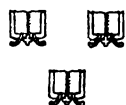


THE PARABLES
OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST



H. G. HOBBS

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FREE

FOREWORD.

The comments on some of these parables are in some cases quite short and much detail has been passed over. The object has been to deal with the important point of the parable, or with something that has been misconstrued. Taking it for granted that if the leading points are understood the other details which need no comment will be appreciated accordingly.

It will be seen therefore that in order to obtain the full benefit, the book should be read with the Bible open; and the passage to be considered should be read through first. And upon this line we may expect the Lord to grant His blessing, for they are His words.

H. G. H.

THE PARABLES

IN THE GOSPEL BY MATTHEW.

In Prov. 1.5, 6, Solomon wrote, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings".

But ch. 26.7 says, "The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools".

The word in Hebrew for "parable" covers any figurative expression—proverb, similitude, saying, etc. Thus we see that a wise man will use such forms of speech in a way that is suitable, and will also discern the significance of such when others use them. But there was One whose wisdom excelled that of Solomon, and of Him it is written in Matt. 13.35, "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world". And when He uttered His parables He said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear".

From this we must conclude that the parables that the Lord used are profound in wisdom and truth and that we need wisdom to be able to rightly interpret them. Not human cleverness, that devises some interpretation to support an already accepted belief. But as it is also written in the Book of Proverbs, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". And in Isa. 66.2, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word".

If we would learn from these parables we must have a holy fear lest we should misuse them in the least, and be in that attitude of mind that pays strict attention to what is written. Moreover, the Lord has Himself given the interpretation to a number of them and these we shall find will afford keys to others which are not interpreted.

John the Baptist being sent to prepare the way before the Lord, preached in a way that corresponded to that of the Lord. They both proclaimed the Kingdom of the Heavens to be at hand. We shall do well therefore to notice that in Matt. 3.10 he used a parable which, though very short, is very important. "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 first thing to note here is that the axe is *laid* to the root of the trees. It is not uplifted, it is there ready to be used. The next is that the trees are to be dealt with individually, this is quite contrasted to Israel's national standing. When God judged

Israel for their sins and sent them captive to Babylon, godly men like Daniel and his friends went among them. And though the Lord knew what Judas Iscariot was, He ate the passover with him, because there had been no act committed upon which he could be "cut off from the congregation of Israel".

But John presents a different view. The individual is to be dealt with as such, and not the nation as one whole. In A.D. 70 God sent the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem in fulfilment of the Lord's words in Matt. 24.2 and Luke 21.20-23. That was a national judgment, depriving them of their temple as in the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

There was evidently another judgment nearer at hand in John's proclamation, it was associated with the Kingdom of the Heavens, which was then "at hand" but had not commenced.

"The Kingdom of the Heavens" is a term which is only used by Matthew, the nearest to it being in Heb. 3.1, "the heavenly calling". Israel had an earthly calling and kingdom, and therefore these two facts, a *heavenly* calling and kingdom and an individual standing before God in contrast to a national one, can only be explained as the present dispensation. Thus, as the forerunner of the Lord, John introduced this new position in his testimony, which was more fully set out in the Lord's own teaching, both in parable and in direct statement: and for which He prepared the apostles who became the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2.20).

With this inspired introduction to the subject we may pass on to consider the Lord's own parables.

In ch. 5.13 He spoke of His disciples as being "the salt of the earth". It is true that salt is a preservative, but we do not attempt to preserve things that are already gone bad. Therefore, to suggest that this means that the children of God are in the world to mix with it and preserve it from corruption misses the point, and leads His children on a false mission. The world was already corrupt before the Church dispensation began.

Moreover, it runs counter to the Lord's words, "Ye are not of the world". There is no question that children of God have exercised a restraining influence upon the world, but that is due to their compromising more than anything else, a give and take attitude towards it.

Salt, in Scripture, is typical of judgment on sin. We are commanded in Mark 9.50, "Have salt in yourselves", and that immediately follows the concluding remarks in the discourse on eternal punishment, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt". And in Col. 4.6 we are told, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt". Speech that is alway with grace, without salt is insipid.

It belongs to those who are afraid to speak their convictions, who want to keep in good favour with everybody. But it is not like the Lord. He said to His brethren, "The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil". And if we had our speech seasoned with salt as we ought the world would hate us far more than it does.

Reverting to Mark 9.50, the whole statement is, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another". Sometimes one will use salt more sparingly than the case requires, toward a fellow Christian; but even that disturbs the peace. Why? Because of that disposition that takes offence at being reproved, even a little. The Lord used the salt on the world, and He used it on His disciples too. His reproofs were for their true spiritual profit, and therefore were the expression of His love for them.

This aspect of the Lord's character is expressed in the types, and particularly in the "meat offering". There the salt had to be included in the mixing before it was brought to the altar (Lev. 2.13).

The next parable (ch. 5.14-16) is similar in meaning, for the light is shewn to "reprove" in Eph. 5.13. In this case, however, the light may include the light of the Gospel. But to preach "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" without "Repentance toward God" (Acts 20.21) is to omit the important background of conviction of sin which prepares the heart to receive the glad tidings.

But why is it that we are so slow to let our light shine? The "bushel" and the "bed" are the divine answer. The bushel suggests business, and we don't want to offend a customer, so we hide the light. The bed, in those times was a couch for reclining by day as well as night. And it suggests that we don't want to be disturbed from our ease; so the bed as well as the bushel is allowed to stifle the light. There is no doubt that the Lord very early, began to prepare His disciples for the path of rejection that He Himself trod.

In verses 23-26 we have an exhortation in parabolic terms which needs interpretation and therefore comes rightly under this heading. But first let us recall what we have already seen that the Lord was preparing His disciples for the Kingdom of the Heavens which was then at hand. The reference to the altar and the judicial nature of the exhortation would doubtless be used by some as ground for asserting that this does not apply to the present dispensation. But we may well ask, did the Lord prepare His disciples for two positions and dispensations to be occupied at the same time, or for a position that they never occupied nor ever will (that is the supposed "Jewish"

position)? Or, did He prepare them for the "heavenly calling" of this dispensation—the Church which is His body, and of which they are the foundation? The question surely answers itself. How then are we to view the words concerning the gift brought to the altar?

Although the Lord was preparing them for the new dispensation, it did not actually begin till after His death. The passover was kept by the Lord right up to the night before He died. The period of the Gospels is a transition period and the disciples were still to fulfil their obligations under the law of Moses. Hence, this exhortation would apply in that connection: but the words that are repeated in this chapter (28, 34, etc.), "But I say unto you", shew that He was leading them beyond the law of Moses.

"We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat" (Heb. 13.10), shews us that there is the heavenly counterpart to the altar of that time which it is our privilege to serve, and therefore the exhortation has its application to us.

But what of the legal aspect of this exhortation? Some would say it is not consistent with this age of grace. But we must remember that forgiveness is never separated from repentance in Scripture: and the passage before us is a case of non-repentance, or refusal to be reconciled. And if one can be delivered to Satan in this age of grace, as in 1 Cor. 5.5, what is the objection to one being delivered to the "Judge"?

And now as to the interpretation of the metaphors: we have no difficulty in seeing the Lord Himself to be the Judge, in view of the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1-3). But who is the officer? There were many officers in Israel, and there are many officers whom the Lord may appoint over His wayward people today. Psalm 17.13, 14 shews us that "men of the world" are "God's sword", and that He uses them upon His saints for their chastisement. Rom. 13.1-5 is a warning to children of God.

Song of Songs, ch. 5.7, is helpful in this connection, specially after ch. 3.1-5. The neglect of the Lord increases and He permits the smiting and humbling by the "watchmen" to bring her to repentance.

So it may be with us, if we refuse to humble ourselves and agree with our adversary (a brother) who has somewhat against us. That is, who has a rightful ground of complaint against us because we have wronged him.

And now what about the prison? It is not needful to be enclosed within four brick walls to be in the Lord's prison. Psalm 142.7 shews that David knew this. But with all that he was "overwhelmed", the psalm makes it clear that he still was conscious of God's goodness and faithfulness through all that

He permitted. "To fall into the hands of the living God" is a fearful thing indeed. And His children may know it if they refuse to humble themselves under His mighty hand.

And if one is thus cast into prison, the Lord says, "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, *till thou hast paid* the uttermost farthing". Mark, there is nothing here about everlasting fire, or the place prepared for the Devil and his angels. It is not the eternal judgment of an unsaved one. It is His chastisement of His child—"till thou hast paid".

But there is a further word to be said on this. Whereas, it may be fitting for one to deliver another to the "Judge" if he refuses to be reconciled and right the wrong, we cannot say that in these days the "Judge" will take the action spoken of. When Moses brought before the Lord the case of the one who gathered sticks on the Sabbath, the Lord commanded him to be stoned. But how many broke the sabbath afterwards and were not punished at all! So at the beginning of this dispensation: God's disciplinary dealings were manifest. But in these days of confusion and ignoring of sin where should He begin, and where should He end. But judgment will yet begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4.17) and it behoves us to see that we keep short accounts, not only with God, but with one another.

Passing on through this discourse we note quite a number of figurative expressions are used, all expressive of the perfect aptitude with which the Lord chose His illustrations. Some of them appear to be of an exaggerated character, but this is only in accord with all figurative expressions, because they are intended to be impressive. On the other hand, if it is impossible, physically, to have a "beam" in one's eye, it is not impossible spiritually. Let us beware.

But such metaphors are self-explanatory and we will pass on therefore to ch. 7.24-29.

This parable is also self-explanatory, but we do well to dwell upon it and to realise that the Lord prepared His disciples for an experience of trial and adversity.

Sooner or later there will come a time of testing that will prove our work. It may be in this life, it certainly will be hereafter (1 Cor. 3.10-15; Gal. 6.5, 6). And remembering what we have noted, that the Lord was preparing His disciples for a heavenly calling, we need to see that our building is based upon HIS OWN WORDS.

In view of 1 Cor. 2.13, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" it has been suggested, or rather asserted, that our ministry is on a higher level than our Lord's, in that He compared natural and physical things with spiritual. But it is altogether overlooked by such that Paul compared natural things

with spiritual in his ministry. See for example, 1 Cor. 3.12: 9.9: 9.24-26: 1 Tim. 4.2: 2 Tim. 2-6. Moreover, if the Lord's words in Matthew do not apply to us directly as many are asserting, why is it that Paul said in Col. 3.16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another . . .". And in 1 Tim. 3.3, 4, "If any man . . . consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud . . . from such withdraw thyself".

Surely this is sufficient for the humble mind to be satisfied that the words of the Lord in the Gospels are directly applicable to and binding upon us, and that we can only relegate them to a supposed Jewish remnant at serious loss to ourselves and His personal displeasure: see ch. 5.17-20.

In ch. 9.14-17 we have a little group of parables which must be considered together; verses 16, 17 being an amplification of verse 15.

"The children of the bridechamber" here is taken by some who hold this "Jewish" theory to signify a different company from the Bride herself. But in Song of Songs 1.4, "Draw me, we will run after thee" presents no difficulty to them. The collective and the individual aspects being brought together in the one statement. Why then can we not see in "the children of the bridechamber", and other like expressions where the plural occurs, a reference to the individual aspect. Moreover, it would be unsuitable to speak of them as the "bride" in those early days. And especially in speaking to others. That blessed relationship awaited revelation at the time when it could be appreciated by those to whom it applied.

Again we see that the Lord prepares them for the time when He should be taken from them. To stretch the application of this to another dispensation which is supposed to come in between this and the millennium seems an interpretation that condemns itself.

Keeping in mind the thought of fasting, we see the meaning of the new patch on the old garment. A life of general abstinence and suffering such as they were being prepared for could only be maintained in the power of a new creation where the Holy Spirit would be ever present. It is a great contrast to the Jewish outlook of earthly blessing and prosperity.

Hence the new patch of the rigours of the new life applied to the old garment of the Jewish outlook would do more harm than good: in fact it would not be practicable. (See also Heb. 8.13).

The wine in the bottles may be taken in the same way, or it may, being a symbol of joy, set forth the other side of the

Christian calling—sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Whichever way it is taken we see the uselessness of attempting to mix the two callings. Judaism has no place in the calling for which they were being prepared. There must be a new creation.

There is also a further thought in the old wine skins which were then used. Glass can be washed clean of the old contents; but skin cannot. That which remained absorbed into the skin and exposed to the air would immediately begin to ferment when the new wine was put in. No matter how airtight the mouth was made, the element of ferment would be already inside. The result would be the bursting of the skin and all would be lost.

Ferment and leaven are of the same nature, and both are used as types of sin. The old covenant was not sinful in itself, but not only had it been corrupted through their handling of it, it also was “weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8.3); and it had also served its purpose in bringing man to an end of himself. Therefore we read in Heb. 8.13, “that which decayeth and waxeth old.” Thus the Lord sets forth in language that can only be fully understood in the light of the new dispensation, the truth that is so clearly expressed in the Epistle to the Galatians, that to introduce the old into the new (which is what happens when the new wine is put into old skins) is to make oneself a transgressor, and to make Christ of no effect (ch. 2.15-21: 5.1-6).

There is in ch. 12.20 a figurative expression which is frequently misinterpreted. The bruised reed and smoking flax are taken to represent a weak believer in Christ. But if we look at the Old Testament we shall find that these figures stand for the wicked and hypocritical. In Isaiah 36.6 and Ezek. 29.6, 7 the reed is a figure of Egypt as a false prop to those who leaned on her. And in Isa. 43.17 the word “tow” is the same as “flax” in ch. 42.3. And in Matt. 12.20 the word “till He send forth judgment”, indicates that then He *will* break and quench them.

Ch. 13 contains a group of parables, and to interpret them correctly we must take note of a few details in the chapter which indicate to whom they were spoken. After the parable of the sower, the disciples asked the Lord, “Why speakest thou unto them in parables?” And He answered, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given”. And in the verses that follow (12-17) the explanation is given that Israel as a whole had the “oracles of God”, but they had not the understanding or disposition of heart that made the word fruitful. But there were some, such as became His disciples and at Pentecost came into the kingdom, who had eyes to see and ears to hear. And to these the interpretations were given; for verse 18 seems to imply that the parable

of the sower was interpreted to them only. Then in verse 36 we see that the multitude was sent away and the interpretation of the wheat and tares and the other parables were given privately in the house.

But it was fitting that the parable of the sower should be spoken to the multitude, because the "sower" is Christ Himself Who spoke the word of the Kingdom (ver. 19 and ch. 4.17). And the parable shews three classes who were fruitless and only one good. So it is well to remember that even the Lord's preaching was so largely fruitless, not because of defect in the preaching, but because of the state of heart of those that heard (verses 14, 15).

This first parable is not commenced with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like", as in all the others. The reason being that the kingdom of heaven (of the heavens) did not commence till after the death of Christ. But He preached that it was at hand, it was "the *word* of the kingdom". But in the next parable (ver. 24) the man sowed good seed "in *His* field". And the interpretation is, "He that sowed the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world". In the first parable the sower might have been a labourer hired, thus Christ is seen as the Servant. But in the second He is the owner, He has bought the field. Hence the words, "The Kingdom of the Heavens is like" at the beginning of each parable that follows.

We see therefore that these parables are descriptive of the new dispensation which began with the resurrection of Christ and took corporate shape at Pentecost. Moreover, they give the view of the dispensation right on to "the consummation of the age". This age is "the mystery"—Jew and Gentile being one body in Christ (Eph. 3.6). And being such, the details were in themselves mysteries, pertaining to a new order of things which though intimated in certain passages such as John 10.16 was not fully revealed till after the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28.19).

The expression "the end of the world" is literally "the consummation of the age". The word rendered "end" has the prefix which means "together". So at the end of this age there will be a period during which all things will be brought to their conclusion together.

The nations will be gathered together under the "Beast" with a view to their destruction, Israel will be brought low and the remnant to be spared for the millennium will be sealed and to some extent cast out by their own people, but still not believers in Jesus as the Christ. The Church also will come through the great tribulation, being revived and re-united in preparation for the coming of her Lord.

In view of this the words of ver. 30 are clear, "Gather ye together *first* the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." The false professors are dealt with in judgment *first*, then the wheat is gathered afterwards. The interpretation is also clear on this point (verses 40, 42), the wicked are to be gathered out of His kingdom before the righteous shine forth in it.

Rev. 17.16 shews that the Roman Catholic system will be destroyed at the beginning of the forty-two months of Anti-christ's power, thus making way for the worship of himself (2 Thess. 2.3, 4). This is in the middle of the 70th week of Dan. 9, "the consummation of the age". Others will be destroyed by other means under the seals and trumpets, and the remainder at the appearing of the Lord Himself, so that all false professors and "them which do iniquity" (lawlessness) will be gathered out before the wheat, the true believers, are gathered in. No other interpretation will fit this parable, for it starts with the resurrection of Christ, embraces all that He taught the disciples (Matt. 28.20) and only concludes with the consummation of the age, the wheat being gathered after the tares.

One other point is important. Ver. 42 shews that before Christ comes the wicked will be cast into a furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. They are in conscious suffering a thousand years before the great white throne judgment, despite all that is being said to the contrary.

The next two parables are a pair, both setting forth the view of the failure of this age. They have been misinterpreted to shew their *success*, by those who imagine that the world will eventually be converted to Christ through the testimony of the Church. But leaven is without exception a type of *sin* in Scripture and this parable shews the working of a woman (possibly Romanism, or the kingdom of the heavens in its wheat and tares aspect, which embraces all sorts of professing Christians). The meal is food, figure of the word of God. And this we know has been corrupted from beginning to end to support errors of doctrines according to men.

The mustard tree is also a figure of failure for though it is a "herb", if left it will grow to a tree. This seems to be one of the effects of the fall of Adam upon creation, and the Lord used it to illustrate the solemn truth. The birds of the air are interpreted for us in ver. 19, the agents of the devil.

The next two parables are also a pair, but they do not shew a failure, but a glorious success. As in the other pair two aspects of the case are presented, so here: there is not a mere repetition. And we must be careful to note the exactness with which the Lord chose His words to make the distinction.

The buying is not the work of a sinner seeking salvation, as some have interpreted it; the Lord urged men to "strive to enter in" because of the importance of the matter; but He never suggested they could buy it. No, the buying is His. He "loved the Church and gave Himself for it". "Ye are bought with a price".

The "pearl" views the Church as one whole, the "treasure" as individuals. Of the pearl (ver. 46) it is said, "he bought *it*." But of the "treasure" it is said (ver. 44), "he buyeth that *field*"; obviously for the sake of the treasure that was in it. And we have already been told that "the field is the world" (ver. 38).

With these differences in view we may now consider another which is more likely to be overlooked. It is the difference in tense. In ver. 44 it is present tense. In ver. 46 it is past tense. And yet so far as tense, strictly, is concerned they are obviously the same; for they are both narrating something that had happened—past tense.

Actually, in the Greek, neither of these tenses are to be limited strictly as a tense. In ver. 44 this present tense is used when the tense is not the important point. And when used for something in the past is intended to convey the thought of process or duration, or to fix the attention on the action so that one visualizes it in process.

In the case of the past tense (ver. 46) (aorist), this is used when it is intended not to decide whether there was any process or duration, or not. It simply states the fact that the thing was done. And when these two are used in close apposition, as in these two similar parables, we must conclude that a difference is intended.

In the case of the treasure, we see that the object is the treasure itself, but the only way in which the man could secure it would be to buy the field. This sets forth an aspect of the work of Christ which is quite distinct from redemption by blood. It is set forth in Phil. 2,5-11 and Heb. 12,2. In both these cases the Lord is presented as our example, and nothing is said about atonement or anything accruing to us as a result, but only that we are to copy Him; and the fact that *He* has a reward for that death. In Phil. 2, moreover, it is "a death of a cross", and in Heb. 12 it is "endured a cross", in contrast to 1 Cor. 1,18, "the preaching of *the* cross", where our salvation is in view. In Phil. 2 and Heb. 12 it is the martyr aspect that is in view and obviously that and that only is the aspect that is for us to copy.

In Phil. 2 there is a process that led up to the death mentioned in ver. 8, and by those steps of obedience, His life long obedience, He was continually giving up all that He had and

buying the reward of ver. 9. Here is the interpretation of the "going" and "selling" and "buying" of the field. It is all the *continuous* tense.

Now we need to consider in what sense the buying of the field (the world) is the means of our Lord securing His treasure. It is not redemption: it is the means whereby He obtains the dominion over all the earth, which Adam lost by his disobedience. So that in resurrection the Lord said, "All authority is *given* unto Me in heaven and on earth, go ye therefore and make disciples".

This authority means that all nations are under His hand. He opens and none can shut, and shuts and none can open (Rev. 3.7). Satan, the god of this age, would close every land to the Gospel; but if Christ says that it is to be opened, it is opened. And in this way He secures His treasure.

Now in ver. 46 we have the opposite view: no process or continuance is suggested, it is just a simple transaction. This corresponds to the obedience of John 10.18 and Rom. 5.19. There His soul was laid down, as an act of obedience, for the sheep; and through that obedience (Rom. 5.9) we are justified. Thus by the one transaction of offering His body and soul for sin He bought the pearl—the Church—not the world.

In the outworking of the plan the Church had to be bought first, and then gathered out of the world. But in the parables the buying of the field is first because only the buying is in view in both. And this is the correct order, for it was the obedience of His life *unto* death that bought the field; but His death alone as the sin offering is the means of our redemption. Thus we have two parables of glorious accomplishment, without failure in either, in contrast to the two which set forth the failure of the Church.

And can anyone deny that these two "buying" parables relate to the Church of the present age? Will any say they are "Jewish"?

"Again the kingdom of the heavens is like unto a net" (ver. 47). This parable is very much like the wheat and tares, but there is a difference. An "enemy" sows the tares; but the Gospel net of the kingdom is like the preaching of the word of the kingdom while the kingdom was only at hand; as in the parable of the sower. Even to the Lord's preaching there was a response which was merely natural and not spiritual, and so it is today.

But at the end, in "the consummation of the age" (ver. 49), the wicked shall be severed from among the just. And no matter whether they are destroyed by the Beast when he burns up the harlot system, or whether they die by any other means,

they will be cast into a furnace of fire where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, there to await the last resurrection, a thousand years later, and then to be cast into the lake of fire.

Ver. 52 impresses us with the importance of being rightly instructed unto the kingdom of the heavens. And therefore the importance of having the right interpretation of these parables in Matthew, and the right application of them too.

And the term "scribe" here is like that in ch. 23.³⁴ which also obviously refers to this dispensation; one who is an able "writer", who must therefore be able to read and to give the sense (Neh. 8.8). Such an one will find that He has a treasury indeed. And contrariwise, those who say that Matthew is "Jewish" and does not apply directly to the Church are throwing away the treasure which the Lord has saved up for us (the mysteries).

Ch. 15.²¹⁻²⁷ affords an extraordinary example of the use of a parable. But we need to compare with Mark 7.²⁴. There we see that the Lord came to the "borders" of Tyre and Sidon, and He entered into an house and would have no man know it.

In Matt. 15.²⁴, the Lord said I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And He kept strictly to that, for the woman came *out* of those coasts and sought Him *in the house*. Then the Lord said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the 'puppies' ". The dogs ran wild and were not kept in the houses, but the puppies were attractive to the children and were brought in to their tables. If the Lord had gone right in to the cities of Tyre and Sidon, as He had the cities of Galilee, and wrought miracles on the same scale, He would have been *taking* the children's bread and casting it to the puppies. But not only had He not gone into their territory, neither had the woman asked that He would come, she simply asked for the demon to be cast out. Therefore her reply that the puppies eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's tables was most fitting. By comparing the record with that in Mark 7 it seems that she cried after Him on the way to the house, and therefore, "He could not be hid".

Possibly, from Matt. 15.²⁵, we may go so far as to say that she entered into the house after him and therefore was in just the place where the "puppies" would be. The remarkable thing is that her "faith" enabled her to defeat the Lord in the use of His own parable: for she had not asked Him to come and cast the bread to her people generally. But can we not see that the Lord presented His parable for that very purpose, that her faith might be demonstrated to His own people? For elsewhere He called *them* "a faithless and perverse generation".

And is it not a challenge to us? When in doubt, and fearing lest we should snatch at promises without having fulfilled the conditions, we may be inclined to draw back from asking. But *faith* finds a way whereby all the *disqualifications* are admitted and yet sees a handle to be grasped in that God has respect to the lowly and contrite hearted ones.

Ch. 18.23-35. This parable affords another example of the way in which the Lord chose His illustrations to impress certain truth. Here He supposes a case which is most unlikely in actual fact. Ten thousand talents is a tremendous sum. The margin gives the talent as being 750 ozs. = nearly 47 lbs., which at 5/- per oz. is £187 10s. This comes to £1,875,000. But Dr. Smith's Smaller Bible Dictionary gives the talent as being 94 lbs.: which at the same rate is £3,760,000, about twice the amount. What an amount! Surely no king would have a servant owe him so much? It is evident that the Lord intended to impress the enormity of what we have been forgiven.

But before we go further, we need to realise that these two men were on the same footing, "fellowservants". Now one cannot be a servant of God unless he is His son (Rom. 6.20-22). There are those who are servants *professedly*, but they never have forgiveness. Therefore, this tremendous debt depicts the position of a child of God and the debt that has accumulated since he has been serving Him. Do any of us realise what our sins amount to? And we need to remember that they could not be forgiven without our Saviour paying the penalty for every one, just as He did for those we committed before we were saved. What a salvation! What a Saviour!!

When we consider this tremendous sum over against the hundred pence (just over three pounds, Roman money), we begin to feel how trivial are the wrongs done to us in view of our own sins before our heavenly Father. And that is the point of the parable.

If we compare ver. 26 with ver. 32 we see that "I will pay thee all" is but a form of speech. What hope had he of paying *all*? But the king understood that form of speech, it is characteristic of the Eastern peoples. To us it might seem out of place. Better to say, "I cannot pay". But there is one thing to be said for it, it is a very strong form of acknowledging the debt, and implies a desire to pay. And this is a very important matter in all cases of forgiveness, both with God and between ourselves. It is in all cases associated with confession or repentance. Here we see that the fellow servant said exactly the same as the first one did to the king. "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all". And on such ground he should have been forgiven.

This parable arises out of the Lord's instruction for discipline in a church (verses 15-18). What is our motive in telling a brother who has wronged us his fault? Is it to "gain" him? It should be. We need to look at ourselves in the light of this. Certainly talking about him to others is not likely to gain him. But if he does not hear thee further steps are to be taken, even to regarding him as an heathen man and a publican. But again, what is the motive? Is it revenge or spite? What was the Lord's motive in appointing such dealings? To keep sin out of the churches. And the relaxing of this discipline is responsible in large measure for the sad state of things today.

Verses 19-22 are all part of the same matter, and the parable is given to clinch the whole. May we be made increasingly conscious of our own great debt: the daily shortcomings, the failures to glorify God, as well as positive offences.

The matter of "binding" and "loosing" here is very solemn. If God has bound a sin in heaven, waiting for repentance, we must not loose it. But if He has loosed it in heaven, because of repentance, it is a serious thing if we keep it bound on earth.

Now ver. 34 presents a problem, though what has been said paves the way to the solution. Will God forgive sins and then bring them back again? Can one who has been justified by the blood of Christ, be eternally condemned? No.

Those who tell us that Matthew's Gospel is "Jewish" would advance this case as evidence of it, saying that it does not fit this dispensation. But that form of teaching overlooks a great fundamental truth. That is, that we who are saved are brought into a double relationship, we may even say a treble one. We have a standing in righteousness before God; we have become His children, and therefore He is our Father; and we are members of the Church of which Christ is the Head. These three relationships are each associated with forgiveness or punishment in their own sphere, and unless we discern the particular sphere of a certain passage of Scripture we cannot rightly understand it. So let us consider briefly these three relationships.

In Rom. 3.19 we see that all the world has become guilty before God. And if you will read through the verses that follow you will see that we are justified by God, and that the relationship is to God alone in this matter of justification. In this matter we have been declared righteous, and nothing can ever affect that standing before God (Rom. 8.28-39). Our sins are forgiven and they can never come up again. Other passages that speak of this relationship are Gal. 3.6-14; Eph. 2.16; Titus 3.4-7, etc. It is always "God" where justification is in view.

But when we are justified we are also born again into the family of God and He therefore becomes our Father. Passages like Heb. 12.5-9 shew that in this relationship our Father exercises a discipline upon us; and our sins, though put away for ever in His law court as God, are only forgiven in the fatherly relationship on certain conditions. In 1 John 1.9 we see it is upon confession. In 2 Cor. 7 it is based on repentance as saved ones. And in the Gospels there are passages that base our Father's forgiveness on our forgiveness of our brethren (Matt. 5.12, 14, 15; 18.35).

The failure to distinguish between the forgiveness of God and the forgiveness of the Father has made way for this "Jewish" theory which has become associated with Matthew in particular. On this ground we are told that we ought not to use the prayer which the Lord taught His disciples in ch. 6: and almost all the Lord's teaching is taken from us and handed over to another dispensation, which is really only imaginary.

One of the great features of the Lord's ministry was to reveal the *Father*, and if this is born in mind we can see that the Lord was preparing His disciples for this dispensation all through His time with them; just as we have seen that He prepared them for the kingdom of the heavens, which began after His death and resurrection.

The third relationship, to Christ as the Head of the Church, is seen in Rev. 1.13 and chapters 2 and 3; where He, as the Head of the assemblies, is judging those responsible for the conduct of those assemblies. It is also seen in 1 Cor. 11, where the Lord chastened those who were not conducting themselves properly at the breaking of the bread, which is an assembly action.

From the above it will be clear that sins which were atoned for by the blood of Christ, and forgiven once for all when we believed, by God as Judge, may be dealt with in chastisement by our Father, or by the Lord as the head of His Church. And this will help us to see the teaching of Matt. 18.34, 35.

The two servants in the parable correspond to two brethren, see verses 21, 35. Therefore, the king in the parable corresponds to God as our *Father*, whose forgiveness is conditional. 1 Sam. 2.30 is one of a number of passages which shew that God does at times revoke His promises because of sin. And that helps us to see that in Matt. 18 the forgiveness which had been granted was revoked and the servant had to pay in full. To pay the debt in money was out of the question; but he was delivered to the tormentors and paid in that way. Sins can very rarely be paid in full by rectifying the wrong. They may be in part. The ungodly will pay to the full in the lake of fire: and children

of God may be made to pay in this life under their Father's hand in chastisement; and that is what ver. 35 says. But it should be clearly understood that this is quite a different sphere from the atonement wherein Christ paid out penalty legally before God.

This parable has a bearing on the whole of the chapter. Verses 15-18 shew that discipline must be carried out if one will not repent, but malice, retaliation, revenge, or an unforgiving spirit where another does repent may call forth our Father's discipline upon ourselves. And if in these days when God is allowing so much to pass we do not see His intervention, we may be sure that there will be a reckoning hereafter. Let us not forget that "many that are first shall be last".

Ch. 19.23-26. The misinterpretation given to this parable that the "eye of a needle" is a name for the small gate of a city, and that the camel can be got through by taking the load off its back is a denial of the one and only gospel of salvation. It makes it possible for a man to save himself by casting off his own sins. The Lord gives the deciding word on this matter in ver. 26, "With man this is *impossible*". But thanks be to God, all things are possible to Him. Our entrance into the kingdom of God is by a new creation, the great miracle of grace.

Ch. 20.1-16. This parable is an answer to what precedes in ch. 19. And to interpret it we must recognize that. To attempt an explanation of each detail leads to confusion. If we say that because each of the labourers received a penny therefore the penny stands for eternal life, because we all receive that alike, we make eternal life attainable by works. And if we say the penny is our reward at the judgment seat of Christ, we contradict what the Lord says in 19.30; there we shall not all receive the same.

The parable is arranged to shew that the Lord will give *all* that He has *agreed* to; but He may also give more. The first labourers had an agreement. The others did not. If we enter the service of Christ with the thought of payment, we at once qualify ourselves for a loss. But if, out of love, we take up our cross and follow Him, we may be sure that when the reward is given it will be far beyond anything we expected.

The same chapter, verses 20-28, record the request of James and John that they might sit the one on the Lord's right hand and the other on the left. And the Lord closed the matter by setting Himself forth as the example of true greatness. If we seek pre-eminence either in this life, or that which is to come, we may find ourselves among the last instead of the first.

Chapters 21 and 22 contain three parables which are all directed against the Pharisees and Scribes. After the Lord had

ridden into the city He went into the Temple and cast out those who were making His Father's house "a den of thieves". This aroused the hatred of the priests and Pharisees more than ever, but they feared the people, who were praising Him. But in the morning when He returned to the Temple, they questioned His authority for doing such things. This led to the discourse that included these three parables, in which also He refuted both the Sadducees and the Pharisees and concluded with that awful denunciation in ch. 23 which concluded His public ministry. The whole passage needs to be read at one reading to appreciate the connection between its several parts and how the Pharisees would feel His words like swords piercing them through. And although He would not tell them in so many words by what authority He did those things, He left no doubt about it both in His question to them about John, and in the parable of the vineyard.

The first parable is short and simple and the Lord explains it (verses 28-32). We behold the glory of the Lord here as unflinching as Rock while He condemns them to their face and they can say nothing.

Then He proceeds with the parable of the vineyard. They could not mistake the purport of this from their knowledge of the similar parables in the Old Testament. Isa. 5: Ezek. 15 and Psalms 80 make their meaning plain. But while there is much that is similar in Isa. 5, there is a marked contrast in one point to Matt. 21.

Isa. 5 was written before the captivity to Babylon. And in ver. 5 God says He will take away the hedge and break down the wall (of His own protection) and leave it open for the inroads of the wild beasts (the heathen). This was fulfilled in the coming of Nebuchadnezzar. But there is nothing here about the vineyard being taken away. In this parable the vines themselves represent the nation which brought forth the wild grapes.

But in Matt. 21 the nation is pictured as husbandmen and from them the vineyard was taken away, indeed they were destroyed. This was fulfilled in the Roman overthrow which was not a captivity, but a massacre. And the kingdom of God was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.

Now who are the people constituting this nation? Who can they be but those who succeeded the nation of Israel—the Church—called in 1 Pet 2.9, "a holy nation"? This holy nation, the Church, has also failed much in rendering fruit to God, we have all come far short of our heavenly calling; nevertheless, where grace has come in there is fruit. The new life by birth

of the Holy Spirit manifests itself, and on the whole, the children of God are a contrast to the world.

The treatment of the servants by the husbandmen, verses 35, 36, reminds us of the words of Stephen in Acts 7.⁵², "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" But there is a remarkable exactness in ver. 39 concerning their treatment of the son. For in the fulfilment of this the Son of God was treated as a blasphemer, and so cut off from the nation (cast out of the vineyard), then they took Him to Pilate with the charge that He made Himself a king and on that ground accomplished His death.

But the stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. And those who "fell on Him" then were broken when the Romans came and destroyed the city. But there yet awaits them a further judgment, not national but individual, at the last resurrection. Then He will "grind them to powder", metaphorically of course, for they will be cast into the lake of fire.

And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard these things they perceived that He spake of them, but they feared to lay hands on Him because of the multitude. And the Lord spoke on with another parable.

Ch. 22.1-14. This parable like the one in Matt. 18 supposes a condition of things that one could hardly believe possible. Who can think that a servant owed a king three million pounds! It is intended to make us stand aghast. So here, who could imagine guests who had been bidden to the marriage of a king's son acting with such effrontery! But this is what the nation had done. Nor are they the only ones.

In ver. 3 we have the call of the Gospel during the life of Christ, "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins" and "the kingdom of the heavens is at hand". Ver. 4 is the call again after the death of Christ—the oxen and fatlings being typical of His sacrificial death. But then they not only made light of it, but the servants were persecuted. This call and its rejection can be seen right through the book of Acts until Paul was a prisoner at Rome (ch. 13.46, 47: 22.21: 26.17, 18: 28.23-28) where they also rejected the call (Acts 28.23-28), but they could not persecute him any more for he was already a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. How long after that the rejection was continued in a direct way we do not know, but we know that they still reject the Gospel wherever it is brought to them.

But about seven years after Paul's testimony at Rome ver. 7 in the parable was fulfilled. The Romans came and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Then the same call was continued, but no longer "to the Jew first". The Jew today

is treated like a gentile, no distinction being made. That is to say, an evangelist is not called upon to seek the synagogue on entering a town, as Paul used to do, and present the Gospel to the leaders of the Jews. He simply presents it to all and sundry. This is depicted in verses 8-10.

Verses 11-14 shew the entering in of the false professors of this age. But they will be cast out *before* the marriage takes place.

Now two things are noticeable. Just as the tares are gathered *before* the wheat, so the one without the wedding garment was cast out before the marriage. This refutes the theory of a secret rapture at any moment, before the tribulation, which is so commonly believed. For the propagators of that teaching tell us that the false professors will be left for the judgment after we are caught up.

The ~~other~~ point is that the same Gospel which was preached by the Lord and the eleven apostles was preached by Paul and is still preached to this day.

Thus is refuted the teaching that the Gospel of the kingdom is different from the Gospel of grace of God, and that Paul had a revelation different from that which was given to the eleven. (See Eph. 3.5, which says that the mystery was revealed to all alike.)

This parable is the last that was addressed to the multitude or to the Pharisees. The discourse continues through to the end of ch. 23. In that chapter there is the open denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees and the pronouncement of judgment upon them, both eternally and by the Romans (verses 33 and 35). And the Lord says, "*your* house is left unto you desolate". No longer does the Lord say, "My Father's house" as at the beginning of this episode. God had rejected it. And when the Son was cast out and slain the veil in the Temple was rent from top to bottom

At the end of this discourse the Lord said, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord", and He went out and departed from the Temple. And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, with the temple still in view, the disciples, catching His departing words, asked Him about His coming again.

Now following the whole discourse through, as well as keeping in mind the relation of earlier parables to the present dispensation, what is there to suggest that the disciples were addressed in ch. 24 as members of a "Jewish remnant", and on "Jewish ground"? Nothing could be more opposed to the character of the whole Gospel, and specially of these last chapters. Everything points to them being viewed as members of the new order

of things brought in from the resurrection of Christ and incorporated in the Church, of which the apostles were the foundation (Eph. 2.20), on the day of Pentecost.

Ch. 25.1-13. That this parable is a continuation of the discourse of the preceding chapter is clear from the word "Then" with which it commences. It refers to the "consummation" which is prominent in ch. 13. Therefore, those who expect the Lord to come before the tribulation will associate it with that company who, it is imagined, will become disciples of Christ after we are caught up. And one argument to support the view is that here we have *ten* virgins who are therefore distinct from the Bride.

We have already seen that the Lord chose His words in His parables in a very remarkable way; every similitude being exactly fitting to the requirements. The "bride" is a figure that expresses unity—the whole company being viewed as one. It would therefore be unsuitable in a parable like this where individual readiness is the great point. There is nothing strange in the same company being expressed by different figures for different purposes. In Eph. 2 we are fellow citizens, the household of God, and the stones of a building. In ch. 4 we are the body, and in ch. 5 the bride. There is therefore no argument in their favour along this line. The figure of the Bride and Bridegroom suggest affection and adornment. The ten virgins go to meet the Bridegroom to welcome him and to acclaim him as the one worthy to take the Bride for himself. And though the Church is the Bride, there is no reason why, individually, as the virgins we should not shew this attitude of heart. The whole Gospel witnesses to the fact that the kingdom of the heavens is the present dispensation and that the Lord was preparing His disciples for it. And this, like ch. 13, is a parable of the kingdom of the heavens; and if we read carefully we shall see that it fits the consummation of this age, and shews the reviving that must precede the coming of the Lord.

Matt. 13.30, 41 shew that the wicked will be gathered out *first*. And Rev. 17.16 confirms it in that the Beast will destroy the Roman Catholic system at the beginning of the tribulation period, when his image is set up. But the foolish virgins are not openly wicked, they are *foolish*, they even take a position of rejection with the true saints, and will maintain it till the midnight cry is made; and then they will find that they lack the one thing essential, the oil being a figure for the Holy Spirit. That they are not true believers is further confirmed by the Lord's words, "I know you not".

While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. Here is a portrayal of the present condition. Many today pro-

fess to be waiting for the coming of the Lord, but no one can deny the sleepiness, worldliness and indifference to the Lord's will that prevails. And this condition of things makes room for some who profess to be waiting for the Lord, but who have not been born again.

We may well ask, Where is the purifying power of the blessed hope? Is the "any moment" teaching one of the causes of this state of affairs? For a hundred years, or thereabouts, this teaching has been making headway, with the definite assertion that there is no further prophecy of Scripture to be fulfilled before the Lord comes. But instead of becoming more expectant and heavenly-minded we find generally that the reverse is the case. Let children of God embrace the truth in their hearts that we have to pass through the great tribulation and that everything around indicates the approach of it, then perhaps we may see some practical results from the blessed hope. Then we might expect a preparation for persecution and taking up the cross.

But whatever happens before, at midnight there will be a cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh". Then the virgins *will* arise and trim their lamps.

But when is this "midnight"? Surely it must be when the abomination of desolation is set up. That will be the darkest hour of all. The saints in the vicinity of Jerusalem will flee for their lives. The edict will go forth that no one shall be allowed to buy or sell without the mark of the Beast, and those who do not receive the mark will be in danger of death.

This will be the testing time which reveals the true state of the foolish virgins. It is a short time comparatively, for the Lord said those days should be shortened. The foolish ones realise their plight, but the wise cannot help them, they cannot give the Holy Spirit that they possess; indeed everyone will need a full measure for himself then. The foolish go to buy for themselves, as they are bidden; but where shall they find it at such a time? They return, but we do not read they had obtained any oil; but they are too late, the door has been shut.

But the wise trimmed their lamps (comp. Luke 12.35, 36) and the light shone forth, and in the revived state, aroused from sleep, they were "ready" (comp. Rev. 19.7). And they went in to the marriage.

The woman in Rev. 12 has a heavenly and an earthly position at the same time. This never belonged to Israel and never will. Their calling and blessing is earthly. The "man child" is a figure of a revived strengthened company who will pass through triumphantly the period of Satan's wrath. All that are alive and remain till that time, who are true children of God, will compose that company, and so when the Lord comes all will be

looking for Him (Heb. 9.28). But if this should come into the hand of one who is not sure of his salvation, let him consider the dread end, "I know you not". Let him haste to the Saviour and take no rest till He is satisfied from His word that he is really His.

Ch. 25.14-30. This parable is again the continuation of the same subject; it is the answer to the question of ver. 3. Having told them the signs that will precede His coming, the Lord's great point is preparedness and occupying in His business while He is absent.

The going into a far country and the distributing of His goods among His servants does not suggest a return at any moment after His departure, there is the statement in ver. 19 that it will be a long time before He returns. But the chief point of this parable is the right use of what has been entrusted during His absence. The preparedness for His return is in the preceding parable.

The details of the parable are, for the most part, self-explanatory. But we do well to remind ourselves of some simple facts. Every child of God is a servant and we each have something of Christ's entrusted to us. It is not for anyone to say, I have no talent. The talents here stand for anything that we have of a spiritual nature. And no matter how small our portion may seem, because of its nature it must be of great value. Therefore, it is represented by talents, which we have seen represent large sums of money. We therefore should see that we are diligent in the use of what has been given us.

Both the one that had received the five and the one that had received the two made the same proportion of increase. And therefore the wording of commendation and reward are the same to each. Herein lies the chief difference between this parable and that of the "pounds" in Luke 19. So that if our possession is small we still have a large encouragement to work with it. And we note further that the amounts were graded according to each one's ability. The Lord has given us as much as we can use.

The one that received only the one talent is obviously not a saved person. How then can he be a servant, and have anything of Christ's to handle? It is evident from ch. 13 that the kingdom of the heavens comprises both true and false Christians. And the Lord's words to the Pharisees, in Luke 15.7, "ninety and nine just persons that *need no repentance*" is obviously taking them on their own profession. There are unsaved persons in Christendom who take the position of being Christians. They have something of Christ's, if it be but a knowledge of the fact that He died on the cross. But "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh", and because they have not Christ in

their hearts, nor the Holy Spirit to give any impulse, they do nothing with the knowledge they have. Indeed their knowledge is a burden to them, and their religious observances are only with a sense of being under an obligation of duty. Thus spoke the one who had only the one talent: he regarded his Lord as a hard master.

But he was a servant—a slave—and therefore he should have done something with the talent, that at least his master might have some interest on it, however small. But no, his heart was not so inclined, so he “hid” it.

Then the Lord ordered the one talent to be taken from him and given to the one that had ten, with the explanation, “For unto every one that hath (an increase) shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but from him that hath not (an increase) shall be taken away even that he hath”.

The concluding verse not only shews that he is an unsaved one, it also shews that when the Lord comes, there will be many false professors who will be taken out of the kingdom and cast into outer darkness, not into non-existence as those would have us believe who deny that there is any suffering before the final resurrection, but into a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The parables of the wheat and tares and of the net, in Matt. 13, bear the same testimony, as also ch. 24.⁵¹: it is the consummation of the age and these are sent into torment a thousand years before the last resurrection and judgment. If these passages, and other similar ones meant anything else, then the Lord’s language was entirely misleading on the point to all who heard Him.

Ch. 25.³¹⁻⁴⁶. This parable deals with a time subsequent to the actual coming of the Lord, it is when He sits upon the throne of His glory. And it shews that there will be a judgment after His kingdom has been established upon the earth.

If Matthew’s Gospel portrays Him as King (as in this parable), not only as “the King’s Son”, as in ch. 22, it is also evident that these parables lead us right on beyond the present aspect of the kingdom to the time when the Lord will reign upon the earth, at Jerusalem.

The title “Son of Man”, like “the Son of God” is a title of the Christ (see ch. 26.⁶³ and John 12.³⁴); and in Dan. 7.^{13, 14} we see that He, as Son of Man, is to receive the kingdom. Moreover, Rev. 3.²¹ makes the distinction between His Father’s throne and His own throne, on earth, which He inherits from His father David, and which we shall share (if we are over-comers) with Him. This parable then, deals with the time when He takes His place upon His earthly throne and, like Solomon in 1 Kings 2, He deals with offenders of the time just before.

Those who believe the Lord will come at any moment make a strong point of the word "brethren" in ver. 40, regarding it as His brethren according to the flesh (Israel). But whatever may be said about Joseph as a type, it is clear that only when *his* brethren saw him in his glory, did they believe on him. There is nothing in the narrative in Genesis that agrees with the idea of a remnant of Israel believing on Christ *before* they see Him. The idea that the Lord will come to the air secretly for His Bride before the tribulation, and that a remnant of Israel will believe on Him, and as His disciples will pass through the tribulation, is not to be found in Scripture. The Genesis account of Joseph agrees perfectly with Zech. 12.¹⁰ that they believe on Him when they see Him in glory when the day of the Lord starts.

But as to the word "brethren" surely we ought to look for our interpretation in the New Testament: and indeed Matthew itself will help us. In ch. 23.⁸ He says, "all ye are brethren"; that was to His disciples. And in 28.¹⁰, "go tell My brethren". This is on resurrection ground. So also in John 20.¹⁷, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father". And in Heb. 2.¹², 17 He is identified with us in the same way.

The truth is that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will pass through the great tribulation: and we must remember that there are to be gentile nations as well as Israel who will be preserved in part for millennial blessings, they are not in the Church, but they must be held back from having any connection with the Beast or his mark, otherwise they would be destroyed. The Church by that time will be revived and re-united, and will endure the persecutions from the Beast, some forfeiting their lives.

Rev. 12 shews this "seed of the woman" to be preserved and nourished of God through this time: and the parable in view shews that God will accomplish this through these Gentiles whom He will hold back from acknowledging the Beast. They do not know the Lord, and are not acquainted with the principle "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto Me": and they are therefore surprised.

Some in support of the opposite view have even made this people's salvation dependent upon their acts of kindness, one of a number of passages that have been misunderstood and therefore misused to imply that there is "another gospel" presenting salvation, partly at least, by works.

The truth is that the kingdom (earthly) has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world (ver. 34); and in view of that they too have been prepared for the kingdom.

In conclusion we ought not to pass over the words of ver. 46. the words "everlasting" and "eternal" are exactly the same in the Greek. If the punishment of the wicked were not of the same duration as the blessing of the saved, then again the Lord's words were misleading. And inasmuch as this parable deals with the time immediately following the last one we can only reasonably conclude that these are sent away into the same place as those in ver. 30, into conscious torment from the time they are removed from this scene and that for eternity.

In summing up this part of our study we readily admit that the Lord is presented in Matthew as the King. And there is a great emphasis on the kingdom; but it is the kingdom of the *heavens*. And to make "the kingdom of God's dear Son" a different kingdom or even a different dispensation is to make a distinction where there is no difference. As has been pointed out, this Gospel is the only one that mentions the Church by name, and it was for this position that the disciples were being prepared.

Matthew's Gospel comes first, and thus introduces us in no indefinite way to the whole of the Lord's ministry. The other Gospels presenting the same or similar parables describing them as of "the kingdom of God" where Matthew says, "the kingdom of the heavens", must therefore be regarded as having the same character as Matthew; being applicable to this dispensation.

NOT CONTAINED IN MATTHEW.

Ch. 4.26-29. The real object of this parable seems to be in the point that "when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come". The kingdom of God is likened to the whole period from the sowing till the harvest; but the suggestion seems to be that the desired fruit will only be there immediately before the end. It certainly agrees with what is presented in Matt. 13, concerning the consummation of the age. And it also agrees with Rev. 12 concerning the "man child"—the revived state of the last phase of the Church on earth.

We may ask, Was there not fruit in the apostles' days, when they were all of one heart and one soul? Yes, we must admit that there was. But very soon the unity was lost, and departure started even while the apostles were living. And when we compare the extent of the kingdom of those days with the present extent of it, we see that numerically it is the end of the age that will shew the likeness to what is here presented.

The words of ver. 27, "he knoweth not how" carry a suggestion of mystery, which is the characteristic of this age; and reminds too of the "mysteries" of Matt. 13.11.

Ch. 13.32-37. That no man will know "*the day and hour*" will be true right up till the end. There is an uncertainty left (intentionally we may conclude) in Rev. 11 as to the association of the catching up of the two prophets and the sounding of the seventh trump. Whether there is an interval or not; and if there is, how long it will be, seems not to be revealed. But one thing is clear, both here and in Matt. 24 and Luke 21 we are told that "when all these things are fulfilled", the last of which is the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars, that *then* the Lord's coming is immediately at hand.

It should also be remembered that it was those who had all these signs given to them that were told to watch because they did not know "when the time is". Writers on these things who hold the "Jewish Remnant" theory will tell us in one place that the signs given in these passages refer to the Jewish Remnant and in close connection with the statement tell us that the words "watch" and "ye know not when", etc., are for us; because we are to expect the Lord at any moment. If it should seem strange that the Lord should put the two things together in this way, we must nevertheless accept it, and look for a solution that fits the fact. Ver. 34 speaks of taking a "far journey", which is the

opposite of suggesting He might come at any moment. But how *long* it would be, they did not know. "At even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning" leaves the matter very indefinite; but one thing is sure, the signs spoken of will come first and we need to be on the watch from this standpoint too. Indeed, it is our responsibility to watch at all times, even as it is to "stand", and "pray" and be equipped with "the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6). One's "work" may be different from another's, but we are all to watch.

PARABLES IN THE GOSPEL BY LUKE

NOT CONTAINED IN

MATTHEW AND MARK.

Ch. 7.41, 42. This short parable affords an interesting comparison with Matt. 18. Here, when the Lord would make a distinction between two degrees of sinners He puts the amounts at five hundred pence and fifty pence respectively. But note in Matt. 18 the vast contrast between Ten thousand talents and one hundred pence. It is a further illustration of the way the Lord chose His words to exactly fit the purpose of His statements.

The Holy Spirit records the fact that this woman was a sinner, and Simon knew it too, so we may conclude that it was commonly known. And Simon reasoned that if the Lord were a prophet He would have known. This reasoning on his part shews that he was not a true disciple, yet there was some recognition of the Lord's power that led him to invite Him in. On the other hand the reception he gave Him lacked the most common courtesies of the times. Are we to gather from this that there was some sort of patronage about it? If so, the Lord was not to be put in such a position. Knowing the reasoning in his heart He took up Simon's thoughts before he had uttered them. Truly He was a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet. And using the parable as a background he proceeded to shew him his faults.

But why did the Lord speak of what Simon had not done to Him? Because He looked for such treatment? No. The Lord was content to have no where to lay His head. And if Simon took offence and did not ask Him again, the Lord was not mindful of that for His own sake.

The parable and the words of ver. 47 both imply that Simon was a forgiven man, but the little love that he shewed suggested that He had been forgiven little. Was this from the standpoint of his own appreciation? Or was he a Pharisee like Paul had been? A strict and conscientious religious man. Possibly both are true for in the light of the knowledge of the excellency of Christ Paul counted all his religious merit as refuse, and called himself the chief of sinners. Possibly too it was the Lord's intention to lead Simon to this. The woman loved much because she realized that she had been forgiven much. Her sins were commonly known and therefore known to herself. But the sins of a Pharisee, particularly of Paul's type are not so manifest. We can only hope that the fact of the Lord pointing out his failures and presenting the parable to him had the effect of

causing him to see more of his own sins; for surely this was the Lord's object in going in to eat with him.

Ch. 10.25-37. The parable of the good Samaritan has been used many, many times to illustrate the Gospel message: but it should be remembered that its real object is to convict the lawyer (and therefore any who take the same standpoint) that eternal life is not to be gained by "doing", because he was not willing to do that which the law required.

The lawyer was not a genuine enquirer after the way of life, he came to "tempt" the Lord. And the Lord, having convicted him out of his own mouth, dismissed him with the words, "Go and do thou likewise"; knowing full well that he had no inclination whatever to do so. There is a striking difference between this word of dismissal and that which He said to the young man in 18.22, "Sell all . . . : and *come* follow me". The words in Mark 10.21 are very significant too, "And Jesus beholding him loved him".

A lawyer is, of course, one who is established in the law of Moses. And it must have been very cutting to his pride as the Lord spoke of the priest and the Levite, the two representatives of the law, passing by the wounded man without offering any help whatever; and presenting the view of a Samaritan, above all, coming near and ministering to his whole need. And then for Him to clinch the matter by giving him back his own question (verses 29 and 36) so that he should answer for himself, must have struck deeply into his conscience.

It has been suggested that the Lord preached a different Gospel to Paul, one not of grace but of works. But such would be no Gospel (good news) at all. But in all such cases as this the Lord meets the questioner on his own ground. He approaches with the thought of *doing*, and is therefore told what to do. Keep the law. For the promise is that, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them". But in each case the enquirer is brought to face something more far-reaching than "Thou shalt not kill", "Thou shalt not steal", etc. There is a big "Thou *shalt*" to be faced. And if the young man that had riches turned away sorrowful when it was presented, what would the proud lawyer feel at the suggestion that he should befriend a poor beset Samaritan?

This presentation of the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" leaves everyone in an utterly helpless state—condemned by law: for it is the commandment of God, binding upon all. Thus the Lord was demonstrating what Paul asserts in his teaching that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God. And if one was convinced by the Lord's demonstration and shewed that he realized

his hopeless state the Lord would have, in due time, led him to trust Him as the One "lifted up" for sinners.

Paul in his epistles does not so demonstrate the force of the law because he is writing to those who have already repented and believed. But in the Acts the record shews that the preaching of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was preceded by repentance toward God. See ch. 13.24, 38, 39: 14.15: 17.30, 31: 20.21.

And what more beautiful picture of the Saviour of sinners could one wish for than this parable? Here is a man on the way from God's city—the city of peace, to the city of the curse. He falls among thieves who strip him and wound him and leave him half dead. Just what sin does. A man may attain to wealth by sinful means, but by so doing he is stripped of everything that is of any value in the sight of God. Morally he is so wounded that he can no more do anything to recover himself. And his state is described as half dead. The lost son in ch. 15 illustrates the same. In the far country he was destitute. He had left his home, his living had been squandered, and he was in want and no man gave unto him. And when he returned his father said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found".

Though a sinner is dead in sins from one standpoint, yet from another he is in that state which will lead to another death from which there is no recovery—the lake of fire, the second death. But while here, though dead in sins, he is still alive and not beyond the possibility of rescue.

But who is to rescue him? The priest and the Levite pass by, they look but they avoid him. And the law, which they represent, does the same. It sees, as it were, the sinner, it presents itself to the sinner. But it can only tell him what he ought to have done. It neither provided any help before to hold him back from sin, nor any remedy now that he has fallen, but just leaves him to the consequences of it, cold and indifferent.

But "a certain Samaritan". What a picture of the Saviour, despised and rejected by His own people; but He is the one who provides *all* that is needed. Truly this is not of works, it is of grace. He binds up the wounds that sin has caused. He heals the sin-sick soul. The oil and wine of grace are poured in and the soul revives and beholds the face of the Son of God.

And he brings him to an "inn" ("a place that welcomes all" according to the Greek) and takes care of him. Here is a view of what the Lord did during His ministry. He gathered around Him a company of sinners drawn by love, these later became the Church. And as each sinner was drawn so he was added to this company. And in John 17 in His prayer for them He said,

“Those whom Thou gavest Me I have kept”. But He was then about to offer Himself up as their sin offering and then to rise again and ascend to heaven. And before He left He gave charge to the apostles to care for His sheep during His absence.

So in the parable we read, “On the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee”.

In Matt. 20.2 we see that a penny was then a day's wages. And in 2 Pet. 3.8 that “one day is as a thousand years” in God's sight. So we see that the two pence, figuratively, is the wages for two thousand years. The labourer is worthy of his hire. And those who care for the lambs and sheep of God's flock are thus provided for in His economy. But let it not be overlooked that it is *labourers'* pay, not the salary of a high official that is here presented. Moreover, it was left open for the “host” to *spend more* out of his own pocket, and to wait for his repayment till the “Samaritan” came again.

It is now nearing the two thousand years since our Lord went away. The “two days” are nearly up (though we cannot reckon on an *exact* two thousand years), and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. What a privilege to spend for Him and His sheep: to “take care” of the sinners that His mighty hand rescues, reaching down even from heaven, where He waits in glory.

But, dear reader, which of the two represents you? Have you come to an end of yourself and felt cast upon the mercy and grace of the Saviour? Do you know His loving care and provision for the little time until He comes again? Or, are you like the lawyer who thought he could do something to obtain eternal life, but went away condemned because he did not love his neighbour **AS HIMSELF**? That very law of which he was an expositor condemned him. How easy it is to prescribe for others and overlook ourselves. These men laded others with heavy burdens, but would not touch them themselves with one of their fingers. How easy also it is to imagine ourselves to be acceptable to God and not to be conscious that on the ground of our own merits we are hopelessly condemned. Nothing but the blood of Christ can secure for any of us an entrance into the presence of God.

Ch. 11.5-13. It is necessary that we consider the whole of this passage and not merely the parable itself. Otherwise we may be led to disappointment. Ver. 9 says, “Ask and it shall be given you”; and ver. 10, “For everyone that asketh receiveth”. And those who have lived longest in the experience of God's grace know well enough that we do not always receive what we ask for.

For one thing these verses do not promise that we shall receive the thing we ask for, except the one thing named at the end—the Holy Spirit (ver. 13). So that when we ask for certain things and do not receive them, this promise is not broken. But the prayer for the Holy Spirit God will never refuse to answer. But we must not presume that the giving of the Holy Ghost is the giving of supernatural gifts; these verses do not promise those things.

But John 14.13 does say, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do". Yet we do not always receive what we ask for. 1 John 5.14 says, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us". Half a century had passed since the Lord gave the promise in John 14 when the Epistle of John was written; and by that time things had already begun to go wrong among God's children. Hence the qualifying words, "If we ask anything according to His will". When the Lord gave His promise it was in preparation for the new dispensation after His resurrection, and it presupposed that they would ask according to His will: and it was so at the first. But in these days of departure we need to keep the words "according to His will" continually in mind as a qualification to all such promises.

So then, returning to the parable we see that the promise is concerning the Holy Ghost, nothing else is promised. In ver. 5 the request is "Give me three loaves". Sometimes "bread" stands for food in general, as in ver. 3. But when we read of "*three* loaves" we know it must mean loaves of bread as we use the term. Now bread is the mainstay or foundation of our food. Perhaps more so then than now. So, the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost is the foundation of all spiritual blessing. Without Him there can be no spiritual life. We may be able to get along without many of the spiritual blessings that are provided for us, in a low form of spiritual experience. But without the Holy Spirit Himself we have nothing.

But though He is a person, yet His presence and power is variable, not only in different believers, but at different times in the experience of any one believer. We may be filled with the Spirit or we may not. And that the Holy Spirit was not given to Christ "by measure" implies that with us there is a varying experience of the measure.

Therefore the prayer for the Holy Spirit is never out of date: and we do well to consider what is said here as to the mode of prayer for the gift.

In the parable the man received because of his "importunity". This word in the Greek means "shamelessness, assurance, effrontery". We sometimes see that persons do get what they ask for simply because of their impudent boldness; and that is

what the Lord is suggesting here. Who are we? And what right have we to ask for the Holy Spirit to be given to us? The third Person of the Deity! We are to ask for Him to come and abide in us, contaminated by sin! Yes, God has cleared the ground in the atoning work of His dear Son and He gives the encouragement to ask.

But if one were in bed at midnight it would take a little time for him to arise and give the loaves that were asked for, and the friend would have to wait. Even so we may have to wait, and the Lord adds the three exhortations, "Ask . . . ; seek . . . ; knock . . .".

Asking alone is not sufficient. The presence of the Holy Spirit involves an experience which is inseparable from a continuous feeding on the Word of God. The words of Scripture are inspired by the Holy Spirit, therefore as we receive them (uncontaminated by human theories) so we shall receive the Holy Spirit. Moreover, when the Holy Spirit is come, the Lord said "He shall testify of Me". The evidence then that the Holy Spirit is operating in us is found in the measure in which Christ is received into the heart and has the pre-eminence. Let us remember that spiritual gifts, as in 1 Cor. 12, are not promised here. Therefore, the presence and power of Christ is the only evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit; for it is the life of Christ manifested in us that produces the fruit of the Spirit.

Therefore, having *asked* for the Holy Spirit we are to *seek*. And where shall we seek? There is only one place, of course, the Scriptures. According to John 16 the Holy Spirit always sets forth Christ. Therefore we must not be looking—seeking—for the Holy Spirit but for Christ, in the Scriptures. And if the Holy Spirit is not hindered He will take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us. But if we do not thus seek we cannot expect our prayer to be answered in any fulness.

But then comes the further word "knock". Some have erred even in seeking Christ in the Psalms, for instance. Even making the statements of the Psalmist in confessing sin to be referring to Christ. To do this, it is said that the Lord took our sins and confessed them as His own. The New Testament never suggests such a thought. But this illustrates how a truism can be perverted by being carried too far. Here it is that the importance of the word "knock" comes in.

When one knocks he waits for an answer. When he seeks he is active, looking everywhere he thinks likely, and unlikely, to find what he wants. But when he has knocked he does nothing till the door is opened.

So is it with the Holy Spirit revealing Christ. We may experience His work by seeking. But we shall find many things

that perplex us as we seek. Things that seem contradictory. Others that seem inconsistent with God's character. Others seem to convey nothing understandable. Be not hasty to form a conclusion or to accept an explanation. Most of us of any experience have had to *unlearn* a lot. The Devil too is transformed as an angel of light, watch and pray. But *knock* and wait for the door to open. Then when the opening comes, or seems to come, see that it agrees with all that is clearly taught in the New Testament; for there is the unravelling of all the Old.

But the Holy Spirit has not to do with the Scriptures only. He leads through life (but always in agreement with the Scriptures, never contrary to them) and therefore these words have this further application. Do we want our course directed according to the will of God, let us ask; then seek, in His word, and if it is not made plain, let us knock and wait. It is the same procedure and the same Holy Spirit Who will come in and make His work real throughout our whole lives.

Ch. 12.16-21. The word parable has a wide meaning. Literally it means that two things are cast alongside one another like parallel lines. "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning" is a common explanation and a very good one; but it does not cover the whole meaning of the word. The Hebrew word is wider and can mean "a proverb" or "a saying".

"An earthly story with a heavenly meaning" implies that an interpretation is needed as in the parable of the sower. But sometimes a parable does not need an interpretation, as in this case. It is just an example of what takes place in everyday life: and the Lord points out the folly of it.

The parable was given in replying to the one who wanted the Lord to speak to his brother that he should divide the inheritance with him. But the Lord refused to intervene and warned against "covetousness".

Coveting seems to be one of the sins that we fall into most readily. And if we do not judge it we shall find that other sins will soon follow in its train. And if we do keep a watch against it we shall find that it is always ready to operate, though it be in a hidden way that will escape notice if we are not alert.

Paul, in Rom. 7, does not choose murder or one of the more commonly condemned sins to illustrate his point, but "Thou shalt not *covet*". To shew that one wrong desire is sufficient to condemn us before God. Let us beware. How much better is it to "lay up treasure in heaven" and to be rich toward God—"rich in good work" (1 Tim. 6.17-19).

Ch. 12.31-40. Looking back over the context we can see that this parable is the further outcome of that which called forth the last. It is all an exhortation to give up the things of this life in

view of heavenly blessings and the fact that our heavenly Father is mindful of us; and that we have the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord before us.

Some have treated this parable as they have the ten virgins, giving it an application to suit the belief that the Lord will come for us before the tribulation, arguing that the Bride is one (singular), but here we have men (plural) that wait for their Lord when he shall *return* from the wedding. So they regard this as applying to a company of people who will be disciples of Christ after the marriage supper of the Lamb has taken place. But no such company of people can be found in Scripture.

As with the ten virgins, so here, the figure is chosen with perfect exactitude. Bridal relationship would not express the view of responsibility that the Lord wishes to impress. The very passage (John 15.15 & 20) which says, "*I call you not servants*" is the one that shews that we are servants. And it is pride and presumption to put aside this description—servants, no matter whatever else we may be.

As the ten virgins presents the joyful attitude of the bride's friends, saluting and acclaiming the bridegroom as the one worthy to take the bride, so here the servants present that attitude of faithful service which will make the reception of their lord all that it should be. Beloved, are we working for this?

Let us take to heart the exhortations of the whole passage; not relegating it to an imaginary company who are to become disciples after we are caught up. No wonder the Lord's people are in such a state of lethargy and worldliness when all these precious passages and their exhortations are taken away from them.

It was evidently a custom on such occasions, as it is on some occasions now, for the most honoured one to serve the servants. And we cannot think that the Lord would have included this point if it had not some parallel in the future glory. When He was here He took the servants' place and washed His disciples' feet, what can we anticipate He will do for us when we are presented faultless to Himself in that day?

Ch. 12.58, 59. The wording here is very much like that of Matt. 5.25, but the application is quite different. Indeed the circumstances are quite different. Matt. 5 is spoken to the disciples, this is spoken to "hypocrites".

While the Lord was here He was continually being judged by men, and finally was brought before the highest authorities and unjustly judged and condemned to death. But the time would come when the position would be reversed: He would then be the accuser. Hence the exhortation to them to deliver themselves "in the way". Every day brought them nearer; then,

while He was there with them, was their opportunity. Repentance and reconciliation was their way of escape, but it would not be open to them much longer.

At the great white throne all judgment will be in the hands of the Son of God. But in Matt. 22.7 it was the King who sent His armies and burned up the city, not the King's Son. So here Christ is not the Judge, He is the accuser. God—His Father is the Judge. This is sufficient to shew that the parable refers not to the great white throne judgment, but like Matt. 22.5, to the destruction of the city by the Romans and the scattering of the nation, from which they have not recovered to this day. They have been "prisoners" in the sense of being confined to the sphere of God's judgment from which they find no way of escape.

The officer (a word with a wide meaning in the Greek) is any-one whom God may appoint to accomplish His purpose. He often uses one wicked ruler to subdue another or to be a chastising scourge upon a nation or nations. There is no power but of God (Rom. 13.1).

This helps also to explain the words "*till* thou hast paid the very last mite". This implies that there will be a liberation when the last mite has been paid. When God has accomplished His whole work upon the nation a remnant will be spared and preserved for the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus.

In very clear contrast to this we find no mention of "*till* thou hast paid" in any of those passages which speak of judgment *after* this life, either in Hades or the lake of fire (Matt. 7.23: 13.42, 50: 25.41: Rev. 14.11: 19.3: 20.10). Nothing anywhere that speaks of coming out, or of an end of the payment.

Ch. 13.6-10. The fig tree here is clearly figurative of Jerusalem from the context. But that by no means gives warrant for always taking it so. In Matt. 24.32 the budding of the fig tree is a sign that Summer is near. So, said the Lord, "When ye shall see *all these things*" (of which He had just spoken)—not the Jews taking a national position, they were to know that His coming was very near.

But the context of this parable leaves no question as to its application. Having answered them as to those who had been slain by Pilate and upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, He adds the parable to make the meaning of His words, "Ye shall all likewise perish" more clear.

Here Israel is the vineyard and the fig tree Jerusalem. Isaiah 5.7 presents a similar view. The owner is God, as in Matt. 21.33, and the "dresser" is the Lord. The Lord's intercession for Jerusalem is here indicated. For the three years of Christ's public ministry God had been seeking fruit unto repentance

from Jerusalem; and the fact that He found none was sufficient warrant for its destruction. But the Lord intercedes for another year and His Father agrees. The digging about and dunging may well set forth the extra attention that Jerusalem received at the end of His ministry, whereas at the beginning it was Galilee that was particularly favoured.

Though His ministry did not last the full fourth year it ran well into it, and that was sufficient to settle the matter. Fig trees shew their fruit very early, sometimes even before the leaves are out, hence it is clear whether there will be any fruit long before it is time to pick it.

The context makes clear the application of the parable but the parable also makes clear the meaning of the words, "Ye shall all likewise perish". It is obvious that the word "likewise" cannot mean that they will perish by exactly the same means, for they could not *all* perish by *both* the means mentioned. But just as truly as those spoken of perished by a visitation of judgment, so surely would Jerusalem perish by a visitation of judgment if they did not repent. The parable has shewn that the fig tree was to be cut down if there was no fruit in the fourth year. So the judgment was to come after the close of the Lord's ministry. In Matt. 23.³⁸ the Lord said, "Behold *your* house (the temple) is left unto you desolate"; and at His death the veil was rent. That was the first sign of judgment pronounced: but in long-suffering mercy it was held up till the Gospel had been preached for another thirty-five years. Then the Romans came and the city did perish. And if a few individuals did escape, so complete was the destruction that it would satisfy the meaning of the word "all" in such a case. (See also Matt. 3.5, *all* Judæa).

Ch. 13.^{32, 33}. The dates given in the margin are not to be taken as strictly accurate always. And Luke's Gospel is not easy to follow as to the sequence of events: in some places the sequence in the record is not according to the sequence of the events. The parable before us was not spoken in the Lord's last visit to Jerusalem, as might be thought from the date in the margin; for in ch. 17.¹¹ we find Him passing through Samaria and Galilee on the way up to Jerusalem. And we must find an interpretation for the three days spoken of here according to the Scriptural use of the word "day". A day can be a thousand years. It can be a period of unfixed duration (like the word hour, or it can be a year. This last is how it is used in Dan. 9, where "weeks" are periods of seven years, in contrast to "weeks of days" in 10.2.

From this we conclude that the Lord meant that He would perfect His cures for that year and the following one and in the next one He Himself would be perfected. But whether Herod

was intended to know this or not we cannot say, probably not. But he would at least gather that He was not afraid, and that He would not die till His appointed time, and then it would not be merely death—but His *perfecting*.

Ch. 14.15-24. Again the context will help us. The parable was spoken in a Pharisee's house with other Pharisees and lawyers present. These boasted that they were righteous and despised others. But the Lord took them to task for choosing the best seats. Then He turned to that one that bade Him and exhorted him when he made a feast, not to call those who could repay him, but the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; with a view to being recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

The mention of the resurrection of the *just* suggests that like Simon in ch. 7, he was not one of the hypocritical Pharisees.

This mention of the resurrection of the just causes one to say to Him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God". And the parable that follows in answer to that shews that the invitation to the kingdom for which the Lord was preparing His disciples had already been given and was being rejected.

The invitation was to all irrespective of position or class. But if a man made a great supper and bade many, certainly the Pharisees and lawyers would be invited and would occupy the chief places. And when the man was angry because those invited excused themselves, he sent his servant to call the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind. This would make it all the more obvious that this parable was directed against this proud class. It is the same truth as He expressed in the words, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you".

But there are certain details in this parable, as in the marriage of the King's son in Matt. 22, which are worthy of note. In that parable servants are sent out, but in this it is one servant. Now who is this one servant? We may well observe a difference here, that in Matt. 22 there is one (figurative of a class) who is cast out because he had not on a wedding garment. But of all that the one servant brought in, in this parable, there is none cast out; his work abides. It must either be the Lord or the Holy Spirit. But as there are two sendings forth it suggests the work of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, if we compare with Matt. 22 we see that the words, "for all things are now ready" occur in the second sending forth of the servants together with the statement, "My oxen and fatlings are killed", which might imply that the sacrifice has taken place.

We may conclude therefore that, in this parable, the two sendings forth of the Servant—the Holy Spirit—are after the

death of Christ; for the words, "for all things are now ready" occur at the first sending. After His death the Gospel was restricted to the Jews, and particularly to Jerusalem for a short time. This corresponds to ver. 21, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city". Ch. 13.³⁴ shews that the parable was spoken in Jerusalem.

Then the servant returned and said, "Lord, it is done as Thou hast commanded, and yet there is room". In Acts 4.⁴ we read that the number of the men that believed was five thousand, and that increased still further as time went on; but yet there was room. Praise God! the Gospel was extended to the Gentiles. So in ver. 23 the command is, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in".

Who are they that frequent the highways and hedges? Not the pleasure seekers as of today, rushing about in motors or sporting their bare flesh as hikers. In those days it was the homeless and outcasts or those in a journey—the wayfarers. In the eyes of these proud Pharisees it would suggest even more: Gentiles, Samaritans, and even lepers and robbers. So after the testimony had done its work at Jerusalem, the Gospel was sent to the regions beyond. Possibly this second sending was through Paul: the eleven have failed to carry out the order in Luke 24.⁴⁷ and Acts 1.⁸.

In ver. 21 we notice the words "bring in hither" and in ver. 23 "compel to come in". If this signifies the work of the Holy Spirit, could He not bring or compel everyone to come? Yes, but there is a purpose of grace according to election. And God has respect unto the humble, but the proud He knoweth afar off. Mary said, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away" (ch. 1.⁵³). The Pharisees were rich in their own estimation, spiritually. They were not deformed, they could walk uprightly. They were not blind, they said, "We see" (John 9.⁴¹). God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (James 2.⁵).

Picture the poor wretch pulled out of the hedge. He can't believe it to be true that such as he is wanted. But the Servant compels. The cords of love come into operation and he is brought in. Grace prevails where "bidding" fails. And in that day God's house will be "filled". There will not be one vacant seat. "Many are called but few are chosen". And those who are only called or bidden—none of them will taste of God's supper. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded".*

* "The Epistle to the Romans" by the same author deals more fully with election.

Now we can understand that such teaching would be welcomed by the multitude in contrast to the Pharisees. Hence, on leaving the house great multitudes went with Him. But the Lord had something to say to them. And it is hardly necessary to comment on the verses that follow, but it is obvious that there is another side to this Gospel of grace. We, who have been compelled by the Holy Spirit are called to God's kingdom and glory, but for the present it is the kingdom and patience (1 Thess. 2.12: Rev. 1.9: 1 Pet. 5.10).

So let us count the cost. Do we conform to what is set before us in the words that follow this parable? Can we say we are truly His disciples?

Ch. 15.1-10. Here is another parable in answer to the Pharisees and scribes who objected to His eating with sinners: and the two that follow are of the same nature and complete the picture.

Although we readily see the Lord in the first one as the man that goes after the lost sheep, do we appreciate how it hit the Pharisees, who despised "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and would not have any dealings with them. That is the real object of the three parables. But the mode of rebuke is not merely denunciation of their attitude, but the presentation of a praiseworthy attitude that should have made them ashamed.

Taking the statements in detail we see that the ninety and nine were not left in the fold but in the wilderness. What if a lion came during his absence? In Matt. 12.11 we have a similar statement as to "one sheep". Can we not say that the Lord went into that synagogue for the very purpose of finding that sheep? And the rest he left. To the woman who came out of the coasts of Tyre He said, "I am not sent but unto the *lost* sheep of the house of Israel". Not merely to the sheep of the house of Israel. Doubtless He was sent to them all as a faithful and true witness, but as the Shepherd He came to the lost, and the rest were left to their own way, exposed to the attacks of the Devil.

But notice too that He goes after it "till He finds it". He never gave up. Not one of the elect but what He found.

In ver. 5 we are not *told* that the man went back to the wilderness nor to the fold. All it says is when He cometh home (ver. 6): a faint suggestion of the new position to which His own would be brought, with joy in heaven, not simply in Israel.

But what would they feel at the words, "the ninety and nine which need no repentance"? John had called them a generation of vipers and from other things which the Lord said they must have known that this was keen sarcasm.

Verses 8-10. The nation of Israel is frequently spoken of in the Old Testament as a woman. Here the Lord shews that whereas a woman would sweep and search diligently till she found a piece of silver, they were content to leave the "lost" of their own brethren to wander, and indeed drove them out from the community. In each case the rebuke comes by way of contrast.

Verses 11-32. This parable presents the case more clearly still. The nation is divided into two classes, but *all* of them were given a position as sons. The fact that there are two, both sons, cannot be interpreted rightly of any outside that nation. The Pharisees claimed this position (John 8.41), and though dispensationally they were in that position, in actual fact the Lord said they were of their father the Devil.

One of those sons stayed at home with his father, he was a good son. The other took his portion and went into a far country. Actually this class stayed in their land but in heart they turned and forsook their privileges and responsibilities as sons and having thus cast off their connection they begin to be in want. Therefore they go over into the employ of the Romans as tax-gatherers. Here are the publicans and sinners whom the righteous Pharisees despised.

We notice here that the Lord makes no excuse for the younger son. He paints his picture faithfully, a sinner. But in that state he begins to feel a want which cannot be satisfied. The "righteous" never felt that, they were quite satisfied with themselves, they were all they ought to be.

At last the younger son came to himself and with nothing but confession of sin and unworthiness he returned. And oh, how the Father's heart is revealed in the welcome. Yea, in the fact that he saw him when he was yet a great way off. *We* were never sons in our unsaved state, but the same grace that was shewn to Israel has been extended to the Gentiles and we have been brought into the fellowship of the saints and of the household of God (Eph. 2.19).

In the father's house he is provided with the best robe. This speaks of the robe of righteousness with which we are covered—righteousness imputed, by faith. The ring and the shoes suggest the opposite of poverty and remind us that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ

The feasts which the people of Israel held were largely in the nature of peace offerings. These suggested peace with God on the basis of a sacrifice, and therefore eating in fellowship with Him. Spiritually we enjoy the same high privilege and the eating of the fatted calf would suggest all this.

But the elder son arrives and is indignant when he learns the cause of the rejoicing. True figure of the Pharisees who despised their outcast brethren. He *would not* go in. In the parable of the great supper we see election compels the sinner to come in, but it never shuts anyone out. The father came out and intreated him but with no effect. He says, "all that I have is thine", a form of speech implying that it is there for him if he will avail himself of it. But there is no suggestion of reconciliation. The first parable sees the ninety and nine "left" in the wilderness. This shews the self-righteous one who never transgressed his father's commandment at any time excluding himself. With all his profession of faithful service his heart is entirely estranged from that of his father. So the Lord said to the Pharisees (Matt. 23.²³), "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".

Ch. 16.¹⁻¹². This parable is not addressed to the Pharisees but to the disciples, as we are plainly told in ver. 1. To explain ver. 9 as irony or sarcasm directed against the Pharisees is to contradict the plain words of the Lord, "And I say unto you"—the disciples. The interpretation of this parable as being directed to the Pharisees is an attempt to pave the way for the teaching that what follows as to the rich man and Lazarus is Pharisaical tradition and that the Lord was ridiculing it. It is advanced by those who say that death is total extinction of being. That the soul ceases to exist at death and therefore there is no such thing as torment for the unsaved before resurrection takes place. We will consider this part of the chapter later.

Whatever difficulty one may have about ver. 9, we must allow that the Lord said, "And I say unto you", the disciples. And we must seek the explanation that agrees with that.

The Pharisees were indeed stewards in the kingdom of God of that time. But their corrupt dealings were not with a view to making provision for the time when they were to be put out of their stewardship, for they never entertained the thought of being put out.

The fact is that the Lord is comparing the stewardship of this life with the eternal state. And in this sense all are stewards—saved or unsaved—we are all stewards of our own lives, and certainly in our unsaved state we have failed and all must give account.

But the parable concerns the Lord's disciples—the children of light. In ch. 17.¹⁰ the Lord says, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do".

So if we are unprofitable servants when we have done *all*, what are we if we have not done *all*? We have to acknowledge that we have not, and therefore we stand as unfaithful stewards in some measure.

The time will come when we shall “fail” as to this stewardship, and we shall pass to another sphere. The “everlasting habitations” will then be our portion and what will be our reception? The whole point of the parable is that the children of this age are wiser in their generation than the children of light. The question of righteousness does not come into the matter, it is wisdom in their own sphere in making provision for the future. The lord of the steward commended him because he had done wisely—though unrighteously. And it is not difficult to imagine such a case, specially if the lord himself is not a just man.

So the Lord would teach us a lesson from the ungodly. They “insure” against all kinds of possible difficulties in this life. Are we as diligent and wise in making sure that we shall have an *abundant* entrance into the everlasting kingdom? Are we striving for the *prize* of our high calling? Are we aiming at the “Well done” of our Lord, because we have laid up treasure in heaven?

But the great problem with most is, does our Lord encourage unrighteousness by this exhortation to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness? No. The fact is that there are no riches in this world that are not contaminated in some way by unrighteousness. Even if we become rich by perfectly righteous methods, which is very doubtful. Our very existence in our present standard of living is due to unrighteousness in one way or another. “Native labour”, “sweated labour”, wars, and so on: if one keeps the position in mind he will not go far before he realises the truth that all riches are contaminated. It is our responsibility to obtain all by righteous means—little or much. But if when we have to give our account our Lord cannot commend our methods, if we have made friends by giving to the needy, *they* at least will welcome us into the everlasting habitations.

Our stewardship is to do good to all men, specially to the household of faith, so far as this world’s goods is concerned; and if we have not been faithful in that, who will commit to us the *true* riches. (Notice the contrast between the unrighteous riches and the true riches in ver. 11, shewing that all the riches of this world are regarded as corrupted.)

Ver. 12 puts an important aspect upon this world’s goods in that they are described as that which is another man’s. They are a stewardship from God. But the reward we receive in the age to come will be our own, it is what we have worked for (John 4.36).

The Lord concludes His message with the words of ver. 13, that we cannot serve two masters, really; we cannot serve God and mammon.

But such teaching was foolishness to the Pharisees. Though the Lord spoke to His disciples, they were ever near seeking to catch Him in His words, and they, being covetous, derided Him (ver. 14). They certainly thought they could serve God and mammon. But the Lord exposed their hypocrisy and reproved their rejection of the *preaching* of the kingdom of God, which set forth grace in the free forgiveness of all sins. And convicted them on the law which they corrupted. They were willing for a man to put away his wife for other less reason than the law of Moses prescribed. They were willing to allow a man not to honour (support) his father or mother providing he made a "gift" to the temple. But the Lord said that not one tittle of the law would fail, implying that though He and John preached the Gospel of grace, i.e. free forgiveness. The law still condemned those who broke it. And as they rejected the testimony of grace, the law still stood to accuse them in the day of judgment. They thought they could enter the kingdom by their own righteousness, but the Lord shattered all such hope.

So then, ver. 18 leads up to the account of the rich man and Lazarus, in which is clearly set forth the experience of both classes on departing this life.

Ch. 16.¹⁹⁻³¹. That this passage is included in such a study as this may, at first, be objected to by some who would say definitely it is not a parable. But certain teaching which is being spread abroad today calls for its consideration. Those who deny that the soul continues to exist after death assert that it is a parable. There are several sects who propagate this teaching, each holding other serious errors though differing from one another. It would not be fitting in this work to go into such teaching fully; that, it is hoped, will be done later. But the passage before us calls for consideration for the reason above stated.

When some, in defending the truth, assert that this is not a parable, that it says, "there *was* a certain rich man", those who propagate the error mentioned reply that many of the parables, which you acknowledge to be parables, begin in the same way. This is true and we must allow it. Matt. 21.³³ is a case where it says, "There was a certain householder" and it is preceded by the words, "Hear another parable". So we must admit that the words, "There was a certain . . ." do not prove that it is not a parable.

As was said at the beginning of this study, we must get the Scripture's view of what a parable is. The New Testament word

means "something cast alongside" which implies one thing likened to another. Hence in many places, without using the word "parable", it is said, "the kingdom of the heavens, or the kingdom of God, is like". When it is asserted that this is a parable we naturally take the New Testament meaning, for that is where it occurs.

The object of asserting that this is a parable is to get rid of the literality of the statements. But, in a parable all the things mentioned to illustrate that which it is desired to teach are actual things known to exist. The sower, the pearl, the net, a man taking a far journey, a king, a marriage, a vineyard, all are to be taken literally—they are known to exist. That they represent something else does not remove that fact. If then the rich man and Lazarus is a parable (though it may be an imagined case for the occasion), all the things mentioned are to be taken literally just as in the parable of the sower, or of the wheat and tares. So then Hades (Hell) is an actual place of departed spirits, the torment is real and all the details mentioned are real. They cannot escape the truth along this line. But further, if it is a parable, what is the reality that this pictures, it must have an interpretation. This they cannot provide. Lame attempts to provide one have been made, but they do not work out to detail and the exponents withdraw.

But being defeated along this line, the suggestion is now put forward that this is Pharisaical tradition, and that the Lord is holding it up to ridicule. We may well challenge them to find anything of ridicule in the whole passage. It is all a solemn revelation of facts shewing what would be the end of these "covetous" people who "devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers".

The Lord never resorted to such methods of ridicule as they suggest. Take another example, which is helpful in more ways than one, Matt. 21.23-33. The Sadducees came to the Lord thinking that they had caught Him in His teaching. But the Lord did not ridicule their teaching but told them plainly and solemnly the teaching of Scripture, to establish the fact of resurrection, and then He added further light as to the state of resurrection—being like to the angels so far as marriage is concerned.

The Sadducees had their traditions, denying resurrection and angels and spirits. But the Pharisees confess both, or assent to both, the words in Acts 23.8 imply that the Pharisees assented to what was right.

The Lord did not suggest that the Pharisees erred not knowing the Scriptures, when He spoke of the rich man and Lazarus. If this view of Hades was their tradition, where did the tradition

come from? Where did their teaching concerning resurrection come from? The Old Testament to be sure. Yet the references to resurrection are very few in the Old Testament. If one is on the look out as he reads he will find quite as many that shew a conscious existence between death and resurrection, without making them mean more than they say. The fact is that as the Lord revealed something more than had been revealed before concerning the resurrection state, so He revealed something more than had been concerning the state of the dead.

But if this was their own tradition did they believe that rich men went to the place of torment and the poor went to the place of blessing. Far from it. The Lord confirmed their teaching, but He shewed their application of it to be wrong. They were righteous in their own eyes and certainly they would go to the place of blessing. Such as Lazarus was cast off by God, in their eyes, or he would not have been in the state he was. But what about love to the neighbour? They devoured widows' houses, and derided the teaching concerning the unrighteous mammon. And the Lord discloses what their end would be in all its literal horror.

But it is objected that Abraham's bosom cannot be literal. Let it be granted that it is not. If one is referred to as a bosom friend, the figure of speech does not remove the literality of what is being said about him. And when the Lord said, "Go and tell that fox" (Luke 13.32), referring to Herod, that figure did not destroy the literality of the "cures" that the Lord did.

Again it is objected that a spirit without a body has not eyes, tongue, finger, etc; but they overlook the fact that in Zech. 12.1 the spirit of man is said to be formed in him, and the word "formed" is the same as in Gen. 2.7 referring to the body. Sufficient to shew that the spirit conforms to the body that it occupies.

There are two occasions recorded on which the Lord appeared to His disciples and they thought it was a spirit (Matt. 14.26 and Luke 24.37). On neither occasion did the Lord suggest that their conception of a spirit was wrong. But on the second He said, "Handle me and see for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have". Thus implying that if it had been a spirit the test would be whether it had flesh and bones, not that a spirit has no form, and indeed no separate existence.

The passage is one of the most solemn revelations of the awful state of the unsaved after death. Confirming all that is revealed in the Old Testament and adding further light on it.

Ch. 18.1-8. One thing to be noted about this parable is that there is no suggestion that we shall receive what we ask for at all times as is implied in the one of the friend who asked for the

three loaves, in ch. 11. This parable is concerned with one petition primarily, but that is made the background for continuance in prayer for all things. If God, after long waiting, does at length answer the prayers of His children and avenge them, who knows but what He may answer other prayers, though it be after long waiting. The one that we are assured He will answer gives us encouragement that it may at length come in other cases.

But in ver. 7 there is an added clause that makes us think. "Though He bare long with them". Grammatically the word "them" can only refer to His elect, for there is no-one else mentioned. Therefore His long suffering is toward His people. What is it then that He has to be long suffering over?

The widow which came to the unjust judge asked to be avenged of her adversary. And if, specially in time of persecution, God's children cry to Him to be avenged, He will do it because it is determined so; but He has to be long-suffering to them because they are asking just the opposite of what they should. In Matt. 5.44 we are told to pray for them which despitefully use us. Obviously from the context to pray for their good. So to pray for vengeance is displeasing to our heavenly Father. His beloved Son set us the example in praying for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him.

But the vengeance will come because it is righteous; and in resurrection we shall see everything perfectly from God's standpoint, see Rev. 19.2, 3.

But though we may not actually pray for vengeance, we may pray in a way that is not well pleasing to God. The passage is speaking of the Lord coming again and before then there will be great persecution and trouble. What will be the attitude of heart in that time. Simply praying to be delivered out of it, or praying for grace to glorify Him in it. When the Lord was contemplating His suffering He said, "Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12.28). Therefore, if our attitude of heart is wrong, and our prayers are wrong, He will answer them but He will have to be long-suffering with us till the appointed time.

There is a further statement in ver. 8, in question form, which is of great value in prophecy. "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?" This implies the answer, "No". Not that there will be a weak faith, but that He will not find it. This overthrows the idea of a Jewish remnant saved in the tribulation period and we having been caught up before.

The context is that of the Lord's coming in vengeance. Therefore, we must have been caught up beforehand, so that we come with Him, according to Rev. 19. If we were caught up

before the tribulation and another company of believers, a Jewish remnant and Gentiles with them, were brought out to suffer for their Lord and for their faith, He certainly would find the faith, strong enough to carry them through the suffering, when He comes.

It also proves that though a remnant of Israel are preserved from receiving the mark of the Beast they will not receive the spirit of grace and supplication till their deliverance comes to them, when the Lord descends to take vengeance. They will not be believers in Christ during the tribulation.

The parable that follows (verses 9-14) needs no explanation. But it is helpful to note that though the word "parable" denotes one thing likened to another, it is not so here. The word has a wider meaning and can include a saying or proverb, or an example of a certain thing. This also applies to the Hebrew word.

Ch. 19.12-27. This parable was spoken in answer to the thought of some that the kingdom of God might immediately appear. That is sufficient to shew that the Lord intended it to teach that He would be absent for a long time. No thought of His coming at any moment was encouraged in the early saints.

The long period of the present dispensation is therefore before us. And the Lord would encourage those who seek the kingdom and glory, to work with a view to it now, in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this parable is thus seen to be different from that of the talents in Matt. 24. That was spoken to the disciples, and included a false disciple. This one also includes a false disciple, but also mentions the "citizens" who hated him. The reason being that it was in answer to the thought of some in the general crowd. The Jewish mind always entertained the joyful prospect of the kingdom of God as revealed in the Old Testament, but it seems, always overlooking the sufferings of the Messiah and the judgments on the wicked when He comes in glory. Like many in Christendom today, they take it for granted that *they* will go to heaven, whoever else does not. Therefore, the Lord gave them this warning which appears in the last statement, "But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me".

The difference also between that which was entrusted to the servants in the two parables is noteworthy. The margin shews the pound to be valued at three pounds two shillings and sixpence. When it is recognised that a penny was a day's pay for a labourer, the sum is not so small as might be thought. But there is a tremendous difference between the pound and the talent; the latter being about a hundred times the amount of the other.

There seems to be a reason for this. The parable of the talents was spoken to the disciples shortly before the Lord died. And He wished to impress upon them the greatness of that which He was leaving in their hands. And we do well to learn to value it more. But "the pounds" being spoken to the multitude, was not intended to emphasise this aspect, but rather that of faithfulness and comparative diligence during His absence, and as we have seen, the solemn fact that some would be destroyed at His return. This should have caused a concern of heart to know just how they stood in relation to Him.

In this case each of the servants received the same amount. But one gained ten, another five; and their reward was in proportion to the gain which they had made. In the talents they all gained the same, in proportion to what they had received, and therefore their rewards were the same.

The "ten cities" and the "five cities" over which they were to have authority, may have a very literal fulfilment in the kingdom; for the apostles have been promised that they shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (ch. 22.³⁰). And the positions of all the saints during the thousand years of Christ's reign upon earth will be graded according to their faithfulness. The parable only records the doings of three out of the ten servants, but sufficient to give the principle.

The attitude of the one who had not used his pound is the same as that of the one who received the one talent; and he is dealt with in like manner, condemned out of his own mouth.

The same principle is seen in that the pound taken from him is given to the one that had gained ten. And to every one that hath (a gain) to him shall be given. But he that hath not (a gain) from him shall be taken that (the capital) which he hath.

But His enemies (His citizens, ver. 14) who would not have Him to reign over them, and who also sent a message after Him, are obviously His own nation. They welcomed the thought of the coming of the kingdom but went about to accomplish the death of their King. But that death was actually His way into the kingdom: the kingdom and patience now, waiting for the glory to be revealed. And after He had gone they sent their rebellious message after Him in the form of persecution upon all that shewed allegiance to Him. But He will return and the nation will then be dealt with in judgment: though other Scriptures shew that a repentant remnant will then find mercy.

May we be found faithful and diligent servants "occupying" till He comes.

PARABLES IN THE GOSPEL BY JOHN.

There are many passages in the Gospels where parabolic expressions are used which have not been included in this study because they are self-explanatory. One such is to be found in John 2.19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up". But 21 says, "But He spake of the temple of His body".

In ch. 4.35, He speaks of a "harvest", but the context makes clear what that harvest was.

Ch. 6.27-66 contains that wonderful discourse in which He claimed to be the "true bread" and spoke of "eating His flesh" and "drinking His blood". But it can be seen throughout that *believing* is the eating and drinking. Eating and drinking are associated with the belly; but believing with the heart.

Those who teach that the bread and wine at the "Mass" are changed into the actual body and blood of the Lord Jesus, use this chapter to support their teaching; particularly verses 35 and 48-58. They urge that we have no right to treat these statements as figurative expressions—that the Lord meant just what He said and intended the words to be taken literally. And the same is said of the words, "This is My body" (L. 22.19).

But when the Lord said, "I *am* the door", He gave no explanation either of that statement or the parable before it. Nor when He said, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4.14 and 10.7 & 9). And when He said, "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers", He did not say ye are *like* serpents (Matt. 23.33). Nor did He use the word "like", or any explanatory words, when He said, "Cast not your pearls before swine, etc." Such metaphorical language is readily understood, and abounds in the Old Testament, for instance, "All flesh is grass". "Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price" (Isa. 40.6: 55.1). And 1 Tim. 4.2 says, "seared with a hot iron", not "*as* with a hot iron", but it is understood.

In John 3.6 the Lord said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit". And in the chapter which we are considering, He said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing".

In view of these last sayings, surely if the Lord's "flesh" were the means of giving spiritual life, and the bread became His flesh, we would find some definite teaching to that effect. For it would not only be opposed to the statement in John 3.6, but would also be opposed to all our senses. When the Lord turned water into wine, everyone could see and taste that it had become wine. But instead of finding anything in Scripture to teach that such a change actually takes place at the Lord's Supper, we find in the chapter we are considering that there are statements which

indicate that the Lord's words are to be taken in the same way as the metaphors quoted above—door, water, milk, wine. etc. So, to consider the chapter, in 6.²⁷ we see that the Lord used the word "labour" with a view to "everlasting life". In ver. 28 they ask, "What shall we *do* that we might *work* the *works* of God?" Thinking that by their works they might *merit* eternal life. Whereas the Lord meant what He said on another occasion, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate, for straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life". The Lord replied, "This is the *work* of God that ye *believe* on Him whom He hath sent". The sequence of these statements shows that everlasting life is obtained by *believing* on Him, and that it is more important than meat.

Having made belief on *Him* the basis, they begin to question why they should believe on Him—"What sign shewest Thou, that we may see and believe?" Really to justify their unbelief, for they had just seen His miracle of feeding the five thousand. To such it was the Lord's practice to speak in parables, that they might hear and not understand (John 12.⁴⁰ and Isa. 6.⁹⁻¹⁰), and at the end of John 6 we find that He made Himself clear to the disciples just as He did in Matt. 13.^{15, 18}. In John 6.³¹ *they* introduce the manna; their minds on physical food just as in ver. 26. But the Lord, on the principle on which He used parables, spoke of Himself as "the bread from heaven". Then, remarkably, they say, "evermore give us *this* bread". They did not think of eating His flesh. The Lord's reply to this is that "He that *cometh* to Me shall never hunger": and the "coming" is made parallel to "believing" in the next statement. They *had* "come" physically, they were standing round Him. But they had not "come" in their hearts, they were opposed, as the next verse says (36).

From this point He goes on further to speak of His Father's will as to those who should come to Him and as to their resurrection. In ver. 41 it is obvious that their objection was to His claim to coming down from heaven. From ver. 42 it seems that the word "bread" does not cause them difficulty. The claim that He came from heaven was their objection, as in other places.

To this objection we have the Lord's reply in verses 44-51, declaring Himself to be what He was, but telling them plainly that only those who were drawn of the Father *could* come to Him. In other words, *they* were not "taught of God", cutting at the root of their pride, and their thoughts of "working the works of God". But in this reply He again made it clear that everlasting life was by *believing* (ver. 47).

In verses 50, 51 He again refers to Himself as the "bread" which if a man eat he will live for ever. But note His words,

“which I *will* give for the life of the world”. This shows that He becomes life, to those who “eat”, only after His death. The bread, therefore, at the Supper could not be in view, for that was before He died, and this chapter carries no suggestion of an actual change of bread to flesh, nor does it mention the Lord’s Supper.

Here the Jews begin to quibble about eating His flesh. And in replying the Lord not only said that if they did not “eat” (believe) they could not have everlasting life, but so worded Himself that if this refers to the Lord’s Supper, no one can have eternal life except by receiving the bread and wine, which excludes all who do not take the Mass, *and all who do*, except the priests, for the priests alone take the wine (verses 53, 54).

In ver. 60 the disciples murmured at the same point as the others did in ver. 52. But the Lord spoke of His resurrection and the “*words*” that He spoke to them. “The words that I speak unto you are *spirit* and are *life*”. To receive words, they must be *believed*, and to receive His words is to receive Him, for the Word was made flesh” (John 1.14). Another statement that eating, in this passage, means believing.

Upon this statement He added, “But there are some of you that believe not”. This statement was the deciding point for many, and they “went back, and walked no more with Him”.

Then He addressed Himself to the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Peter answered, “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the *words* of eternal life”. “And we *believe* and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”.

They were not stumbled, they were “given” to Him of the Father, and they had received His words (John 10.27, 28: 17.2, 8).

If we have the witness that we are children of God (Rom. 8.15, 16), we *know* that we have eternal life and we know that we did not receive it at the Lord’s Supper, much less at the Mass. But what of them, can we expect to convince them? The whole chapter shows that we can have very little hope. If the Father “draws” them and they have already been “taught of God”, in some measure, concerning the death of Christ and its value in securing eternal life to sinners, apart from their works, we may have some hope; if they truly desire to follow on to know the Lord. Otherwise they remain “hearing but not understanding, and seeing but not perceiving”.

Ch. 10.1-6. The door into any place is the appointed way in. Hence He Who came by the appointed way was the Shepherd of the sheep. The appointed way is not difficult to understand, it must be the way which agrees with “all that the prophets have spoken”. And it was by that way that He had come. Other false shepherds had come, but not in the way that fulfilled the

prophecies. They must perforce "*climb up* some other way". Self-exaltation into a position that did not belong to them, not to shepherd the sheep, but to steal them.

To the true Shepherd the porter opened. Not only was it by the appointed way, but there was a porter there to open to Him. John the Baptist had been sent to "prepare His way before Him".

The door led into the fold. An enclosure of walls high enough to keep out the wolves and other wild beasts. A similar figure to that in Isa. 5 and Matt. 21. Here is the view of Israel enclosed in God's protection from the wild beasts of the Gentiles. True the Romans had them in subjection: God had permitted a premonition of what was to come if they did not repent of their sins. And the Lord had come to claim His sheep before the devastating judgment overtook them, when the Roman armies destroyed the city as He foretold. Still the fold was there: still there was space to repent.

He called *His own* sheep by name. What then were the other sheep? Ezek. 34 is a chapter devoted to this theme that Israel were God's flock, the whole nation. But in John 17 the Lord spoke of those whom the Father had given to Him. They were the ones who had received His words and believed them, they are distinguished from all the remainder. "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me", He said.

These then were "His own" sheep. They were called by name: a delightful thought, foreknown of Him and therefore sought out and gathered to Himself.

And when He called them, they responded, and He led them out. Where? "Out". That is all that is said here. The Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. 13.¹³, bids us go forth unto Him without the camp. That is where they were led. There is no suggestion whatever of another "Jewish" fold. Just as in Matthew we see He taught them "mysteries" which had been kept secret since the foundation of the world and so prepared them for the kingdom of the heavens. So here He led them out to a new position altogether, which in ver. 16 is described as one "flock", not one "fold". (The words are quite different in the Greek).

So, we read on, when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. Nothing is here mentioned to suggest anything beyond the thought of His leading about. A beautiful picture of what is also taught later in the Epistles (Heb. and Peter) that we are "strangers and pilgrims" in the earth.

"And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers". This was true of that time, but can it be said so today? Sadly enough, it cannot.

Ver. 6 tells us that they to whom the parable was spoken did not understand. It is the same principle as in Matt. 13. It was not intended that they should. The end of the previous chapter shews He was speaking to the Pharisees. That which they might easily have understood was not palatable to them, therefore these "mysteries" were hidden from them.

Then He spoke another parable unto them (ver. 7) and we must not confuse them. He who is the Shepherd in one is the door in the other; yet both are sheep parables. It helps us to see that the Church which is revealed to be the Bride later, can, and is, in the parables, spoken of as "the friends of the bridegroom", the "servants" who wait for their Lord, and the wise "virgins". But we should discern and preserve the distinction which the chosen figures are intended to express.

So here, the view changes, He is now the Door. Of the fold? No, of the sheep. They are still simply a flock: no earthly position. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob led their flocks about in a land in which they were sojourners.

And again He says, "All that ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. (Those to whom He became the Door, of course.) They were preserved from deception, just as at the end of this dispensation, a remnant will be preserved from identification with Antichrist, though they will not be saved till afterwards.

And if any man enters in by that Door He *shall be saved*. No suggestion of a position of probation as under law. His salvation is secure simply upon the fact of entering in by the appointed way. Here is absolute grace.

But as to this Door, the sheep go "out" as well as "in". And the finding pasture seems to be identified with the going out.

Now we must relinquish the thought of the Shepherd for a while. He is the Door—the way in and out. In and out of where? There seems to be nothing in Scripture to agree to this but the fact that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10.19). Nothing could be more clear than that those who were called out from the Jewish fold were prepared for this "heavenly calling".

Our Forerunner has entered into that holiest of all, becoming for us, by that fact, an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. And we as the holy priesthood have the privilege of entering where He is, because the veil has been done away.

But what about the going out? Having boldness to enter in does not suggest that we have entered never to come out. We have a place outside the camp, as we have seen. And though both places are ours at all times, in that we can enter when we will; in our consciousness we go from one to the other. The

entering in is connected with the offering of spiritual sacrifices. We cannot always be conscious of this, we have to leave the mountain top, though we may feel like Peter, "It is good for us to be there". There is service to be done and reproach to be borne for His name. But these last are not connected with our "sheep" position. Sheep need pasture. And we come out and find this. We sit and meditate over what we read and we return into the holiest to offer the sacrifice of praise—a sweet savour of Christ—the outcome of what we have fed upon.

Again, from ver. 10 onwards, the figure is changed. Christ is the Shepherd again. He, in contrast to the thief, came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. He came that they might have life. Those that are saved have passed out of death into life. They have eternal life (John 5.24). But, praise God, we shall have it more abundantly when we put on our immortal bodies. Then we shall no longer be strangers in the earth, we shall be in the Father's house of many mansions.

This good Shepherd giveth His life (places His soul) for the sheep. Not that He simply dies in the attempt to save, like a hero. He definitely gave Himself a sacrifice to make atonement on behalf of the sheep. True the contrast with the hireling might suggest dying in defence of them, but the placing of His soul suggests more in the light of other Scriptures. Hirelings there were in those days, and hirelings (spiritual) there are in these. They care not for the sheep, but care for themselves. It is their living. And the sheep are left to the ravages of the wolf. But nowhere do we read here that a sheep is killed or destroyed, though this is the object of the thief, nor does the wolf devour. They have life eternal, and that cannot be destroyed. But the wolf does catch and he does scatter. And that is true today. Instead of being one flock, united in the truth, they are divided by the Devil's cunning devices and scattered to the four winds, taken alive in snares of the Devil at his will (2 Tim. 2.26). What a concern there should be to get back to hear no other voice but the Shepherd's. His voice may come through undershepherds whom He has appointed, but we all have the faculty of discerning His voice through the Scriptures. We all have the Holy Spirit, Who, it is promised, will lead us into all truth.

The good Shepherd knows His sheep, ver. 14, and is known of them. What a privilege to "know Him". This is life eternal (John 17.3).

And as the Father knows Him (ver. 15), so he knows the Father. And the placing of His soul on behalf of the sheep was a transaction between them both, planned before the foundation of the world.

Ver. 16 shews us the bringing in of the Gentiles, the "other sheep". Not of that *fold*, but all become one flock. It seems that a careful consideration of the word "flock" leads to the conclusion that the "one flock" of Jews and Gentiles will only be realized in glory, when the Lord Himself will lead His own to richer pastures and living fountains (Rev. 7.17). In Song of Songs 1.7, His love says, "For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" His "companions" in shepherding the sheep have taken the place that He Himself should occupy. The exaltation of leaders out of their true places, so that the flocks have become theirs rather than His.

Ver. 17 shews a special aspect of love because of special merit and the same may be our experience if we fulfil the conditions, ch. 14.21-23. Is it not something to be coveted? He had this love because He placed His soul for the sheep. The next verse (18) shews what the placing of His soul implies, not that it was taken from Him in His effort to save us. It was His own voluntary act, for when He knew that all had been fulfilled He "yielded up His spirit". But the further evidence of His glory and power is seen in that His resurrection was of the same nature. It was of His own will and power in response to His Father's command. Well may our hearts say, "Let all the angels of God worship Him".

Can we be surprised that those blind Pharisees said He was mad, and even demon possessed. But others realized that those words were not those of such an one. They sensed the wonderful depth of truth, even though they could not follow them. And they remembered the miracle that led up to these things (ch. 9). It is interesting to note that, in the Greek, the word "putteth forth", in ch. 10.4, is the same as "cast out" in 9.35. The Lord's way of leading out His own may be by their being cast out.

Then their further approach to Him in the temple brought forth another few statements concerning sheep. Note that in ver. 26 it is not, "Ye are not My sheep because ye do not believe", but "Ye believe not because ye are not of My sheep". If they had been His sheep (given by the Father) they would have heard His voice and recognised it as that of the Promised One. No, they were the ones that were left in the fold, soon to be forsaken altogether to the attacks and ravages of the Roman armies.

But while these verses pronounced the utmost security to all that are really His sheep, the point that should not be overlooked is, that His sheep hear His voice, and follow Him. Do we answer to this?

Ch. 12.24. Here is a very short parable, but the interpretation is very far reaching. Notice the words that precede it, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified". It was

His answer to those who told Him of the Greeks who wished to see Him. But if we read the whole chapter we can see that several statements indicate that His public ministry was at an end, this being specially so in the latter part. Ch. 13 records the passover with His disciples; and the ministry to them afterwards follows in chapters 14, 15 and 16. Ch. 17 records His prayer to the Father with the first request, "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee", followed soon after by the words in ver. 4, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do". That refers to His ministry—the atoning work not yet commenced, is viewed separately. The words on the cross were, "It is finished", not, "I have finished".

Returning to ch. 12.24, we note that it was time for Him to be glorified; the Greeks had come too late, though doubtless there was the further opportunity after His resurrection.

By this reply He made clear that His death was essential if there was to be any fruit of reproduction according to kind from His life. His preaching had had effect in some. His disciples were gathered around Him. But though they had received His words and they were "spirit and life" to them, only by His death to make atonement could there be any fruit. In the purpose of God according to election, of course, His words were spirit and life to them only because the following atonement was certain. God had not to wait till it was done.

The fruit from a corn a wheat is like the corn which is sown; its life springs out of the one that dies. So those who are the fruit of His death partake of His life and eventually, like the ripened grain are conformed to His image. In this life we are "changed into His image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3.18), a gradual process. But the time will come when we shall all be "changed" in a moment, at the last trump. Then we shall be "like Him" fully. See Rom. 8.29; 1 Cor. 15.35-58; Phil. 3.21; 1 John 3.2. This wonderful work is foreshadowed in the "wave sheaf" of Lev. 23.10, 11.*

The words that follow in verses 25, 26, shew that there is besides the atoning work, in which we can have no part, a general principle involved in His words: and therefore we need to consider the parable from this angle too.

To interpret the words in ver. 25 is difficult in these days when there is so little suffering for Christ's sake. If we had been, and were still, faithful to our profession in baptism (crucified with Christ), and His commandments had been kept, and we had taken His attitude toward the world, we would still be a persecuted people. But can we say that everyone that loves his soul will lose it? The question may be answered thus.

* "Types in the Book of Leviticus" deals with this more fully.

First let us notice that it is the word "soul", not "life". Men may kill the body, but they do not kill the soul, and cannot (Matt. 10.28). If they kill the body the life goes but the soul lives on.

In those early days Christians were often faced with death for their testimony and they were baptized with a view to entering those ranks (1 Cor. 15.29). Therefore if we regard the Lord's words as relative to such a condition of things, which we must in many other places; and we ought to regard such conditions as normal and not extraordinary, we can see that His words apply characteristically. That is, that His people do not love their own souls. (See Luke 14.26, the word "soul" for "life" here also.) The soul is the inner man with which we are born, the seat of our natural desires and feelings, and can only be converted to the glory of God by persistent discipline upon it through the Holy Spirit. Hence a true Christian disciple cannot love it. On the contrary, therefore, those who do love it, are not His disciples, and they will not only lose their lives but their souls too.

But he that hateth his soul, which according to Luke 14 is the characteristic of every true disciple, though he lose his soul (for a while) shall keep it unto life eternal.

If we consider this passage with Matt. 10.39, we may liken the soul to money.

To "lose" the soul, like losing money, is to no longer have the use of it. It will go to that place where it is confined and no longer free to assert its wishes and inclinations.

If we lose our souls *for Christ's sake*, we lose them for a while, but only like putting money in the bank to "keep" it for the future; we shall "find" it again in resurrection.

But what shall we say as to our present conditions? We hear of worldliness of all kinds among many who we believe to be children of God. We see decisions made contrary to God's word which involve an unequal yoke with the world, because of some temporary gain. Unions, friendly societies and many such things, as joining with unsaved relatives in things which are of the world and out of place for a Christian, instead of taking one's stand for Christ. Will such lose their souls? We can only conclude as has been already remarked, that the Lord had no thought of His words being applied to such a condition of things among His own. And if that be so, ought we not to be ashamed, and cry to God for a work of the Holy Spirit that will bring us back unitedly to the intended order?

Death to this world is the Lord's appointed means to fruit in our experience. And as ver. 26 says, "If any man serve me, let him follow me". And the precious promise is given that such

will be *with* Him, and be honoured of His Father. May we have respect unto the recompense of the reward, and learn to count values in view of eternal glory.

Ch. 13.1-17. This chapter presents a parable in action instead of words. Indeed, what the Lord did is of a twofold nature. It is an example, to be followed, in principle. It is also a figure of something in another sphere, a spiritual washing. The word "example" in ver. 15 is the word for a sample of wares for sale, which one will readily see is quite distinct from a "type", which is the word for "figure" in Acts 7.34: and Rom. 5.14; where it is obviously one thing to *represent* another, but of a different nature.

The first aspect of the case is ministry to one another in the physical sphere. This would include any of the most menial services that are rendered. In this land we do not usually wash our own feet on entering the house, and it would be no service to us for another to insist on doing it into whose house we might enter. Therefore the example is not in the particular form of service, but in the nature of it. That is, doing the most lowly acts that are of real service. So that, in that sense the Lord did really give a sample of what He wanted them to do.

Moreover, to give them this example, He rose during the eating of the supper. This is clear from the fact that they went on eating the passover afterwards.* He felt the importance of this message to them so much that, though He had said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer", He rose while they were eating together. A detail of the example that should not be overlooked in our service to the saints. And further, He took time to gird Himself and wipe their feet, all twelve of them, finishing His self-imposed task properly.

But when He came to Peter, he objected. But the Lord's reply to him was, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter". We can hardly think that Peter did not know what the Lord was doing in that commonplace action. But there was something else of which we may say His action was a "type" or a "parable". One thing to represent another, though of quite a different nature: the privilege of washing one another's feet spiritually with the water of the word. Eph. 5.26 speaks of the Lord's own washing. Ex. 30.18-21 speaks, in type, of washing our own hands and feet. But the Lord gave another type, washing one another's feet. If one were to suggest washing our feet in normal circumstances today, we might think it an intrusion. But spiritually it should be welcomed, others may see a

* Verse 2, according to the Greek reads, "And supper becoming", or "having become", not "being ended".

need where we overlook it. But in this sphere also, the girding with the towel and wiping have their significance. Such service should be done thoroughly, and the one washed should not be left feeling uncomfortable, but refreshed. Such service then becomes exalted to holy service, requiring a humble spirit in both the giver and the receiver.

Ch. 15.1-11. This parable has presented a problem to many. Some have used it as proving that one who is "in Christ" can be lost eternally. But others oppose this and recognize that other passages where doctrine is clearly set forth shew that we can never perish if we really are born again. One explanation offered to solve the difficulty is that the branches have been broken off from elsewhere and grafted into this vine; and that the fruitless branch is one that has never really united with the vine. In such a case it would not be simply non-fruit-bearing, but dead. Neither is there any justification for such a thought in the word "branch", nor any suggestion of grafting.

Each parable must be viewed according to its purpose, and it is clear on the surface that *our own responsibility* is emphasized throughout the parable, our responsibility to abide in the vine. The words "abide", "continue" and "remain" are all the same in the Greek.

Our vital union with Christ is not our responsibility. God has done that work of uniting us to our Head, once and for all. But the maintenance of communion with Him is our responsibility. And our fruit bearing depends on this communion. One may be out of communion with the Lord but still have eternal life because he is vitally joined to Him. But if we do not abide in Him as to communion our fruit will fail.

Every branch which beareth fruit, He "cleanseth" it, in husbandry this would include pruning. Thus the Father deals with us "for our profit". Every branch that beareth not fruit He taketh away. This had various manifestations in the early church, by death, or excommunication, or delivering to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, or that they may learn not to blaspheme (1 Cor. 5.5: 11.30: 1 Tim. 1.20: James 5.19, 20: 1 John 5.16).

In ver. 6 we see that the gathering and burning is by men, not by the Husbandman. Psalm 17.13, 14 shew that wicked men, men of the world, are God's sword whom He uses upon His own. In Song of Songs 5.1-8, we see that missing her beloved because of self-indulgence she is smitten, wounded, and uncovered by the "watchmen" of the city. But men will not cast the unsaved into the fire, this is done by the angels, in Matt. 13.41, 42, the parable of the tares.

But the question may be asked, Do we always see those out of communion with the Lord taken away? The same answer applies

here as elsewhere. The Lord did not prepare His disciples for days such as these, but for that which is expressed in the Acts and the earlier Epistles. Then they were one, and the discipline that the Lord appointed was carried out. Today it is unknown. Large buildings filled with Christians, indicative of a great work going ahead prosperously are taken to be tokens of real spiritual power and blessing. This very parable and the fact that we do not see God's hand is witness that the whole Church is in such a state that God cannot shew His hand as He did in apostolic times. If He chastens His children today it is usually in a way that hides His hand, circumstances are overruled by Him to speak, but who is there that "hears the rod"?

Nevertheless, the principle still operates that it is only as we abide in the Lord, in communion, that real fruit will be brought forth. A great work, the result of human energy, which appeals to human nature and ignores the *commandments* of the Lord, which are so strongly emphasized here, must not be mistaken for spiritual fruit. This can only come from the One who is the Fountain of Life. And we can only abide in His love, in this full sense, if we keep His commandments (ver. 10). And these things were spoken that His joy might remain in us and that our joy might be full (ver. 11). We may have happy times in circumstances where His commandments are ignored. But our joy should be in His joy, according to this verse, and we can hardly expect Him to have joy when we do so ignore His commandments.

Shall we carry on carelessly in this condition of disunity, compromise and neglect of His commandments? He will not come for His bride till she has made herself ready (Rev. 19.7), and she certainly is not ready yet.

Many see and feel the need of revival, and some are saying it will not come, the dispensation will end in failure. No, beloved, Eph. 4.13 is clear, His people will come to the unity of the faith first. Then let us set our hearts upon it and start praying for it. Then it may please Him to shew how we may work for it. But we must be prepared for some drastic changes, some rooting up and pulling down (Jer. 1.10) and the clearing away of much rubbish (Neh. 4.2, 10).

If you would like other literature on the Types, Romans, Corinthians, The Lord's Coming, or any other subject that you may be concerned about, your requests will be welcomed and we will do our best to fulfil them.

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