.m., or cockcrow, was the signal)

Fourth: 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. (6 a.m. was the end of the fourth watch)

In other words, there was a signal at the end of each watch, at which time the watch was changed. The four night watches went from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Although it is known that the rooster makes a loud sound very early in the morning, the expression “cockcrow” referred to the specific hour of 3 a.m. At that time, a signal was given by those keeping the watch to alert the next watch to take over.

Jesus’ statement shows that his trial before Caiaphas was still going on at 3 a.m. He had spoken to the apostles at length following the Last Supper (John 14-17). He was apprehended around midnight in the Garden of Gethsemane without any sleep. In the garden, he asked, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” showing that an hour passed while he prayed three times (Matt. 26:40).

Also, the implication was that Peter’s three denials would occur rather quickly in succession. When Peter’s and Jesus’ eyes met at 3 a.m., Jesus’ trial was still going on. As he was being transferred to another hall, he turned and looked at Peter (John 18:27,28; Luke 22:61). Immediately Peter remembered the prediction that he would deny the Master three times and then his own vehement denial and boasting as to his faithfulness.

How would Peter have known it was 3 a.m.? It was customary to mark the end of each night watch with some kind of signal. When the signal sounded right after the third denial and the Master’s eyes met Peter’s (probably at the very moment of the signal), there was no mistaking the reason for Jesus’ look. It was as if the Master were saying, “Remember what I said.” The grief-stricken Peter “went out, and wept bitterly” (Matt. 26:75).

Lest we be too hard on Peter, we should remember that he and John were the only two disciples courageous enough to follow Jesus to the site of the trial, but at the time of cockcrow and Jesus’ look, Peter was “unstable as water” (the Reuben characteristic—Gen. 49:4). Later he became a *rock*, but a number of experiences were needed first, before his character became crystallized. After the resurrection, Jesus said to Peter, “When thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Thus, even though Peter had followed Jesus for 3 1/2 years, a change was still necessary. Peter had thought he loved Jesus more than all of the others, but he had to be converted from unstable water to a *rock* character. Tradition, as well as Peter’s epistles, show that his character matured after Jesus’ resurrection. From then on, there was no more vacillating. After his “conversion,” which was possible only after the Holy Spirit came, his immature impetuosity departed, and he became *controlled*. The Holy Spirit was the stabilizing factor. Pentecost had not yet come when Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep and lambs. Incidentally, Peter is rated above John. The order of the top four apostles, as indicated by the stones on the high priest’s breastplate, is Paul, Peter, John, and James.

Peter’s real conversion came at Pentecost. He was so bold then that he got up before 3,000

people and preached, thus putting his neck on the block (Acts 2:41). The Day of Pentecost was a holy festival, and the scribes and Pharisees were adamantly opposed to any preaching about Jesus. Peter said, “Ye men of Israel, by *wicked hands you have crucified and slain Jesus*” (Acts 2:22,23 paraphrase). For Peter to persuade devout Jews to consecrate—Jews who realized the Crucifixion had taken place but knew little about Jesus—took great *power*. Their consciences being pricked, they asked, “What should we do?” Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:37,38). The Acts account is merely a condensation of Peter’s remarks. Especially when we consider that he was a fisherman by trade, his discourse must have been very moving in order to persuade such devout Jews from other countries. He was now manifesting the rock-stable character of boldness that he had lacked previously.

The Scriptures state that Paul became the chief apostle (2 Cor. 11:5). Since he was the replacement for Judas, Judas would have been the chief apostle if he had not deflected. When Satan was successful in getting to Judas, that left Peter, who was in the No. 2 position, as the next apostle. For that reason, Jesus said to *Peter*, “Satan hath desired to have *you*, that he may sift *you* as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Satan was going right down the *order*. He hated Peter because of his leadership qualities, even though they were misdirected at times. Of the three (Peter, John, and James), Peter is always listed first, showing his importance among the apostles.

It is interesting that Peter had a wife. (We know this because Jesus healed his mother-in-law’s fever—Matt. 8:14,15.) Jude and James the lesser (Jesus’ stepbrothers) also had wives. And Paul said he could have married if he had so desired, but he chose to remain single to better serve the Lord. It is ironic that the Roman Catholic Church greatly esteems Peter, saying he was the first pope, yet Peter was *married*. Incidentally, an example of Jesus’ being the Advocate of the Church is Luke 22:32, where he said he prayed for Peter so that the latter’s faith would not fail.

Matt. 26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

Matt. 26:37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

Verse 36 is a rather abrupt change. In verse 30, a hymn was sung, and Jesus and the 11 apostles went out. A few verses follow, and then suddenly, in verse 36, Jesus and the others had reached Gethsemane. John’s Gospel fills in the gap with Jesus’ long discourses. Incidentally, because of the betrayal that occurred subsequently, Judas must have known that Jesus intended to be at the Mount of Olives on this night.

Notice Jesus’ words: “Sit ye here.” Of the 11 apostles who were with him, he addressed only eight, telling them where to stay. He announced his intention to “go and pray yonder,” but the significant point is that he made a *separation* among his disciples. Peter, John, and James were favored to accompany him farther. Many feel there should be no distinction in the body of Christ. It is true that there is no male or female, no bondservant or free, etc., in the body of Christ, but Jesus did not violate this principle. Some brethren have the idea of democracy so much in mind that they fail to realize what they think is being cliquish may not be so at all. Rather, because of *love for the Lord and the truth*, some are drawn together more than others. We, too, may find we are drawn more to certain brethren.

Why did Jesus take Peter, John, and James? He made a distinction and a separation to favor them because they were more zealous than the others. The other disciples would have felt this distinction, for they had also been following Jesus, and now he directed them to sit down and wait while he departed with the other three for another part of the garden. Right away the eight knew he was favoring the three more than them.

These things happen in life, yet some will criticize another and say he is drawing disciples after himself. However, if a distinction is based on love for *God and His Word*, the priority is proper. On a note of caution, should the one or ones we get benefit from happen to stray, we should leave them. The basis for fellowship should not be emotional. Those who hear the Word and *do* it are Jesus' "mother" and "brethren" (Matt. 12:50). Jesus' own mother was a believer, yet he used this principle with her and his own family; that is, he made a distinction.

No doubt the other apostles sensed Jesus' favoritism, for there was a dispute over who was greatest. When John and James wanted to have the chief positions, the others were resentful. Sometimes our feelings are hurt too, but if we are in the right attitude of mind, we rise above the hurt feelings. Unfortunately, when some brethren get offended, they leave the truth and go their own way, isolating themselves. That is the wrong attitude. Here with the apostles, in spite of having hurt feelings, the eight stayed with the Master because they loved him.

This principle of favoritism is not usually discussed. In fact, we hear the opposite in sermons. It takes nobility of character to recognize that brethren are superior to us and more zealous in the Lord's service. The bond or union should be the desire to know God's Word and be led of Him.

Matt. 26:38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

Jesus began to be sorrowful and very heavy. A strong wave of sorrow and depression was beating down on him at this time. Before the Last Supper, he had said this too, but then the sorrow left him for a while because he was preoccupied in sermonizing and preparing the disciples for his departure and what to do in his absence when he would ascend to his Father. In addition, advice was needed that would be helpful during the Gospel Age. In his desire to fully inform them, he forgot about his own experiences to come, but once the instruction was finished, he was again overwhelmed with sorrow.

Sermons are also given that we should *never* be sorrowful, that we should *always* rejoice. That is not true, for many Scriptures show we have changes of feeling—our Lord certainly did. We are to "count it all joy" in the *final* analysis, but at the time we are going through a trial, it is grievous (James 1:2). "No chastening [affliction] for the present [at the moment] seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (Heb. 12:11). Hence we do have periods of depression under certain circumstances. Even Jesus did, and he was *perfect*. There is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh" (Eccl. 3:4).

Gethsemane means "wine press and oil." Because of His foreknowledge, God overruled the naming of the garden; that is, a geographical place was named *in advance* for the event.

Q: Does the instruction "watch with me" mean that Jesus was asking for the apostles' prayers or that he just wanted them to be alert and awake?

A: If the events in the Garden of Gethsemane are a picture of conditions at the end of the age, the lesson would be that fellow Christians, in their sympathy and interest on behalf of others who might be in a particular testing period, should be watching and praying not just for themselves but also for others undergoing a trial at that hour. When Peter and James were in prison and James was beheaded, the brethren had almost an all-night vigil (Acts 12:1-17). Then Peter appeared at the door of the house where they were gathered, having been miraculously released from prison. Here is an example of brethren praying for a fellow Christian. The brethren knew that without divine intervention, Peter would be put to death next. They were very concerned lest they lose two apostles, especially with Peter being such a leader.

However, in Jesus' case in the Garden of Gethsemane, the apostles did not do much praying because their own sorrow for him made them sleepy. Incidentally, sorrow does bring fatigue. Luke 22:45 states, "He [Jesus] found them sleeping for *sorrow*." Because of their personal grief and Jesus' message about his departure, the 11 apostles were in a weakened condition. Also, the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them.

Matt. 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Jesus went "a little farther" but was still within hearing distance of Peter, James, and John. They could hear the prayer he uttered—not in its entirety but the beginning. Jesus was there for an hour, so he certainly uttered a much longer prayer than is recorded in the second half of verse 39. The three apostles heard the address portion of his prayer. After that, they slept (verse 40).

Mark 14:35 states that Jesus "fell on the ground." Here the account says he "fell on his face." The tremendous depression that seized Jesus was a very emotional experience. Therefore, perhaps he uttered the beginning of his prayer in a loud voice, and then his voice quieted down.

Sorrow can be an extreme experience. For example, we were with a brother when his wife was committed to a mental institution for restoration of health. She was subsequently cured from the mental breakdown, but at the announcement, he was so grief-stricken that he actually fell right down on the floor and cried.

Of course Jesus was grief-stricken over a much more severe trial: crucifixion and alienation from God as far as the nation of Israel was concerned. The "cup" that he prayed might pass from him if it was the Father's will was not death because he came here to die. Rather, it was the shame and humiliation of dying as a vile criminal and a blasphemer of the Father he loved so deeply. Even stoning would have been preferable to crucifixion because the Law said, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). It was one thing to die for mankind, but he was asking if it was necessary for all the other details to be fulfilled. He was undergoing an internal tug-of-war. He knew he would be crucified (as he stated earlier), so on second thought, after asking that the cup pass from him, he realized that attendant suffering and humiliation had been predicted. The emotional strife taking place in his heart was very strong.

Comment: Being perfect, Jesus loved the Father with a fullness that we can only know in part. That is what hurt him—he *so loved* the Father that the thought of the world's misunderstanding and thinking he was *blaspheming* the Father was tearing at his heart.

Reply: This emotion was so intense that it momentarily offset the other aspect of prophecy having to be fulfilled—that he had to die between two malefactors, on a cross, etc.

At that time, Jesus did not know the Father would hide His face (so that he would cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"), but he did know the Cross symbolized shame and ignominy. Based on history, he would have known about crucifixion, for as the Logos, before he came to earth, Spartacus and others were crucified on the Appian Way in Italy. And when he was in his teens, crucifixions were taking place in Israel. Thus Jesus was aware of the horrors of crucifixion and what it entailed, but the Father's forsaking him was a genuine surprise. Therefore, the "cup" of verse 39 was the same as on other occasions.

Matt. 26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

Matt. 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing,

but the flesh is weak.

Why was *Peter* particularly singled out if all of the disciples were asleep? The reason is that Satan especially wanted to sift him.

Q: Jesus prayed *three* times for the cup to be removed if it was the Father's will, and Paul prayed *three* times to have his affliction removed. Do these examples indicate that the Christian can always go to the Lord in prayer *three* times over a matter, saying, of course, "Thy will be done"? And is the implication that if Peter had prayed *three* times after Jesus warned of Satan's desire to sift him, he could have avoided falling into the temptation of denying Jesus *three* times?

A: Technically speaking, that is a possibility, although Jesus knew that, in reality, Peter would fail because the failure had been predicted.

Q: Are these examples an indication to the Christian of the value of praying three times in a crucial situation or temptation?

A: Yes, and we should not judge, by what we *see*, the reactions and spirituality of Christians who are going through a severe trial. A reaction could appear to be weakness when depression is really the cause. God's hand rested heavily on Jesus. Jesus experienced extreme depression, but he rose above it.

In prayer, we should always have the attitude "Thy will be done." It is interesting that both Jesus and Paul prayed three times in regard to their trials. Concerning Paul's affliction in the flesh, Jesus answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in [your] weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Q: Will the feet members at the end of the age have a similar experience in that although God will not turn His face from them, other brethren will not really understand what they are going through?

A: Yes. The feet members will be separated from the other brethren and seemingly be forsaken. Peter's *denial* of Jesus is symbolic of the Great Company class at the end of the age. In addition, a Judas class will *betray* the feet members (and thus indirectly the Lord). Prayer will be an important factor. In fact, it might even be the deciding point in some making their calling and election sure and others not. The Garden of Gethsemane experience was a victory for Jesus, for from the end of his third prayer, he had a spirit of assurance and composure all the way up to his crucifixion, when he momentarily felt forsaken by the Father.

Q: Is it out of order for one to pray more than three times over a matter?

A: No, as shown by the importunate widow (Luke 18:2-5). However, the experiences of Jesus and Paul do teach that if we discern the answer to our prayers to be "no," we should fully acquiesce and submit. Of course we might not immediately discern the negative answer and thus would keep praying.

Matt. 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Jesus' second prayer was phrased a little differently from the first, showing that he was not as urgently asking the cup to pass. He was beginning to sense that he had to drink of the cup.

Matt. 26:43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

Matt. 26:44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

We cannot see the depth of Jesus' struggle. He was torn by his affection for the Father, for in no way did he want to be considered a blasphemer before the nation of Israel.

Matt. 26:45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Matt. 26:46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

There should be a paragraph mark (¶) after "Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest." A *little space of time* occurred before Jesus made the next statement. An awareness of the time lapse in verses 45 and 46 is really necessary to get the sense of what was happening. Moreover, we can see Jesus' consideration for his disciples.

Apparently, Jesus did not pray anymore after this third prayer. He just sat down with the apostles and waited, staying awake. We know he was awake because he could hear Judas and the others coming to the garden to apprehend him. Perhaps he could see their torches too.

Judas came around midnight. This conclusion is based on the distances involved and Jesus' movements and activities up until 3 a.m., the time of cockcrow, when he looked at Peter.

Matt. 26:47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Matt. 26:48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

Matt. 26:49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

Matt. 26:50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

What hypocrisy for Judas to say, "Hail, Master," and then to kiss Jesus, *knowing what he was doing!*

Q: John 18:4-9 gives the following information. Jesus asked, "Whom do you seek?" The men from the chief priests and Pharisees answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." And Judas stood with them. As soon as Jesus had said, "I am he," they went backward and fell to the ground. Then Jesus asked again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am he. If, therefore, you seek me, let my apostles go their way so that my saying might be fulfilled, 'Of them which you gave me, I have lost none.'" How do these details fit in with the kiss of Judas? Did Judas kiss Jesus first?

A: Verse 48 records the words of Judas: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he." The kiss was the identifying mark, and it probably came first. Then Judas retreated back into the presence of those who had come to seize Jesus. Jesus asked the question "Whom seek ye?" because he knew this whole incident would be recorded in the Gospels for future posterity. John 18:4 says, "Jesus therefore, *knowing all things that should come upon him,*" went forth and asked the question "Whom seek ye?" Thus he knew they were seeking him, he knew their purpose, and he knew about Judas—even though he asked and repeated the question.

Jesus' questions bring out another factor too. If the officers and men thought that *he* was the one they really wanted, their attention would be distracted from his followers. Directing the focus of attention to himself had the effect of defocusing the attention on the others so that they would not be interfered with. In fact, Jesus even said regarding his disciples, "Let these go their way" (John 18:8). In other words, Jesus was saying, "I am the one you want."

The other eight disciples had probably already fled. Just Peter, James, and John lingered, and they had been closer to Jesus during his prayers, being "a stone's cast" away (Luke 22:41). And of the 11 apostles, only Peter and John followed Jesus when he was led away.

Q: What about Mark, who was not an apostle? Wasn't he also present because he fled naked when they grabbed his clothing (Mark 14:51,52)?

A: Yes, but his fleeing was on another basis. It is helpful to know the geography of Jerusalem. Mark's house, where the brethren sometimes met, was on the way to the high priest's house. Mark could hear the multitude passing by, taking Jesus to Annas. Remember, it was late at night, so Mark was in his nightgown, which was like a simple smock (a "linen cloth"). When he went out to see what was going on, he was somehow identified as a follower of Jesus. Consequently, some of the young officers grabbed his garment, and he fled away naked back to his house. (Subsequently, Peter supplied Mark with information to write his Gospel.)

The Apostle John was known by the household of the high priest. Somewhere along the line, he had a rapport with the higher-ups, even though he was a fisherman. Probably this connection was due to marriage or an in-law relationship. Thus John got into the high priest's palace ahead of Peter (John 18:15,16). In fact, John had the maid open the door to let Peter in.

Jesus addressed Judas as "Friend." The only two other places the Greek word *hetairos* is so translated are in the Parable of the Penny and the Parable of the Wedding Garment. The "friend," who was a murmurer in the first parable and the guest without a wedding garment in the second parable, does not necessarily represent some who will go into Second Death, but that possibility is not ruled out either (Matt. 20:13; 22:12). The "friend" class are in close association with Jesus. Psalm 41:9 calls Judas "mine [Jesus'] own familiar friend ... which did eat of my bread."

It is interesting that "a *great* multitude" armed with swords and staves came to seize *one* man, Jesus, who had only 11 men with him. As soon as Jesus said the first time, "I am he," the multitude "went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 18:6). The multitude came in numbers and were armed with weapons because they did not know whether Jesus would exhort his followers to take up arms. The populace had just hailed Jesus as King of the Jews. Therefore, the chief priests, etc., wanted a multitude to go forth to seize him because they did not know what to expect. Because of the sympathy of the people for Jesus, the chief priests and elders had him apprehended at night. They were afraid that his sympathizers would not tolerate their actions if done in the daytime. But even acting secretly at night, they still did not know what they would face. The officers had swords, and servants and sympathizers of the high priest wielded staves. There were not only those in official capacity who were against the truth but also their sympathizers, ordinary people who saw things from the perspective of those in official capacity. Thus the staff carriers were not organized "militia"; they were just taking along weapons to show their sympathy for the soldiers' apprehension of Jesus.

Matt. 26:51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

Matt. 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that

take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Peter drew his sword and struck Malchus, a servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear (John 18:10). Originally, there were two swords (Luke 22:38). Peter had one, but we do not know which other disciple had a sword. Jesus had said, “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one” (Luke 22:36). He wanted the apostles to have two swords so that he could say, “Put up again thy sword into his place,” thus showing that had he wanted the apostles to fight for him, he could easily have aroused their loyalty. Also, if he had encouraged them to do so, the apostles could have subsequently raided the high priest’s house that night and released him. By telling the apostles to put up the two swords, Jesus proved that he *submitted willingly* and that he knew what the chief priests and elders intended to do with him. Moreover, he did not run away. In other words, the multitude did not really apprehend Jesus—he *allowed* himself to be taken.

Matt. 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Matt. 26:54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

John 18:3 describes the multitude who came out against Jesus as a “band.” Just how many comprised a band is difficult to say, for the size varied throughout history. However, it was at least several hundred.

The size of a “legion” also varied, but it would have been a minimum of 2,000—and there were 12 legions! (At times during history, a legion consisted of up to 6,000.) Jesus was not trying to be technical, but in all, *at least 24,000 angels* could have helped him. And with *angels* comprising the legions, little humans would have been no match!

Matt. 26:55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

Whenever Jesus criticized, his remarks were meant to be *constructive*, even with the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus made them *think*. Notice how he addressed those who came to seize him. “Are you come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me? You had this opportunity in the daytime.” This remark made them think about their actions so that later they could reflect on Jesus’ words. Hopefully, some would then see the enormity of what they had done—the smallness, meanness, cowardice, etc., that were manifest in that type of apprehending Jesus, a *single* individual.

The multitude were probably not afraid of him militarily as an individual. What they and the scribes and Pharisees feared was his *influence* upon others. Jesus had a *personal* power, as evidenced with the falling backward—whether the multitude appreciated that fact or not. And that is another point: If Jesus had wanted to, he could have handled the situation single-handedly, *without* 12 legions of angels.

Comment: The fact that the multitude was not deterred by Jesus’ words and actions shows that when minds are hardened to a specific situation, those people are irrational in a crowd.

Reply: It was like a lynching spirit. Consider the whole procedure. Jesus was apprehended at night, the inquisitorial examination was at night, the sentence was reached at night, and early in the morning, the religious leaders went to Pilate—all before the public woke up. Everything was cut-and-dried—a kangaroo court with an irrevocable decision. The religious leaders wanted to get the Crucifixion under way as much as possible before there was any public

awareness. The first thing the general populace knew, Jesus was dragging the Cross through the street. The scribes and Pharisees knew that if Jesus was already apprehended, the public would be less apt to defend him. The public reasoned, If Jesus really is the Savior, how can he be so humiliated? Crucifixion seemed to belie Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. That is why many did not interfere with his being led to crucifixion. They thought, If he really is the Messiah, he would not submit to such treatment. Later some said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21).

Q: Some brethren seem to have a reserve with regard to prayer—more so than the nominal systems, whose adherents look for miraculous intervention. Generally speaking, the thought is to bear with an affliction because we are consecrated unto death. The importunate widow was not a Christian, but she asked *many* times. With prayer, are there limitations under certain conditions where we should not keep pressing a matter?

A: If we are conscious of getting a definitive "no," then we should cease to make the petition. In regard to Paul's asking three times to have his "thorn in the flesh" removed, the number is symbolic and does not necessarily mean we can pray only three times. "Three" has the thought of the third attempt being the final one. In baseball, for example, it is "three strikes and you're out." *Symbolically* rather than literally, this is true with prayer.

Comment: Jacob's wrestling with the angel *all night* shows his persistence in prayer. He kept praying until he got blessed.

Reply: Persistency would depend on what the struggle and the prayer were for. In the parable, the judge heard the importunate widow because of her persistency. Jesus used this as an illustration that the Christian should, in desiring a good blessing, be persistent.

Q: That would be true with regard to developing the fruits of the Spirit, more faith, etc.—things that will help us as new creatures—but are there limitations in praying for physical ailments, for example?

A: Anyone not as zealous as Paul might pray and pray and pray, but Paul was more sensitive to the answer. He reasoned that it was the Lord's will not to have *full* sight restored. Paul and Jesus both received assurance, even though the answer was no. If we realize the answer is no, then we should submit fully, willingly, and promptly. The problem is that many do not back off and see something in its larger perspective, and thus they fail to see a "no" answer.

Q: Jesus' healing the ear that Peter cut off would have been a real testimony, especially to the high priest's servant, that what the multitude was doing was wrong. Will there be an antitype at the end of the age in regard to Papacy's supporters? Will there be some kind of indication that support for Papacy was misdirected?

A: An awareness will come later. Consider a lynch mob as an analogy. The enormity of the crime and the fact that the mob is caught up in a wave of frenzy hits *afterward* with the realization that *wrong* has been done. In the future, those who are not die-hard ecclesiastics themselves but are, nevertheless, servants and supporters of the papal system will realize their error. *The restored ear indicates restored "hearing"—a realization later of what was done previously.* Other pictures show that when the public realizes Papacy is doing the very things it either disclaimed having done in the past or said would never be repeated, the veneer will be stripped away, and all will see Papacy as it really is. When the persecuting spirit arises again in the near future, when the animalistic trend of sadism is exercised, the system will be unmasked in the eyes of others. "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered" means that Papacy will be exposed as the Antichrist and as manifesting a depraved condition (Isa. 47:3). The seeming loving kindness will be seen as a false front. The past history of Papacy is *true* history. The "eunuchs" (servants) of

that system will disassociate themselves. Thus the healing of the ear of Malchus seems to support the thought that some will have their ears opened to discern the truth of the matter.

Matt. 26:56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

All of the disciples initially forsook Jesus and fled, including Peter and John. The only difference is that these two followed Jesus at a distance to the high priest's house (John 18:15; Luke 22:54).

Matt. 26:57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

First, Jesus was led away to the house of Annas, who was the alternate high priest as well as the father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18:13). Caiaphas, who was regarded as the leader, was the primary high priest, but Annas could fill in with equal authority on certain occasions.

It is interesting that Jesus was taken to Annas first. Proof that Caiaphas had more of the leadership role is John 18:14, "Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people." However, because Annas was older, deference was given to him to show respect. The high priest served in his office until death, but the Jews had an arrangement whereby the high priest could be relieved of his responsibilities temporarily under certain circumstances.

After being led to Annas, Jesus was taken to Caiaphas "where the scribes and the elders were [already] assembled" and waiting, and it was *after midnight*. Obviously, they had planned and plotted in advance so that they could condemn Jesus to death.

Matt. 26:58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

"Peter followed him [Jesus] afar off unto [Caiaphas'] the high priest's palace." Peter did not go into the council chamber itself but sat in the courtyard, warming his hands and mingling with the servants and soldiers. The houses of Annas and Caiaphas were probably right next to each other and had a common courtyard. With this understanding, the Gospels can be harmonized.

When Peter uttered his third denial, Jesus was in transit from one house to the other, passing by the courtyard. Thus he could look directly at Peter. As a result, Peter was filled with remorse and went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61,62; Matt. 26:75). Therefore, wherever the two houses were located, they were close together.

John 18:16 tells that Peter got into the courtyard because John, who "was known unto the high priest," spoke to the maid who "kept the door." As a result, she allowed Peter to enter, but in the process, she recognized him and asked, "Aren't you one of Jesus' disciples?" (John 18:17; Matt. 26:69).

Why did the maid ask Peter this question? At the time of Jesus' apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter struck off the ear of Malchus, a servant of Caiaphas, with a sword. Therefore, when the trial was subsequently held at the house where Malchus served, the maid's recognition shows that a mixed or motley crowd (including both men and women) had gone with weapons and torches to seize Jesus. In this crowd were both soldiers and servants. The soldiers would have carried the swords, for they were the militia given by Pilate to the Jews. Assigned to the Temple, the soldiers were under the control of the high priest. In other words, those comprising the crowd that seized Jesus in the garden were *insiders*. How else would they have known about the plot unless they were related family-wise or servant-wise to

the high priest? They were all sympathetic to and informed about the high priest's intentions; hence they had gone out willingly to apprehend Jesus. The plot was *well thought out*.

Matt. 26:59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

Verse 59 proves conclusively that the religious leadership was perpetrating evil, for a basic commandment is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exod. 20:16). And false witnesses were being sought. This was a kangaroo court, a court that had *predetermined* a guilty verdict punishable by death. The religious leadership was looking for an excuse so that technically, for the record's sake, Jesus could be condemned by the testimony of two witnesses.

It is interesting, however, that the false witnesses were not rehearsed previously—or at least not sufficiently rehearsed—for Mark 14:56 says that although many bore false witness against Jesus, "their witness agreed not together." With the chief priests and the council serving as a "jury," a technical basis of two or three harmonious testimonies was needed.

It was prearranged that Judas would leave the Last Supper and go to the high priest to finalize the deal and also to lead the multitude to the Garden of Gethsemane to point out Jesus with a kiss. A time deadline was involved, for Jesus was to be tried that night.

Matt. 26:60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

Matt. 26:61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

The testimony of the witnesses did not agree. According to the Law, the testimony of two or three witnesses had to agree in order to convict. Evidently, many individuals were willing to testify, but no two or three testimonies coordinated.

Two witnesses came forward claiming that Jesus had said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days," but neither did their witness "agree together" (see Mark 14:57-59). Actually, their testimony, taken literally, was rather far-fetched for condemning a person to death—that in *one* day, a *single* individual could destroy a *literal* temple and then rebuild it again in *three* days—yet that is how the scribes, chief priests, etc., received it.

Matt. 26:62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

Matt. 26:63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

The high priest commanded Jesus to answer: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." The word "adjure" meant that a response was required by the Law. The term is comparable today to a person's being sworn in on the witness stand and thus having to tell the truth under oath.

The high priest asked a simple question, and an answer was required. Jesus replied, "Yes, I am the Messiah." In antitype, if we are asked a similar simple question such as "Are you a Christian?" we should feel obligated to answer in the affirmative. Just as Jesus was *forced* to answer, so it would be wrong for us not to answer such a question when commanded.

Matt. 26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall

ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Jesus answered Caiaphas, “Thou hast said” (that is, “Yes”), but why did he add the following (paraphrased) testimony? “A time will come in the future when you will recognize, as a fact, that I am the Christ, the Son of God. You will see a living testimony of who I am, and at that time, I will come in the power of the Almighty.” Jesus’ testimony reminds us of Stephen, who spoke similarly under inspiration just before his stoning. As a condemned man, Stephen had the right to give a testimony, and he gave a long one. He ended his testimony with, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). When the religious leadership heard these words, they were furious and stoned him to death. It was as if Stephen had a vision of the future. Compare Jesus’ words here in verse 64: “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

Q: What is the difference between the chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, and the council?

A: Consider the Tabernacle. Aaron was the high priest, but what about the underpriests? In Jesus’ day, there was still a high priest, and the “chief priests” were equivalent to the underpriests. The priesthood rotated with courses of service, so at any given time, some of the chief priests were in Jerusalem, while those who were “off duty” were scattered throughout the nation in different residences.

The “council” was the Sanhedrin, the 70 who corresponded to the 70 in Moses’ day. Back there the 70 assisted Moses in judging the people and handling *personal* problems, whereas the Sanhedrin, as the “Supreme Court,” was a more secular body that made *judicial* decisions. When Jesus was brought in, the council was present, just witnessing the proceedings; toward morning they made an important decision (Luke 22:66-71).

The “elders” were teachers like Gamaliel who were regarded as *authorities* on certain matters. They were more or less theologians, but they did not serve actively in the priesthood. In other words, they were “theological consultants.”

“Scribes” generally took notes and recorded proceedings, but one had to be advanced to get into that office. Scribes served in the *religious* court and were “religious lawyers,” as opposed to lawyers today, who interpret civil law.

In summary, then, “chief priests” were underpriests, the “council” was the Sanhedrin, “elders” were theological consultants, and “scribes” were religious lawyers.

Q: The question remains, Why did Jesus answer as he did in verse 64? Did the high priest adjure him to answer? Did the Holy Spirit give Jesus the words, or was he speaking on his own?

A: The Holy Spirit may have led him, for he was not yet a divine being. Normally, Jesus would have said merely, “Yes, I am,” but just as the holy prophets of old were moved to speak, so Jesus, the greatest Prophet of all, could have been similarly moved.

These added words were valuable from another standpoint. Jesus said to the thief on the Cross, “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43 corrected translation). It was as if Jesus were saying, “Though I am being crucified as a malefactor between two thieves, though the nation is reviling me, and though I appear powerless, what seems to be defeat is really the stepping-stone to victory and part of God’s plan.” Despite the subsequent wave of anxiety (“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”), he was confident of victory. And he was likewise confident here in verse 64.

An interesting question is whether Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were present for these council proceedings. Normally, they would be, but it is quite possible the evil plotting triggered their taking a stand for Christ. Earlier Nicodemus, fearing his reputation, went to Jesus *by night* to ask a question about the Kingdom and the resurrection. Not much is known about Joseph except that he was very wealthy. However, these two men were outstanding when Jesus was crucified in that they (and not the apostles) took his body down from the Cross in the sight of all the people. At the *crucial* time, Nicodemus and Joseph were there.

Joseph went to Pilate and *boldly* asked for the body. The *highest* element of the nation had *unjustly* condemned an *innocent* man to the most *horrible* death. It would seem that this action led Joseph and Nicodemus to take a stand for Jesus. They could see that the office of the Sanhedrin was being sullied. (The Sanhedrin is justifiable by Scripture, for it was authorized in Moses' day—see Exod. 24:1,9.) What should have been the highest judiciary in Jerusalem was now being defiled by a crucifixion. Either Joseph and Nicodemus were not present at the council that night, or if they were, we assume they got up out of their seats and walked out. Thus the events probably did have an effect on them—for *good*.

Q: In what sense would the high priest “see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven”?

A: Jesus' authority will be seen in the Kingdom, when he will “come” with “clouds” of *judgment*. The religious leaders were having a kangaroo court to unjustly condemn Jesus, so he admitted not only that he was the Messiah but that things would be different in the future. “I am right, and you are wrong” is another way of stating the matter. Matthew 16:27 bears out the thought of his coming for judgment: “The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” The Church will be with Jesus, and all deeds will receive a “reward,” the bad deeds requiring retribution.

Matt. 26:65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Tearing his clothes was an *emotional* act on the part of the high priest, who was irked because the evidence against Jesus was flimsy at best. Although two witnesses were found, their testimony did not agree. Hence Matthew said that no witnesses were found (verse 60), that is, no real, legitimate witnesses. The evidence was so foolish with the two *false* witnesses that the high priest was frustrated. In his *frustration*, he turned to Jesus and asked, “What do you have to say? You have been quiet all along, and now I command you by the name of God to tell us whether you are the Messiah.” Jesus' answer was used to condemn him. “You have all heard what he said!” shouted the high priest as he tore his clothes to show his *righteous indignation*. The others looked up to Caiaphas as a religious leader, so his emotional trauma affected the council like a lynch mob. All were swayed, and they unanimously condemned Jesus.

The high priest's reaction was improper based on Leviticus 21:10, “He that is the high priest ... shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes.” The high priest was *forbidden* to display such emotionalism. Judgment should be based on *principle*, not emotionalism.

“What further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.” In other words, “We do not have to proceed any further. Jesus' own words are blasphemy, and we have all heard this blasphemy.”

Matt. 26:66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

“What think ye?” continued the high priest. The others answered, “He is guilty of death.”

Notice that they did not just say he was guilty but guilty of *death!* Of course Jesus' death was the reason for their assembling in the first place, but now they felt they had a case. The basis of their condemnation was that Jesus felt he was the Messiah.

Matt. 26:67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

Matt. 26:68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

Once Jesus was condemned, they all—soldier, servant, or whoever—felt they had the liberty to abuse him. Luke 22:64 states that he was blindfolded, which made the actions of his persecutors even more of a mockery when they said, “Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?” How sarcastic! What a low level they stooped to!

“They spit in his face, and buffeted [punched and kicked] him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands.” These experiences were prophesied in Isaiah 50:6 and Psalms 22 and 69. The spitting was disgusting, especially considering Jesus' office, his background as the Logos, and his dignity. He was tested to the full, but he faithfully endured the contradiction of sinners (Heb. 12:3). As the Logos, he was with the Father at the creation of man, and now man did these things to him.

For “palms,” the King James margin has “rods,” that is, “the rods of their hands.” The word “rods” gives a more forceful picture of the strength that was used from their hands.

Matt. 26:69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

Matt. 26:70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

Matt. 26:71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

Matt. 26:72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

Matt. 26:73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.

Matt. 26:74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

Matt. 26:75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Verses 69-75 cover Peter's three denials of Jesus, as follows:

First denial (verses 69-70): Peter was “without in the [high priest's] palace,” that is, outside in the courtyard. He was discomfited by the question and his denial, so he got up and went out into the porch.

Second denial (verses 71-72): Peter was confronted again. Instead of getting away from the questioning by changing his environment, he walked into the same situation and was asked the second time, “Aren't you the fellow who was with Jesus of Nazareth?”

Third denial (verses 73-74): Peter was asked a third time if he was “one of them,” for his speech

betrayed him (with a Galilean accent). He was still outside, for the porch was outside the palace.

Notice the progressively vehement denials of Peter:

1. "He denied."
2. "He denied with an oath."
3. "Then began he to curse and to swear."

With the first two denials, a woman initiated the question. In John 18:26, the third questioner, a man, is identified as a relative of Malchus. Mark 14:69 identifies the second person as a maid (a woman), so the supplied word "maid" is correct here in verse 71 of Matthew.

Peter denied Jesus three times just as the Master had predicted, "and immediately the cock crew." Remembering the prediction, Peter "went out, and wept *bitterly*." Luke 22:60,61 brings in the rapport between Jesus and Peter. Immediately, while Peter was uttering the third denial, "The cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered [Jesus' prediction of the three denials before cockcrow]." Thus Jesus' *powerful, meaningful* "look" included remembrance by Peter and *deep* remorse. Stated another way, Peter's repentance, contrition, and utter remorse were all part of that look, and then Peter went outside and wept bitterly. His only access to Jesus in a personalized sense during the trial was in that look. This scene was probably recorded for playback in the future—the look being photographed just as Peter saw it. Such a look would strike to the *depth of the soul*.

Q: Mark 14:66-69 states plainly that the first two who questioned Peter were maids (females), but Luke 22:58 records Peter's second denial as, "Man, I am not." This is confusing. Was the second questioner a man or a woman?

A: Actually, the Luke account is not confusing. The denial was precipitated by a woman, but others were present who chimed in. Hence Peter's reply was to a man. (Note: The mention of the "man" in connection with the second denial does not mean that more than three denials occurred. There were only *three separate incidents* of denial.)

Q: Please harmonize Matthew 26:52 ("Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword") with Luke 22:36 ("He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one").

A: A question was asked at a convention some time back that will answer this question in another way. "Isn't it a contradiction for a Christian to have a gun in his possession? Doesn't having a gun indicate a lack of faith?" To answer this question, we must realize the circumstance. Brethren on farms or in the country who are plagued by gophers, foxes, hawks, etc., need a gun to shoot whatever is raiding their chickens and livestock. City brethren who see the gun standing in the corner of the room can ignorantly jump to the wrong conclusions.

Now consider the circumstances in the apostles' day. Paul said he was in danger of wild beasts in his journeys to certain places. Therefore, for purposes of protection, it would be practical for him to have a sword. Thus there are occasions when a Christian should take a "sword" and occasions when he should not.

Ezra's return to Israel was a case where it was proper not to take a "sword." While in captivity in Babylon, Ezra was recognized as a great scholar. In time, he had an audience with the king and got permission to return to the Holy Land with the treasures and the vessels of the Temple. The king asked if he wanted soldiers and arms for protection, but since Ezra had just been bragging about the *mighty Jehovah*, he now felt ashamed to admit a need for *man's* protection, so he said "no." Normally, it would be foolish to venture out on such a dangerous trip with so much wealth and no protection against not only wild beasts but also marauding

bands. Under the circumstances, however, Ezra was right to refuse the king's offer.

To "take the sword" is more than just a momentary taking for purposes such as those already mentioned. It would be *trusting* in the sword, *living* by it—a *way of life*—and using it on others. Moreover, in the present life, not all who take the sword perish by it. In fact, many die an entirely different type of death. The *general* rule is that those who habitually exercise violence are more apt to receive retributive justice. Many of Jesus' statements were a "popular" saying that contained a great deal of truth, and as such, they were not to be taken too literally. For example, "If your eye offends you, pluck it out," and "If a man compels you to walk a mile, go with him twain." The principles behind these well-known statements are what is important.

Matt. 27:1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

This was the morning of the day Jesus was crucified. The chief priests and elders had a meeting in which they decided that Jesus was to be executed. The meeting occurred predawn, before sunrise. We know this because Mark 15:1 tells us that Jesus was taken to Pilate the *first* thing in the morning, probably around 6 a.m.

Matt. 27:2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Imagine their binding Jesus! This information suggests that although he was bound earlier at the house of Annas, there was a subsequent time when he was not bound (such as during the predawn meeting). This binding of verse 2 was psychological. Jesus was condemned and then strapped. (An *innocent* person who is handcuffed by the police experiences a trauma.) Since it was morning, the public witnessed Jesus being bound. In fact, the binding was the first thing they saw because the other activities had taken place at night under cloak of darkness. What a change! The binding would have caused Jesus to *feel* guilty, even though he was innocent, for a shame, or stigma, was attached to the experience. Being perfect, Jesus was very *sensitive*.

Matt. 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

When did Judas realize that Jesus had been condemned? The Scriptures give no information about what Judas did after Jesus' apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane. He led the band of militia and rabble to the garden, identified Jesus with a kiss, and then dropped out of sight. Being the betrayer, Judas did not have to flee like the other disciples, so we can presume he followed along back to the house of Annas and then Caiaphas—and especially if he thought Jesus would miraculously free himself. If so, Judas would have known the results of the condemnation trial and would have seen the religious leaders bind Jesus and lead him to Pilate. Hence Judas now knew Jesus' doom was sealed.

As a result, Judas had a guilt complex and tried to return the money to the chief priests and elders. Judas "repented," but his repentance was not recognized. There is no more hope of retrieval for one who crucifies the Son of God afresh and puts him to an open shame (Heb. 6:6). (This condemnation also applies to one who denies the blood of the Ransom.) "For *godly* sorrow works repentance to salvation and brings no regret: but the sorrow of the world works death" (2 Cor. 7:10 paraphrase). Obviously, then, Judas's sorrow was the *wrong* kind: a sorrow unto death. He neglected to go to Jesus *personally* and ask for forgiveness—an action that *might* have resulted in retrieval. At any rate, Judas's sorrow was not acceptable, even though it was strong enough for him to commit suicide.

Matt. 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said,

What is that to us? see thou to that.

Judas did recognize that he had sinned and he was sorrowful, but his doom was sealed, nonetheless. Notice the reaction of the priests: “What is that to us? You see to it!”

Matt. 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Matt. 27:6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

Q: How do we harmonize verse 5 with Acts 1:18? “Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.”

A: Judas did not *personally* purchase the field, for he threw the money down and went out. The priests, feeling that this “blood money” could not go into the treasury, decided to buy the potter’s field. Therefore, Acts 1:18 is saying that since Judas brought ignominy and shame on his Master, the money he received for the betrayal had the *effect* of purchasing the field.

With regard to Judas’s bowels gushing out, Acts 1:19 reads, “And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.” In other words, some of the public saw the horrible nature of Judas’s death—that all of his bowels lay in a deposit at the base of the hill upon which he had hanged himself. It is likely that Judas used a tree on the brink of the hill. When he threw himself out and forward with the noose around his neck, not only did the tree limb probably break, but also the cord somehow slipped down to his stomach so that he was ripped open and his bowels and blood gushed out. Even though the nation was not in favor of Christianity, everyone in Jerusalem knew about the death of Judas. Interestingly, his suicide happened on the *same* day that Jesus died. Both Jesus and Judas finished their course in a terrible manner but from two different standpoints.

Potter’s field was called “The field of blood” because Judas’s blood and bowels gushed onto this very field. The priests called the 30 pieces of silver “blood money” because they resulted in the death of Jesus, but there was also a *visual* demonstration in the way Judas died.

Potter’s field was in the Valley of Hinnom, the garbage dump at the south end of Jerusalem. Judas’s bowels gushed out into the valley down below. “Potter’s field” was the earlier name because the clay found in that valley was used to make pottery. This name was subsequently changed to “The field of blood” (Aceldama).

When Judas originally arranged the betrayal, he probably rationalized that Jesus would not really be condemned but would miraculously escape. Judas did not expect Jesus to be put to death, for when he saw that Jesus was condemned, he realized he had made a *mistake* in regard to a *just* man. He had presumed that somehow Jesus would extricate himself from the situation and thus not be condemned. Instead Jesus submitted to the experience.

Q: Does Judas’s attitude here suggest that the Judas class at the end of the age will also experience some kind of sorrow following their betrayal of the feet members when they see that the manner of the latter’s death is something they had not anticipated?

A: Yes. If brethren betray other brethren, it might seem that doing so will save the former’s “skin,” but the betraying brethren will not realize the consequences of their actions at the time. They will betray in order to free themselves from a situation of pressure. However, it is one

thing to harmlessly tattle on another and identify someone in the truth, and it is another matter entirely to see what the action leads to. The betrayal at the end of the age will, therefore, be similar in principle to the betrayal of Jesus.

The Judas class may rationalize their actions by thinking, “It is okay if I give out names of brethren, for the Lord will take care of them.” The action will not seem to be that harmful, but nevertheless, it will be a *betrayal*. We must not aid or abet anyone in apprehending somebody else to save our own life. “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it” (Matt. 16:25). Decision making in the future will be a critical point.

Q: Acts 1:20 quotes Psalm 69:25 about Judas, “Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein,” and also Psalm 109:8, “His bishopric let another take.” What are the thoughts in these Psalm portions?

A: In Psalm 69:25, the pronouns are *plural*—“Let *their* habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in *their* tents”—because the reference is to a Judas *class*, of which Judas was a member. And there is another point. In the New Testament, most modern translators erroneously quote the Old Testament Septuagint rather than the Hebrew manuscripts. It is like having a conversation with another party and referring to an Old Testament Scripture. We probably would not quote it exactly, and neither did the New Testament writers, who could not quickly refer to an Old Testament text because there were no chapter or verse markings. Therefore, the reference in the first chapter of the Book of Acts to Psalms 69 and 109 was not meant to be exact. This is true of many other Old Testament references in the New Testament that do not match either the Hebrew or the Septuagint word for word. A relationship or theme was expressed but not a verbatim quote. The original in the Old Testament would have the priority, and then a principle, lesson, or sermon was drawn from it. Hence a statement or observation about something was not necessarily as exact as the original. For example, a principle might have been drawn from the original to justify an action.

Comment: The thought that Psalm 69:22-28 refers to a *Judas class* is very *strong*. Verse 28, which says, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous,” shows Second Death.

Reply: That is right.

Comment: Verse 23 is also strong: “Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.” The Judas class will experience a confusion of mind, a loss of Spirit begettal, etc.

Reply: Yes. When the potter’s field was called “The field of blood,” it ended up not being inhabited in the usual sense. Instead of the clay being used for making pottery, the field became a place for refuse (for disposing of garbage and burying the dead in disgrace).

Q: The other Psalm reference in Acts 1:20 is strong too. Psalm 109:6-8 reads, “Set thou a wicked man [Judas] over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he [Judas] shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office.” Then what about the next few verses? “Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places [etc.]” (Psa. 109:9,10). Do these succeeding verses still refer to Judas?

A: As a general rule, some portions of Old Testament Scriptures are designed to have a dual application, with part applying to one matter or individual and part applying to another. For example, Jeremiah 50 and 51 talk about Babylon. Several details are told about the destruction of *literal* Babylon, but then there are verses dealing strictly with the future *antitype* and some

verses dealing with *both*. In other words, in a prophecy, a few verses may apply specifically back there, and then suddenly a portion of text is interjected that has not had a past fulfillment yet is in the context of things already fulfilled. These are clues that such is a *prophetic* statement, and hence it is important to know both Old and New Testaments. A knowledge of history also helps us to know what has and has not been fulfilled. Sometimes the very history so essential to understanding is actually recorded elsewhere in Scripture. It is as if words were written down and then an italicized expression meant to refer to *mystic* Babylon is inserted.

There is another point too. When a serious transgression occurred in Israel's history (such as Judas's betrayal), the whole family suffered. In the Kingdom, every man who individually eats the sour grape will have his own teeth set on edge, but in past history, any father who ate a sour grape set his children's teeth on edge, and the family suffered subsequently. The whole family was treated like a plague or contamination as, for example, with the destruction of the families, including small children, along with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:1-35). Thus the principle of Psalm 109:9-15 applied back there but does not refer to the Kingdom.

Even today we see this principle enacted. For example, if the Israelis find that a certain house contains a sniper or a terrorist, they will blow up and level the whole house as a lesson to other people, yet the circumstance of others living in that house are unknown. Perhaps they were forced to cooperate at gunpoint or they are relatives or they could be truly sympathetic to the terrorist. Regardless, the practice is to level the house. To the onlooker, this practice appears to be very ruthless, but it is necessary lest other terrorists be harbored there later.

Q: Before the Kingdom, aren't the sins of the parents visited on the second and third generations?

A: Yes, and also to the fourth generation depending on the nature of the sin, and even to the tenth. However, it is usually to the third generation and rarely to the tenth.

Matt. 27:7 **And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.**

With the 30 pieces of silver, the chief priests bought the potter's field to use as a cemetery for burying "strangers" (non-Hebrews). Previously, the field was a source of potter's clay; now it became a cemetery. The association, seen here, of calling a cemetery for the indigent and/or the homeless a "potter's field" came down through history. For example, formerly in New York City, unclaimed bodies were buried in what was called "Potter's Field" following dissection, experimentation, etc.

Matt. 27:8 **Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.**

Aeldama is the Hebrew for "The field of blood" (Acts 1:19).

Matt. 27:9 **Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;**

Matt. 27:10 **And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.**

That Scripture, plus another one in the New Testament, has been very puzzling because neither appears in the Book of Jeremiah. However, Zechariah 11:13 mentions the 30 pieces of silver. Certain of the minor prophets quoted other prophets, such as Micah's quoting Isaiah (compare Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4). Probably the same situation occurred here—Jeremiah made the statement and Zechariah quoted it. (See the *Diaglott* footnote for several possible explanations.)

A number of things happened in Old Testament times that were not recorded in the Old Testament as we have it today. For example, in three places in Zechariah, the prophet referred to Jeremiah but did not use Jeremiah's name. Zechariah took lessons from Jeremiah and made similar statements. Therefore, the reference in Matthew 27:9 to a statement made by Jeremiah was probably originally uttered by him and then later quoted by Zechariah.

The same principle was used in Acts 20:35. Paul urged the elders of Ephesus to remember the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," yet these words are not found in any of the Gospels. However, that does not mean Jesus did not speak them. Paul was simply quoting something Jesus said that was not recorded in the Gospels. Therefore, when we read Matthew 27:9 and cannot find the statement in the Book of Jeremiah, faith tells us that he did say this, nevertheless.

There are other illustrations as well. (1) The names of the two magicians who withstood Moses are given in the New Testament—Jannes and Jambres—yet they were not recorded in the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:8). (2) Jude said that Enoch prophesied about the Lord coming with "ten thousands of his saints," but no such prophecy appears in the Old Testament (Jude 14). In fact, this statement is not even in the Book of Enoch.

Matt. 27:11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

Put yourself in Pilate's place. The *very first thing* in the morning—almost like waking him out of bed—the chief priests brought the condemned Jesus to him. The very fact the chief priests brought Jesus so early alerted Pilate that something was awry, for this was a pressure tactic. It was not orderly and natural to act so quickly so early in the morning. The chief priests wanted to get Jesus' crucifixion over and done with, but Pilate wanted to know what Jesus had done to cause such a reaction. Pilate did not think very highly of the scribes and Pharisees anyway, and he could see through their stratagem to get him to put Jesus to death.

Matt. 27:12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

Matt. 27:13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

Pilate himself questioned Jesus. First, he asked (verse 11), "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Presumably this question was asked *privately*. Jesus replied, "Thou sayest," that is, "Yes." But when Jesus was in public before his accusers (verse 12), he answered nothing. Isaiah 53:7 prophesied of this: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

"Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" Crucifixion was a horrible death, yet Jesus refused to use the *one* opportunity to defend himself. From a *human* standpoint, it was astounding to Pilate that Jesus would remain silent and not use this rare opportunity. Pilate knew the rigors of crucifixion. And on top of that, the reason for wanting Jesus' death was a flimsy accusation—simply because he said he was King of the Jews. Anybody else who made such a claim would have just been laughed to scorn and allowed to go on about his business, but not Jesus.

Matt. 27:14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Why did Jesus remain silent? He was probably aware of the Isaiah 53:7 text. Also, he must have

sensed that Pilate was wavering, and he knew he had to be crucified. He did not want to escape because his time had come to die. Jesus came to earth to give his life, and now was the time. To defend himself under that circumstance would mean he was trying to save his life.

Matt. 27:15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

On the Feast of Passover, the governor customarily released a prisoner according to the people's choice.

Matt. 27:16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

Matt. 27:17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Matt. 27:18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

Barabbas was not the only prisoner, but Pilate probably named him as the worst one, thinking that surely the people would want Jesus released. The other Gospels pinpoint that Barabbas was a *known* insurrectionist and a murderer, whereas the chief priests merely *accused* Jesus of being an insurrectionist.

At least three times, Pilate made a serious attempt to get Jesus released. When he afforded Jesus an opportunity to defend himself, he was surprised that Jesus declined. Even in private questioning, Jesus answered only, "Thou sayest." Moreover, Pilate washed his hands before the people.

Q: Is the name Barabbas a play on words? The concordance says it means "father's son," and he was released in place of Jesus, the *real* "Father's Son." Barabbas was the son of his father the Devil.

A: Yes. *Abba* means "father," and *bar* means "son." Incidentally, both *bar* and *beni* mean "son."

The entire drama of the Crucifixion and events leading up to it will be shown to all future, yet-unborn generations on other planets. Each character in the closing events of the last week of Jesus' ministry will be seen to have portent. For instance, the scribes and Pharisees picture the nominal Church leadership, and Pilate represents the high civil leadership.

Q: Does the release of Barabbas indicate that at the end of the age, some anarchists or terrorists could be released, while the truly consecrated are kept in prison and then executed?

A: Yes.

The scribes and Pharisees hypocritically argued that anyone who professed to be a king was a threat against the Roman emperor. Pilate was then afraid that the chief priests, Pharisees, etc., would get word back to the emperor. Thus this reasoning caused Pilate to later look more leniently on Barabbas, for he did not want to jeopardize his governorship. However, initially Pilate did not want to have Jesus crucified.

Q: Does *Pilate's Report to Tiberius Caesar* seem to be authentic?

A: It seems very reasonable. If *Pilate's Report* is fiction, it was written by one who was very much in tune with the circumstances and situation that existed back there. Of course we cannot be positive with regard to the authenticity, but it seems genuine. Many comments harmonize

with the thinking of Jesus as enunciated in the Gospels. In fact, *Pilate's Report* helps us analyze certain verses better because of the emphasis on the pandemonium in connection with Jesus' trial and crucifixion, how the mob was incited, and the lack of rationale. The report harmonizes not only with the Gospels but also with certain texts in the Old Testament. At any rate, *Pilate's Report* is helpful and does cause us to read the Gospels more carefully—and the Second Psalm too, especially the beginning.

Pilate's Report records Jesus as saying about a river (paraphrased), “You want me to concede and defend myself when I am here to do the Father's will, but I would no more think to do that than to say to the stream coming down from the hill, ‘Go back whence you came.’ To defend myself is the furthest thing from my own thinking. What comes down from the Father for me to do, that I will do.” The Gospels record only “Thou sayest,” but this other statement does not necessarily conflict. Jesus did say something privately to Pilate, and John 18:33-37 suggests that he may have uttered more than just these two words. *Pilate's Report* is helpful to read, for it alerts us to certain other details. However, our particular objective should not be to defend its authenticity.

“Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?” Pilate was the one to choose the release options. He selected the vilest of the criminals to contrast with Jesus. By taking this initiative, he seemed to be trying to make the people more amenable to releasing Jesus.

Notice that Pilate said, “Barabbas, or *Jesus which is called Christ.*” Even his intonation could have indicated that the real accusation was simply that Jesus called himself “Christ.” From Pilate's nonreligious standpoint, this charge was very *superficial*. He was asking, “Do you want me to release the one who calls himself Christ or this *known* criminal?” He was trying to twist the arm of the rabble before him, the ones who would give the verdict.

Pilate, a worldly-wise man, could see that the charges against Jesus were all trumped up and that the chief priests had delivered him because of envy. The charges did not merit capital punishment, and even if they did, Pilate did not want to be involved.

Q: How did Pilate know that “for envy” the chief priests and elders had delivered Jesus?

A: Certainly Pilate knew something about Jesus. Thousands—*great* multitudes—went to hear Jesus, not only those in the Galilee area, such as the crowds who were fed with the few fish and the loaves of bread, but also Jews from Lebanon, the ten cities of the Decapolis in Transjordan, and various tribes. Therefore, for the *governor* not to know what was going on, especially since he was responsible to the emperor for any civil commotion in his jurisdiction, would be a case of real negligence. Pilate probably knew that Jesus commanded a lot of attention. Also, the fact that Jesus was brought to Pilate for execution so early in the morning (around 6 a.m., before the public was awake) disclosed the motives of the chief priests and elders. And Pilate knew that the crowds followed Jesus, not the priests.

Matt. 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

When Pilate sat down on the judgment seat, his wife came to him and said, “Have nothing to do with Jesus; he is a just man. I have suffered many things in a dream this day because of him.” It is interesting that God put in the wife's dream that Jesus was a *just* man. Through her, the Lord gave Pilate opportunity to change his decision—just as Jesus gave Judas opportunity at the Memorial supper to change his mind about the betrayal. Because of the dream, when Pilate made his decision in regard to Jesus, he incurred more guilt. In the future, Pilate will not

be able to say, “*If I had known....*”

A governor was supposed to be the administrator of justice. Since part of the function of his office was to make decisions, a piece of putty in the judgment seat was not fit for the office. Therefore, Pilate cannot be excused by saying that the people came to him and were intent on Jesus’ crucifixion. As a Roman governor, he had the authority to exonerate Jesus.

Pilate’s wife reminds us of the queen who went to King Belshazzar at the feast to suggest that Daniel be summoned to interpret the handwriting on the wall (Dan. 5:10-12). As a result, the aged Daniel was called. In other words, a queen mother suggested to the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar what action to take. Hence there were critical moments in history when *women* played a prominent role—both for good and for bad (such as Jezebel).

Matt. 27:20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Matt. 27:21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

The chief priests and elders—those most responsible—engineered the release of Barabbas after Pilate had named him as the alternate for release. Pilate had deliberately named Barabbas, a known criminal—an insurrectionist and a murderer—thinking that surely the people would release Jesus. There were other criminals to choose from, but Pilate intentionally chose Barabbas. The fact that two were crucified with Jesus and two others suffered crucifixion, although not immediate to the Cross, proves there were at least several other prisoners. Pilate thought that Jesus’ innocence would stand out when contrasted with the notorious Barabbas, but the chief priests and elders effectively persuaded the multitude to release the guilty one and condemn the innocent one.

Matt. 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

When verse 22 is compared with verse 20, we can see that the chief priests persuaded the multitude not only to choose Barabbas for release but also, taking no chance, to destroy (crucify) Jesus. Notice, “They [the multitude] *all* say ... Let him be crucified”—they wanted Jesus’ death. *Pilate’s Report* agrees, for pandemonium ensued in connection with the “trial,” resulting in a shouting match. As an illustration, spectators can get so involved in a sports event that they are carried away emotionally, loudly voicing their pleasure or displeasure—even without cheerleaders. Of course the invisible Adversary and the fallen angels were probably whispering in the people’s ears too. In the future, all the forces operating behind this trial will be revealed. Some of the side actions that are not perceived through the Word alone will no doubt be amazing.

Matt. 27:23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

The multitude “cried out *the more*,” their cry becoming almost like a chant.

Matt. 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Pilate washed his hands because he felt that Jesus was innocent, and he did not want to condemn an innocent man. It was as if Pilate were saying, “This is *your* doing, not mine.” He

agreed to the Crucifixion because he was pressured into it.

Sometimes politicians have savvy and are able to judge the thinking of men. Pilate was one of these—a discerning individual—but we should not forget that he was powerful and not afraid to show his strength, as manifested in his slaughter of many individuals (Luke 13:1). However, to assign crucifixion, a *most horrible* death, to an innocent man was too much even for a hardened individual, especially since Pilate did not feel that Jesus was a real threat. When Jesus talked of his *future* Kingdom, Pilate considered him a dreamer. “Coming in the clouds of heaven” was utter foolishness to Pilate. It was not until the priests threatened to tell Caesar that Pilate was frightened not to condemn Jesus. He still felt Jesus was innocent but agreed to go along with the Crucifixion because of fearing Caesar.

“Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made.” Everything that Pilate did to try to curb or control the matter had an opposite effect. The multitude became more and more excited until he could see the situation was hopeless.

Pilate “took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.” Imagine witnessing this dramatic scene! Paintings usually show Pilate on a raised platform above the crowd. This portrayal would be accurate, for the multitude could thus see what Pilate was doing. Also, being on a different level was a symbol of authority.

“And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it” (Deut. 21:6,7). This instruction was given to the Israelites, and of course, in the type, the heifer that was slain represented an individual. The fact that Pilate followed this practice shows that among the Gentiles, there must have been a spin-off custom. Water is a symbol of purity and innocence. In India and other countries, this sort of washing is done.

Even though Pilate tried to free Jesus, he incurred a measure of guilt for finally assenting to the Crucifixion. However, the fact that he subsequently suffered a horrible death himself would count as some of the retribution. It is actually a blessing for someone who commits wrong in the present life to receive the punishment or expiation now, so that he or she can come forth from the grave in a more favorable condition, not having so many sins to receive stripes for. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men[’s sins] they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24). Some sins are expiated now, and some will be expiated in the next age.

Matt. 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

Isn’t it strange that the statement was uttered in this manner? This is what happened to many of the Jews in AD 69—Jesus’ “blood” was on them.

Q: Wasn’t the people’s statement taken from the Law? Deuteronomy 19:10 reads, pertaining to the cities of refuge, “*That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.*”

A: Yes, the terminology came right from the Law. In effect, the people were saying, “Jesus is guilty, so his blood can be upon us,” but the reverse was true.

The Romans *hated* Israel, feeling they were a recalcitrant, stubborn people, divisive and factional. Subjects of other nations were docile under Roman rule but not Israel. The Roman army really meant business when it came against Israel in AD 69. There was a long historical

basis for their anger.

Josephus tells about the great number of Israelites who were crucified on the walls of Jerusalem in AD 69-70. Thousands were put to death in this way during the siege. Plainly, the crucifixions were retribution. No doubt some remembered this statement of verse 25, but on the whole, human nature is strange. Most forget the words they utter unless forced to remember them by circumstances.

Matt. 27:26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

The Crucifixion was wretched enough, but to be scourged as well made the suffering even more intense.

Q: Luke 23:16 reads, “I will therefore chastise him, and release him.” Doesn’t this statement indicate that Pilate used the scourging as one last way to have Jesus released? He thought this bloodletting would satisfy the masses.

A: Yes. All four Gospels have to be read in order to understand all the action that was involved.

There is no question that Pilate felt Jesus was innocent and attempted to have him released. He regarded Jesus’ arrest as clearly a setup. He knew that through jealousy and envy, the priests and other religious leaders wanted to get rid of him but have Pilate do the dirty work. What hypocrisy! Passover was coming, and the religious leaders did not want to be contaminated.

Spiritually speaking, the human heart is so deceitful that on a much *smaller* scale, this type of thing can happen with us individually. We must guard ourselves lest we do an injustice to others. For example, it is easy to be generous with other people’s money. Or we can add to the suffering of another individual by a careless remark. True, the remark is not premeditated, but in a moment of jealousy or whatever, a damaging comment can slip out. What happened to Jesus was far, far worse—manipulating the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas. Nevertheless, we must constantly guard our hearts against the wrong spirit.

Comment: A situation occurred years ago where a brother was voted in as elder who was very unqualified. When the class saw that a big mistake had been made, those who voted for him wanted another elder, who had *not* voted for him, to tell the party. “It is your duty” was the reasoning. Our minds can work in such a lopsided way.

Take another situation. Suppose an incident arose where we deliberately asked a question to stir up trouble without thinking of the feelings of the elder involved. Such an attitude would indicate an insensitivity for our own amusement and for just wanting to hear a debate. We should not introduce a delicate issue under an *unfavorable* circumstance. There is a proper time and place for everything. For instance, if we were studying a certain subject, then questions along that line would be thoroughly in order. After all, that is the point of a study. But in another situation, such a question might put someone on the spot. Or we might be a guest in someone’s home, and another brother or sister could force us to discuss a subject that would put the host and hostess in their place. To do this would be inconsiderate and improper. We should think out things in advance.

Matt. 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

Matt. 27:28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

Matt. 27:29 And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

Matt. 27:30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Matt. 27:31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

All of these events occurred under Pilate's jurisdiction (by the "soldiers of the *governor*"). Jesus was taken to Herod earlier, and Luke 23:7-11 tells what happened at that time. On Jesus' return to Pilate, the things related in Matthew took place, including the scourging. *Two* robes, one with Herod and one with Pilate, were put on Jesus for mockery. Incidentally, scarlet is a purple red.

When the four Gospels are combined, the events from Jesus' seizure in the Garden of Gethsemane up to his death indicate the prolonged suffering that he went through. Obviously, the Master had little or no sleep that night. Just one thorn can penetrate and hurt—imagine a *whole crown* of thorns embedded into the scalp, which is a tender place without much flesh! We know these thorns were real because they were retribution for the Garden of Eden. *Thorns* and thistles were brought forth from the earth to Adam after sinning (Gen. 3:18). Adam's penalty, which had to be laid on Jesus, included far more than just dying. For example, after Adam sinned, he and Eve realized they were naked and hid behind a tree. Hence Jesus had to experience nakedness but in front of the "tree" (the Cross) in view of the entire nation. The Ransom is far deeper than just being a man's life for a man's life. Jesus had to suffer in some way *all* the penalties that came on Adam. He had to feel the guilt—in addition to the guilt and shame that came from exposure in nakedness on the Cross.

Take another example. We could be perfectly innocent, yet if the police came into our home, handcuffed us, and marched us off to prison, we would experience a sense of guilt in a psychological trauma. Jesus had to go through corresponding experiences for Adam, even though it was his *blood* that canceled the sin. The incidental sufferings—shame, sorrow, pain, etc.—did not cancel sin; Jesus' death did that. However, *both* were needed, for it was the Father's will for Jesus to have all of those experiences.

The tree was the instrument of deception in the Garden of Eden that brought the death penalty when the serpent beguiled Eve with the fruit. Therefore, Jesus had to die on a tree and be cursed. Just as Adam was cursed because he ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, so Jesus had to be cursed by hanging on a tree. He had to actually *feel* that curse, even though he was without spot. Truly the weight of the world was on his shoulders as the Redeemer. He is a champion in every sense of the word. If we could *see* everything that happened to Jesus, we would weep and be wrung out with emotion. We can only *partially* enter into his experiences by reading about them. Seeing would be a different matter.

Those who get the divine nature must have some of the experiences Jesus had. No matter how consecrated each individual is, not everyone has these experiences. All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. We think of persecution as self-denials, but it is not. *Opposition*, *suffering* for the truth, and *cross bearing* are elements of persecution. If persecution was necessary for Jesus, then to some extent at least, it is necessary for us.

"And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head." Isaiah 50:6 predicted this experience: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Thus Jesus knew it was the Father's will for him to endure these sufferings. The prophecies of Psalms 22 and 69 also helped.

Jesus was blindfolded when his persecutors plucked the hairs out of his beard and told him to prophesy who they were. Although Matthew did not actually say that Jesus was blindfolded, the implication is there.

It was King Adam, the father of the human race, who died. Even on Egyptian tablets, “Mena” (Adam) is pictured as a Pharaoh, a king. As such, he had dominion over the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, etc.—he was king over his domain. Therefore, Jesus had to die as a King, but a King in *dishonor*. Adam was a king in honor until he sinned, and Jesus had to pay the penalty of shame that came on Adam through disobedience.

Adam was put out of the *Garden of Eden*. In the *Garden of Gethsemane*, Jesus had a crucial test, or crisis. He agonized before the Father that if it was possible, the cup would pass from him. And Adam’s crucial trial occurred in the Garden of Eden when Eve, who had already partaken of the forbidden fruit, asked Adam to do likewise. The penalty was on Adam, not on Eve. Through Adam, the death penalty came on the human race. The whole story of the human race was in jeopardy in the garden when Adam was urged to eat of the fruit.

Thus Jesus had to unwind all aspects of the curse. He had to be SIN on the Cross. We use the words “sin offering,” which sound nice, but he had to actually have the feeling of being CURSED. He was the serpent on the pole. He had to feel as if he were Satan himself in the sight of the public. He had to appear as an impostor, falsely claiming to be the Messiah.

Matt. 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Cyrene is probably Libya in North Africa. Simon was *compelled* to bear the Cross—it was not a voluntary action. According to Roman law, anyone not a Roman citizen could arbitrarily be ordered to carry a load to the next milepost (or less as the case might be).

Mark 15:21 tells that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and an individual named Rufus is mentioned in Romans 16:13, “Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” It was quite possibly *providential* that Simon was compelled to bear the Cross. Mark 15:21 also tells that Simon had just come “out of the country.” Therefore, he was a traveler about to enter Jerusalem when he was intercepted.

“As they came out [of the city of *Jerusalem*, not Pilate’s chambers], they [the soldiers] found ... Simon.” When Jesus exited the Damascus Gate (a lower gate than the one used today), Simon was compelled to bear the Cross because Jesus needed assistance. Coming from the Via Dolorosa out the lower Damascus Gate, he had a *relatively* easier transit, but once he passed through the gate, there was a considerably steep rise in the terrain—much more so than now. Seeing that Jesus did not have the strength to ascend, the soldiers compelled Simon to help.

Simon and his two sons were probably black, although they could have been another nationality just living in Libya. At any rate, it was obvious to the soldiers that Simon was not a Roman citizen. Also, in addition to the color of his skin and his not being Roman, Simon may have been physically big and strong. Strength was needed, for the Cross was heavier than is usually considered.

It is hard to think of Jesus bearing that heavy cross on his raw-flesh back and shoulders following the scourging. There was a crosspiece on Jesus’ cross. It is true that sometimes for a crucifixion, the victim bore a pole or stave across his shoulders instead of dragging it behind, but Jesus truly dragged the Cross, as proven by two Old Testament pictures. (1) For Passover, the blood was splashed on the lintel and side posts of the door—hence in two directions—to resemble a cross. (2) Blood was sprinkled seven times on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the

Covenant in the shape of a cross. Thus we know the Cross was shaped like a lowercase “t” (†) and was not like a St. Andrew’s cross (x). Actually, a Lorraine cross, which has an extra shorter crosspiece above (‡), was the shape of Jesus’ cross because a sign was hung above his head with the following words in three languages: “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Matt. 27:37). Jesus carried just the “t” (†) Cross; later, after he was affixed to the Cross, the sign was nailed above his head.

Matt. 27:33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

Golgotha (Hebrew) is equivalent to Calvary (Greek), both meaning “place of a skull.” Skull Hill was an appropriate place for Jesus to pay the Ransom, since he died for one who had plunged the whole world into sin and death. The curse of death was on the human race, hence on a *human skull*.

The skull on the face of the hill shows God’s *foreknowledge*. Knowing *in advance* that Jesus would die in this very place, God originally caused a cleavage in the rock that would fracture to the shape of a skull. It is interesting that the stone where the skull is located fractures easily, whereas the stone to the right, being harder, was used as fill in constructing Solomon’s Temple. And Solomon’s Quarries underlie the city of Jerusalem, also having sufficiently hard rock.

Calvary hill is identified by the Arabs as “Adam’s hill.” Adam lived many years after he was expelled from Eden, dying at the age of 930, so it is quite possible that he was in this very location. There is even a place across Jordan and a little north called “Adam,” a small town in what would now be Transjordan. Thus places and names identify Adam with this area—not necessarily as a dwelling place but in transit.

Matt. 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

The purpose of the drink was to stupefy or dull Jesus’ senses. It was like giving someone a weak dose of morphine, although the vinegar drink wore off after a while and death took a long time in crucifixion.

Mark 15:23 states that Jesus was given “wine mingled with myrrh.” This was the same drink; hence it was wine vinegar. Gall is a synonym for myrrh, and myrrh mixed with vinegar has a stupefying effect. “Myrrh” (Hebrew *marah*) means “bitter.” Psalm 69:21 prophesies of this experience of Jesus: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Later Jesus had another experience with a drink, but this first drink was considered an act of mercy, which the women were sometimes permitted to render. If imbibed, the drink helped to alleviate the initial aspects of crucifixion.

Jesus merely tasted the drink and then refused any more. Had he consumed a greater quantity, it would mean he was trying to alleviate the penalty of the curse, and he came to die for this very purpose.

Matt. 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

Jesus’ garments were parted in four pieces, but his seamless outer robe was kept intact. For the robe, lots were cast. To take this action at the scene of the Crucifixion was sadistic. Not only did the soldiers strip the person so that he had no clothing, but also, to further denigrate him and his memory, they cold-heartedly cast lots for his last possessions right in his presence.

Matt. 27:36 And sitting down they watched him there;

Then the soldiers sat down and watched Jesus hanging on the Cross. They sat with repose, for the Crucifixion took time. Jesus was on the Cross from 12 noon until 3 p.m.—three hours.

Matt. 27:37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The soldiers set up a sign over Jesus' head with the accusation "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." These words were written in three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—so that all would know. It is important that Jesus was called "King" here, since he died for *King* Adam.

Q: Since Jesus' accusation was written in three languages, will the antitype be that the world will know when the feet members are put to death?

A: In effect, a public announcement was made of the charge against Jesus. If there is an antitype for the feet members, a public charge will be made against them too. In this age of television and worldwide communication, such an announcement would be easily accomplished through the media.

Comment: It is interesting that the chief priests wanted the sign amended to read, "He said, I am King of the Jews" (John 19:21). However, Pilate replied, "What I have written I have written."

Q: What is the difference between the Judgment Seat, the Judgment Hall, the Pavement (Gabbatha), the Praetorium, and the common hall?

A: First, we will consider the *Judgment Hall*. When Jesus was initially brought to Pilate, the chief priests did not enter "into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled" (John 18:28,33). Hence the scribes and Pharisees and the multitudes did not enter the Judgment Hall but stayed outside. Therefore, the Judgment Hall was a more sequestered or private area where interrogation was given.

Take a modern example. In the courtroom, the judge sits on an elevated platform behind a desk. The jurors and the spectators are usually present, but there are times when the judge does not want them to hear a certain discussion. At such times, the judge goes into a back room with the parties who are privy to and/or part of the discussion, but the others are barred. Another approach is to order the courtroom cleared so that the judge and the lawyers can privately consult. With Pilate, there was a separate room for interrogation. At most, only a few were allowed in that room because the decision was a Roman one. Thus the Jews were excluded except for the one being interrogated. The Judgment Hall should not be confused with the Judgment Seat.

Next comes the *Judgment Seat*. Matthew 27:19 reads, "When he [Pilate] was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him" in regard to her dream. The Judgment Seat was separate from the Judgment Hall. When Pilate was seated on the Judgment Seat, he could talk to the multitude, and they could see him. He carried on a conversation there and rendered a decision.

In the Judgment Hall, Pilate asked Jesus if he was King of the Jews. Jesus responded, Pilate asked another question, etc., etc. The Gospels state that after the questioning, Pilate came out to the people. Thus the Judgment Hall was a separate room *not visible* to those outside. When Pilate left that room and *came out* to the people and asked, "What will you have me do with this

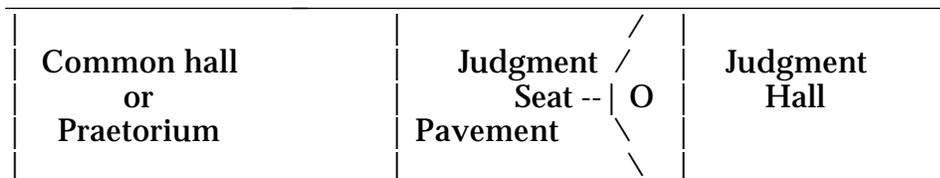
man?" he was in a *visible* area.

The *Pavement* will be considered next. John 19:13 states that Pilate "sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement [Hebrew *Gabbatha*]." The Pavement was like a courtyard composed of blocks laid down uniformly; that is, it was a laid-in floor made of blocks. This inner court was open to the sky. The Judgment Seat was elevated above the Pavement so that Pilate could address the people with authority. In other words, the Judgment Seat was on some sort of riser so that Pilate could speak down to the people.

What was the *Praetorium*? Mark 15:16 tells that soldiers led Jesus away "into the hall, called [the Praetorium]" and called together "the whole band [of soldiers]." The word "Praetorium" has been used in history in a number of ways (see the simplified explanation under the word "hall" in Young's *Analytical Concordance*). We usually think of a hall as a covered corridor that we can walk through, but anciently, "hall" meant an *open court*.

Matthew 27:27 speaks of a *common hall*. The soldiers took Jesus "into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers." The Praetorium is the *same* as the common hall. In fact, the *Diaglott* translation uses the word "Praetorium" in this verse.

Now we can put all the pieces together regarding (1) the Judgment Seat, (2) the Judgment Hall, (3) the Pavement, and (4) the Praetorium, or common hall. The Temple arrangement illustrated these terms somewhat. The Temple had an outer court and an inner court. When the scribes and Pharisees brought Jesus to Pilate, they stayed in a kind of outer court—the common hall, or Praetorium. A visible but more inner court was the Pavement. In this more secluded area, the actual judgment took place. From the Pavement, Jesus was taken into the Judgment Hall for private questioning by Pilate. Periodically, Pilate came out and talked with the multitude, but when he sat in the Judgment Seat, he rendered a decision. No doubt the Judgment Seat was well built to signify authority; it was in the place of the Pavement but was elevated. Pilate was up on a platform approached by a step arrangement. There he sat to give a decision. When Pilate came out into the elevated portion, it was just a little square, but it flanged out so that he had walking distance. He came out of the Judgment Hall, walking on the same level, and then went over to the protrusion where the throne, or Judgment Seat, was and rendered a decision. Pilate could talk to the people from any place on that platform. Then he went back into the Judgment Hall and questioned Jesus further. Finally, he brought Jesus out and said, "Behold the man!" (John 19:5). Hence Jesus, too, was on the raised platform and was visible to all. From this location, Pilate gave the decision. Then Jesus was taken out to the Praetorium to be mocked and abused by the soldiery. Hence the Praetorium was an outer court.



The Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem today, near the Fortress of Antonia, provides some concept of the layout in Jesus' day, but the city on the north part of this route is of relatively modern building. Off to the side at one part of the Via Dolorosa is a courtyard. There is an open cloistered walk with a little inner court and then a larger courtyard where the horses could come in and the soldiery would be. This courtyard (the Praetorium) was more or less a public area. Mostly, it was designed for the protection of Pilate. His centurions were quartered there, awaiting his orders, yet the courtyard was public in the sense that the people could walk there.

Thus the Praetorium was outside, and the Pavement was another little open court in view of the public with perhaps a cloistered walk and Pilate's throne, or Judgment Seat, at one end.

And off one of the wings of that platform, Pilate could go into a private room where the interrogation was held. This most inner room was the Judgment Hall.

The following is a summary:

1. Judgment Hall: the most inner room; used for private interrogation by Pilate.
2. Judgment Seat: next to the Judgment Hall and open to public view.
3. Pavement: a little court immediate to the Judgment Seat.
4. Praetorium: outside where the soldiery were stationed; a larger courtyard.

Matt. 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Immediate to Jesus' Cross, two thieves were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. Jesus had a conversation with one of them, and the two conversed with each other. The conversation shows that they were in close proximity to one another with Jesus being in the center.

Matt. 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

Matt. 27:40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

The clause "they that passed by" does not mean that the Cross was set up near a large thoroughfare where passersby could easily communicate with Jesus. The topography of the land adjacent to Calvary would preclude this. Calvary hill is about 20 feet above the chasm that was artificially created a few centuries before Christ's First Advent. Hence the people called up to Jesus, "If you are really the King of the Jews, come down off the Cross." By their raising their voices a little, Jesus could hear them very clearly. Also, the women viewed Jesus afar off. If his Cross had been down on road level, they would have been close to him (Matt. 27:55).

Proof that Jesus' head was more than eight feet off the ground is the fact that the sponge filled with vinegar was put on a reed in order to reach him so he could drink (Matt. 27:48). A six-foot man who put his arm up could easily reach about eight feet. Therefore, the part of the Cross *aboveground* had to be quite high—enough higher than eight feet to require a stick to reach Jesus' mouth. Thus we begin to appreciate the size of the Cross, and the taller, the heavier.

And there is another point. The Crucifixion is one of the greatest events in history. If it has been recorded as a *visual* presentation for viewing by posterity, a *higher* elevation would be a better perspective to photograph. The purpose of having Jesus crucified on a hill was to let all Jerusalem know what had happened. Very conspicuous on the brow of a hill, Jesus was visible from a considerable distance. Incidentally, too, the Crucifixion took place at Passover when teeming multitudes were in Jerusalem. Therefore, putting Jesus on a hill served as a warning by Roman authority of what happened to those who were guilty of sedition, etc. It was like advertising the penalty for disobeying Roman law.

Skull Hill is sometimes called Stephen's Hill, meaning that when Stephen was stoned, he was taken out to this hill. According to custom, the victim was pushed off the hill and, hopefully, died instantly. If still alive, he was put out of his misery with stones. However, because of the *symbolism*, stones were cast *whether or not* the victim was already dead. The casting of stones indicated that the victim was an object of hatred and an enemy of the people.

The fact that the hill was called "the place of a skull" is another indication the Crucifixion took place on elevated ground (Mark 15:22). The hill looks like a skull. If the Crucifixion had occurred down low and on a level, the narration would not be so appropriate. "Skull Hill"

suggests that the Crucifixion took place on top of a hill, rather than at its base, as many are now trying to say.

Matt. 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

Matt. 27:42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

Matt. 27:43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

Matt. 27:44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Verses 39-44 show that all the people—from the criminal, to the common people, to the highest religious authorities and civil officials—were at least representatively there to mock Jesus. He was truly rejected by the nation. Psalm 22:7,8 is graphic: “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” All segments of society were involved in stigmatizing Jesus at his crucifixion.

“The thieves ... cast the same in his teeth.” In other words, they also said, “If you are really the Son of God, come down off the Cross and save yourself. You saved others; save yourself.” The phrase “in his teeth” means the thieves were trying to get Jesus to take back his claim to be the Son of God. In essence, they were saying, “If you cannot fulfill what you said and prove that you are the Son of God, then take back your words.” The thieves wanted him to recant, or swallow back, what he had previously uttered.

Luke 23:39-43 shows that one malefactor did support Jesus. “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Therefore, *more* than the two thieves were crucified, but to Jesus’ *immediate* right and left were the two who accompanied him to Calvary and were crucified “with him,” that is, at the same time. An appendix in the Companion Bible provides interesting details in a reasonable explanation. The point is that there had to be more than just the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus and “cast the same in his teeth,” for certainly neither of these was sympathetic to Jesus. Others were behind Jesus, yet within hearing distance, whereas the two (one on his right and one on his left) could talk across his face.

The people down below shouted up to Jesus, mocking him. Even the chief priests and the rulers were not in the immediate vicinity of the Cross, for four Roman soldiers, the ones who parted Jesus’ garments, were right around the Cross. Their function was to keep people at a respectful distance so that they could not relieve the suffering. An exception was made in the case of Jesus’ mother, and John was allowed to assist her. The soldiers permitted this exception because their approach offered no threat.

The taunt was, “You say you are the Savior and have healed others, but now you are on the Cross and cannot even come down.” The Crucifixion seemed to remove the basis of Jesus’ claim. Had he yielded to this temptation, he would not have paid the purchase price of redemption for mankind. In the future, it will be seen that these were *very critical* moments. No doubt Jesus was very sensitive to these remarks, yet he was obedient *to* the Cross as well as *on* the Cross.

“He trusted in God; let him [God] deliver him now, *if he [God] will have him.*” What a dig! This statement would have cut Jesus to the quick, but he had to humble himself and submit. The mocking was a crucial period of time for Jesus, but he did not come down off the Cross.

Matt. 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

During the three hours that Jesus was on the Cross, from noon until 3 p.m., darkness was over all the land. At noon on normal days, the sun was at its height and most brilliant—directly overhead—yet at this time, there came a darkness that lasted for three hours. Jesus was on the Cross for those three hours.

Noon was the *full of the moon*, even though the moon was not visible. Therefore, from one standpoint, the Crucifixion occurred in the fullness of time, that is, in the fullness of favor under the Law to the Jew. Jesus came to his own, but they did not receive him (John 1:11). Hence darkness or blight was made manifest at his death.

When the unusual darkness came, it created concern. The darkness was not caused by an eclipse, for no eclipse occurred in the Jerusalem area for several years, including the year Jesus died. A *total solar eclipse* is very rare; sometimes one does not happen for a hundred years. Instead an earthquake occurred in the distance, casting up an ash cloud that obscured the sun. Frequently, a dust or ash cloud appears in the vicinity of an earthquake, so that conditions actually become like night.

The fullness of the moon was taught in the Passover type. Hence the full moon was more critical from a Scriptural standpoint. However, the sun being darkened was a sign or an evidence to that generation that something strange was happening. Peter called attention to this phenomenon in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-16,19,20). “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, ... hearken to my words: For ... this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ... I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.” Peter continued, saying in effect, “You crucified Jesus the Savior, and in connection with that crucifixion, many strange things happened.” He did not mention the rending of the Temple veil because it is recorded in the Gospels, but he felt that the strange happenings were a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy—and proof that Jesus was the Savior.

The dust in the air that darkened the sun from noon until 3 p.m. was *real darkness*. After 3 p.m., there was some thinning out, some lightening. Otherwise, the account would have stated the length of darkness as continuing until sunset or beyond. However, even after 3 p.m., the dust particles remaining in the air had strange effects, despite the fact that the darkness was lifting. For example, the dust particles affected the moon that night, giving it an unusual appearance. Peter called attention to the fact that with Jesus’ death, unusual things happened in nature. “Vapour of smoke” is a good description of an ash cloud from an earthquake. And the Scriptures tell us there was an earthquake (Matt. 27:51).

Matt. 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Matt. 27:47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

“Eli, Eli [My God, my God], lama sabachthani [why hast thou forsaken me]?” When Jesus spoke these words, his speech would have been slurred because of his physical condition, his

agony. He who had spoken as “never man spake [before]” lost the distinctness of pronunciation (John 7:46). As a result, others thought he was calling for Elias (Elijah).

Matt. 27:48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

One of the Roman soldiers took a sponge soaked with vinegar and passed it up to Jesus on a reed (a hyssop branch) so that he could drink (John 19:28,29). Jesus had just said, “I thirst.” (A tremendous thirst accompanies crucifixion.) The vinegar was given to him not to assuage his thirst but to add to his torment. Jesus would have been heavily perspiring under the agony of crucifixion, and drinking vinegar would only have intensified his thirst. Here is an example of the sadistic, brutal instincts of fallen man. Earlier the account said that the people, chief priests, scribes, elders, and thieves mocked Jesus on the Cross. Now the Roman soldiers were doing the same.

Remember that Jesus was on the Cross for three long hours. The number of words spoken *that were recorded* are few. Obviously, more was said, and the agonizing experiences were prolonged. For example, the people railed, but how many people? The railing could have occurred for at least two hours as various people passed by.

Matt. 27:49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

The others were annoyed at this interruption. They wanted to see what would happen. Would Elias come to take Jesus down off the Cross? Talk about mockery!

Matt. 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Jesus cried triumphantly: “It is finished!” “Father, into thy hands I commend [deposit] my spirit!” (John 19:30; Luke 23:46). We do not know which statement came first. Perhaps he said, “It is finished,” and then bowed his head and commended his spirit to his Father. Jesus died of a heart attack—and of a *broken heart* as well. “It is finished” was a cry of *victory*, for Jesus knew that he had been faithful and that he was dying right then, that the rupture had taken place.

It is quite possible Jesus got one last wave of *strengthening* in order to shout out these words. When he said, “I thirst,” and the sponge of vinegar was offered and he drank (John 19:30), he may have gotten the sensation that as far as he knew, all things prophesied for him to do were fulfilled and there was nothing more except for him to expire.

“Jesus ... yielded up the ghost.” The *Diaglott* interlinear is better: “Jesus ... resigned the breath.” He gave up the breath of life when he died, saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Matt. 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

The earthquake could have followed a fault such as the Palestinian rift. The dust cloud that obscured the sunlight could have been caused by an earthquake in the *distance* that threw ash up in the air. Then air currents carried the dust to blanket the Judean countryside for three hours, causing a real darkness. The earthquake tremors themselves would have approached closer and closer to Jerusalem (they usually follow a fault) until the quake of verse 51 occurred. In any event, there had to be several tremors because another one occurred at Jesus’ resurrection on Sunday morning, when the stone was rolled away from the tomb.

The Temple veil, which was four to six inches thick and heavier than a rug, was rent from the

top to the bottom, signifying a *divine* judgment and God's *wrath*. The fact that the rending of the Temple veil was *not* denied indicates the truthfulness of the Gospel account. Hence we know that an earthquake occurred, the land was dark, and the Temple was affected. If these facts were not true, they would have been contradicted back there, for the Gospels were written while that generation was still alive. Matthew wrote fairly soon afterwards—before the Temple was destroyed. Thus there is *prima facie* evidence that these things occurred.

The earthquake was *violent*, for rocks were rent too. When these strange things happened, Jews who had borderline faith were stimulated to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. And imagine their reaction when the report came, "He is risen!" The timing of these strange events in nature to coincide with the Crucifixion was very faith-strengthening.

Matt. 27:52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

Matt. 27:53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

C. J. Woodworth compiled the list of spurious passages on pages 10-12 in the last section of the *Berean Manual*. For the verses being considered, the list reads:

Matt. 27:52 - And the graves were opened*

Matt. 27:53 - and went*

The asterisks indicate that these words are missing in the Sinaitic manuscript, but even *with* these omissions, the account *would still be true*. Verses 51-53 would read: "... the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Seven words are deleted, but the sense is the same.

At one time, the Pastor felt this incident was probably an interpolation, but the interpolation is the seven words, not the whole two verses. He then used another argument but changed his mind later on.

"The *saints* which slept arose." There should be no objection to this clause because it identifies those who were raised. When the earthquake occurred, *believers* were raised, not worldly people, yet many object to the word "saints" being used prior to Pentecost and feel this is another proof the whole text is not authentic. However, the word "saint" is used in the Old Testament, for example, in Psalm 106:16 (in regard to Aaron) and Deuteronomy 33:3. And there is another point. The Gospel of Matthew was written about 14 years after Jesus' death, so the writing took place *after* the fact. In other words, Matthew wrote *later* about those who were in the tomb when Jesus was crucified but were resuscitated in connection with the earthquake. This statement is reasonable too, for during the 3 1/2 years of Jesus's ministry, some who had a hearing ear would have died, yet John tells us that as many as received Jesus were given the privilege of becoming the sons of God. Therefore, it would be an act of beneficence for God to awaken those of this class who died before Pentecost so that they could receive the benefit of the Holy Spirit and thus have a chance to make their calling and election sure.

The questions might be asked, "Why, then, did they die? Why were they not spared from death?" The answer is that their awakening has significance as a type or picture of events at the end of the age. When the antitypical earthquake occurs, it will be a proof that the Church has finished its course. Revelation 19 shows that the Time of Trouble will be an evidence that the Bride has made herself ready. That is the signal of an awakening, or a resurrection.

Why does the account say, "Many *bodies* of the saints which slept arose"? Matthew wanted to show that the awakening was like Lazarus' resuscitation. The bodies of those individuals had started to decay, but there was a restoration to live out their lifetime. The *same* vessel, more or

less, that went into the grave was revived. Even though Lazarus had been dead for four days and was decaying, when he was called forth, he was the same Lazarus. Therefore, the flesh was restored on the same body frame. 1 Corinthians 15:37 teaches, “Thou sowest not that body that shall be.” The real resurrection of both the Church and the world will be of a different substance from that which went into the grave. For example, if millions lose their lives in a nuclear explosion at the end of the age, their bodies will be fragmented and completely erased. When called forth from the tomb, new atoms will be brought together to simulate the body that died. The soul and the mind will be the same. Each will come back as the same individual, but the atoms of the body will be different.

Therefore, verses 52 and 53 are not describing a resurrection but a resuscitation, an awakening, similar to that of Lazarus. Of those thus revived, perhaps some were faithful and some were not, but they did have an *opportunity*. Moreover, others, seeing these revived ones and knowing they had died, were strengthened in faith at this occurrence.

After Jesus’ resurrection—three days later—these “saints” went into the Holy City. When first awakened, they experienced great mental confusion to learn that the one they trusted to be the Savior had just been crucified. In fact, he was still on the Cross. Joseph of Arimathea was pleading for his body, and Nicodemus was gathering cloth to wrap around his body plus ointments. Under such circumstances, the saints did not go into Jerusalem and testify about their resuscitation. They were utterly bewildered and wanted to find out what had happened.

In the future, this incident will be a *very dramatic* film to see! The saints had previously known Jesus as a preacher of wonderful sermons and a healer of the sick. Imagine their consternation to now be resuscitated and learn of his betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and death. And they knew of the condition under the Law: “Cursed is he who hangs on a tree” (Deut. 21:23 paraphrase). No wonder they would not go into the Holy City! But after Jesus’ resurrection, it was another matter. Their faith was restored just as that of the apostles was restored. They were “begotten ... again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). When Jesus was crucified, Peter’s faith momentarily ceased with regard to seeing Jesus as the Savior because everything belied the fact.

After Jesus’ resurrection, the saints would have run around ecstatically announcing, “We were dead, but now we are alive! Jesus is alive!” Surely they *would not be calmly* witnessing at such a time but were running around like lunatics with excitement and enthusiasm. The whole city would know that some were saying Jesus was alive. Hence there was great concern on the part of those who had put Jesus to death. They thought the whole matter would die with his death, but instead his ardent followers, risking life and limb, and speaking with great boldness, promoted his cause *more than ever*. The plotting of the scribes and Pharisees boomeranged. And so “He [God] that sitteth in the heavens” laughed and had them in derision (Psa. 2:4). The resurrection of Jesus brought his life to a beautiful climax and great joy.

The sleeping saints who were raised picture, in antitype, the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies, the Old Testament “saints,” who will be raised in “bodies” as perfect human beings. They will also experience momentary confusion when first raised, but events will be quickly explained to them. Then they, in turn, will be the mouthpieces to the world.

Q: Is any part of verses 52 and 53 truly spurious? The *Diaglott* indicates that they are authentic in their entirety.

A: It does not really matter, for whether or not the seven words are spurious, the meaning is the same.

If we consider the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry as a picture of what will happen in the

future, it shows that after the feet members are put to death, then will come the great Time of Trouble, the great earthquake, in the midst of which the Ancient Worthies will be brought forth in physical bodies.

Matt. 27:54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Notice, not just the centurion but those who were with him expressed the sentiment “Truly this was the Son of God.” Considering how hardened these Roman soldiers were, particularly the ones who cast lots for Jesus’ robe while he was in agony on the Cross, divided his garments, and gave him vinegar to drink on a hyssop branch, this statement was remarkable. It shows that they recognized the greatness of the signs—the darkness and the earthquake. This admission does not mean they became converts, but they did associate Jesus’ death as *triggering* the strange phenomena in nature.

The fact that Mark 15:39 mentions *only* the centurion probably means that subsequently he was a changed man who became identified with the other believers. Momentarily, the others were very much impressed, but they would not have become Christians. Some think this centurion was Cornelius, although we do not know for sure.

A person can be miraculously preserved from death and thank God at the time but a week or two later just drift away. Even Israel, after the Six-Day War, felt that God had intervened because of the many miraculous circumstances, but a short time later the Air Force and the brilliance of the generals were credited for the victory. The same thing happened in 1948 when Israel became a state. Israel is basically agnostic today, not a nation of believers.

Q: Which veil in the Temple was torn?

A: There was only *one* veil, and it hung between the Holy and the Most Holy. (Doors were at the entrance to the Holy.) In Ezekiel’s Temple, there is no veil at all, just doors separating the Holy and the Most Holy and doors at the outside entrance.

The earthquake and the resuscitation of some who were dead were not of man’s origin. Matthew was stressing the *miraculous* nature of the events that occurred. Paul drew other lessons, such as saying that the torn veil showed Jesus’ opening up the new and living way (Heb. 10:20). Sometimes Paul referred directly to the earthquake and sometimes inferentially.

Matt. 27:55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

It is kind of touching that the women followed Jesus all the way from Galilee, yet now, because of his nakedness, they kept their distance out of respect. They stayed with him until the end; they witnessed his decease.

Matt. 27:56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.

“Among [those who had followed Jesus from Galilee] ... was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.” The latter was Salome (Mark 15:40). Another Mary was present also: Mary, the wife of Cleophas (John 19:25). She was the sister of Jesus’ mother, but a lineage chart is needed to explain this relationship. (There are three major Marys and at least six altogether in the New Testament.) Matthew 13:55 identifies Mary, Jesus’ mother, as also being the mother of James, Joses, Simon, and Judas. Although she

was near the Cross earlier when Jesus committed her into John's care, she was now afar off with the other women (John 19:25-27). Mary means "bitter." It is significant that so many Marys were present to witness Jesus' *bitter* experience.

The disciples (men) were not present. They had fled because in times of persecution, the men are usually sought after. It is reasoned that if they are all killed, the movement will cease, and that was especially true in the past when women occupied a subservient role. John was the exception. He drew near the Cross with Mary, Jesus' mother, but the extenuating circumstance was that he had some kind of family connection with the high priest (John 18:16).

Matthew's personality and motivation in writing his Gospel are reflected in this verse by the mention of Mary Magdalene *first*. Matthew wanted to help the Jews, particularly the publicans and sinners, see their need for repentance and forgiveness. Mary Magdalene had been possessed by seven devils previously, and Matthew himself had been a publican (Luke 8:2). Thus he was sympathetic to those not regarded too highly by the authorities of that day. Matthew's Gospel gives us insight into Jesus' popularity with the class who were considered outcasts but who responded to the gospel message. Matthew was trying to encourage those who felt unworthy. Even in his genealogy, he did this, bringing in those who were included but had a bad reputation (Rahab, Tamar, and Ruth the Moabitess). The fact that their past backgrounds became submerged shows what Jesus' message has done, can do, and will do for those who respond to his calling.

Matt. 27:57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

Matt. 27:58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

"Even" was between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., the start of the next day. In the Old Testament, the account about the Passover (Exod. 12:6) gives the literal Hebrew for "even" in the margin: "And ye shall keep it [the lamb] up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening [*between the two evenings*]."

What were the "two evenings"? They were the two periods of the sun's *declining*. The first evening, called the "lesser even," was from noon until 3 p.m. The second evening, called the "greater even" because the sunset was closer at hand, was from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. Therefore, "between the two evenings" in the type was 3 p.m. Since Jesus did not die until 3 p.m., we know that verse 57 refers to the "greater even." Joseph of Arimathea would not have begged the body until Jesus had died.

Arimathea was a city in Judea, about five miles north of Jerusalem; that is, it was in the vicinity of Jerusalem and not a distant location. Piecing the Gospels together reveals that Joseph of Arimathea was a good, just, rich, and honorable counselor. Apparently, he was a member of the Sanhedrin, a very respectable position.

The Garden Tomb is north of Jerusalem, a little distance outside the Damascus Gate. This was the family tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The grave was hewn out of rock. Attaching the city name, Arimathea, to Joseph was a way of identifying which Joseph. Incidentally, in the New Testament, "Joses" is often used for Joseph.

The faith of Joseph of Arimathea was shown because he "waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43). Also, he did not consent to the counsel and deed against Jesus (Luke 23:51). John's Gospel tells that Joseph and Nicodemus were secret believers at first. Nicodemus "at the first came to Jesus *by night*" (John 19:39). Joseph was "a disciple of Jesus, but *secretly* for fear of the

Jews” (John 19:38).

The first three Gospels commended Joseph of Arimathea. Only John reported this somewhat negative aspect—probably to emphasize the *marked* change in character and conduct following and/or resulting from the Crucifixion. By the boldness of Joseph and Nicodemus in begging the body of Jesus—in taking from the Cross the body of a condemned “criminal,” whom all Israel had spit upon—and respectfully wrapping it and taking it to the tomb, they came out of their shell and revealed themselves as Jesus’ disciples. Their thought and concern for him were remarkable. The apostles lost that privilege, for even though they did not have a tomb available, as Joseph did, they could have assisted. Joseph of Arimathea “went in *boldly* unto Pilate, and *craved* the body of Jesus” (Mark 15:43). Imagine the emotion with which he pleaded!

Matt. 27:59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Matt. 27:60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Why did the Holy Spirit overrule to have Matthew mention that it was a new, hewn tomb, the entrance of which was blocked? The Jewish answer to the Crucifixion, both anciently and currently, is that the body was stolen, secreted away, by the disciples who later declared, “He is risen.” But the account refutes this reasoning, for the grave was hewn out of *solid* rock. In other words, there were no secret passages. The tomb was chiseled out—to be, as it were, a strong box or a stronghold. When the stone “lid” was put on the tomb, there was no chance of stealing the body—and especially when a watch was placed there (verse 66). Death was the penalty if anyone tried to break the seal on the door. The stone was “great.” Joseph would have needed help to roll it into place. Later the earthquake jostled the stone so that it slid over.

Q: Does Isaiah 53:9 apply here? “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.”

A: Yes. “Rich” applies to Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb and “wicked” to Jesus’ dying between two thieves. These two Old Testament clues were an enigma, for how could a person be with both? But in connection with his death, Jesus was placed in these two different postures.

Matt. 27:61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

These two Marys observed the activity of Joseph and Nicodemus (and any other unnamed helpers). They watched the placement of the body in Joseph’s new tomb so that later, when they went to get other spices to further prepare the body, they would know how to get back there. The “other Mary” was Jesus’ mother (see verse 56); she was also the mother of Joses and James.

Why was Mary Magdalene mentioned first and Jesus’ mother in a secondary role? Part of the reason was Matthew’s motivation in emphasizing the former’s forgiveness and repentance and thus reinstatement to favor, a favorite theme since Matthew himself had been a publican. He kept stressing repentance for the Jew.

When Matthew wrote his Gospel, he started out with Jesus’ lineage, which of course showed Mary as the mother of the *babe* Jesus, an infant. But now Jesus was over 30 years of age, and he had had a ministry of 3 1/2 years, during which he gave great sermons and did many healings. He had even said that his “family” was not his mother and brothers but those who did the will of the Father. The others, hearing him, thought he was putting down his mother, but had Jesus not done that, Mariolatry would have occurred right from the beginning. Jesus counteracted

this attitude to show that from the true standpoint, she was just like any other disciple, and attention should be focused on the Master himself. Hence she is called the “other Mary.”

The traditional Catholic view is that Mary had only the *one* Son, but if all Scriptures are considered, that is not true. For example, the fact that she brought forth her “*firstborn* son” implies others were born subsequently (Luke 2:7). Matthew 13:55,56 speaks of Jesus’ brothers (James, Joses, Simon, and Judas) and his sisters. Acts 1:13 lists the apostles including two of Jesus’ brothers, “James the son of Alphaeus” and “Judas the brother of James.” Then Acts 1:14 mentions Mary and the two other brothers of Jesus, who were *now* believers but not originally (John 7:5). In all, Jesus had four brothers. Judas, the brother of Jesus, also called Lebbaeus Thaddaeus, wrote the Book of Jude (Matt. 10:3). The apostles are listed in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, and Acts 1:13. “James the lesser” and Judas (not Iscariot) were Jesus’ brothers. “James the greater” was a brother of John, both being “sons of thunder” and sons of Zebedee and Salome (Mark 3:17; 16:1). Peter, James, and John (the latter two being sons of Zebedee) were honored with a more immediate presence with Christ. Six of the 12 apostles were closely related to Jesus, being either brothers or cousins.

Why was the name Mary used so frequently? Miriam and Mary are the *same* name. The Jews looked up to Miriam and revered Moses, her brother. Miriam was very prominent, even though she got leprosy at one time, for she led the whole nation in singing after the Exodus and was highly respected for her position (Exod. 15:20,21).

Matt. 27:62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

Matt. 27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

Matt. 27:64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

Matt. 27:65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

Matt. 27:66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

“So the last error shall be worse than the first.” The chief priests and Pharisees thought that Jesus’ profession to be the Messiah was false, but in view of his former profession, they felt that if news got abroad that he had been raised from the dead, it would be even more damaging. Consider what happened when Lazarus was raised after being dead for four days. That miracle was a leading reason why the people hailed Jesus as King when he rode into Jerusalem. When the Pharisees heard that Lazarus had been raised, they went to his home in Bethany and planned to kill him as well as Jesus. If Lazarus, who did not claim to be the Messiah, was raised from the dead and, consequently, caused excitement and commotion and the hailing of Jesus as King and Messiah, then what would the people do if the one claiming to be the Messiah was reported to be raised? The chief priests and Pharisees feared that type of news. The concept of the disciples’ stealing the body is still held among the Jews today.

Two different character types were among those responsible for Jesus’ death. Some people were so evil that even though they felt Jesus was the Messiah, they still rejected him, but that was not true of most of those who were involved with his death. Peter said, “Brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers” (Acts 3:17). In other words, had the majority of the Jews *known* that Jesus was the Son of God, they would not have crucified him. It

is hard to believe that any would be so incorrigible as to crucify Jesus *knowing* his true identity, but there were some.

“The next day, that followed the day of the preparation,” the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to set a watch. The “preparation day” was Thursday, the 14th, when the lamb was slain late in the afternoon. The day after the preparation was the 15th, Friday, from 6 p.m. on. The chief priests and Pharisees did not allow much of a time gap after Jesus died. He had foretold his death and his rising again on the *third* day (Matt. 16:21; 17:23). Only one *full* 24-hour day was involved, but the Pharisees did not even wait for that. They had the seal set immediately, as fast as they could, by the Gentiles. Pilate had a cohort of soldiers that were given for the protection of the Temple. The priests could utilize the powers of this small band, called the Temple guard, after getting authorization from Pilate. Thus the guard sealed the stone and set a watch. Of course Pilate also had his own guard, which was involved in the Crucifixion and was used to put down any insurrection that might arise. Hence there were the two guards at that time.

From their perspective, the chief priests and Pharisees kept the Feast of Passover with “clean hands.” However, those of their number who paid the bribe money to the Roman soldiers were especially culpable, for *knowledge* was involved. They thus obtained an *additional* testimony from the very ones they had requested to be set over the tomb.

What did “setting a watch” mean? The soldiers sat around and made sure no one came into that area. What did “sealing the stone” mean? A type of paraffin was put around the stone, as well as a chain or rope. If the stone was moved, the chain would break. The seal of authority was in the center. Being easy to break, the seal was actually symbolic, but death was the punishment for breaking it. Hence the stone was just as secure as if it had been welded to the wall. The cord or chain could be quite flimsy, but breaking it brought the ultimate penalty. Instead an angel rolled the stone away in connection with an earthquake.

Q: In the antitype with the feet members, is there a correspondency to the amount of planning and scheming that took place to put Jesus to death?

A: Yes. Just as Herodias arranged a contrived method of putting John the Baptist to death, so it will be with the feet members. Temporary emergency legislation was enacted to trap Daniel with the result that he was cast into the lions’ den. With the feet members, the argument will be that legislation is necessary in order to preserve the status quo, law and order. And just as there were immediate repercussions back there, so it will be in the future. When the quake occurred, the stone was rolled away, and there were startling events. The fact that the nation was still *not* converted shows a great deal. If we had lived back there and really believed Jesus was a *false* Messiah—as the majority of the people did—and then saw him hanging on the Cross, that image would have been indelibly printed on our mind. The later claim of some that he had been raised from the dead would not have been effective in breaking our prejudice. If even Thomas had to see certain things with his own eyes, then those with less information would have had a skeptical attitude. To the degree that we see the truth, a *miracle* is involved.

Matt. 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

Notice the wording “the end of the sabbath.” Actually the sabbath ended at 6 p.m. on Saturday, at sunset, but the women did not go to the tomb until early Sunday morning at dawn. Why, then, does the account say “in the end of the sabbath”? The women had seen on Friday afternoon where the body was laid, but then they went home to procure spices, intending to return after the sabbath to further anoint Jesus’ body. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had hastily removed the body from the Cross, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in

the sepulcher. Now the intention was to saturate the cloth material with sweet-smelling fragrances. Therefore, the women had rushed home on Friday and quickly purchased the spices before the sabbath began at 6 p.m. According to the Law, they could do no further work on the sabbath and thus had to wait until it ended. But at 6 p.m. on Saturday, the sun was setting and darkness set in, so the women waited until early Sunday morning. They left their homes while it was still dark, anticipating an arrival at the Garden Tomb at dawn. When the women arrived, they found the tomb *empty*.

Two Marys went to the tomb at this early hour: Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother. (Again, notice the secondary role given to the latter.) Other Gospels mention additional women such as Salome (Mark 16:1) and Joanna (Luke 24:10). Only four are named, but there were at least five or six women. Joanna was the wife of Chuza, Herod's chief steward (Luke 8:3).

Matt. 28:2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

The women were either at the tomb or very near when the earthquake occurred. It is thought that they lived to the south of the city of Jerusalem, so they had to leave their homes and go north to Golgotha. It would have taken about a half hour to walk that distance at a fast pace.

No doubt the women were aware of the earthquake but did not at first realize the connection. The angels may have been involved in precipitating the earthquake, for spirit beings have various powers. At any rate, the stone was rolled back from the tomb door, or entrance.

Jesus would have been already raised and his human body dissolved into gases *prior* to the earthquake. Everything had already taken place at the time the stone was rolled away. An angel was outside the tomb. Having rolled back the stone, he sat on it.

Matt. 28:3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

Verse 3 describes the angel's appearance. "His countenance was like lightning" in that his face was very bright—not like flashing, jagged lightning but as a bright shining (Greek *astrape*) or supernatural illumination. This illumination was so strange and awesome that it numbed those who beheld it (verse 4), unless, like the women, they were specially empowered by a supernatural force to withstand it. Incidentally, that is why artists have drawn halos around the head of angels, but actually, the shining emanated from the face, and it may not have been a perfect circle.

Even with this bright shining, facial features were distinguishable. Otherwise, the word "countenance" would not have been used. Mark 16:5 calls the angel "a young man," showing a definite distinction in facial features in spite of the "lightning" countenance. The light was ethereal and mystical with power, having a force in it—some sort of magnetic power that enervated or dissipated the strength of the beholder.

In addition, the angel's raiment was "white as snow." With both the flesh and the garment illuminated, the women knew that this was no ordinary person—that they were seeing a supernatural being, a messenger from God. Jesus would have had a similar appearance at his transfiguration earlier. His face shone "as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). Also, in Sinai, just from looking at the "angel," Moses' face glistened; that is, it absorbed some of the light rays (Exod. 34:29,30).

Matt. 28:4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

The keepers (the tomb guards) experienced the earthquake and beheld the angel. For fear of

the angel, they shook and “became as dead men.” They were there on the ground, knocked out, as it were, while the angel talked to the women. Although present, the keepers were numb, so they were out of the picture. This was a *startling* experience, yet the women were so intent on anointing Jesus’ body that they were not very observing. Their minds were emotionally involved with the purpose of their mission. In view of the reaction by the keepers, it is incredible that they could later be bribed into silence. They were given “large money” (verse 12), apparently a *lot* of money.

Matt. 28:5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

“Answered” is an Old English word that means “the angel *spoke*” and does not necessarily imply an answer to a query the women made. However, the angel may have been responding to what he knew was in their minds.

Matt. 28:6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

“He is not here: for he is risen, *as he said.*” The angel’s words reminded the women that Jesus had prophesied not only his death but also his resurrection. Then the angel introduced the women to the tomb: “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

Matt. 28:7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

The angel’s saying, “Lo, I have told you,” was like his saying, “Mission accomplished.” The holy angels followed orders *exactly*. In other words, “I have discharged my responsibility. Now it is up to you.”

The women were being prepared for Jesus to appear in Galilee to a larger group, including them. The journey to Galilee would take about a week, and they were even told to go to a particular mountain, probably the Mount of Beatitudes (verse 16).

Here in the Gospel of Matthew, *one* angel was *outside* the tomb giving instruction. However, Luke 24:4 and John 20:12 mention *two* angels *in* the tomb. The same message was repeated inside the sepulcher because the women were too emotional and shocked to grasp it the first time. “Go back to the other disciples and repeat my words that Jesus is risen and will appear in Galilee. Go there and await that experience.”

In all, there were at least two angels, and probably three. If there were only two, the one outside would have subsequently moved inside. Mark 16:5 mentions one of the angels as “a young man sitting on the right side.” John 20:12 says two angels were sitting, “one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” In other words, the angels changed postures.

Jesus had been laid in the antechamber of the Garden Tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. A slab was there for preparing the body before it was moved permanently into the tomb bed. However, Jesus’ body never got moved, for he was resurrected first. The tomb bed had been hastily chiseled out because Joseph and Nicodemus realized that Jesus was taller. Compared to the carefully finished sepulcher, this portion, dug with haste, is circumstantial evidence that Jesus’ body truly was laid there in the Garden Tomb. The angel on the right side (Mark 16:5) was at the end of the antechamber and off to the right.

Matt. 28:8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

The women had *mixed* emotions—and they *ran!* Remember, Jesus’ mother, Mary, was among the women. With fear and *great* joy, they ran along the uneven ground.

Additional information is supplied in Mark 16:8. The women “went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: *neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.*”

Matt. 28:9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Matt. 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Jesus appeared to the women, but John 20:11-18 shows that Mary Magdalene was not present for this appearance. Jesus used a customary salutation: “All [of you,] hail”! Evidently, they recognized his voice and also presumably his appearance in this case. The women excitedly held his feet and worshipped him.

Jesus was *momentarily* held by the feet here. On another occasion, he said, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17 paraphrase). “Touch” in the Greek means “*embrace.*” The thought is as follows: “Do not continue to hold me. I will be here for a while. I am going to my Father, but first, I will see you again.” In other words, “I will be leaving you, but not right away.” By saying “Embrace me not,” he was teaching other lessons as well. For example, “Although I am the same personality, I am different than before. I am now the *risen* Lord.” After his resurrection, he was not as familiar with the disciples as he had been previously. He wanted to impress on them that he was of a *different nature*, even though his love and concern were the same. He tried to show them he had capabilities now that he did not have as a human being (he could go through bolted doors, vanish suddenly from their sight, appear as a gardener to Mary, etc.). Jesus now kept a little reserve. There was not the same degree of familiarity because his position as the risen Lord commanded more respect. He was now the *tried, proven, and raised Lord Jesus*. Before, he was of the brotherhood and had to make his calling and election sure; he was a “man of sorrows” (Isa. 53:3). Now he was different.

The same is true of Jehovah. We would not think of embracing His feet because of the honor of the office—unless, ultimately, we are of the divine family. If we become part of the Little Flock beyond the veil, we will find out what the relationship is.

With the expression “All hail,” Jesus was also saying, “My resurrection is good news not only to me (that I have been faithful), but also to you. Your hope is no longer dead but is a *living* hope.” Jesus was reassuring the women. Repeating the angel’s instruction to go to Galilee was necessary because strong emotion causes forgetfulness.

With all the excitement of the resurrection and the joyous conviction of Jesus’ brethren, the witness was powerful! And Jesus appeared to 500 in the Galilee area, who not only were almost forced to believe but also actively became identified with him and the apostles.

Matt. 28:11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

Meanwhile, the soldiers awakened and hastened back to the chief priests to tell them what had occurred. The religious element feared that if news of Jesus’ resurrection leaked out, the whole city would be in an uproar and equally excited.

Matt. 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

Matt. 28:13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

Matt. 28:14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

Matt. 28:15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The “saying ... commonly reported” is that Jesus’ disciples stole his body. Matthew wrote his Gospel about ten years or so after Jesus’ resurrection, and this saying is still prevalent today as, for example, in the book *The Passover Plot*.

Guilt was especially incurred by the chief priests and elders, who assembled to concur on a fabricated story, a LIE. Of course not all of the priests and elders were involved. Those most concerned had been involved in putting Jesus to death. Now they schemed how to handle this new situation. They supplied both the hush (bribe) money and the false testimony the soldiers were to give. All this required planning and thinking—and thus responsibility and GUILT. They were lying against the Holy Spirit.

Q: Matthew’s Gospel is the only one that reports in detail about Judas and relates this incident about the hush money. Was Matthew particularly directing his Gospel to the Jews? Was he showing their responsibility?

A: Yes, Matthew’s Gospel was directed to the Jews and to their customary way of thinking and talking in everyday language.

The following sets forth distinctions as to whom each of the four Gospels was addressed:

1. Matthew was directed to the Jews.
2. Mark was a testimony to the Romans. Hence this Gospel was crisp and concise—a blunt type of presentation that the Romans would be more apt to appreciate. They just wanted the facts and nothing flowery, embellished, or gushy.
3. Luke was slanted to the Greeks.
4. John is international. This Gospel was written on a different basis—it was directed to those who would become Jesus’ followers and was even wider in scope. An analogy is that the stars are a testimony to *everybody*, for all people can appreciate the heavens. John reasoned from the standpoint that the way Jesus performed showed he really was the Son of God—through his words, his mannerisms, and his actions. John’s approach was, “We touched, held, and embraced this man; therefore, we can assure you our testimony is *true*.”

Matt. 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

Matt. 28:17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Matt. 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Matt. 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Jesus not only told the disciples to go to Galilee but also named a particular spot: “a mountain.” The Gospels do not tell every word Jesus uttered but, rather, the *essence* of what he said. Otherwise, the New Testament would be as thick as the Old Testament.

Q: After the disciples were instructed to go to Galilee and did so, were they then told to return to Jerusalem, where the Upper Room was located, for Pentecost?

A: Yes. The reason Jesus went to Galilee was that there were many disciples in that area who had consecrated but not been able to accompany him to Jerusalem prior to the Crucifixion. However, a number of women did minister to and accompany him. Of course the 12 apostles went plus other brethren. For the benefit of those who could not go, Jesus appeared in Galilee after his resurrection to assure them of the fact. It is startling that even though he appeared, some still had difficulty believing he had been raised. (The apostles had the advantage of *multiple* appearances. To those in Jerusalem, the news was broken gradually.) When Jesus appeared the first time in Galilee, some were quick to believe, while others were skeptical, but Jesus reassured those who were hesitant to believe. His effort to reassure them shows his concern for those who wavered. His words of reassurance were, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”; that is, Jesus had the *power* to appear as he did. He also appeared on another occasion in the Galilee area when the apostles were out fishing (John 21:1-13).

The “mountain” was probably the Mount of Beatitudes, where Jesus had given the Sermon on the Mount, although we do not know for sure. On the mountain, Jesus told the apostles that their future mission would eventually be to leave Jerusalem and go to other nations to preach the gospel, repeating what they had heard him say on several occasions.

Q: Verse 19 is frequently used by Trinitarians in trying to prove the oneness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. How would we refute their reasoning?

A: We could not explain this Scripture convincingly to Trinitarians because they are so infused with that thinking. Baptism is done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the sense that the Father is the Author of the whole arrangement and His Son is the Lord of the Church, the Head of the body. Not only should this distinction be discerned, but there should be *understanding* of the Word through the Holy Spirit. In other words, if one were baptized in just the name of the Father and the Son, it would be a perfunctory service, such as is done with infants. An infant who is baptized has no understanding. Hence relative *adult* understanding is a necessary prerequisite to a proper baptism. It is the same principle as the statement that those who worship God should do so “in spirit and in *truth*,” “truth” being *understanding* (John 4:24).

Jesus had just made the statement “All power *is* given unto me in heaven and in earth.” This statement shows a *subservience* to the *Father*, who had the *authority* to confer this power. It also shows a distinction between the two beings. The only Trinitarians we can hope to reach are those not too steeped in the doctrine. A miracle is required to break that enslavement of thought.

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age, Greek *aion*].” What a nice way for the Gospel of Matthew to terminate! This statement of Jesus would comfort any Christian in any age, regardless of the level of understanding, in time of severe trial or persecution.

Q: Is the “Amen” at the end an instance of Matthew’s personality coming out?

A: Probably. However, some red-letter editions attribute this statement to Jesus. Matthew ended his Gospel by telling what Jesus said to the 500 in Galilee, but this was not his last appearance. The apostles went back to Jerusalem, where Jesus appeared in the Upper Room and also on the Mount of Olives. Therefore, Matthew probably uttered the “Amen.”

Q: The only Scripture that mentions the two angels, one at the head and the other at the feet where Jesus had lain, is John 20:12, but some other information is inserted in between. The other Gospels seem to say that all the women who came to the tomb ran back to the other disciples. What was John saying? In Chapter 20, he stated that Mary Magdalene went to the sepulcher early in the morning and then ran to tell Peter and John. These two raced to the tomb to see for themselves and went home again, but Mary stood outside the sepulcher weeping (John 20:11). She stooped down, looked into the tomb, and then saw the two angels.

A: Mary Magdalene stayed alone at the tomb for a while after Peter and John left. When Jesus said, “All hail,” she was not present. She probably followed Peter and John back to the tomb and then lingered. Evidently, Peter and John were in a different place from the other disciples. Therefore, the other women ran to the other disciples while Mary ran to tell Peter and John.

Notice, Peter and John went to the high priest together when Jesus was arrested. And they were the spokesmen at Pentecost and later at Antioch. Their being together at these times suggests a special rapport between them, as well as separate lodging from the other disciples. Not only does John’s Gospel clarify that Mary Magdalene was not with the women when Jesus said, “All hail,” but also it proves that the end of Mark’s Gospel is inaccurate and spurious (John 20:1-18; Mark 16:9-20).

At least two angels were at the tomb early Sunday morning. If the one angel outside the tomb went inside, there may have been just two angels. At any rate, there were probably no more than three, with changing postures. Two angels appeared quickly at the tomb (Luke 24:4). Then there was a lapse of time until Peter and John were summoned, and Mary Magdalene was alone when the two angels again appeared. Thus the two angels probably appeared, disappeared, and reappeared.

When UFO information is pieced together, parts of the testimony are cohesive, even though some of the eyewitnesses exaggerate and some minimize their reports. Certain common points emerge: UFOs can disappear and reappear, they can enlarge and shrink, and an airplane can pass through them without any jolt (like going through a cloud). Spirit beings can assume shapes, forms, and sizes according to their purpose. A *legion* of fallen angels was in two men of Gergesa/Gadara. A thousand angels can be in *one* person—just a “microchip,” as it were. A microchip can transmit and receive *vast* amounts of information, even “intelligence” activated with feelings, thinking, and emotions.

When Peter and John entered the tomb, they both saw the same thing, but Peter went away not believing for the moment (John 20:3-8). However, John pieced the clues together and was convinced. When the body was “extracted,” the linen wrappings remained. John now saw them and observed that the collapsed separate wrappings for the head and body were still intact, *not unwound*. Since it would be impossible to remove a body without unwrapping it under normal circumstances, John realized a miracle had occurred—the body had been dissolved into gases. Thus two people can witness the same event and draw different conclusions.

We will conclude Matthew’s Gospel as he did: “Amen.”

[Note: The following separate discourse given by Bro. Frank Shallieu in October 1997 is an update and clarification of some of the details of the Parables of the Talents and the Pounds since the Matthew verse-by-verse study in 1983-1985.]

COMPARISON OF PARABLE OF THE TALENTS AND PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

The Parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:12-27) was presented in the home of Zacchaeus, and the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) was given subsequently on the day before the Memorial. In other words, the two parables were given a week apart toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Since the parables have both similarities and disparities, a comparison yields considerable information. Later on we will reason on some subjects not commonly explored to any depth.

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus said, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country" (Matt. 25:14). The Parable of the Pounds reads, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). Not only do both parables speak of the Master's departure from his disciples and his going into a "far country," which is heaven itself, but they indicate a considerable time lapse covering his absence. In fact, before the parable was given, Luke revealed that the disciples mistakenly thought the Kingdom would soon be established. To counteract such thinking, among other reasons, Jesus gave the Parable of the Pounds.

The Talents Parable continues, "Who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one [of his own servants] he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey" (Matt. 25:15). The Pounds Parable says, "He called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy [that is, trade and/or use the pounds in a business fashion] till I come" (Luke 19:13). One pound, the *same* amount, was given to each servant, but *varying* amounts of talents were given to each individual: five, two, and one. Despite the disparity, the two parables pertain to the same subject matter, namely, Jesus' going into a far country and returning to reward his faithful servants.

In the Talents Parable, we are next told, "Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents [for a total of ten talents]" (Matt. 25:16). And of the second servant, it is said, "And likewise he that had received two [talents], he also gained other two [for a total of four talents]" (Matt. 25:17). Incidentally, when the two parables are compared, both the pounds and the talents are types of money.

Luke 19:14 inserts a statement that seems to be out of place, but it is there for a reason. "But his citizens hated him [Jesus], and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." The Pounds Parable continues, "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading" (Luke 19:15). Quite an increase was shown by the servant whose pound had gained ten pounds. "Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds" (Luke 19:16). And Jesus replied, "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17).

Now we will read more verses. "But he that had received one [talent] went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy

of thy lord” (Matt. 25:18-21). Notice that the one who was faithful with the one pound and increased it to ten pounds was given authority over “ten cities.” The one who faithfully doubled his five talents for a total of ten talents was told he would be ruler “over many things.” Thus the Talents Parable is not specific about the reward, whereas the Pounds Parable is. The reward was directly proportional to the money originally given and *faithfully used*. In both cases, the reward for faithfulness was *rulership*—in the one case “cities” and in the other case “things.”

The Talents Parable continues: “He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:22,23). The two-talent servant was faithful over a “few things” but was rewarded with “many things.” That principle is in both parables: of doing *little* on this side of the veil and being rewarded with *much*. The point is that the “little” in service was so appreciated that, in comparison, the reward overwhelmed.

Luke 19:18,19 tells us, “And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.” The reward was equated with the end result. The one whose pound gained ten pounds got ten cities.

Although going back and forth between the two parables is a little difficult, it will start to bring out certain distinctions and the slightly different way the reward was expressed in each case.

With the rewards for the increase in talents, the same statement was made whether the individual gained five talents (a total of ten) or two talents (a total of four). “Well done! You are good and you are faithful. Therefore, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (paraphrase). Thus there was no distinction between the one with the greater results and the one with the lesser results. However, the same statement was not made with regard to the increase in pounds, for in that case, the reward was directly proportional to the gain. The one ending up with ten pounds got more than the one who ended up with five pounds.

Now we will discuss in more detail the last class in the parables, that is, those who did not increase the one pound or the one talent. Keep in mind that both parables deal with the same subject matter. The first two classes are favorable and were thus commended, but that is not the case when there was no increase.

The Parable of the Talents continues: “Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine” (Matt. 25:24,25). The servant was given one talent and returned one talent. There was no increase.

With regard to the Pounds Parable, “Another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow” (Luke 19:20,21).

The criticism or condemnation sounds similar in both accounts. The same subject matter is being viewed from two different perspectives. In both parables, there was no increase, no results. One servant hid his talent in the earth; the other laid up his pound in a napkin. The net result was that both returned to the Lord what was originally given to them with no added interest or usury. The Lord voiced his disapproval as follows:

“His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury [with interest]” (Matt. 25:26,27). In other words, the money should have been used in a business activity in which interest would accrue. The one-talent servant is called “wicked and slothful.”

The Pounds Parable is worded much the same. “And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?” (Luke 19:22,23). Here the servant is called “wicked.”

In both cases, the Lord was complaining not that the servant had to double what he was given but that he needed at least *some sign* of interest accruing. The result was a reprimand that exceeded just words; it involved a loss.

“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:28-30).

And what does the Luke account say? “And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they [the apostles who interrupted Jesus] said unto him, *Lord, he hath ten pounds.*) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath [used] shall be given; and from him that hath not [used], even that he hath shall be taken away from him” (Luke 19:24-26). Again the wording is similar. The disciples could not understand why the pound would be taken away and given to the servant who already had ten pounds. Human logic would say, “At least give the pound to the one with fewer pounds, the five-pound servant.” In other words, the apostles could not contain themselves. Not understanding the dispensing of the reward, they interrupted Jesus.

Questions: How can the talent be taken away from the one-talent servant and given to the ten-talent servant? How can the pound be taken away from the one who did not earn any interest and then be given to the one who had accrued ten pounds? What do the “talent” and the “pound” represent in antitype?

First, the pound will be considered. In the past, the pound has been explained as referring to justification, the standing of the Christian. With everyone in the body receiving one pound, there is equal distribution. But here is a further question. How can justification be taken from one individual and given to another who *already has justification*? If the pound is modified to mean the hope of the high calling, the definition is better, but it still does not answer all questions. At least the hope of the high calling is common to all who consecrate, for we are all called in the one hope (Eph. 4:4). And with such a definition, it would be possible for one who loses the pound to be of the Great Company. However, the faithful ten-pound servant had already attained a place in the Little Flock, so how could the hope of the high calling of the one-pound servant be given to him?

Therefore, we are back to the same question. What does the pound represent? Remember, the first two classes of servants were commended, but the third class was not. The pound represents locality, territory, or region of responsibility. When each of us gets the truth and consecrates, the hymn applies that says, “Brighten the corner where you are.” In other words,

when we get the gospel, responsibility follows. First, we make an effort to change the environment in the home. Next we witness to a friend, then a neighbor, and then a coworker. This responsibility to witness pertains to the one pound. Of the various avenues of industry, we *must do something* for the gospel's sake. Of course, if those we witness to do not accept the truth, at least we were not quiet about it.

This line of reasoning shows us something else. When the call is given—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—and the individual responds favorably, repents, and dedicates his life to the Lord, not only is he in the race with the hope of the high calling, but a place has already been allocated (Matt. 11:28). To repeat: every person who consecrates is not only justified but has a place already allocated for him. We know that each consecrated individual has a place down here, for God puts every member in the body as (or where) it pleases Him. In being part of the body, each person has a function: the eye, the ear, the foot, etc. (1 Cor. 12:12-22). However, the Lord has so well thought out His plan with all of its ramifications that He already has territories in mind for the world in the Kingdom Age. He knows who will administer and have the rulership in the various continents of earth: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, etc.

The Scriptures tell a little. For instance, Jesus said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). (The twelve tribes represent twelve different personality traits.) Just as large corporations have a chain of command for authority and responsibility, so it will be in the Kingdom with the apostles at the top. Other strata of authority will be underneath them in the chain of command. As star differs from star in glory, so there will be differences in degree in the rewards given in the Kingdom Age. The Pounds Parable shows that the reward is directly related to the exercise of one's responsibility. If the responsibility is increased, then so is the reward. A person will have authority over five or ten cities in the Kingdom instead of over just one city. Had the one-pound person gotten even one additional pound, he would be a ruler in the final analysis, for he would be of the body of Christ in glory and reign and have proportionate jurisdiction. It is significant that the parable does not mention a doubling of the pound as being necessary but simply says that the servant was unfaithful with his one pound.

With regard to the Talents Parable, the Lord originally gave five talents to one servant, two talents to another servant, and one talent to a third servant. In the net result, the servant with five talents got ten, the one with two talents got four, and if the servant with one talent had been faithful, he would have had two. However, the one-talent servant was not faithful, and this omission is very revealing. Notice, the Pounds Parable states that there were ten servants, but only three of the ten are mentioned. In several parables, Jesus leaves us hanging so that we can exercise our minds, and that is the case here. What about the other seven servants? Perhaps one of them also got ten pounds. Perhaps another servant added one pound for a total of two pounds. But what about the ones who *lost* the money so that they did not have even the original pound? At least the one who hid his talent in the earth and the one who laid up his pound in a napkin were able to return the money to the Lord. The point is that some will forfeit even the one pound by, say, forsaking the truth and thus end up with nothing and a destiny of Second Death.

Another question arises. In both parables, the one talent or pound was at least kept or preserved. These servants were still ostensibly in the truth but were indolent and inactive. The next point is that the talents and pounds were called the *Lord's* money, for it is *He* who originally gives the talent(s) and the pound to each one of us (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23). The talent(s) and the pound are not of ourselves.

In giving an explanation with regard to the five-talent person, the Pastor listed the five talents as wealth, influence, education, power of the intellect, and public utterance. In other words, if we take public utterance as an example, the Lord opens the door of opportunity, and there are different degrees for the one-, two-, or five-talent person.

Concerning the pound, each of the consecrated has personal responsibilities where he is situated. If one is faithful and has unusual zeal and energy, his influence generally goes beyond the normal parameters of the home, the business, and the neighborhood. The multiplication of the pound indicates the extension of one's influence beyond his own locale or region. Some have national influence, and others even have international influence. Thus there are different degrees to which one can "brighten the corner." The corner becomes large in some instances. The reward for using the pound, which is a city or cities proportionate to faithfulness, shows a burgeoning of influence. The greater the faithfulness, the greater the reward.

With the talent of wealth, we must be careful, for some have reasoned that if they stay in their job and accumulate thousands of dollars, they can do thus and thus and thus. The parable is referring not to that kind of reasoning but to what the Lord gives. For example, one might get a windfall or an inheritance—something that was not earned. We call that Providence.

Influence is another talent. Even if our influence is confined to the local ecclesia, we have that responsibility. One way of being faithful is to attend meetings, for a meeting cannot be a success unless brethren are present. The coals of fire warm one another. We confide our problems to each other, work together, etc., especially as we see these evil days (Heb. 10:25).

The talent of education does not mean that we should reason, "If I get a college degree, I will have such and such a position." Instead the talent of education is something we get without effort being involved. Providence bestows the education. Many brethren obtain considerable education (self-taught or otherwise) before they consecrate. Particularly if one is poor, it is apparent that the education was providential. (Incidentally, the three major themes of the Bible break down into one-third history, one-third prophecy, and one-third doctrine.)

Brethren may be given the talent of public utterance where the door opens for work on radio or television. Those who are invited make use of that which opens up. Others, through the pressure of salesmanship, open the door. They are self-advertisers, as it were, which is permissible if the motive is right.

The parable shows that the talent can be taken away from the one-talent person, who had apportioned to him a place in the Kingdom. The Lord sets the members in the body down here, and for those who are faithful, a much greater reward awaits them beyond the veil. If one is not sufficiently faithful, the jurisdiction or authority set aside for him is taken away and given to another. As long as the door is still open, another person is called to fill the vacancy of either the one-pound or the one-talent person.

Past explanations do not fit the taking away of the talent and the pound. Consider Solomon, who prayed for wisdom to judge the people faithfully. As the successor of David, he prayed that he might be a blessing to the kingdom of Israel, and God answered that prayer by granting wisdom through the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are enumerated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, a gift of faith, a gift of healing, a gift of prophecy, a working of miracles, the discerning of spirits, diverse tongues, and the interpretation of diverse tongues. These gifts were mechanical in the early Church, but even in a spiritual sense, they are somewhat mechanical. God can bless one in an avenue where he was not endowed by nature. When an individual is faithful, the Lord can give a gift arbitrarily: wealth, influence, public utterance. For example, some who start with poor

stammering tongues—and thus have a rather limited field—end up as international orators. God still gives these spiritual gifts. On the other hand, fruits of the Spirit, though still miraculous, picture *our cooperation* with the Holy Spirit.

Next, what about the wicked and slothful servant? Looking up the word “wicked” in the concordance does not really give the answer. The word is used only about a dozen times, and in seven of those cases, it seems to apply to the incorrigible. For instance, this word is used in regard to Satan. When the Greek article “the” is put in front of this word—“*the wicked [one]*”—it is referring to the Adversary himself (Eph. 6:16). However, this word is also used in 1 Corinthians 5:13, where there is the possibility of retrieval in regard to a person who was in a pretty deplorable state along the lines of the flesh. Not only did the Apostle Paul instruct that the wicked person should be cast out of the ecclesia, but in his second epistle to the Corinthians, he mentioned that the ecclesia should restore such an individual lest he “be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” and commit suicide (2 Cor. 2:6,7). The individual really came to his senses and repented and was, therefore, to be received back. Here, then, is one who was temporarily put out, as it were, and the possibility of restoration did exist. (Of course from a practical standpoint, not too many would make that return journey for various reasons. However, this individual truly repented.)

The point is that the Corinthian situation opens the door to a faint possibility of retrieval when the word “wicked” is used. The Greek word *poneria* is listed in *Strong’s Concordance* and Liddell and Scott. *Strong’s* is relatively limited in the examples it provides, but the word is mentioned. The following is from Liddell and Scott. The first or major characterization of *poneria* is “a bad state or condition, badness.” The second characterization is in a moral sense: “wickedness, vice, knavery (trickery), baseness” and then “*cowardice*,” a word that fits. Thus the word *poneria* can be used to mean “coward.” Notice that in both parables, the thought of fear is expressed: “I was afraid” and “I feared thee.” We see, then, that with the thought of cowardice being a possibility, the parables may be speaking of the Great Company. In regard to one of these parables, the Pastor gave the thought that the one-talent or one-pound person pictures the Great Company. However, because of his numerous other responsibilities, he did not go into the reasoning behind the thought.

The Greek word is also *poneros*, which refers to a condition in a physical sense. The root meaning of this word is “oppressed by toil, toilsome, painful, grievous”—thoughts that are quite different from “the wicked one.” A second application of *poneros* is “bad, in a bad case, in a sorry plight, useless, good for nothing.” A third application is, in a moral sense, “bad, worthless, knavish, the evil one, cowardly.”

Liddell and Scott have ten times more information on words than *Strong’s*. And another dictionary commentator also gives more information than *Strong’s*, but we will now examine *Strong’s*, which says that in a figurative sense *poneros* can mean “calamitous,” and in a passive sense it means “ill,” that is, “diseased” and “morally culpable,” namely, “derelict.” Both the one-talent and the one-pound individuals in the parables were derelict and indolent with regard to responsibility. Then *Strong’s* gives another definition: “vicious.”

In Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the meanings under the word *poneros* are “bad, malignant, miserable.” Of the three, “miserable” is about the best connotation for the “wicked” one-talent and one-pound persons. Seven times this Greek word is used in reference to the Devil, the Wicked One, but 1 Corinthians 5:13 gives reason for hope for the individual.

Next we will consider the expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” as part of the penalty. The expression is used about nine times in Scripture. In several instances, the thought is “pretty near the end of the road” or “in the pit.” Nevertheless, several other usages are in a different

light. For instance, the tares are cast into a furnace of fire to experience wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42). With the tares, the thought is that they will cease their profession as Christians. Having never consecrated, they never had the hope of the high calling and hence are not under the threat of possibly losing life altogether. In the Parable of the Dragnet, angels sever the wicked from the just and cast the wicked into a furnace of fire; wailing and gnashing of teeth follow (Matt. 13:50). That parable can possibly be open to two interpretations. In the Parable of the Wedding Garment, the man found without a wedding garment is cast into outer darkness and there experiences weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13). This last usage sounds like the bottom of the pit. The evil servant of Matthew 24:48-51, who smites his fellow servants, does not seem to be salvable. In Luke 13:28, Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Although some of the scribes and Pharisees had more responsibility and thus incurred Second Death, there is hope for them as a class, for how could they see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom if they were not brought out of the grave? Thus there can be hope when the expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is used.

In summary, we reason along several lines as to why the "wicked servant" in the Parables of the Pounds and Talents may not represent a Second Death class.

1. The meaning of the Greek word translated "wicked" indicates some possibility of hope.
2. Likewise, the expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" shows a possibility of hope.
3. The term "outer darkness" can also have a possibility of hope. Let us digress on that term for a moment to consider the scapegoat picture in Leviticus 16. The sins of the nation of Israel were confessed over the scapegoat before it was sent out into the desert. In other words, the Great Company will feel the guilt and have the same fate or experience as the world in the Time of Trouble, which will be a wilderness situation for *all who are left* after the feet members are taken.
4. In both parables, the "wicked servant" was on hand to hear the condemnation, the suggestion being that perhaps in the antitype this class will not go into Second Death. Remember, the servant *preserved* the one talent or pound.
5. Of the ten servants in the Pounds Parable, what about the seven who are not mentioned? The servant or servants who did not have even the one pound originally given are not mentioned because they remain in the tomb and thus do not hear the condemnation.
6. A dispensational feature is shown, for the man or nobleman goes into a far country and then returns. Jesus received the Kingdom when he went away and then waits until the Father tells him to go into action. Since the parables are dispensational, the faithful servants (the first two classes) hear the personal commendation "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" beyond the veil before they see the Father (Matt. 25:21). But the one-talent and one-pound individuals (the third class) hear the condemnation on this side of the veil. While still down here, they will say, "The bride hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). When the foolish virgins knock on the door to get in, Jesus will tell them, "I do not know you; I do not recognize you as being of the wise virgin class" (Matt. 25:11,12). At first, they will weep and gnash their teeth with remorse and a sense of loss, but subsequently they will be restored to zeal and joy as they begin to wash their robes during the Time of Trouble. As the Great Company class who have already entered the tomb are resurrected in the Kingdom, they will hear why they lost out on the high calling. Some will be very surprised.

Another aspect needs to be discussed. The Parable of the Pounds mentions, “But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). When Jesus gave this parable, he was in the house of Zacchaeus. It was the last week of his ministry, and he knew he would be crucified. The parable closes with “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me” (Luke 19:27). This verse, which appears to be an addendum as a warning, is mentioned directly in connection with the rewards and condemnation. The word “slay” sounds drastic. In other words, certain Scriptures seem to indicate that of the Jewish religious ruling element at the First Advent, some had so much responsibility that they could even go into Second Death and thus not have the opportunity to get life in the Kingdom. This situation would be peculiar only to those who were alive when Jesus was here at his First Advent. After all, what is the purpose of the resurrection? Its purpose is to acquaint mankind with the fact that Jesus IS the Messiah, that he IS the King, and that he HAS a message. The message is that one must listen and obey in order to get life. Disobedience and failure to bow down will result in Second Death (Acts 3:23). Those who lived after Jesus’ earthly ministry—and thus get their information from others—are indoctrinated under conditions that have prejudiced them and inculcated great hatred whether for the natural Jew or for the true Christian, but those scribes and Pharisees who lived when Jesus was on the scene and paid hush money to the soldiers who guarded his tomb had *great light* and hence *great responsibility*. They heard the testimony of Jesus and saw his miracles, his ministry, and his kindness. What more could they have? In the Kingdom, those who refuse to listen to the voice of Jesus will be summarily cut off. Others will receive a 100 years’ trial, and some will go into Second Death at the end of the Kingdom Age. Thus there are different degrees of culpability.

What we are trying to say, too, is that Jesus gave a practical lesson at the time. When we look at the parables, we see that he invariably kept two things in mind: (1) that the parable should benefit those who were currently listening to him, and (2) that the parable should benefit those who would subsequently study his Word. Stated another way, the parables were given for two types of audience: for those who heard Jesus in the outer perimeter, as well as for those who were listening at his feet. In other words, there are other or additional meanings for his people down through the age. Generally in these parables, the people listening knew he was speaking of them, even though he spoke dispassionately. In some instances, the people reacted with anger.

In conclusion, the one-talent and the one-pound persons represent the Great Company class, who in the Parable of the Sower are encumbered with the cares of this life, the heavy responsibilities and burdens. Whether the responsibilities are legitimate or not depends on the circumstances. In the Talents and Pounds Parables, the servants had responsibility, for they were told what to do. Thus they had no real excuse for failing to show an increase, and accordingly, Jesus gave them a little tongue-lashing, which was meant to be constructive. If hardened in heart, the hearers become angry and do just the opposite; i.e., they destroy themselves if they feed on that madness; they reap a proportionate reward based on culpability.

A month later, in November 1997, the following comments were appended.

Matthew 25:14-30

The “man travelling into a far country” gave five talents such as *wealth, influence, intellectual power, education, and public utterance*. These were all God-given natural gifts of Providence consecrated to the Lord and accepted by him as being possessed by the individual’s new nature. (Compare *Reprint* Nos. 2764 and 3869, years 1901 and 1906, respectively.)

Luke 19:11-27

The nobleman called his ten servants, delivered ten pounds to them, and said, “Occupy till I come.” Each and every new repentant convert adopted into the body of Christ is not only justified but also invigorated with the one hope of the high calling, namely, to live and reign with Christ. In addition, God has “set the members *every one* of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (1 Cor. 12:18). Not only is this true in the present life of human experience on this side of the veil, but also, at the same time (if we understand the matter correctly), the Heavenly Father tentatively assigns a somewhat corresponding territorial jurisdiction on the other side of the veil in the divine program of the Kingdom Age. In the Parable of the Pounds, that territorial jurisdiction is styled “a city.”

In the present life, each Christian is charged with the responsibility of being a witness for Christ in whatever locale he happens to reside when he receives the call of the one hope. Each one is expected, as the hymn expresses it, “to brighten the corner” where he is, that is, the environs where he lives. In other words, the one pound represents the territory or jurisdiction immediate to the recipient of the one pound: the home, the workplace, the neighborhood, etc. According to one’s zeal, energy, and enthusiasm, there exists the possibility that the door of opportunity may be enlarged to areas of service beyond that immediate to the original calling. If faithfully performed and acceptable to the Master, the enlargement or expansion of territorial influence or jurisdiction—whether successful or not in the conversion of new souls—proportionately enhances one’s jurisdiction and influence in the Kingdom Age. (Consider Noah, a “preacher of righteousness,” as described in 2 Peter 2:5. Only his immediate family responded to the message, yet he is reckoned faithful.) Thus the removal of the one talent or the one pound from the unprofitable servant and the transference of such authority and/or capability to the one already possessing ten pounds or ten talents becomes entirely feasible.

[Note: The following is a separate discourse given by Bro. Frank Shallieu in July 1985. It is based on the premise that events in the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry are a type or picture of experiences that will befall the feet members at the very end of the age. The discourse concentrates on the last of these events.]

LEADING CHARACTERS IN THE CLOSING EVENTS OF JESUS' LIFE

Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane was a *crucial* point. It followed his joyful, triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the casting out of the Temple money changers, subsequent sermons, the anointing of his feet, etc. Moreover, the original Memorial Supper had just taken place. Jesus arrived at Gethsemane very late at night, at approximately the *midnight* hour. Thus, psychologically, the background was appropriate for his heart being full of sorrow and his apprehension as to whether he had faithfully fulfilled his ministry. Figuratively, it was his "midnight hour of darkness," and these experiences are typical of those that will befall the feet members at the end of the age.

The word "hour" is significant, for it corresponds to the "*hour*" of power of the beast (Rev. 17:12) and to the "*hour*" of Satan (Luke 22:53), the Prince of Darkness, the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). It is also the "night [hour]" in which no man can work (John 9:4). Jesus' ministry had already been faithfully fulfilled when this hour of his apprehension came. He could no longer preach sermons to either the public or his chosen disciples. This, too, is a type of the time at the end of the age when the Church is apprehended.

The "hour of temptation ... shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10). It starts with the Church at this end of the age. Back there it was Jesus' personal hour of temptation and trial when he struggled in Gethsemane, praying that if it be possible the "cup" would pass from him. (Compare the term "hour" in Mark 14:35,41 and John 12:27; 13:1.) The "cup" refers to certain features connected with the closing events of his life. Jesus had some doubts about whether he had faithfully performed everything according to the Father's will, and he was assured that he had. But what did he fear? The *stigma* of the Cross. No doubt he had previously considered the pain aspect, the brutality, etc.—after all, he came here to die—but he had not prepared for the stigma aspect, for being considered cursed of God. He did not realize in advance that the Father would have to turn His face from him, because on the Cross he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

In the future, the hour of temptation will start with the Church, but Paul said it will try *every* man's work (1 Cor. 3:13). The hour of temptation will try not only the true Church, the Great Company, and the nominal Church but all down the line, so that every single individual who lives at that time, as conditions wax warmer and warmer, will have his structure of faith tested in some manner—even those who are not Christians. But the hour of temptation started with the Head at the First Advent.

When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, he came to his disciples *three* times to counsel them to *watch* and *pray* lest they enter into temptation. Watching and praying were the theme of his admonition, but they could not stay awake. Nevertheless, the Apostle John apparently heard a sufficient amount of Jesus' agonizing to record it in his Gospel, thus giving us an appreciation of what experiences our Lord went through.

The *three* (Peter, James, and John) were separated from the rest of the eleven in the Garden. Evidently, the eight stayed farther behind at the foot of the hill. Jesus went ahead a little with the three and then left them to proceed a short distance by himself. But the three were definitely in closer proximity to him for his Gethsemane agonizing. They represent the Church, that is, the feet members. Based on other pictures, there will be *three* classes of the Little Flock at the end of the age. (The three Hebrew children in the furnace of affliction are one picture.)

This concept of *three* is pictured in several ways in these last events, in addition to the three apostles being closer to Jesus when he was praying in Gethsemane. For instance, *three* women were at the Cross when Jesus gave to John the custodianship of his mother—Mary his mother; his mother's sister Mary, wife of Cleophas; and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25-27). And *three* men figured prominently: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, in addition to the Apostle John. In begging Pilate for Jesus' body and then taking it down from the Cross, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea *publicly* demonstrated their sympathy for the One who was considered an outcast, a blasphemer, before the nation. This act required a great deal of courage, especially when, prior to this, Nicodemus and Joseph were in the background. (For fear of the Jews, Nicodemus had come quietly to Jesus at night to ask questions about his doctrine and its application. And Joseph was obscure until this event.)

Thus the three apostles, the three women at the Cross, and the three men all teach the same lesson. And it is interesting that females are included in these pictures, showing that the gospel message and its application are not to be primarily considered as centered in the male sex. All are *one* in Christ, male *and* female.

We return now to the Garden of Gethsemane picture. The eight apostles who were separated out to wait farther away represent the Great Company, whereas the three who accompanied Jesus closer picture the Little Flock.

Incidentally, all the particulars of the closing scenes of our Lord's life will be indelibly etched upon all future creations; that is, when other intelligent beings are created on various planets, they will be apprised of the ministry of Jesus, the calling of the Church, etc. These events are being photographed as they actually occurred. The lessons will be much deeper than just the witnessing of this sorrowful drama leading up to the Cross.

Judas. By means of a kiss, Judas identified Jesus as the one the scribes and Pharisees were seeking to slay. Judas was one of the twelve apostles. From that standpoint it is startling that one so closely associated with Jesus—hearing his sermons, seeing his miracles, and so forth—would stoop to betrayal. The kiss shows that right up to the very last moment, Judas pretended to have an affection for Jesus—loyalty and respect too. But the kiss was the act of betrayal.

Several *motivations* can be suggested for the betrayal:

1. **Avarice.** Judas wanted the money. He was the apostle who held the money bag, and he was a thief (John 12:6). Judas thought the plan was clever; namely, he would get a sizable sum of money, and Jesus could easily extricate himself from any sort of imprisonment at will, even if he were betrayed. Judas did not realize the horrendous evil he was perpetrating and what the betrayal signified.

2. Judas may have wanted to accelerate Jesus' taking command as Messiah. The people had just hailed him as "Hosanna to the Son of David," so the moment for pushing him to take control and set up his Kingdom seemed propitious. Of course, in the establishment of that Kingdom, the apostle assumed he would be greatly honored as Jesus' confidant. (Judas may have been even closer to Jesus than the Gospels indicate, for the Gospels would downplay this lest too much emphasis be given to Judas and his character be glorified as a martyr. With the perverted judgment today, the world often makes the villain the hero.) Thus Judas probably tried to hasten the Kingdom by forcing our Lord's hand, thinking that Jesus would manifest some great power and extricate himself. It is true that Jesus had this capability, for when the mob approached him in the Garden of Gethsemane, they all fell backward. They were

momentarily awed by the power of his personality, but that power was purposely broken. And his apostles had two swords to show that he had servants who were willing to fight and to die for him and that he could have elicited an army to support him and his cause. By instructing to put away the sword, Jesus showed that he did not intend to establish the Kingdom in that way. Instead he was meek and submissive to the experiences that led to his crucifixion and death.

3. At the close of Jesus' ministry, Judas had some contact with the clergy in order to make arrangements for the betrayal. This contact is interesting in regard to the antitype, for some associated with the true Church will momentarily have a similar camaraderie at the end of the age. True, Judas was probably feigning this relationship in order to betray Christ, but he was getting money for his efforts. And regardless of the motive, he did have contact with the clergy, and he was responsible for Jesus' apprehension.

The Judas class at the end of the age will not just consist of consecrated, Spirit-begotten individuals but, based on other pictures, will include some who are not Spirit-begotten. Under certain circumstances, it would be possible for some not consecrated to incur equal responsibility to Judas, and thus to merit equal condemnation and judgment, that is, Second Death.

Annas versus Caiaphas. After Jesus was apprehended at Gethsemane, he was first taken to Annas, one of Israel's chief priests. During the trial under Annas, Jesus was abused, mocked, and bruised. Next Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas, which was next door, as it were. Being high priests simultaneously, both Annas and Caiaphas were related to the religious element. And in the religious world today, we have Catholicism and Protestantism. Caiaphas pictures Catholicism, and Annas symbolizes Protestantism. Although Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas and hence the older of the two, it was Caiaphas who said, "It is expedient that one man die lest a whole nation perish" (John 11:50 paraphrase). Thus it was Caiaphas who made the decision for our Lord's fate. When, as high priest, he tore his garments before the council, he accentuated the point that they felt Jesus was worthy of death (Matt. 26:65). (Similarly, Herodias gave counsel to Salome to ask for the head of John the Baptist.) With Jesus going to Annas first but the decision and manipulation being done by Caiaphas, the antitype will be as follows. Deference will first be ostensibly given to Protestantism, the image of the beast, but the real power for determining the death of the feet members will be residual in Papacy, the beast. Salome was the dancer, but Herodias was the schemer behind the scenes. And of course Herod, representing civil power, did the executing.

With regard to the *religious* aspect, Jesus was tried on *three* occasions. He was taken (1) to Annas, (2) then to Caiaphas, and (3) finally to the late council, or Sanhedrin, in the wee hours of the morning, before being taken to Pilate at 6 a.m. The Sanhedrin made the legal decision that because the holy day (Passover) was coming, they would give the "dirty work" to Pilate.

There were *three civil* trials as well. When Pilate found out that most of Jesus' ministry had been performed up in the Galilee region where Herod was the chief civil authority, he turned Jesus over to Herod. Pilate thought he would thus be able to shift the pressure being exerted by the religious element to Herod. But later the matter was shunted right back to Pilate.

In all, then, there were *three* religious trials and *three* civil trials. The number "three" is very significant with regard to many events in the closing moments of Jesus' life, and it has several connotations in Scripture.

Jesus was twice robed and mocked as a king. Some of the ridicule and abuse was done

privately and some quite openly or publicly, especially when he was on the Cross. He was taunted by all segments of society with regard to his claim of being Messiah. His claim appeared fallacious, for the people reasoned, "How could the true Messiah end up on the Cross?" At any rate, Jesus was mocked both publicly and privately.

Herod versus Pilate. Both Herod and Pilate were representatives of civil government or power, so what is the difference in the antitype? In the John the Baptist picture, Herod symbolizes civil power, and this definition remains consistent even though a further distinction is seen when he is compared with Pilate. When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for interrogation and resolution of the problem, Herod's jurisdiction was over the *local* area. Thus in the antitype, Herod's jurisdiction would correspond to the state or local government or authority. When the feet members are apprehended, they will be examined by local authorities, but in the final analysis, their execution will take place on a national level. Therefore, Pilate represents the *federal* government or a *larger* theater of operations of government.

Most local government decisions are more prejudiced in the courts. Frequently, when a "bad" decision is rendered, an attempt is made to take the case to a higher court because, generally speaking, the higher the case goes, the less emotional the verdict or decision will be. A national decision is usually fairer and more dispassionate. Pilate certainly tried to get out of the experience because he could see the envy of the scribes and Pharisees. He knew they wanted to have Jesus put to death—and why. Thus he tried to satisfy them and yet spare Jesus' life—hence the scourging and also the offer to free him. But instead the cry was to free Barabbas, a notorious criminal, and to crucify the holy, harmless, undefiled One.

These events of Jesus' last week are the most important in the history of the *universe*. By divine providence, all of the actors in this "drama" have a symbolic portent in the antitype.

Barabbas. Barabbas perhaps pictures a more radical *religious* element who at the end of the age will actually think of insurrection and takeover, capitalizing on the sentiments of the public, who will be looking for a deliverer. Barabbas means "son of the father." ("Bar" is the same as "ben," i.e., "son," and "abbas" means "father.") Thus the etymology of his name suggests a radical *religious* element as opposed to a terrorist who acts for other motives. An example of a current radical religious terrorist is the Islamic movement, whose religion is based somewhat on Jesus but primarily on Muhammad and the Koran.

Pilate's wife. In the John the Baptist picture, Herodias, Herod's wife, represents Papacy, the mother Church, but such is not the case here. Not only does Pilate's wife signify an element somewhat sympathetic to Jesus (she could see the injustice of his being put to death), but she had a dream in which she was warned of God regarding Jesus' being a just man. And history records that Pilate met a dreadful experience a few years later. This experience was retribution for having remanded Jesus over for crucifixion. Because of this advance expiation for his sins, perhaps the good features of Pilate's character will have a greater outflow in the Kingdom.

Now let us consider certain things. Many Protestants are dissatisfied with the circumstances and conditions in their churches. They feel a lack there, but not knowing what else to do, they remain as "prisoners" within the system and do not take a stand in coming out of Babylon. In the near future, the doctrine of the Trinity will become very troublesome to many. That doctrine will be held up as the determining factor to judge whether or not one is a Christian. Nonacceptance of the Trinity will rank one as a cultist; acceptance will be considered orthodox. Many in the nominal Church system do not believe in the Trinity, but they are afraid to take a stand against it. This will be true also as the end of the age approaches. In their *confused* state, they will be herded into a position of opposition, whereas they will not really be in heart

sympathy with what is occurring. Although they will have some knowledge, they will allow the Trinity doctrine to bind them. They will know that the impending persecution is wrong—that it does not have God's approval and that it will result in some terrible experience. Consequently, they will voice a warning to the civil authority not to consent to the persecution. Even from a humanitarian standpoint, many have noble principles along certain lines. At any rate, this class will be somewhat enlightened. But the doctrine of the Trinity will be a real problem.

The Scriptures also picture some in the nominal system as eunuchs who cast Jezebel out of the window to her destruction. The "eunuchs" are a class consecrated to the nominal system (for example, nuns and priests who have made vows to the Roman Catholic Church) and yet are not really in sympathy with it. They are looking for an opportunity for radical change but have not been in a position to effect the reform they desire. When a propitious moment arises, they will follow the advice of "Jehu." Thus not all in the nominal Church system will be in sympathy with it.

Peter versus Judas. Peter did not premeditate the denial of Jesus. When certain circumstances came on Peter suddenly, he denied Jesus momentarily, which is quite different from the premeditation of Judas. Hence there was much less guilt and culpability with Peter. Even the courts recognize the factor of human frailty under conditions of pressure and thus moderate the sentence. But this is just an analysis of two individuals: Peter and Judas. In the *overall* drama, the *general flow* of events is studied and other lessons emerge.

The fleeing of the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane was also momentary, and it represents the Great Company class. The disciples were under pressure and, to a large degree, lacked understanding and knowledge. Hence they fled for their safety, but later on, they proved to be loyal at heart. Thus the fleeing was a *temporary* circumstance, condition, and defect in character that was not as culpable as the actions of Judas. Judas had manifested greed much earlier in Jesus' ministry, so his betrayal was an outgrowth of a wrong heart condition.

Simon the Cyrenian. The class Simon represents is difficult to identify. Possibly there will be a situation similar to Elijah's being fed or given some solace by the "ravens," an unconsecrated element who are *ravenous* (self-centered and greedy for their own sustenance). In the world are some people who have enough decency that they will render support for a cause even though they are not in sympathy with the details. Evidently, Simon's sons subsequently became Christians, and rather noteworthy ones at that, because Rufus and Alexander are mentioned deferentially in the epistles (Mark 15:21; Rom. 16:13). We do not know about Simon, but a change may have occurred in his life too. However, what he was at the time he assisted Jesus with the Cross is the key to the antitype. Among the *general public*—not those identified with the religious setup—will be some in sympathy with common decency and a fair trial.

Of course Simon was forced to help Jesus with the Cross according to Roman law. (The Romans could commandeer anyone in sight who was not a Roman citizen to transport their baggage, etc., one mile. This authority was a means of providing lackeys on certain occasions.) Hence Simon was compelled to bear the Cross. Nevertheless, a providence was probably operating behind his selection. Therefore, it is possible that at the end of the age, some of the public may be more or less forced by circumstances to voice their thoughts. It is one thing to witness a disputation and another matter to speak out and take a stand. Most people will not take a stand even though their hearts tell them a wrong has been committed; instead they remain silent. But the circumstances forced Simon, and yet he was probably in sympathy with that act anyway.

Sign on the Cross. The sign on the Cross, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” was written in *three* languages (John 19:19,20). The three languages suggest that the experiences of the feet members will be publicized, even though they are an unknown group and relatively insignificant. When the *large* picture is considered, Jesus’ ministry was confined to a *very small* spot on this globe. But when his accusation was written in three languages, it was more or less broadcast to the other nations so that foreign travelers would remember the event, even if they had nothing to do with the Passover and lacked religious compunctions. The point is that in the antitype the death of the feet members will have a national or an international stage of enactment. The death of the feet members will be appreciably seen (whether favorably or unfavorably) by others not immediately identified with the local scene.

Comment: In regard to the motivations of Judas, an antitype seems likely. For instance, many (whether consecrated or unconsecrated) know that the hope of the Church is to live and reign with Jesus and that the end of the age is rapidly approaching to usher in the Kingdom with its beautiful promises. Therefore, wouldn’t it be possible that part of the motivation with the Judas class would be to accelerate the establishment of the Kingdom? They would reason, “The feet members have to die anyway, so if we precipitate the matter by giving the names of some of the consecrated, we will be hastening the blessings for ourselves and everybody.” Their hearts could greatly deceive them.

Reply: Yes. The Judas class could be harboring the thought that since all are consecrated unto death anyway, it does not matter whether they die today or tomorrow. They may thus justify their involvement and not appreciate the guilt aspect—the *personal guilt* they would incur.

Comment: In other words, they may feel it is harmless to give out the names of brethren since they are all consecrated and will have to die anyway. However, everything must be done according to the *Lord’s timetable*. The Lord has a specific time for each of us to die, and we should never precipitate the end of either our own course or the course of any of the brethren.

Reply: Notice that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, “Let these others go. It is *me* you want.”

Comment: It was mentioned in the discourse that Judas had some contact with the clerical element. Based on certain other types, the suggestion has been made—and strongly proved by Scripture—that a greater opportunity for a witness work will open up as the end of the age approaches. This witnessing will no doubt, at least temporarily until the smiting message is due, throw some of us in contact with the clergy and thus create the potential for too much compromise, fraternization, etc.—and perhaps even betrayal.

Reply: In other words, leads established earlier could be followed up at a later date for wrong reasons. For a *short* time, the truth will be attractive to certain segments of the public, including the clergy.

Comment: And it would be flattering to suddenly have others listen to us, but that should not color our stand for principle.

Q: The faith of every man will be tested. Will those in the nominal Church be tested on the Trinity? And how could the *unconsecrated*, those in the *world*, be tested along the line of *faith*?

A: The world does not have “*the faith*,” but in times of great duress or emergency, when life itself is threatened, people are usually not atheists. Instead they call for some higher power to save them. Thus many people are *intellectual* atheists. They like to feel so independent and self-

sufficient that they give the impression of being atheists, but at heart there are not too many hard-core atheists. Only the fool says in his *heart* there is no God, but one could utter these words with his *mouth* (Psa. 14:1).

Every man's work will be tried in the Time of Trouble. All who go through the trouble will have a very severe experience. It will come down to a question of survival, of life itself. The trouble and personal reactions to the events of that day will become indelibly etched on the minds of the people forever. There are all kinds of works—wood, hay, and stubble. Some are based on Christianity and some are not.

With regard to the Trinity, many will waver with indecision. They will reason that it is more favorable to remain in the nominal Church than to take a step into the unknown. But as time goes on, other circumstances will force the Great Company to come out of Babylon. The revelation of the *true* character of professed Christianity will cause them to make a decision based on factors other than the Trinity. And the Trinity will begin to lose its power. When a person is in a fire or some very trying experience—literally as well as figuratively—he thinks differently than he would under quiet circumstances with a studious application. Earlier, when the Trinity test comes, the people will be able to think about it and make a decision. Later on, the doctrine will fade out, and the real issue will be life and death.

Jesus' words in Matthew 16:25 will be very meaningful at that time: "For whosoever will [seek to] save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life *for my sake* shall find it." This text applies not only to the Little Flock but also to the Great Company—that is, to *all* of the consecrated. When we say that some will forsake the Master because of fear, that would be only a *momentary* condition for the Great Company, for in the final analysis, they will have to make a decision. Any of the consecrated who carry that fear too long will go into Second Death, no matter how nice they appear to be. The Great Company will be forced to make a decision later on, that is, after the Little Flock is beyond the veil. Earlier, the Great Company will momentarily forsake, but later on, each will be forced to *personally* make a decision.

Comment: When the church systems collapse, the consecrated who have remained in Babylon will be suddenly forced or cast out on their own. That is when the crucial testing point of the Great Company will come.

Reply: Therefore, regardless of which class we ultimately find ourselves in, we must be careful about seeking to save our life. We should *always* keep in mind that we *must lose our life*—but according to the *Lord's* timetable.

PARABLE OF THE PENNY
(Matthew 20:1-16)

Discourse given by Bro. Frank Shallieu in April 2001

The Parable of the Penny, found in Matthew 20:1-16, reads as follows:

“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

“And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

“And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

“And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

“Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

“And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

“They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. [The last clause, “and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive” is omitted in the ancient manuscripts, but the principle is correct because it is stated in verse 4.]

“So when even[ing] was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

“And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

“But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

“And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

“Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

“But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

“Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

“Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” [The last clause, “for many be called, but few chosen” is properly omitted in the ancient manuscripts, for the statement is incongruous to the theme of the parable.]

A correct interpretation of the Parable of the Penny is predicated upon having a correct understanding of the terms that are used in the parable. For instance, the parable starts with the term “the kingdom of heaven,” which refers to the “kingdom of heaven class”; that is, it is a reference to the consecrated, to the true Spirit-begotten children of God in the Gospel Age, to

those who hope for and aspire to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Heb. 3:1; Phil. 3:14).

Next, who is the “householder”? This term, from the Greek *oikodespotes*, means “master of the house” in the sense of a general manager or, more specifically, a *house despot* or *ruler*. In Matthew chapter 13, where the Parable of the Sower is followed by the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the “householder” is unquestionably Jesus. Matthew 13:27 reads, “So the servants of the householder [Jesus] came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?” Likewise in the Parable of the Penny, the “householder” is Jesus, but we must prove that identity.

It is true that the Apostle Paul speaks of the “house of God” in 1 Timothy 3:15, “... thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God,” and this term would seem to make God the householder. But in the third chapter of Hebrews, Jesus is considered as being over his own house, the house of the Spirit-begotten class during the Gospel Age. In Hebrews 3:1-6, Paul wrote:

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

“Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

“For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

“For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

“And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

The point is that in the New Testament, the term “householder” sometimes applies to God and sometimes to His Son, so we must be careful in defining the term. When the same Greek word, *oikodespotes*, applies not to the Gospel Age but to Old Testament times, the householder is God. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, starting in Matthew 21:33, is an example: “Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.” In principle, this text sounds the same as the twentieth chapter of Matthew, but subsequent verses clearly show that the context refers to Jehovah in the Old Testament. The “householder” sent multiple servants (prophets) to the nation of Israel, but the servants were abused. Last of all, the householder sent His Son, but the husbandmen killed the Son, the heir. Therefore, this parable in the chapter following the Parable of the Penny refers to a *different* circumstance, so it is not a proof that the householder in the Parable of the Penny is God.

The “vineyard” in the various parables refers to the professed people of God, but depending on the subject matter, the term can apply to either natural Israel in Old Testament times or spiritual Israel in New Testament times. Isaiah 5:1-7 furnishes a basis for calling natural Israel a vineyard:

“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

“And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest

vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

“And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

“And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

“For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”

Whereas the New Testament speaks of Jesus as the householder over the house of sons during the Gospel Age, Jeremiah 2:20,21 confirms that God is the householder of the Old Testament:

“For of old time I have broken thy yoke [in Egypt], and burst thy bands [in the Exodus]; and thou saidst, I will not transgress [at Mount Sinai]; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

“Yet I [as the householder] had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?”

To quote so many Scriptures and spend so much time on the identity of the householder may seem to be overemphasizing this point, but the identity becomes essential to a proper understanding of the Parable of the Penny and its theme.

In the Parable of the Penny, three terms are used interchangeably, all referring to the same personage: “householder,” “lord of the vineyard,” and “goodman of the house.” Of the three, “householder” and “goodman” are the same Greek word: *oikodespotes*.

A simple explanation of the “penny” (Greek *denarion*) is that it was a full day’s wage—a thought that is supported by several Scriptures. (1) In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan showed mercy to the wounded man, took him to an inn, and paid the innkeeper two pence, saying, “Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee [for the difference]” (Luke 10:35). The point is that the two pence were for the two days in which the wounded man would be given room and board and time for healing. Of course the spiritual lesson is that the two pence represent 2,000 years, but that is another subject. (2) Revelation 6:6 is a prophecy of a development during the Dark Ages. “And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” In other words, one measure of wheat cost a penny, and so did three measures of barley. Therefore, a poor man bought barley because he got three times as much food for the one penny and was thus able to sustain his family for a longer period of time. (Incidentally, the measure of wheat was like a bushel of seed, so it had great nutritional value.) The point is that it took a full day’s labor to get one measure of wheat or three measures of barley. Not only was the penny a full day’s wage, but it was a fair wage for a laborer back in Jesus’ day.

The next term or individual to consider is the “steward.” The lord of the vineyard, the householder, said to his steward, “Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.” The steward (Greek *epitropos*) is defined as “one to whom a thing is committed.” In Galatians 4:1,2, the same Greek word, *epitropos*, is rendered “tutors,” as follows: “Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors [that is, instructors] and governors until the time appointed of the father.” However, *epitropos* should not be confused with the “wise steward” (a different Greek word, *oikonomos*) of Luke 12:42, which refers to the Pastor. “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” In other words, the two different Greek words have two different significations. Moreover, the steward of the Parable of the Penny is not the “faithful and wise servant” of Matthew 24:45, which is interpreted to be the Pastor: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?”

For the time being, we will delay an explanation of the term “Friend” in the Parable of the Penny, and will turn to the parable itself. Verse 1 reads, “For the kingdom of heaven is like ... an householder, which went out early in the morning [the inference being about 6 a.m.] to hire labourers into his vineyard.” In antitype, “early in the morning” could not be Pentecost, as interpreted in the *Third Volume*, for all of the laborers, whether they were first or last to enter the vineyard, were *contemporaneous* throughout the “day.” They simply entered the vineyard at different periods of time. Therefore, not only could “early in the morning” not be Pentecost, 2,000 years ago, but also it could not even be the beginning of the Harvest in 1878 because all who lived then have since died. Nor, for the same reason, could early morning be 1916, when the Pastor died. Stated another way, no one who was in the truth 85 years ago is alive today. The point is that the setting of the Parable of the Penny is in the Harvest period but not in the beginning.

Now we can begin to narrow the parameters of application for Parable of the Penny because we know that when the parable ends at 6 p.m., the last hour, the twelfth hour, the Gospel Age will be over. To find when the parable started its fulfillment, we simply back up from the end of the Gospel Age to a time when all of the laborers are living contemporaneously. The parable concludes when the age closes and the last members of the Little Flock enter the door to the wedding. First, however, another event will take place.

“When even[ing] was come,” the steward gave each of the laborers a wage, or “hire,” but the first laborers showed a wrong spirit by murmuring, thinking they should have received more; that is, they murmured because those who worked only one hour got wages equal to their wages. Not only will the murmuring take place just before the Gospel Age ends, but it will take place down here, not up in heaven, for murmuring would not be tolerated in heaven, as even the Pastor admitted in subsequent articles. Therefore, the wage, or penny, must be given *on this side of the veil*.

When the householder “went out about the third hour [9 a.m.], and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,” he made the same proposition that he had made to the early morning workers. The word “about” means that the times were not definite, but we take the liberty of inserting times such as 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. in order to give order or sequence to the parable. In other words, we should not think that going into the vineyard is tied down to a mathematical scale, but it is sequential and orderly. What is the significance of the term “marketplace”? Buying and selling activities take place in the marketplace, and even today in certain places in this country, migrant laborers get up early in the morning and stand in a row, hoping an employer will hire them. Accordingly, the eleventh-hour workers were standing idle all day in a line, as it were. When the householder went out early in the morning, he chose some of the

laborers and not others. When he went out the third hour, he chose more of the laborers who were standing idle, and he did the same (“likewise”) about the sixth and the ninth hours. In other words, the same routine was followed, but we are not given a detailed description. Jesus purposely avoided detail so that the emphasis would be on the first and the last laborers. The laborers called in between were relatively insignificant compared to the first and the last.

The householder went out “about the eleventh hour ... and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here *all the day* idle?” They replied, “Because no man hath hired us.” Notice, the implication is not necessarily that the eleventh-hour workers were young, but that whoever they were, they had to be *on hand*, alive, and standing idle in the marketplace since 6 a.m. We know that the parable reaches fulfillment near the end of the Gospel Age, but the question remains, How long is the “day” of the parable? As already shown, it did not start at Pentecost or at the beginning of the Harvest period or even in 1916. Therefore, the starting point has to be some date subsequent to 1916, but in addition, the day has to be a relatively short period of time so that all of the laborers will be living contemporaneously with regard to receiving the penny. We would conjecture that the maximum period of time would be 40 years, and the minimum might be 5 or 10 years. Whatever the length of time, we believe that the parable has already started and that the vineyard work required by the details of the parable has been going on.

An important point is that only those who entered the vineyard at some time—whether early in the morning or subsequently—received “every man” a penny. Notice, too, that when the Lord said to the third-hour workers (and inferentially to the other workers), “Go ye also into the vineyard,” the account says “they went *their way*.” The implication is that they went into the vineyard but did not do exactly, necessarily, everything alike. However, they served in the vineyard in some capacity in a public fashion, and there are perhaps a score of different ways to faithfully preach the gospel and serve the Lord in the vineyard, and thus qualify for receiving the penny.

Notice that when the murmuring occurred, manifesting a wrong heart condition, the account does not state that every one of those who first entered the vineyard murmured. However, in saying, “*They* murmured,” the implication is that the majority murmured “against the goodman of the house.” Then a very interesting and enlightening statement is made: “But he [Jesus] answered *one* of them [one of the murmurers], and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?” Why was *one murmurer* singled out from the midst of the first vineyard laborers and addressed by Jesus as “Friend”? Of course we are entering the realm of speculation, but we think it is reasonable to conclude that this one individual will be a major influence in the antitype; that is, a *prominent individual* will arise in the future and manifest this murmuring attitude. A person does not have to murmur with his lips, for he can murmur with his heart. For example, to question inwardly, “Why did God let this happen?” would be thoroughly improper. To consider such thinking for even a moment would cast a reflection on the Heavenly Father or the Lord Jesus Christ. To repeat, this class will murmur “against the goodman of the house,” against the lord of the vineyard, against the householder—*against Jesus*—who went out at the different time periods and addressed those who were standing idle in the marketplace. In other words, the application and fulfillment of this parable are during the *Lord’s presence*. The murmurer called “Friend” will arise, and it will be manifested later that he is voicing the sentiments of a majority of the first-hour laborers.

An illustration of the principle of influencing others occurred when Judas was with the Master and, in the presence of other disciples, criticized Mary’s use of the spikenard to anoint Jesus, saying it could have been sold and the money used to help the poor (John 12:3-8). Then others, at the time of a subsequent anointing, likewise murmured about the seemingly costly waste (Matt. 26:6-12; Mark 14:3-8). The point is that sometimes a prominent individual can influence a

number of others.

When Jesus used the word “Friend,” he used the Greek *hetairos*, which means “comrade” and not friend in the sense of an endearing term. That same Greek word was translated “Friend” only two other times in the New Testament. One usage is found in the Parable of the Wedding Garment: “*Friend*, how camest thou in hither not having [on] a wedding garment? And he was speechless” (Matt. 22:12). Again that Greek word has a negative connotation. The second usage pertains to the kiss Judas gave Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: “And Jesus said unto him [Judas], *Friend*, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him” (Matt. 26:50). For the third time, the usage is negative. Therefore, the individual who voiced the murmuring in a special sense in the Parable of the Penny probably represents a Second Death class. Although we would not draw the same conclusion in regard to the other murmurers, we can see how a leading character can influence others, at least momentarily, until they reflect on the situation and their better judgment comes to the fore. Based on other Scriptures as well, we believe the chief murmurer in the Parable of the Penny will have a startling fulfillment in the near future along this line.

Notice that when the householder in the parable said, “Friend, ... Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee,” the term “this last” was similarly used previously by the murmurers who received the penny last: “*These last* have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.” In the Gospels, Jesus frequently took a phrase uttered by another individual in a parable and reused it later in the parable to teach a lesson. In considering the repetition of “this last” in the Parable of the Penny, we will recall the incident of the golden calf with the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai following the Exodus. When Moses went up Mount Sinai and did not return for 40 days, the Israelites wanted to choose another leader, made the golden calf, and so forth. The ringleaders said derogatorily of Moses, who had laid down his life, giving up the throne of Egypt to serve the Israelites, “As for this Moses, *the man* that brought us up out of the land of Egypt...” (Exod. 32:1). Those who make such an utterance because of a wrong spirit will reap a proportionate reward.

Jesus’ words suggest that the one he addressed as “Friend” (or comrade) voiced the sentiments of the first laborers, generally speaking. In saying they had “borne the burden and heat of the day,” the murmurer was talking on behalf of the first-hour workers, although not necessarily every one of them would have concurred with his words. Nevertheless, he did influence many in making the slur that these last laborers worked only one hour but got the same as the early morning workers. His being singled out in the parable indicates that the identity of that individual will be publicly manifested in the antitype in a future fulfillment.

Next, we need to consider the role of the steward in more detail. The parable states, “When even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.” As already discussed, the Greek word translated “steward” in the parable is not the same word that is used in reference to the seventh messenger, the Pastor. Rather, the “steward” of the parable is more like an office manager, which carries a lower echelon of responsibility.

The parable is saying that the invisible, present Lord will use an individual down here to give the “hire” (the reward) to the laborers who worked different hours of the day, and he will begin with the last workers. Note that *ALL* of the laborers, regardless of what hour they entered the vineyard—first, third, sixth, ninth, or eleventh—received a penny. The reward cannot be the commendation given to those who make their calling and election sure (“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord”—Matt. 25:21), for such an

interpretation would not make sense. Not all of the workers in the vineyard will get immortality and reign as kings and priests, especially when some of them murmur. Therefore, the penny has to be another type of reward or privilege, and we will discuss what that reward might be.

Some clues are furnished as to the principle. For instance, the Parable of the Pounds mentions that our Lord, before leaving for the far country, chose ten individuals and gave each of them one pound (Luke 19:12-27). Of the three who were used in the parable to teach a lesson, one individual earned ten pounds, another earned five pounds, and the third did not earn anything extra but just preserved the original one pound. The question is, What does the “pound,” which each received, represent? At the conclusion of the parable, the one who folded the pound in a napkin (or the one in the Parable of the Talents who buried his talent in the earth—Matt. 25:14-30) kept it but did not increase it, so the reward was given to the individual who had done the most with his pound (or talents). The “pound” cannot represent justification because all in the parable were justified, and it is impossible to gain ten justifications from one justification. Therefore, because justification could not be taken from the one-pound individual and given to the ten-pound individual, another explanation is needed. The “orthodox” interpretation does not fit all of the details of the parable.

In the Parable of the Penny, the “penny” reward given to each of the laborers is the *privilege* of doing a final work. The laborers were given an honor for their dedication and service in doing the Lord’s will, but the parable does not state what the laborers did with the penny privilege. Other prophetic pictures show that there will be a weeding-out process at the end of the age. Let us consider the Gideon picture (Judges 7:2-8). Of the 32,000 Israelites who were to fight against the Midianites, the number was whittled down to 10,000 and finally to just 300 men. In the final analysis, only 300 were fit for—and had the enthusiasm for—doing a *smiting* work. We recall how the 300 blew their trumpets, broke their pitchers, and put the Midianites to flight and confusion. This experience of Gideon and the 300 is a type of the feet members of the body of Christ. The same selection or separation is shown in several pictures. For example, Elijah was separated from Elisha, both picturing consecrated children of the Gospel Age, particularly at the end when the translation of the feet members will take place. Elijah was separated by the chariot of fire, that is, by persecution and trouble.

Therefore, while each of the laborers in the parable was given a penny, that penny represents the privilege of doing another work—a work that is a little different from the vineyard work. The vineyard work is a public work of trying to find the Lord’s jewels in the world and, when finding them, to nurture them and help them appreciate and know the truth. Although the laborers entered the vineyard at different hours, they were *all* engaged in vineyard work. Subsequently and separately, they were *all* given the reward of a penny, indicating they were to do something else. When the trouble is seen to arise, then (as the saying goes) the men will be separated from the boys. The quality of dedication and enthusiasm in serving the Lord will be manifested at that time. As an illustration, when our Lord was apprehended in the Garden of Gethsemane, all of the apostles fled except John and Peter. The two were very careful and prudent, but at least they did not flee. From these pictures, we can see that not all are more-than-overcomers. To get life, all must be overcomers, but not many are *more-than-overcomers*.

In summary, we feel that the penny is the privilege of smiting the Jordan. Brethren, hopefully, are familiar with the type of Elijah’s smiting the Jordan from the Pastor’s writings—the *Reprints*, the *Question Book*, etc. At the end of the age, Satan will bruise the heel or feet members of the body of Christ.

The “tutor” steward, who will be used by the invisible present Lord to give the penny reward in the near future, is on a much lower level than the “seventh messenger,” or “that servant”

steward (Matt. 24:45,46). There is a wide gulf between the two, but nevertheless, the steward is a particular individual whom God will use at the fulfillment of the end of the parable to furnish instruction, information, leadership, or whatever is required to accomplish this final work. But what will happen? Although all of the consecrated will receive the penny, acting upon that penny is another matter. If we take the principle “many are called, but few are chosen” and change the wording slightly, we can see that many *will be given* the penny (the privilege), but few *will take advantage of and use* the penny for what it will accomplish and do.

Then the “goodman,” Jesus, addressed the false friend, who had a wrong spirit, asking, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” Many are used of the Lord for great or “wonderful works,” as in the question “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not ... in thy name done many wonderful works?” But the Lord replied, “I never knew [recognized] you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:22,23). In other words, Jesus never recognized them as being of the Little Flock for their works. Christians sometimes subconsciously view one another and give them a scale of importance based upon their works, whereas we are saved by faith and *grace*, and the Lord does that measuring.

In the Parable of the Penny, there seems to be a pervading clique or group spirit, a denominational spirit, that looks with askance on those who are not in the mainstream. What is very interesting about the eleventh-hour laborers is the fact that they stood idle all day in the marketplace—for *eleven hours*—waiting for and *wanting* someone to hire them. How commendable! They wanted to do something, but the door of opportunity did not open to them. Eventually, the Lord, in His providence, opened the door for this class to serve Him in some kind of public witness activity—not necessarily in the final, fatal witness but in a final *Harvest* work. They entered the vineyard the last hour, and at the conclusion of that last hour, that is, at the twelfth hour, the penny was given: the privilege to do the smiting work.

In the parable, the goodman asked the leading murmurer, “Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” When Jesus served at his First Advent, the sin of many of the scribes and Pharisees was jealousy. They envied his popularity and success. Having gone through a long period of schooling and development in sectarian understanding, many of the scribes and Pharisees were sages with white hair and were respected members of the Sanhedrin. Then along came this newcomer, a young man only 33 years old, whom they considered presumptuous. If, instead, they had *analyzed* Jesus’ actions, they would have realized that everything he did was helpful to others—not only the healing but also his preaching. The scribes and Pharisees could not fault his parables except when they touched upon money or greed. The scribes and Pharisees were irritated at Jesus’ message, but the bottom line of their irritation was seeing his popularity with the masses, particularly his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem at the end of his ministry and the reaction to his raising of Lazarus.

Many, but not all, of the scribes and Pharisees had this sectarian spirit. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were notable exceptions. Prior to the Crucifixion, they questioned Jesus, but when Jesus was put to death, they *publicly* took his body down from the Cross, anointed it with spices and aromas, and wrapped it with burial cloths. Just as with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the mettle of our character shows in what we do when a crucial moment comes. The point is that we do not know in advance how we will react when the persecution comes, but we pray to God that He will fulfill His promise to us if we are faithful and not try us above what we are able (1 Cor. 10:13). If we think we can stand in our *own* strength, then He might show us that we do not have a sufficiency of strength. Our experiences are humbling.

In regard to the eleventh-hour workers, how many of us would stand in the marketplace for eleven hours waiting to be hired? Those laborers were hoping and praying to enter the vineyard. When the popular public message comes at the end of the Gospel Age, the eleventh-

hour workers will enter the vineyard. The experience will be comparable to Jesus' Triumphal Entry. Like Jesus, those who then speak and espouse the truth will have the sympathy of the masses, but as with Jesus, the masses will subsequently turn against the feet members. Later, at the behest of the religious leaders, the masses shouted against Jesus, "Crucify him!" Thus we can see how fickle the public is in their reactions to different situations.

Therefore, entering the vineyard at the eleventh hour, near the conclusion of the twelfth hour, pertains to the *popular* message, but the next message is the *unpopular* or smiting message, which will be different. The eleventh-hour laborers will be given the privilege of delivering the unpopular message. Of course how many of each category will use the penny is another matter. The parable does not state how many of the first laborers will use the penny, but we can assume by the spirit of the parable itself that only a *minority* will utilize the opportunity for participating in the unpopular message. Likewise, the parable does not state how many of the eleventh-hour workers will use the penny, but because of their enthusiasm, zeal, and appreciation of recognition at the very end, a majority will probably do the second-phase work, that is, the smiting message.

We return to Jesus' question "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" He was asking the murmurers, "Is your eye evil because I am *generous* in giving the penny to all of the workers?" It is up to the Lord how matters are handled, and we should not question, murmur at, or repine about what God's providence permits to happen, especially in this type of situation.

The concluding verse of the parable states, "So the last shall be first, and the first last," and that is the principle. The fulfillment of this parable teaches a very wholesome lesson, but the lesson will not be seen until it becomes hindsight—until after the fulfillment. Then all will see that the Lord did the right thing in regard to whether or not an individual took the step of using the penny.

It is interesting that on page 225 of the *Third Volume*, where this parable is treated but not in-depth, the Pastor described the work as "the 'door' of opportunity for sacrifice and service," and he said that the door was not yet shut. Whereas he applied the phrase "door of opportunity" more or less to vineyard work, we would apply it to the last fatal witness, to the smiting message, which will be like Jesus' experience at the conclusion of his ministry. The penny, therefore, is a message of instruction to the feet members of the true Church—a message for those who desire to enter the door of opportunity and give the final, fatal witness.