

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

The four gospels are not four different editions of the life of Christ, but four pictures of the Christ from different standpoints. Each presents a distinct aspect, and together they form the complete whole.

It is somewhat like attempting to obtain a photograph of Mount Blanc. They tell you in the valley that there is no single picture of the mountain, but they can give you a number of views from different standpoints, and then you can make your composite view of the mountain. So the four evangelists give us different views of the Lord Jesus, and out of the four comes the complete conception of His character and work.

SYMBOLS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

In the ancient tabernacle and temple stood the figure of the cherubim. There were four faces: the first a lion, the second an ox, the third a man and the fourth an eagle. The lion represented Christ as our King; the ox, the toiling and suffering Christ; the man, the human Christ; and the eagle, His divine character. The ancient fathers justly applied these symbols to the four gospels. Matthew is the Gospel of the King, Mark, the Gospel of the Servant, Luke, the Gospel of the Son of Man, and John, the Gospel of the Son of God.

The very first picture in Matthew is the King of the Jews, and the last is the Supreme Lord, to whom all power is given both in heaven and in earth, sending forth His ambassadors to the nations and claiming their obedience and loyalty.

When we turn to Mark, we find a story of deeds, not words; a toiling Christ who has gone almost half through His ministry before the end of the first chapter.

In Luke we have the revelation of His human heart, and a series of most touching manifestations of His sympathy, tenderness and love. The first picture takes us to the cradle of the Babe, and the last gives us the walk to Emmaus, and the charming revelation of His human heart, unchanged even after the cross and resurrection.

When we turn to John, it is indeed the soaring eagle bearing us up to the sublime heights of His primeval deity and the mysteries of His oneness with the Father.

And yet none of these gospels attempts to give us a complete biography of Jesus Christ. Even the longest presents but a few fragments from the story of His life, the sketch of an occasional day or hour gleaned from much more that has been left unrecorded—so much indeed that the Apostle John could say that if all that He said and did were written, "even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (John 21:25b).

It has been well said that the New Testament evangelists were not reporters but editors. They did not give a chronicle of complete facts so much as a selection of special incidents, clustered together for the purpose of illustrating certain points and principles which were more important than even the facts themselves.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Matthew

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

Matthew's object in his Gospel is to show the Jews that Jesus is the long expected Messiah, the Son of David, and that His life fulfilled the Old Testament Prophecies. The purpose is given in the first verse. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. This statement links Christ with two of the great covenants that God made with David and Abraham. God's covenant with David consisted of the promise of a King to sit upon his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:8-13). God's covenant with Abraham promised that through him should all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:3). David's son was a King. Abraham's son was a Sacrifice. Matthew opens with the birth of a King, and closes with the offering of a Sacrifice.

Matthew links us up with the Old Testament. On every page he is trying to connect the Gospel with the prophets and show that all of their teaching and prophecy are being fulfilled in the person and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The author is a Christian Jew (Matt. 9:9; 10:3). Matthew, whose name means, "gift of God," was a tax collector at Capernaum when Jesus chose him as one of the twelve disciples. Mark and Luke also give his other name, Levi. He was a publican (a term of reproach) at the time Jesus found him, and he left all and followed Him.

Matthew 1:1-25

The obvious design of this genealogical table is to show that Jesus was the actual and legal heir of David. Joseph, while not His actual father, was His legal father, and Jesus was the heir of Joseph. He was recognized by all the people as the son of Joseph, and entitled by every form of law and justice to inherit his rights and titles. If Joseph, therefore, was the lawful heir of David, Jesus must also be. This genealogical table was prepared with great accuracy, and establishes without question, the title of our Savior to sit on the throne of David. When He appears on earth again, no member of the Hebrew race will be able to lawfully dispute His title, that He is alive, and the only living heir to David's throne.

Many Bible students have been perplexed by the difference between the two genealogical tables given respectively by Matthew and Luke. Luke also gives us a long genealogy. The difference consists in this, that the genealogy of Luke is Mary's, not Joseph's. Luke has given us the human side of Christ; therefore it was natural that he should trace His mother's pedigree, and she also could trace back her lineage to David by an unbroken line through Nathan, the son of David, rather than through Solomon, from whose line the family of Joseph came; so that we have two lines of genealogy connecting Jesus with Israel's history and David's throne.

Matthew's genealogical table contains three groups of names, each group consisting of 14. The first consists of patriarchs from Abraham to David, the second of kings from David to the captivity, the third of persons of royal extraction, though not kings. Gradually the line descends until it reaches the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. These three groups form six series of seven each. Seven is the number of perfection, and six of imperfection. The six series that preceded Christ were all imperfect human links, the seventh is reached in Him, the perfect and golden link which makes the chain complete.

Some names have been omitted among the kings, noticeably the wicked descendants of the house of Jezebel. The most remarkable feature, however, is the presence in this genealogy of four women, all of them women on whom rested a shadow of shame. The first was Tamar, of the family of Jacob, the story of whose dishonor is well known. The next was Rahab, the notorious woman of Jericho, who was saved by the spies because of her friendship. The third was Ruth, the daughter of Moab, herself a virtuous woman, but her race accursed. The fourth was Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, but the partner of David's sin, when he stole her from her husband, Uriah. Why should these four dishonored women be named in the lineage of the Son of God and the Son of David? The reason is not far to seek. He came to be the Savior of sinners, and He was not ashamed to include even in His royal line the most lost and sinful of the race, and thus to set the pattern which the whole story of redemption has fulfilled that Christ "welcomes sinners" (Luke 15:2b).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Why do you think these long dry catalogues of names were allowed to be put in the bible?

Show whether or not David knew the Savior's lineage would come through him?

1 Ki. 8:15,16 Ps. 89:3,4 Ps. 110:1 Ps. 132:11,12

Why do you think Jesus' birth had to be a virgin birth?

Isa. 7:14 Isa. 9:6, 7 Isa. 53:10-12 Isa. 64:6-7 Luke 1:26-38 John 1:29 Acts 17:26 2 Cor. 5:21
Heb. 2:14 1 Pet. 2:22, 24

Was ever faith more tried than the Virgin's, when for no fault of hers, but in consequence of an act of God Himself, her conjugal relation to Joseph was allowed to be all but snapped asunder by a legal divorce? Yet how glorious was the reward with which her constancy and patience were at length crowned!

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

Matthew 2:1-12

From the many incidents relating to the birth and childhood of Jesus, Matthew mentions only three highly significant events (cf. Lk. 1:26-2:52). The first is the visit of the Magi. Many misconceptions have arisen concerning the visit. These Magi were students of astrology who searched the heavens for significant movement in the stars. They were not magicians in the evil sense, as liberals have charged; neither were they kings, even though they brought kingly gifts to the child King, Jesus. Their number is not told, but it probably was more than three. The time of their arrival was not the night of the birth of Jesus but some weeks later.

In Matthew's account, they appeared in Jerusalem, where they inquired concerning the birth of the King of the Jews. At this time, there was widespread expectation of the coming of a great ruler, a truth which was inherent in Jewish prophecy and spread by Jews as well as others over the Roman world. The Magi probably came from Babylon, which, for centuries, was a center of the study of astrology, as both Lenski and Allen observe. Allen, after citing a dozen or more instances in ancient literature referring to Messianic expectation, comments, "The whole world was expecting the Savior King."

The wise men, or the Magi (Gr. *Magio*, from a Persian word for those who were expert in the stars), told inquirers that their interest was aroused by seeing an unusual star in the East, which signified to them that the King had come. These tidings, when reported to King Herod, troubled him, for Herod knew all too well the Jewish aspiration of throwing off the Roman yoke and his own rule over them. Herod was an Edomite, a people hated by the Jews, and there was always the possibility that Jewish hope, aroused by the arrival of a supposed Messiah, could inflame them to rise up against him. The tidings of the Magi are reported by Matthew as troubling to Herod and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod, having called an official meeting of the Sanhedrin—including all its three classes of members, the high priest, scribes, the elders—demanded of them a formal statement where the Messiah was to be born. This was common information, as it was stated in Micah 5:2, and Herod may have known the answer, but he wanted it officially from the Jewish leaders. They replied by paraphrasing Micah 5:2, with some additional facts from other Scriptures, or at least translated the Hebrew freely. They named Bethlehem in Judea, which, although a small town, would distinguish itself as the birthplace of the one who would rule over Israel. Matthew adroitly answers Jewish unbelief concerning Jesus Christ by quoting their own official body to the effect that the prophecy of His birth in Bethlehem was literal, that the Messiah was to be an individual, not the entire Jewish nation, and that their Messiah was to be a King who would rule over them.

In the cunning mind of Herod, a plot had already formed to nip this growing bud of Messianic hope before it got out of hand. Having dismissed the Sanhedrin, he called the wise men to him privately and, with skill, inquired when the star appeared. He did so to pinpoint the age of the child. He further urged them to find the child and then bring him word that he also could worship Him. It is an amazing thing that Herod did not send his servants with them, and that the Jews themselves, stirred up as they were by the report, apparently did not lift a finger to search out the young child. As Richard Glover expresses it, "It is strange how much the scribes knew, and what little use they made of it." Such is the appalling gulf between religious beliefs and practice.

The wise men, however, immediately set out for Bethlehem. To their amazement and delight, the star in the East reappeared and guided them so unmistakably that it even designated the house where the child was. The most probable explanation is that the star in the East as well as the star that guided them to Bethlehem were supernatural rather than natural phenomena. No star in the distant heavens could provide such accurate guidance.

(Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come, John F. Walvood)

Why do you not hear of the Jewish leaders coming out to examine the claims of the wise men?

Speak to Herod's concerns here since he was not a true king of the Jews—merely the appointed Tetrarch of Jerusalem by Rome.

The whole book of Matthew concentrates on Jesus' role as _____ of the _____ (fill in) for the Scriptures prove Him to be Israel's Messiah.

Matthew 2:13-23

Instead of welcoming Him, we are told that Herod "was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3). This represents the attitude of the political world to the Lord Jesus and His second coming. We read of it in the second Psalm: "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One" (2:2). Herod could only see in the birth of Christ a menace to his throne, and his natural resort was to violence and murder. In his cruel and relentless determination to put Jesus out of the way, he assassinated all the boys of Bethlehem under two years of age. Herod was of the race of Esau, and so he naturally represented the flesh in its enmity against the Lord; but he represented also the normal attitude of the world's political governments. We talk loudly of our Christian nations and our socialistic dreams, ideal communities and states that will be essentially theocratic. This will never be until Jesus Christ Himself shall come and establish His kingdom by divine authority and power. And when He comes He will find the world and its rulers not waiting to welcome and worship, but arrayed against Him in the last, dread battle of Armageddon.

The ecclesiastical rulers, too, had the best of opportunities to examine His claims and accept His message. Their very Scripture pointed them to the place where He lay. But they, too, were disturbed as much as Herod. They made no effort to visit Him at Bethlehem, but treated Him with neglect and indifference, and afterwards rejected and crucified Him. And so the religious world, as well as the political, will be found arrayed against Christ when He comes again. There will be a little flock of true followers and friends, but the ecclesiastical rulers of Christendom are today not much in sympathy with the true spirit of the Church, and the Church is rapidly drifting toward the sad and solemn picture of the Laodicean Church, the last stage of nominal Christianity on earth, with Christ standing outside the door, and rejecting the lukewarm formalism which still wears His name, but which He is ready to spew out of His mouth (Revelation 3:14-16).

His flight into Egypt marked the next stage of His rejection. The Holy Babe and His mother, with Joseph, were forewarned of the threatened assassination, and immediately departed to the land which had always been associated with

the sufferings of their people. Egypt was the land of exile and the house of bondage. It was necessary, therefore, that the Lord should pass through all that His people had suffered or should suffer. The journey was not made in royal state; no luxurious palace car conveyed this Leader and Master; no splendid hotel waited with open doors to entertain Him. Seated with His mother on a lowly ass, with Joseph leading it by the hand, along the rocky and deserted road, with a leather bag of water and a few dates or figs and barley cakes, they traversed the long and desert way, and took refuge at last in some humble cabin in the land of their fathers' bondage. Still He is a King in exile. He does not sit on splendid thrones, or control the men and armies of the world, but like David in the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1-2), He has His humble followers gathered from the outcasts of the land. Christ is still an exiled King, and is despised and rejected of men. And if He were to appear once more, the majority of those who bear His name would probably be ashamed of Him.

Nazareth was the last stage in the story of His rejection. The very root of the name Nazareth literally means a sprout or root out of dry ground. It is quoted in Isaiah 11:1, "A shoot (sprout, KJV) will come up from the stump of Jesse," and in Isaiah 53:2, translated, "He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground." It is the Hebrew word *nazar*. The town of Nazareth was worthy of its derogatory name. It held the lowest place, socially and morally in public estimation, and the question of Nathaniel was characteristic, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46). It was enough to destroy a prophet's reputation to hail from the town of Nazareth, and the city of the Nazarenes was a term of reproach in apostolic times.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Herod was being driven by his own jealousy and used by Satan to carry out the most hideous crime: the killing of the children of Bethlehem under two years of age. **Show how Satan is the driving force of much evil in this world, but still restricted by God to go only so far.**

Isa. 8:10 Matt. 18:18 Luke 9:1 Luke 10:19 Rom. 8:37-39 1 Cor. 15:57 2 Cor. 10:4, 5 Eph. 1:19-21 Eph. 6:12-14 Col. 2:15 2 Tim. 1:7 Jas. 4:7 1 John 4:4 Rev. 21:7

Matthew 3:1-12

John's business was to prepare Israel for the presentation of their Messiah. The nation had backslidden until they practically lost their covenant rights as God's theocratic people. His ministry of repentance, and the sign of baptism that accompanied it, practically ignored all their ecclesiastical claims and rights and demanded of them that they should come back to God as proselytes from heathenism had to come.

The rite of baptism was not unknown among the Jews, but it was invariably associated with the receiving of proselytes or converts from the heathen. To require a Jew, therefore, to be baptized was an ignoring of his Jewish standing. It implied that he had forfeited his covenant rights and had to be born over again. It was indeed laying the axe to the root of the tree and hewing down all their pretensions and claims of birth and merit. That they should submit to this is the most profound proof of the marvelous power of the great revival introduced by John. Baptism in its own essential symbolism and significance is the figure of death and resurrection, and the baptism of the people of Israel was a death blow to all their religious pride and an acknowledgment of the need of an entirely new life before they could again stand on covenant ground.

The message of repentance is always God's preparation for every advance moment. The hardened sinner has no use for God's message of grace until driven to self-despair by conviction of sin; then he is willing to listen to the gospel of the grace of God and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

John's message of repentance was not given merely to the coarse and criminal classes of his time, but to the learned Sadducees, the religious Pharisees and the cultured courtiers who thronged to hear him. It must have seemed very rude that he should class them all with publicans and sinners, but he did, and demanded of them a repentance so radical as to acknowledge that they needed a change as thorough as the publicans themselves.

Notwithstanding his bold and faithful preaching of repentance, John knew that mere repentance would not permanently save them, and they must have a power supernatural and divine that would keep them from the sin that they had confessed and for a time put away. Therefore, he brought to them the promise of another and a greater Prophet, One who in His own personal character was so infinitely above him, that His very shoe strings he was unworthy to unloose, and One who was to bring a new power into our spiritual life as much greater than the mere power of repentance and reformation as fire is mightier than water. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (3:11c). Water is but external, fire is internal, penetrating and intrinsic in its cleansing power. This was what the prophet Ezekiel had announced centuries before as the radical need of fallen human nature, "I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (36:27). This is the deeper Christian life which God is making so clear and so urgent in the life of His people today. This is Christ's baptism, not John's, and no converted soul is fully saved until it has passed on to this deeper life and received the Holy Spirit in His sanctifying and keeping fullness.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

The Pharisees were the zealots of outward, literal, legal Judaism—not, however, as represented in Scripture, but as interpreted (or rather perverted) by the traditions which had from age to age grown up around it, penetrated to its core, and eaten into its life. The Sadducees, occupying skeptical or rationalistic ground, were, of course, anti-traditional; but they went much further, limiting their canon of Scripture (in effect if not professedly) to the Pentateuch, and explaining away almost everything supernatural even in it. (*The Four Gospels*, David Brown) **What were the Pharisees and Sadducees told would happen to them if they did not bring forth “fruits befitting repentance”?**

Matthew 3:13-17

Among the multitudes that came to John for baptism was one form so little different from the rest that speaking of Him later, John said, “I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit’ ” (John 1:33). John recognized the modest stranger as together they were going into the waters of the Jordan and at first refused to baptize Him: “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” (Matthew 3:14) But Christ insisted, explaining, “It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (3:15).

Christ had no sin of His own to bury, but He had the sin of the world. His baptism, therefore, was the assuming of the responsibility of human guilt and going down in a figure to death on account of it, and then coming forth in baptism again in a figure of the resurrection. As He did so, John expressed the deep significance of this sign on the following day, by pointing Him out and saying, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). He had borne our sin into the waters of death figuratively, and, coming forth in resurrection, He had also figuratively borne it away. Then, a little later he was actually to go down into a real death on the cross, and come forth in a real resurrection. His baptism was the rehearsal in advance of the crucifixion and the resurrection. Therefore, it was followed by the Father’s voice accepting Him, and declaring that He was well pleased, not only with Him for Himself, but henceforth and forevermore with all lost sinners who claimed Him as their Sacrifice and Righteousness.

At the same time, there came to Jesus Christ another baptism, namely, the Holy Spirit, just as John declared that there would come this divine baptism to all who received Him. From this moment Jesus Christ stood in a new attitude to His work. Henceforth there was another Personality united with Him, in all His teachings, acts and sufferings. It was the third Person of the Deity, so that all Christ’s public life was fulfilled in the power of the Spirit. While He was by His own divine right the Son of God, yet He deliberately suspended the exercise of His own divine rights, and took the position of a dependent man looking to God through the Holy Spirit to enable Him for all His ministry just as a He enables us now.

Therefore, He delayed the commencement of His public ministry until after He had received the Holy Spirit. He did not attempt a single official act until He had been baptized with power from on high. What a lesson, what an example for us! His Spirit-baptism was intended to be the pattern of ours. This one feature marked the infinite difference between Christ’s baptism and John’s. John’s was a baptism into death to the old life of sin; Christ’s was a baptism into life and power, bringing to our aid something more than our own will power and our purpose to do better, and giving to us the divine cooperation of the Holy Spirit.

Not only so, it takes us into a new sonship. Even as He was recognized as the Son of God, united to Him by the Holy Spirit, we share His relation to the Father, and in infinite humility, and yet with infinite confidence we can hear the Father say, “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6 KJV). “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

John knew he was not worthy to baptize Jesus—rather, he wanted Jesus to baptize him. **If baptism follows repentance, why did Jesus, who had no sin, insist on being baptized?**

Matt. 5:17

Matthew 4:1-11

Before David, the type of His greater Son, could be publicly called to the kingdom of Israel, he had to prove his prowess in single combat with the champion of the enemy, and his victory over Goliath vindicated his right to be recognized as the true leader of his people. In like manner the Lord Jesus Christ, immediately after the public inauguration of His ministry by the testimony of His Father, was called to meet the great enemy of God and overcome him in single combat and decisive victory.

The temptation in the wilderness had a threefold significance. First, it was intended to prove the divine character and the spotless righteousness of the Lord Himself.

In the next place, it was intended to defeat the devil from the very start and put him in the position henceforth of a conquered foe.

And in the third place, He fought the battle of the wilderness as the Captain of our salvation, and His conflict was the pattern and pledge of the conflict and victory through which all His followers should pass.

The scene of the temptation was suggestive. The first chapter of human history began in a paradise, but it ended in a disaster. The first chapter of divine redemption began in a desert, but it shall end in a paradise restored. This contrast is typical of the old and new dispensations. The old dispensation gives promise of earthly blessing, the new dispensation starts in company with our Lord in poverty and humiliation and it leads up through great tribulation to the place where sorrow is unknown.

The time of our Lord's temptation was also full of significance. It came immediately after His baptism and the voice of the Father proclaiming from the open heavens: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Our severest temptations will come to us after our greatest blessings. The old line is full of meaning,

If conqueror, of tomorrow's fight beware.

Indeed, it is only the soul that has met God and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit that really feels the full force of temptation. The man that is going along with the current of evil is insensible to its power. It is when he resists that he is conscious of the opposing force. It was when the Philistines heard that David had been made king that they came to "search for him" (2 Samuel 5:17). He was important enough now to be an object of their attack, and it is when we have yielded ourselves to God and committed ourselves to the purpose of full salvation that all powers of evil are combined to break us down and dishonor us with defeat and failure.

Then again the time of our Savior's temptation was significant in respect of His physical condition. He had just been fasting 40 days and nights, and it is added that after this "he was hungry" (Matthew 4:2). His body and mind were worn and exhausted with long fasting and privation in the wilderness and in this condition He was particularly susceptible to the assault of the enemy. Satan knows when we are weak and subject to his power, and he wisely chooses the time of attacking.

One of the strongest impressions which one receives in carefully reading this narrative is the utter poverty of the devil. He had nothing to offer Christ but stones. He couldn't even bring Him bread. True, he offered Him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but these were all stolen goods, and the devil had no power to give title. Christ rejected his braggart bribe, and a little later was able to say Himself: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). The day is coming when the shout will be heard in earth and heaven: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Revelation 11:15b).

The devil is a liar and a fraud, and he will cheat you every time. Do not listen to his propositions. He is a promoter of worthless stocks; he will take your money and laugh at you after he has fooled you.

There was another agent in this temptation, namely, the Holy Spirit. "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1). Do not let us make our own temptations, but when God permits them, let us be very sure that He will go with us through them as He did with Jesus Christ. Then we shall have no need to fight in this battle. Hand over the devil along with all our other trials to His hands, then the battle will be the Lord's, and we shall learn to stand still and see Him conquer. "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:17). "When the enemy comes in like a flood,/ the Spirit of the LORD will put him to flight" (Isaiah 59:19b, margin).

The form of the temptation is full of practical teaching and help. The first object of the enemy was to destroy His faith. This is always the primary object of the tempter. It is a trial of our faith. He came to Christ with an insinuating question, just as he came to our first parents in Eden. He did not dare to deny Jesus' divine Sonship, but he cunningly hinted at the obvious inconsistency of anybody in so deplorable a condition as He was, claiming to be the Son of God. It was as if he had said, "You, the Son of God, out here in this desolate wilderness, neglected by your Father, ready to perish with hunger? Surely it must be some wild delusion; and yet, if it be, why certainly you will have no difficulty in proving it by supplying yourself miraculously with all the bread you need?" And so he comes to us with some discouragement. He points to some mysterious trial or privation and he insinuates the subtle doubt of our Father's love, or of our own sonship; and we begin to wonder if, after all, we can be truly His children. Discouragement is back of many a life of sin and failure, and confidence in God is a "shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16).

Then, when the adversary gets us discouraged, it is so easy for him to suggest to us some forbidden way of help—"make the stones bread," take some unauthorized way of deliverance, step out of the will of God, and accept the compromise of right or honor which the wicked one has always ready at our hand. But the Master would do no such thing. It was not so necessary for Him to have bread, as to do the will of God, and stand where His Father had placed Him in submission and obedience. And so He answered, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

It has been finely said that the Lord Jesus did not defeat Satan by power, but by righteousness. It would have been very easy for Him, by a stroke of power, to have hurled the fiend into the abyss, but He did something better. He stood so

panoplied by divine righteousness that the enemy could make no impression on the Son of God and was driven back helpless and defeated simply by the Master's breastplate of righteousness.

The next temptation appealed to His higher spiritual nature. It was a solicitation to His faith to go too far, venturing beyond the prescribed limits of God's own Word. "Throw yourself down" (4:6), he said, "and let God work a mighty miracle in your preservation, which will lead the people to acknowledge you in your divine character." When the enemy cannot tempt us through our lower nature, he will do so through our higher. He will use even our religious life and our very faith as the instrument of fanaticism, and push us to some rash, presumptuous extreme through which we shall take ourselves out of the hands of God, and really put ourselves in the hands of the enemy. Therefore, we see around us today, the numerous examples of well-meaning people that probably began with sincere faith and then allowed themselves to be controlled by the spirit of fanaticism until they have become the very instruments of the devil himself. Let us remember that even faith itself can go no farther than the Word of God. It must always be limited by "it is written" (4:4), and then "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

The next assault of Satan was aimed at the ambition of our Lord, and especially at what might be called a holy ambition. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and doubtless urged upon Him the good that He could do by accepting these seats of power and vast resources and using them to reclaim this earth from all its wrongs and grievances, and prove Himself the deliverer of humanity. But He asked this: that he be permitted to hold the helm, receive the homage and be the mastermind behind it all. " 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me' " (Matthew 4:9).

But he overreached himself. "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (4:10b) was the answering blow with which his blasphemous demand was met, and he himself was driven, defeated, from the field. So still he comes with the alluring vision of power and ambition, pleading, no doubt, as of old, some beautiful motive, some dream of worldwide influence, some scheme of social reform or political utopia. The one fatal condition in it all is, "if you will bow down and worship me." His touch, his control, his partnership is enough. There can be no compromise with evil. Even the best things that he can give would be defiled by his fatal touch, and the true Christian will always remember that the only safe course is to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness and no partnership with evil in any form.

(*The Christ in the Bible*, A. B. Simpson)

What a contrast does Christ here present to Adam! Adam was tempted in a paradise, and yet fell; Christ was tempted in a wilderness, and yet stood. Adam, in a state of innocence, was surrounded by the beasts of the field, all tame and submissive to their Lord; Christ, in a fallen world, had the wild beasts raging around Him, and only supernaturally restrained. In Adam we see man easily and quickly falling, without a single incentive to evil save the tempter's insinuations; in Christ we see man standing encircled by all that is terrific, and harassed by long-continued, varied, and most subtle attacks from the tempter. (*The Four Gospels*, David Brown) Since our Lord was tempted, so we too shall experience temptation. **What should we do, then, when temptation comes?**

Matt. 16:22, 23 John 12:20-31 John 14:30 1 Cor. 10:13 Eph. 6:13-17 Heb. 2:18 Jas. 4:7
1 Pet. 5:9 1 John 2:14

Matthew 4:12-17

Let us notice the *first doctrine which the Lord Jesus proclaimed to the world*. He "began to say, Repent."

The necessity of repentance is one of the great foundation stones which lie at the very bottom of Christianity: it is a truth which needs to be pressed on all mankind without exception. High or low, rich or poor, all have sinned, and are guilty before God; and all must repent and be converted, if they would be saved. —It is a truth which does not receive the attention it deserves. True repentance is no light matter: it is a thorough change of heart about sin, a change showing itself in godly sorrow for sin—in heart-felt confession of sin,—in a complete breaking off from sinful habits, and an abiding hatred of all sin. Such repentance is the inseparable companion of saving faith in Christ. —Let us prize the doctrine highly. No Christian teaching can be called sound, which does not constantly bring forward "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21)

(Expository thoughts on Matthew, J. C. Ryle)

Define the word repentance.

Matthew 4:18-25

What marvelous power over the hearts of men must Jesus have possessed, when, on the utterance of those few now familiar words, "Follow Me"; "Come ye after Me," men instantly obeyed, leaving all behind them!

(*The Four Gospels*, David Brown)

Explain how the drawing power of Jesus still works today, although He has ascended on high.

John 16:7-14 John 17:11, 17-19, 26 Rom. 8:11, 14, 27, 37 Gal. 4:6, 7

Matthew 5:1-7:29 Overview

After Moses had led the people across the Red Sea and they began their national history, he went up into the mountain and there promulgated God's great law from Sinai. In like manner, Jesus Christ, the Prophet greater than Moses, when He had been formally inaugurated and announced as the Messiah, also went up into the mountain and gave forth the great law of the New Testament.

Its Place And Time

This is popularly known as the Sermon on the Mount. It is not introduced in the Gospel of Matthew in its chronological place, but was really delivered at a later period than the things recorded in the immediate context. This is in accordance with a principle already explained, that the writers of the Gospels were not mere reporters or historical chroniclers, but spiritual teachers, marshalling their facts, not in historical order, but rather in their logical relation to the central idea of their gospel.

It was the true order, that, having introduced the King and witnessed to His character and divine commission, He should now give to us a public declaration of the great principles of His kingdom and its relation to the teachings of the past and the plan of the future.

Scope Of The Discourse

This great discourse, which covers the next three chapters of Matthew (5-7), is an unfolding of the righteousness of the kingdom in contrast, first, with the teachings of Moses and the Old Testament; second, with the practice and conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious professors and teachers of the day; and thirdly, with the ungodly world who are traveling the broad road which leads to destruction.

It is necessary at the outset to clearly fix in our minds the purpose of this great discourse.

First, it is a summary of the law, presenting in concise form the essence of the teachings of Moses purged from the errors and corruptions which had grown around them through Jewish traditions.

Secondly, it is a summary of the ethical teaching of the New Testament, and therein marks a great advance upon the moral teaching of the Old Testament. It is a sort of frontispiece in the opening of the volume of Christ's life and teaching, like the first Psalm in the book of Psalms, which is a portrait of the godly man and primarily of the Lord Jesus Himself, the supreme type of all godliness and goodness. The Sermon on the Mount finds its only perfect realization in Christ Himself and so it stands like a portrait at the opening page of the Gospels.

Not The Gospel

But, in the third place, it must not be forgotten that even this sublime discourse falls short of the full spiritual teaching of the New Testament. It is not, therefore, in an unqualified sense, the law of Christ, and it is not correct to say, "If I regulate my life according to the Sermon on the Mount, I shall have reached the highest standard of character." We must bear in mind not only its advance on the teaching of the Old Testament, but its defects and shortcomings as compared with the deeper and higher teaching of the later portions of the New Testament. For example, we find nothing in this sermon about the name of Jesus and His mediation with the Father as our Intercessor and Great High Priest. The Lord's Prayer is offered to the Father direct without any reference to the Son. It is true that the "Our Father" of the first petition may be held, in the light of what Christ afterwards taught, to include the Intercessor along with us when we pray, but this certainly could not be obvious to an immediate listener to whom the great truth of Christ's Priesthood had not yet been explained. A good deal later, the Lord Himself refers to this and supplies the lack. "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:24).

Further, there is nothing here about the great work of the Holy Spirit, the next great revelation of the New Testament. This was to come later, and it would have been premature to introduce this teaching here before they were prepared to receive it. Later the Lord Himself made it preeminent in His parting messages, and the apostles of the New Testament re-echo the message on every page.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the Sermon on the Mount says nothing of the atonement, the crucifixion of the natural man, the resurrection life into which we enter through fellowship with Christ, and the indwelling of Christ Himself in the heart as the great Pattern of godliness and the only secret by which we can really live the Sermon on the Mount. It is a cold yet faultless vision of righteousness, revealing, like a mirror, our unrighteousness, but as helpless as that mirror would be to wash away impurities which it had exposed upon your face. While we give this glorious message its high preeminence, let us not put it in a false place, and let us not forget the Master's own later explanation, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (16:12-

13a). It is no reflection upon the honor of Christ to say these things, or frankly acknowledge the things that are lacking in His great law from the Mount. It was the message of the King and the Son of David, and it marked a transition between the Old and the New Testament dispensations, being the law of the kingdom rather than the law of the gospel. We find 10 great points in these New Testament laws.

Character

1. The Master does not speak of what we do, but of what we are, and the personal character which He here describes is strikingly different from the Old Testament ideal. The eight beatitudes mark the gradation of religious character by four steps downward and four steps upward. True spiritual character does not begin with self-effort, but self-renunciation. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3a) is the first step; the people that are dissatisfied with themselves and have a deep and overwhelming sense of their failure and helplessness. The next step is also down, "Blessed are those who mourn" (5:4a). These are the people that not only realize their nothingness, but are deeply moved about it, and are tender and susceptible to the touch of God's Spirit. "Blessed are the meek" (5:5a) marks the next descending step; the people that are yielded, broken and so far from self-will that God can mold them to His will. Finally, the fourth step is a deep spiritual hunger, a longing for righteousness, a desire so earnest that all else is gladly sacrificed for the higher blessing sought. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (5:6).

Now begins the spiritual ascent. The first step is love to others, that tender charity born of our own poverty of spirit and our own deep sense of nothingness and failure. "Blessed are the merciful" (5:7a). From love to man it is but a step to love God, and so the next step is: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (5:8a). This is literally, the single in heart, the people that have but one aim, to please and glorify God. The third step in this advancing scale brings us to positive and practical service for Christ and others, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (5:9a). This does not mean the mere settling of personal grievances between people, but the sacred ministry of making peace between man and God, the reconciling of the world to Him, the seeking and saving of the lost. The last stage in spiritual life is suffering for Christ's sake. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.... Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (5:10-11). Christianity has its coronation in victorious suffering and patient submission to the will of God.

Influence

2. Character is not a cold and ethical quality; but it has a beneficent influence. Two fine figures are here employed to express it, the salt and the light. The salt is the figure of our silent influence, that which does not express itself in action, but spreads as a sweetening and conserving influence through human society. A very large part of our influence is unconscious and intangible, forces that are held in solution and yet that hold together the family, the Church and the whole social economy. True godliness is such salt, and for the sake of the saints of God, the world is saved from utter destruction.

There is also a positive influence in Christian character; it is like the light, diffused, far reaching, beneficent. It is not enough to have an absence of negative qualities. But rather, "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (5:16). They must see our good works, but they must glorify not us, but our Father.

Salt and light! What beautiful figures of the influence of holy character. God help us to be as wholesome as the salt, and as bright, as pure, as far reaching in our influence for God and our usefulness to men as the beautiful light.

Righteousness

3. From the 17th to the 37th verse, the Lord dwells upon the righteousness of the kingdom, showing, first, that it must not aim at a lower standard than the law, because instead of abrogating that law He has come to fulfill it. In the next place, it must surpass the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and we know that their righteousness was most scrupulous and elaborate. Above everything else, the righteousness of the kingdom must spring from the heart and control the secret motives of the soul. The hatred of a brother is recognized as murder, the spirit of evil desire as a real transgression of the seventh commandment, and the very thoughts of the heart as constituting moral acts and qualities. Under the heart-searching light of the holy law, human nature stands convicted and condemned, and "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

Love

4. The last 10 verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew reach a height which the Old Testament had not dreamed of. It teaches a love that not only sought to bless its neighbor but its enemy, and to be like the kind and beneficent heavenly Father, who "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). The law of Moses had nothing to correspond with the sublime ethics of the 44th verse: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." This is the high plane of the fifth beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (5:7). It is more than righteousness; it is divine love.

Sincerity

5. Sincerity is the issue in chapter 6:1-18. Their good deeds, their alms, their prayers, their fasting, must all be in the sight of God and not in the sight of man. Ostentation and love of human praise must be denied, and our most sacred ministries inspired by two supreme motives: the glory of God and the approval of our Father in heaven. Human praise, if sought as a reward, will destroy all claim to higher recompense. The things we do to be seen of men may bring us their approval, but their value terminates there. "I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (6:50).

It is said a good man was once asked by a heavenly messenger what boon he would specially crave, and he asked that henceforth he might be made a blessing to everybody he came in contact with, but in such a way that his own shadow would never fall upon anyone else, and only God would recognize the service. The seraphim veil not only their faces, but their feet with their wings, and the highest ministry is that which is so lost in the thought of the Master that it forgets even its own footprints.

A Single Aim

6. Singleness of heart is touched on in chapter 6:19-24. There must only be one Master. We cannot serve God and money. There must only be one goal, the home above. All our treasures must be there. The eye must be single to God alone, or the whole body shall be full of darkness. This is the meaning of the sixth beatitude. "Blessed are the pure in heart" (5:8a), literally this means, "the single in heart," people that have but one object and aim, to bless and glorify God, whether men praise or blame.

Trust

7. Next, trust is present in chapter 6:25-34. The spirit of the Old Testament is work; the spirit of the New Testament is trust. Anxious care is forbidden and counted for sin. After the solemn words, "You cannot serve both God and money" (6:24), the conjunction is introduced, "therefore." "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life" (6:25), and the inference is very plain that the taking of thought and the harboring of anxious care is a form of serving money. Worldliness consists not merely in the love of the world, but quite as much in the fear of the world. True faith trusts the heavenly Father for the present life as well as for the life to come, and if we are not trusting Him now for the things that are present and real, what evidence have we that we are really trusting Him for the things that are unseen and about which we may only be deceiving ourselves? God gives us the tests and trials of the present life in order to prove that He is indeed real to us, and that our faith does take Him for help in time of need. Righteousness is not merely doing our duty to our fellow men, or even having an eye single to the will of God. The very root and principle of it is a confidence so simple and complete that like the sparrows of the field, we can leave all our interests in His hand and trust Him for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come.

Charity

8. The spirit of consideration for others, especially in our judgments concerning our fellow men, is next enforced (chapter 7:1-16). The same principle by which we judge our brothers is to be applied to us by the Supreme Judge in the last day. With burning irony, the Master exposes the hollowness and insincerity of pretending to take a little speck of sawdust out of our brother's eye when there is something in our eyes as much greater than our brother's fault as a great piece of timber is greater than a little speck of sawdust floating in the sunbeam. The word "plank" here literally means "a rafter," a heavy piece of timber, and the keen logic of the comparison needs no emphasizing. We are not forbidden to judge of the moral quality of the actions of people; it is their motives that we are not to judge. Actual evil is obvious, and it is not wrong to call it by its right name. But this is a very different thing from sitting in judgment upon the motives and character of others. This is the prerogative of the divine Lawgiver, and He will not allow us to invade it.

At the same time there is a fine sentence added in the sixth verse. "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces." The spirit of charity does not require us to be weak and easily imposed upon. We should be so discriminating that we will not allow people to abuse our trustfulness. We should not commit ourselves to those that would take advantage of our frankness and rend us. We are to be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (10:16).

Prayer

9. Two paragraphs are devoted to the subject of prayer in this discourse. The first is chapter 6:9-13, where the Lord's Prayer is given as the great model of prayer. This subject is resumed in chapter 7:7-11, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (7:7-8). The efficacy of prayer is most emphatically announced. Further, the various degrees and forms of prayer are finely expressed by the three words, "ask, seek and knock." Prayer is not only a matter of petition, but it is also a matter of patient and persevering search, and it is also a force that breaks down the barriers which interpose, and cooperates with God in bringing its own answer. Very beautifully does He tell us of the faithfulness of the great Hearer of prayer. He will not deceive us or put us off with a counterfeit blessing. From our own

love to our offspring, He rises to the sublime argument, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him" (7:11).

The Final Test Of Character

10. Having finished the chief points of His discourse, He finally concludes by telling of the solemn test which is to come to every life and character.

He gives us a simple test to apply to our own actions. This is the Golden Rule (7:12), which shines like a star of light over all the teachings of human philosophy and morals: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." This is the law of life by which we can determine for ourselves the right or the wrong of any action about which we may be in doubt. Is it according to the law of love? Will it bring happiness and blessing to my brother? Would I want him to do it to me? This will clear away every mist and enable us to act with a good conscience and a full assurance of pleasing God.

Next He gives us the test of the fruit men bear. "By their fruit you will recognize them" (7:16). The false prophet may come in sheep's clothing, but if we search him, we shall find him out by the influence of his life and the fruit of his teaching and practice. Is it humility, holiness, glory to God and lasting good to men? Or is it self-aggrandizement, self-glory and gain?

He gives us the test of obedience. This is to be the test of the judgment. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' " (7:21-23).

God tests us now. The rain and the storm described in the closing paragraphs of this great Sermon on the Mount are not all to be revealed amid the tests of the judgment Day. Many of these tests mercifully come to us now. God anticipates the day of judgment and gives to us the opportunity of finding out now whether we are prepared to stand the tests of the final day. Some day we shall thank Him for the trials and temptations that brought us to see whether we were wrong and saved us before the final crisis from the doom of the self-deceived.

The figure of the rock refers undoubtedly to the great Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ Himself. He alone is the foundation of holy character and final acceptance. It is not enough to know these lofty teachings or even to approve them. There is no power in poor human nature to fulfill them. The law of Christ, like the law of Moses, is but a mirror to reveal us to ourselves, not a fountain to cleanse us. For this we must go to Christ Himself.

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not final but preparatory. It leads us up to Christ, but we must follow until we get there; and then from His indwelling light and His enabling Spirit, get the power to make this picture a living reality in our own experience. The great Teacher did not stop with the Sermon on the Mount. He has led us all the way to Calvary and Pentecost, and now, resting upon His finished work and His indwelling life and power, we can sing in a sense which the saints of the Old Testament could never know:

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

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Matthew 5:1-3

Christ came once in the flesh, and He is coming yet again. Each advent has a special object as connected with the Kingdom of heaven. The first advent of our Lord was for the purpose of establishing an empire among men and over men, by laying the foundations of that empire within individual souls. His second coming will be for the purpose of setting up that empire in glory. It is therefore vitally important that we understand what the character of the subjects in that Kingdom is, so that we may know whether we belong to the Kingdom ourselves, and whether its privileges, immunities, and future rewards are a part of our present and future inheritance. God's great salvation is free, "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). This is a most merciful provision of divine grace, for were God to offer salvation for sale, no poor sinner could secure it, seeing that he has *nothing* with which to purchase it. But the vast majority are insensible of this; yea, all of us are until the Holy Spirit opens our sin-blinded eyes. It is only those who have passed from death to life who become conscious of their poverty, take the place of beggars, are glad to receive divine charity, and begin to seek the true riches. Thus "the *poor* have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11:5), preached not only to their ears, but to their hearts!

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

What does it mean to be *poor in spirit*, and why is the kingdom of heaven theirs?

Matt. 3:2 Matt. 4:17 Matt. 5:20 Matt. 11:28, 29 Luke 15:14 Rom. 12:3 Phil. 3:1-14

Matthew 5:4

Mourning is ever a characteristic of the normal Christian state. There is much that the believer has to mourn over. The plague of his own heart makes him cry, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24).

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

What should we be mourning about?

Ezra 9:4 Jer. 13:17 Jer. 14:17 2 Cor. 6:10 Heb. 12:1

Matthew 5:5

Moses turned his back on worldly honors and earthly riches, deliberately choosing the life of a pilgrim rather than that of a courtier. He chose the wilderness in preference to the palace. The humbleness of Moses is seen again when Jehovah first appeared to him in Midian and commissioned him to lead His people out of Egypt. "Who am I," he said, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod. 3:11)

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

Describe the humility (Matt. 5:5) we should have before God.

Ex. 3:11 Num. 12:3 Ps. 5:9 Ps. 37:10-11 Matt. 21:5 Gal. 5:22, 23 Gal. 6:1 Eph. 4:2 Phil. 2:3
Heb. 11:24-26 1 Pet. 5:6

Matthew 5:6

In the first three Beatitudes we are called upon to witness the heart exercises of one who has been awakened by the Spirit of God. First, there is a sense of need, a realization of my nothingness and emptiness. Second, there is a judging of self, a consciousness of my guilt, and a sorrowing over my lost condition. Third, there is a cessation of seeking to justify myself before God, an abandonment of all pretenses to personal merit, and a taking of my place in the dust before God. Here, in the fourth Beatitude, the eye of the soul is turned away from self toward God for a very special reason: there is a longing after a righteousness that I urgently need but know that I do not possess.

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

Explain how we become positionally righteous.

Isa. 56:1 Isa. 61:10 John 1:12 Rom. 1:16, 17 Rom. 4:25 Rom. 5:19 Rom. 10:4 1 Cor. 1:2 2 Cor. 1:1 2 Cor. 5:21 Eph. 1:1 Phil. 1:1 1 John 2:23

Explain how we are experientially righteous?

Ps. 23:5, 6 Ps. 34:10 Jer. 23:6 Luke 1:53 Eph. 5:10 Phil. 2:12, 13 Phil. 3:8-12 Phil. 4:7
Col. 3:15

Matthew 5:7

It is the forgiving spirit; it is the non-retaliating spirit; it is the spirit that gives up all attempt at self-vindication and would not return an injury for an injury, but rather good in the place of evil and love in the place of hatred. That is mercifulness. Mercy being received by the forgiven soul, *that* soul comes to appreciate the beauty of mercy, and yearns to exercise toward other offenders similar grace to that which is exercised towards one's self. (Dr. A. T. Pierson)

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

How has the Lord shown mercy toward us?

Ps. 85:1-13 Eph. 2:4 1 Tim. 1:12-13 Titus 3:5

Matthew 5:8

He who is pure in heart not only obtains clear and satisfactory views of the divine character, but he enjoys intimate and delightful communion with God. He is brought very near God; God's mind becomes his mind; God's will becomes his will; and his fellowship is truly with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (Dr. John Brown)

In what ways can our hearts grow cold toward God?

Ps. 95:6-11 Prov. 21:29 Eph. 4:30 Rev. 2:4,5

Matthew 5:9

The believer in Christ knows that there is no peace for the wicked. Therefore, he earnestly desires that they should acquaint themselves with God and be at peace (Job 22:21). Believers know that peace with God is *only through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Col. 1:19, 20). For this reason we speak of Him to our fellow men as the Holy Spirit leads us to do so. Our feet are "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15); thus we are equipped to testify to others concerning the grace of God. Of us it is said, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of *peace*, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15). All such are pronounced *blessed* by our Lord. They cannot but be blessed.

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

How do you know the peace of God?

Matt. 11:28-30 John 14:27 John 16:33 Gal. 5:22 Eph. 2:14 Phil. 4:7

Matthew 5:10-12

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to *suffer* for His sake" (Phil. 1:29). The words of Christ in John 15:19, 20 have never been repealed:

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.

(The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, A. W. Pink)

How can you be at peace, and even joyful, living under severe persecution (Matt. 5:11, 12)?

Acts 5:41 Acts 16:25 Rom. 5:3-5 Rom. 8:17 Phil. 3:10 Phil. 4:6,7 Col. 3:15-16 Heb. 10:34 Heb. 11:25 1 Pet. 2:20

Matthew 5:13-16

As salt must come into actual contact with what is to be seasoned by it, so must Christians, instead of standing at a distance from their fellows, come into contact with them, on purpose, to communicate to them their own qualities.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

What does the material salt do for mankind and how was it used in Bible times?

Lev. 2:13 Num. 18:19 Judges 9:45 Job 6:6 Ezek. 16:4 Ezek. 43:24

Matthew 5:17-48

Let us beware of despising the law of the Ten Commandments. Let us not suppose for a moment that it is set aside by the Gospel, or that Christians have nothing to do with it. The coming of Christ did not alter the position of the Ten Commandments one hair's breadth. If anything, it exalted and raised their authority. The law of the Ten Commandments is God's eternal measure of right and wrong. By it is the knowledge of sin; by it the Spirit shows men their need of Christ, and drives them to Him: to it Christ refers His people as their rule and guide for holy living. In its right place it is just as important as "the glorious gospel."—It cannot save us: we cannot be justified by it; but never, never let us despise it. It is a symptom of an ignorant ministry, and an unhealthy state of religion, when the law is lightly esteemed. The true Christian "delights in the law of God." (Rom 7:22)

Let us beware of supposing that the Gospel has lowered the standard of personal holiness, and that the Christian is not intended to be as strict and particular about his daily life as the Jew. This is an immense mistake, but one that is

unhappily very common. So far from this being the case, the sanctification of the New Testament saint ought to exceed that of him who has nothing but the Old Testament for his guide. The more light we have, the more we ought to love God: the more dearly we see our own complete and full forgiveness in Christ, the more heartily ought we to work for His glory. We know what it costs to redeem us far better than the Old Testament saints did. We have read what happened in Gethsemane and on Calvary, and they only saw it dimly and indistinctly as a thing yet to come. May we never forget our obligations! The Christian who is content with a low standard of personal holiness has got much to learn.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Jesus is elaborating on the Law, saying that any evil or lustful thought, whether or not it is carried out, is a sin (Matt. 5:21-32). **How may our thought life be brought under control so that our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees?**

Lev. 19:2 Luke 6:32-38 Luke 11:9-13 Rom. 6:6 Rom. 6:11-14 Rom. 7:19-25 Rom. 8:12-17 Rom. 8:26-27
Phil. 1:6 Phil. 4:8-9 Col. 1:28 1 Pet. 1:13-16

Matthew 6:1-8

In all our duties, whether giving or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is, *that we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God.* "Our Father seeth in secret." Everything like formality, affectation, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. He takes no account of the quantity of money we give, or the quantity of words we use: the one thing at which His all-seeing eye looks is the nature of our motives and the state of our hearts.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What does Matthew 6:3 mean: "Let not the left hand know what thy right hand doeth"?

Matthew 6:9-15

Our Father which art in Heaven, — The paternal relationship of God to His people.

Hallowed be — Be held in reverence; regarded and treated as holy.

Thy name. — God's name means 'Himself as revealed and manifested.'

Thy kingdom come. — The kingdom of God is that moral and spiritual kingdom which the God of grace is setting up in this fallen world.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. — To see the whole inhabited earth in entire conformity to the will of God.

Give us this day our daily bread. — Give us this day the bread which the day's necessities require.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. — As the debtor in the creditor's hands, so is the sinner in the hands of God.

And lead us not into temptation, — We incline to take it as a prayer against being drawn or sucked, of our own will, into temptation.

But deliver us from evil. — This final petition, then, is only rightly grasped when regarded as a prayer for deliverance from all evil of whatever kind—not only from sin, but from all its consequences, fully and finally.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen. — For all is Thine

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

Elaborate on one of the above portions of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), and speak to the richness of its meaning to you personally.

Matthew 6:16-24

“No man can serve two masters;” (Matt 6:24a)

Singleness of purpose is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. If our eyes do not see distinctly, we cannot walk without stumbling and falling. If we attempt to work for two different masters, we are sure to give satisfaction to neither. It is just the same with respect to our souls. We cannot serve Christ and the world at the same time: it is vain to attempt it. The thing cannot be done: the ark and Dagon will never stand together. God must be king over our hearts: His law, His will, His precepts, must receive our first attention; then, and not till then, everything in our inward man will fall in to its right place. Unless our hearts are so ordered, everything will be in confusion. “Thy whole body shall be full of darkness.”

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What does fasting have to do with a singleness of purpose?

Matt 9:14,15

Tell why the following people fasted in the bible: Daniel, Ester, Paul, and Barnabas.

Matthew 6:25-34

These verses are a striking example of the combined wisdom and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching. He knows the heart of a man: He knows that we are always ready to turn off warnings against worldliness, by the argument that we cannot help being anxious about the things of this life. “Have we not our families to provide for? Must not our bodily wants be supplied? How can we possibly get through life if we think first of our souls?” The Lord Jesus foresaw such thoughts, and furnished an answer.

He forbids us *to keep up an anxious spirit* about the things of this world. Four times over He says, “Take no thought.” About life,—about food,—about clothing,—about morrow, “take no thought.” Be not over careful: be not over-anxious. Prudent provision for the future is right: wearing, corroding, self-tormenting anxiety is wrong.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What message are you sending to God when you worry?

Matthew 7:1-6

The first portion of these verses is one of those passages of Scripture which we must be careful not to strain beyond its proper meaning. It is frequently abused and misapplied by the enemies of true religion. It is possible to press the words of the Bible so far that they yield not medicine, but poison.

When our Lord says, “Judge not,” He does not mean that it is wrong, under any circumstances, to pass an unfavorable judgment on the conduct and opinions of others. We ought to have decided opinions: we are to “prove all things;” we are to “try the spirits.” (1Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1)—Nor yet does He mean that it is wrong to reprove the sins and faults of others until we are perfect and faultless ourselves. Such an interpretation would contradict other parts of Scripture: it would make it impossible to condemn error and false doctrine; it would debar any one from attempting the office of a minister or a judge. The earth would be “given into the hands of the wicked” (Job 9:24): heresy would flourish: wrong-doing would abound.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

How can we judge, give correction and show Christ’s love when needed without falling into judgment ourselves?

1 Cor. 11:31 1 Cor. 5:12-13 Gal. 6:1,2 Eph. 4:31,32

Matthew 7:7-11

We must pray. — This is a subject to which the Lord Jesus evidently attaches great importance: the language that He uses is a plain proof of this. He employs three different words to express the idea of prayer: “Ask,”—“Seek,”—“Knock.” He holds out the broadest, fullest promise to those who pray: “Every one that asketh receiveth.” He illustrates God’s readiness to hear our prayers by an argument drawn from the well-known practice of parents on earth: “evil” and selfish as they are by nature, they do not neglect the wants of their children according to the flesh; much more will a God of love and mercy attend to the cries of those who are His children by grace!

What do you suggest we should be asking God for in prayer?

Matthew 7:12-20

Our Lord gives us a *general caution against the way of many in religion*. It is not enough to think as others think, and do as others do. It must not satisfy us to follow the fashion, and swim with the stream of those among whom we live. He tells us that the way that leads to everlasting life is “narrow,” and “few” travel in it; He tells us that the way that leads to everlasting destruction is “broad,” and full of travelers: “Many there be that go in thereat.”

These are fearful truths! They ought to raise great searchings of heart in the minds of all who hear them. —“Which way am I going? By what road am I traveling?”—In one or other of the two ways here described, every one of us may be found. May God give us an honest, self-inquiring spirit, and show us what we are!

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J. C. Ryle)

What type of check and balance should we place on ourselves to be assured we are walking the narrow way and not being victims of self-deception?

Ps. 61:2 Ps. 94:22 Matt. 15:14 Luke 13:24 John 15:2-5

Matthew 7:21-29

The man who hears Christian teaching, and practices what he hears, is like “a wise man who builds his house upon a rock.” He does not content himself with listening to exhortations to repent, believe in Christ, and live a holy life. He actually repents: he actually believes. He actually ceases to do evil, learns to do well, abhors that which is sinful, and cleaves to that which is good. He is a doer as well as a hearer. (James 1:22)

And what is the result? In the time of trial his religion does not fail him; the floods of sickness, sorrow, poverty, disappointments, bereavements beat upon him in vain. His soul stands unmoved; his faith does not give away: his comforts do not utterly forsake him. His religion may have cost him trouble in time past; his foundation may have been obtained with much labor and many tears: to discover his own interest in Christ may have required many a day of earnest seeking, and many an hour of wrestling in prayer. But his labor has not been thrown away: he now reaps a rich reward. The religion that can stand trial is the true religion.

The man who hears Christian teaching, and never gets beyond hearing, is like “a foolish man who builds his house upon the sand.” He satisfies himself with listening and approving, but he goes no further. He flatters himself, perhaps, that all is right with his soul, because he has feelings, and convictions, and desires, of a spiritual kind. In these he rests. He never really breaks off from sin, and casts aside the spirit of the world; he never really lays hold on Christ; he never really takes up the cross: he is a hearer of truth, but nothing more.

And what is the end of this man's religion? It breaks down entirely under the first flood of tribulation; it fails him completely, like a summer-dried fountain, when his need is the sorest. It leaves its possessor high and dry, like a wreck on a sand-bank, a scandal to the Church, a by-word to the infidel, and a misery to himself. Most true is it that what costs little is worth little! A religion which costs us nothing, and consists in nothing but hearing sermons, will always prove at last to be a useless thing.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What makes the two types of hearers different?

Matthew 8:1—9:38 Overview

After the giving of the law by Moses, Israel's lawgiver, comes the record of the mighty works of Joshua, their great captain of faith and victory. And so, after the Sermon on the Mount, and the new law of righteousness proclaimed by the Lord Jesus, we are introduced to the victorious work of the Captain of our salvation.

The two chapters which follow the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 8 and 9, contain a striking group of the miracles of our Lord, specially clustered together so as to set forth His mighty power in the most emphatic and convincing manner. They are not presented in their strict chronological order, but rather with special reference rather to their bearing upon His revelation as the Messiah and King. They are worthy of careful study in connection both with the kingdom and the King.

Thoughtful students and teachers of dispensational truth see in these successive miracles a striking foreshadowing of the kingdom in its future developments. While we have no authority to say that the narrative was intended to set forth

these future facts, yet there is nothing to forbid such an interpretation so long as it does not exclude the literal and immediate application of the truth to the present, or gospel, age.

One of the dangers of dispensational teaching is that it is apt to pigeonhole important portions of the Scriptures and limit them to the future when they are needed for the spiritual comfort of God's children in the present.

In this view of their dispensational applications, the healing of the leper in the eighth chapter of Matthew is applied to Israel. The Lord was in the house when the leper came to Him, and so Israel in her sinfulness and helplessness, of which leprosy was the special Levitical type, is represented as coming to her King for healing.

The next miracle, the healing of the centurion's servant, was quite different. Christ was absent from his house, and His healing virtue was transmitted through the intervening spaces to this Gentile believer, whom the Lord commended for a faith such as He had not found even in Israel. This represents Christ's healing and sanctifying power among the Gentiles through the Christian age, not through His visible and manifested presence, but through His Word, which is emphasized especially in this miracle.

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which follows, brings the Lord again into the house, and once more He is dealing with Israel, who is represented by the sick one here, whom He raises up to minister unto Him. This stands for the restoration of Israel at the coming of the Lord and the glorious ministry to which she shall be called during the Millennial age.

Then follows the healing of the people in Matthew 8:16, and the casting out of demon power without limitation. This, we are told by our dispensational friends, foreshadows the universal extension of the healing power of Christ after His second coming, when it shall be without limitation or restriction. Now some are healed, but then the promise will be fulfilled, "No one living in Zion will say, 'I am ill' " (Isaiah 33:24).

The story of the stilling of the tempest in the eighth chapter of Matthew represents, according to this view, the trials and troubles of God's people during the present time, which are to be brought to an end at the appearing of the Lord, when He will rebuke the angry waves of this troubled world, and there shall be "a great calm" (Matthew 8:26, KJV).

This will be followed by the destruction of Satan's power in the Millennial earth, represented by the miracle of the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs, whom the Savior met on the other side of the lake after the stilling of the tempest.

Then follows the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum, accompanied especially by the statement, "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (9:6a). Our friends represent this as the appearing of Christ on earth and His restoring of His people Israel, raising them up from their paralysis of ages, and sending them forth to walk and work for Him.

After this comes the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, standing for the future resurrection.

And finally, the two miracles of the healing of the blind and the dumb complete the group, and tell of the time when the veil of blindness shall be taken away from Israel, and the promise shall be fulfilled, "then will ... the mute tongue shout for joy" (Isaiah 35:6).

But whatever may be the dispensational meaning of these miracles, there is no doubt about their present meaning. They present an impressive exhibition of the power of Christ over sickness, Satan, nature, death and sin.

This is illustrated in a series of striking cases of healing.

The Will of Christ Respecting the Healing of Disease, as Revealed in the Healing of the Leper

This poor sufferer came to Him representing a suffering world. His appeal expresses the attitude in which most people stand toward the Lord. They do not doubt His power, but will He? "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean" (Matthew 8:2b). The answer of Christ was prompt and unequivocal and leaves no doubt upon the mind of any candid sufferer about His attitude toward disease: "I am willing ... be clean" (8:3b)! "Not only am I willing, but I am positively wanting to heal and help all who come within reach of My touch. But there must be a corresponding will on your part." Therefore, He adds, "be clean." You must bring a sanctified will, which is the true seat of faith, and meet His will, and when your will cooperates with His, then will come the manifestation of the healing power.

The Word Of Christ for Healing

"Just say the word," said the centurion, "and my servant will be healed" (8:8b). This miracle is especially valuable for our dispensation. This represents the power of an absent Christ, through His Word, to reach our need. We do not need to

Climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down.

His Word still holds in solution all His ancient power. Like that living seed they took from the mummy's hands, which had been lying there for 3,000 years, but which contained in its bosom a vital germ, so that the moment it touched the soil it germinated into life, and today our land is filled with Egyptian wheat. So the Word of Christ comes down to us across 2,000 years with unextinguished vitality in its every sentence, and if we will claim the promise, if we will plant our seed in the soil of a trusting heart, if we will commit ourselves to the promise and put our weight upon it, we shall find that it is as real as in the days of Galilee, and God's words will become living deeds in our life.

The Work of God

The next healing, Simon Peter's wife's mother, represents the purpose of divine healing. It is not for your selfish gratification or gain, but, like her, you must rise and minister to Him, and give back to God in loving service, the blessing that He has vouchsafed to you.

The Atoning Blood

The next reference connects our healing with the cross. The reason that He healed was because it was incumbent upon Him as the Messiah to fulfill the picture given by Isaiah the prophet, "He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (53:4). This He did when He hung on the cross and bore in His own body all the physical liabilities of our bodies, making it true that "by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24b). It is the deep foundation of divine healing, the solid rock of Christ's atonement.

Sin and Sickness

The next example in the first part of the ninth chapter shows the connection between sickness and sin. They had brought this man to Christ with much faith on their part. But the Lord did not heal him at once. He saw a deeper need and at once He touched the real root of the trouble: "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2b). Back of his sickness was the deep source of sin, and not until he was pardoned and prepared to take his place as an accepted child of God, was the Master ready to pass on to the healing. It is not true, therefore, that the Lord healed this man because of the faith of the four men that led him. Through their faith, the Lord took the case in hand and saved him first; and then, after he was saved, he had faith enough to take the Lord for healing and for anything, himself. It was through his own faith that he rose up and took his bed and walked. After we meet the Lord in salvation, it is easy to trust Him for everything besides.

The Touch of Faith

This is beautifully exemplified in Matthew 9:20-21, in the woman who pressed through the jostling crowd, and with something in her own heart that had been awakened to apprehend God and feel its way to the living Christ, reached Him, and drew from Him the very dynamite of His power (the word "power" in Mark 5:30 literally is dynamite). The spiritual life has a set of senses corresponding to the outward senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. Just as the root of a tender grapevine feels after the hidden spring until it finds it, and then drinks from it its fertilizing nourishment, so there is something in a hungry heart that feels after God until it finds Him. And when it finds Him, it recognizes His reality just as sensibly as we know the light we see, the water we taste, the fragrance we breathe, the hand we touch.

We cannot take the Lord's healing till we have this sense of spiritual touch. God will give it to us. The beginning of it is the sense of need; and as we press this up to God and follow hard after Him, we shall surely find Him and a new life and revelation will come to our inmost being.

The Touch of Christ

"He touched their eyes" (Matthew 9:29). There are two touches. There is the touch of our trusting hand; there is the mighty touch of His healing hand. Both are necessary, but His will follow ours in every case. He did not touch them until they had answered his challenge to believe, and when He touched them, His message was: "According to your faith will it be done to you" (9:29).

Such is the picture of the power of Christ to heal. That power is still unchanged. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Matthew 8:1-17

What is the symbolic meaning of the healing of the cleansed leper, the palsied person made well by a word and a woman sick with a fever restored in a moment to health and strength?

Isa. 33:24 Mark 7:37

Matthew 8:18-22

How should we interpret the message Jesus gave to His disciple in Matt. 8:21, 22.

Matthew 8:23-27

What does the great tempest in the sea represent?

Matthew 8:28-34

The demon spirit seems still to tenant the lives of human beings. To what else can we attribute the paroxysms of passion, the awful cruelties and inhumanities of men? There is only one devil, but many demons, only one prince of the power of darkness, but many emissaries. Take heed, lest you open the door of your nature to the spirit of evil and he possess you. Watch and pray, and trust the keeping of your soul to the hands of Christ. He is stronger than the strong man.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

How much power and authority did the devil have over these men and how much does he have over us?

1 Sam. 16:14 1 Chr. 21:1 Job 1:12 Zech. 3:1-2 John 8:42-45 Luke 22:3 Acts 13:9-11 2 Cor. 4:1-6
2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15 1Tim. 3:7 Rev. 20:7-10

Matthew 9:1-15

How grievously do they err, and pervert the simple, who represent the object of Christ's mission to have been merely to furnish a code of sound morality, or establish spirituality of worship, or certify the doctrine of the resurrection, or the like. He came to heal the sick soul, to raise the sunken, to save sinners; to bring back to God the vilest prodigals, and beautify them with salvation. Such as want Him not for this He passes by; they are not His patients, and they get nothing from Him.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

What did Jesus mean when he told the Pharisees in Matt. 9:13, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice?"

1 Sam. 15:22 Hos. 6:4-11 1Tim. 1:5-17

Matthew 9:16-17

"He had not come to add something to the legal dispensation but to supersede it with that which was entirely new. . . . The new wine of grace was not to be poured into the skin-bottles of legality."

(Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew, H. A. Ironside)

Explain the meaning of the cloth and wineskin in Matt 9:16, 17.

When Christ enters our life, does He build on what good already resides in us, or does He go entirely beyond our natural selves and work in the new spiritual life He has given us?

Ps. 19:7-14 Rom. 6:1-11 Rom. 7:4-6 2 Cor. 5:14-17 Gal. 2:19-21

Matthew 9:18-38

We read in this passage (Matt. 9:20-22), that a woman sorely afflicted with disease, came behind our Lord in the crowd, and "touched the hem" of His garment, in the hope that by so doing she should be healed. She said not a word to obtain help: she made no public confession of faith; but she had confidence that if she could only "touch His garment" she would be made well. And so it was. There lay hid in that act of hers a seed of precious faith, which obtained our Lord's commendation. She was made whole at once, and returned home in peace. To use the words of a good old writer, "she came trembling, and went back triumphing."

Let us store up in our minds this history; it may perhaps help us mightily in some hour of need. Our faith may be feeble; our courage may be small; our grasp of the Gospel, and its promises, may be weak and trembling,—but, after all, the grand question is, Do we really trust only in Christ? Do we look to Jesus, and only to Jesus, for pardon and peace? If this be so, it is well. If we may not touch His garment, we can touch His heart. Such faith saves the soul. Weak faith is less comfortable than strong faith: weak faith will carry us to heaven with far less joy than full assurance; but weak faith gives an interest in Christ as surely as strong faith. He that only touches the hem of Christ's garment shall never perish.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Explain what it would be like to have a faith like this woman.

Matthew 10:1-12:50 Overview

In the ninth chapter of Matthew we have already seen the spirit of hostility and opposition manifested when He undertook to forgive the sins of the paralytic, and they said in indignation, "This fellow is blaspheming" (9:3). But in the next three chapters (10-12) their opposition reaches its climax, and finally terminates in open blasphemy and murderous conspiracy, so that the Lord Jesus is obliged to change entirely His methods from this time. Instead of teaching openly, we find Him using the veil of parables, and commencing in the 13th chapter that extraordinary series of the parables of the kingdom in which He unveils the future development of His kingdom in a form fitted to hide the truth from those that were disposed to abuse it, and at the same time to reveal it to the earnest and sincere inquirer. Let us trace this story of rejection in those chapters.

The Apostles Sent Out

1. The first intimation of it is in connection with the sending out of the 12 apostles (10:1-42). They were to be His witnesses to Israel, and the terms of their commission are most explicit. "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel' " (10:5-6).

The very fact of His appointing them indicates His realization of the fact that He Himself would soon be taken from the world, and therefore He appoints these representatives to carry on His kingdom after He shall have gone. Their message is to be rejected as well as His. "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.... On my account you will be brought before governors and kings. . . . All men will hate you because of me.... A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.... If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household" (10:16, 18, 22, 24, 25).

The principles of Christianity are not to bring about a state of universal peace, but "to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (10:35-36). "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (10:34). The radical teachings of the gospel arouse as much antagonism as love. On the other hand He tells them that those that received them will be recognized as receiving Him and the slightest ministry done to the disciple and the servant shall be acknowledged and rewarded by the Lord (10:40-42).

How different the prospect thus held out to them from the ideal which they had formed. How strange and sorrowful the ministry to which they went forth. But how necessary it is for us to understand the true spirit of the New Testament and realize today that the spirit of the age is as utterly opposed to Christ and true Christianity as it was in Galilee and Judea when these words were first uttered. We are not going forth to be received with open arms by our generation and to see a golden millennium arise around us during the present order of things, but rather as a "little flock" (Luke 12:32) of humble and separated men and women following still "outside the camp" (Hebrews 13:13) the lowly Nazarene, while the spirit of the age pursues its earthly aims and is satisfied with its own resources, hopes and destinies.

John's Message of Doubt

2. The next incident was the sending of two disciples from John the Baptist with a message of inquiry: "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:3). The Baptist was now a prisoner at the mercy of Herod, who was soon to behead him, and in the loneliness of his dungeon, the breaking down probably of his health, and the confused reports that doubtless came to him about Jesus Christ, he seems to have begun to doubt whether He was the true Messiah after all, and he sent two of his disciples to inquire.

It must have been discouraging to the Master to find that even John was beginning to doubt, but He sent back the self-evident answer, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor," with the addition of a little hint to John himself not to lose faith: "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (11:4-6). He then takes the opportunity of bearing high testimony to John as the greatest prophet of the old dispensation, but adds, as showing how much greater the gospel age is than the Old Testament: "yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (11:11b). The humblest disciple of Jesus raised through Him to the family of heaven as a son of God is greater than the highest of the Old Testament prophets. How lofty the dignity to which Jesus has brought us!

The Lord next proceeds to tell His disciples how the Jewish nation has rejected both John's ministry and His. "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn' " (11:16-17). He means that the ministry of John with its solemn message of repentance has not really brought them to repentance, and that His ministry, so different,

with its words of joy and hope, has likewise failed to evoke any real response from the heart of the nation. Israel refused the message of her God, and rejected John and Jesus, too.

The Cities of Galilee

3. Next follows His open upbraiding of the cities of Galilee, wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they had received His messages and the manifestations of His love and power in vain. Less terrible, He tells them, shall be the fate of Tyre and Sidon and even Sodom in the day of judgment than theirs. In proportion to their opportunity and privilege has been their indifference and unbelief. Today the ruins of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum attest the awful fulfillment of these tremendous warnings.

Let not the modern hearer of the gospel forget that the privileges and opportunities which we are enjoying in this enlightened age will bring upon us also an equal or a greater guilt and doom if we receive the grace of God in vain.

His Gracious Words

4. His mercy was in contrast with their unbelief. Over against the dark picture of their rejection stands the light of His love. It was in the very hour when His lips had uttered the dread woe against the cities of Galilee, that His tender and loving heart burst forth with the most touching and beautiful of all His messages of love,

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (11:28-30)

Perhaps in the crowd that surrounded Him, He saw the agonized face of some poor sinner; and from the hard unbelief of the self-righteous Pharisee, He turned to the earnest hearts even in that crowd that were longing for His mercy. It is a beautiful coincidence brought out by a careful study of the gospel harmony, that the story recorded in the seventh chapter of Luke of the sinful woman, who came and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head in the house of Simon, followed this incident in Mathew. How delightful to think that that appeal recorded in Matthew 11:28 had gone to her heart and led her to follow Him to the house of Simon and there to let Him know how His words of mercy had comforted and saved her. Yes, as the lone rose of the Alps grows amid the glaciers, so the fruits and flowers of grace are found even in the most forbidding soil and the most unlikely surroundings. Oh, that some heart that reads these lines might also come and repeat the story of her blessing.

New Controversies

5. The next step of their opposition and rejection was a bitter theological fight with Him over their traditions concerning Sabbath observance. As He walked with His disciples through the grainfields they were hungry and without supplies, and they took the grain and rubbed it in their hands and satisfied their hunger in this crude way. The very poverty suggested by the act might well have touched the hearts of His cruel foes. It was indeed a sign of His rejection by a selfish world, and showed how true it was, as He said elsewhere, "The Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (8:20). But all they could see in it was a slight to their rigid traditions about working on the Sabbath. In their eyes it was a greater sin to rub out some grain than to let a man die of starvation.

The same spirit appears in the incident that follows in the 12th chapter of Matthew in connection with the healing of the man with the withered hand. They recognized His healing power by their question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (12:10). It never seems to have occurred to them that if He had power to heal He must be greater than the Sabbath or the law. But all they could see was their theological bigotry. The Lord answered them by an appeal to common sense and humanity. He asked them what they would do if one of their sheep had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath. Would they help it out, or let it die there? The question needed no answer for every one of them knew that his self-interest quite as much as his humanity would lead him to save the sheep, Sabbath or no Sabbath. The Lord swiftly turns the argument on them by answering, "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (12:12), and immediately heals the man with the withered hand. These ancient theologians were types of a good many later followers, men who would fight to the death for a quibble or a doctrine, but who had no compunction about torturing to death an innocent martyr under the Spanish Inquisition, or treating a poor Hottentot as if he were a brute.

In passing, it is not out of place to refer to the question of the Sabbath. Our Lord undoubtedly recognized the Sabbath by His own distinct acknowledgment, "for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (12:8). He distinctly revised it when He incorporated it into the New Testament and He established not only a new significance to it as His day, and the day that we hold in remembrance of His resurrection, but He also instituted as the essential principle of its observance the great law of liberty and love that runs through all the teachings of the gospel. The essential principle of Sabbath observance is love. It is not so much what you do not do, as what you do. It is to be spent in works of mercy and charity and therefore is to be kept in the spirit of holy liberty and loving service for God and man. Do not let us go back with the Seventh Day

Adventists to the law of Moses. The gospel has set us free, but the liberty on which its freedom rests is "do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

Plotting to Kill Him

6. The outcome of this controversy is a bitter, malignant hatred that at length full, determines upon His destruction and at once begins to conspire for His death. They seem to have met at this time in a special conference and arranged the plot for His immediate arrest and destruction.

They seem never to have realized how futile all their plans and plots were against One that had the power of life and death in His hands, and that He could not die until His hour had come. But God let their malignity reach its full fruition and show itself in all its blackness and crime.

Withdraws

7. We now read that when He knew of their conspiracy, He withdrew Himself from them and kept in retirement for a while (Matthew 12:15-16). This was but a type of His final withdrawal from Israel altogether. He was beginning to leave the nation to its fate, and, therefore, the evangelist quotes from Isaiah the prophecy concerning Him.

Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out:
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
Till he leads justice to victory.
In his name the nations will put their hope. (12:18-21)

The emphatic feature of this quotation is its reference to the Gentiles. Christ was now withdrawing from Israel and preparing for His ministry to the uncovenanted nations who have reaped the advantage of Israel's blindness and rejection. How solemn for us the thought that there comes a time in the individual's life when the Lord also withdraws Himself from the soul that has long rejected His grace.

There is a time, we know not when,
A point, we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men,
For glory or despair.

Their Blasphemy

8. This final climax of their long course of unbelief and opposition finally came through an outburst of popular enthusiasm on the part of the people after one of His miracles. Having healed the blind and the mute man, possessed of an evil spirit, so that the man both spoke and saw, the people were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" (12:23). The Pharisees could not stand this testimony and they broke out into wild and angry vituperation and immediately accused Him of being in league with Satan and casting out demons by Beelzebub, prince of the devils. Once before they had hinted at this, and the Lord had passed it over. But now He takes up their charge and answers it: first, with the most inexorable logic, showing them the absurdity of supposing that Satan would try to cast out himself, when this would be the surest way of breaking down his kingdom; and then, having exposed them to the ridicule of the people, He turns upon them with awful severity and pronounces upon them the fearful sentence of eternal judgment because they had committed the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit by attributing the works of God to an evil spirit. Their sin had reached its culmination and at last their doom was sealed.

It is indeed a fearful picture and the question may well be asked, is it possible for us to commit their sin today? Certainly it is not possible in precisely the same way to commit it without our going to the extent of impious infidelity. But it may be possible for any sinful man to go to the terrible limit which they did in this essential principle, that is, in the face of light with full conviction and certainty that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, to reject Him deliberately and finally. This would indeed be an unpardonable sin. Let no one, however, be distressed and driven to despair by the enemy through this passage, if you still find that you really desire and are willing to accept the Lord Jesus as a Savior. For in this very passage He tells us that "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men" (12:31), the assumption of course is that they will accept forgiveness through Jesus Christ. It is the rejection of Christ that constitutes the fatal sin. For such there is no forgiveness, for there is no other Savior but He.

The Sign of Jonah

9. They asked Him for a sign and He now gave them the sign of the prophet Jonah (12:38-42). It is somewhat sardonic that the Lord Jesus should choose as His witness the very man that the higher critics are trying to get rid of. Jesus at least had no doubt about the historical reality of Jonah and the great fish, and we can safely stay in such good company, notwithstanding even the higher critics.

The two peculiarities of Jonah's significance as the type of Christ were, first, his death and resurrection. By referring to this the Lord Jesus clearly indicates now what He had incidentally hinted at before, that He is to be finally rejected and crucified. The next significant point, however, in Jonah's resemblance to Christ, was that after his resurrection Jonah was sent to the Gentiles and not to Israel. There is no mistaking the meaning of this in Christ's use of the figure. He is clearly intimating that through His death and resurrection He is to become the Savior not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile and the heathen.

In connection with the story of Jonah, the Lord adds a solemn warning to the men of that generation by telling them that their sin was greater than that of Nineveh, which repented at the preaching of Jonah, while "one greater than Jonah" (12:41) was appealing to them in vain.

Parable of the Unclean Spirit

10. The parable of the unclean spirit follows (12:43-45). He applies it directly to Israel. They had been previously cleansed through John the Baptist, but they had failed to go on as John had bidden them, and receive Jesus Christ. And the result would be that their hearts, left "unoccupied, swept clean and put in order" (12:44b), would again be possessed by "seven other spirits more wicked than itself" and "the final condition ... is worse than the first" (12:45).

How real, alas, all this has become to Israel, and it will become more sadly true in the judgments still awaiting them. It is also true of the individual soul. A temporary reformation, which is not followed by the filling of the heart with Christ and the Holy Spirit, will not suffice, but will surely be followed by a worse relapse. The only sure salvation is a full salvation. It is not enough to cast out Satan—you must receive the Holy Spirit and be filled with the fullness of the indwelling Christ.

His Mother and Brothers

11. The last incident in the chapter is very pathetic. As we read it in the light of the other Gospels, we learn that His mother and His brothers were seeking for Him, not out of idle curiosity or family affection, but because they believed He was insane. "They said, 'He is out of his mind'" (Mark 3:21), and probably they wished to put Him under restraint. Yes, even His dearest ones at last had failed Him, and He takes advantage of the occasion to proclaim the law of the new relationship which He has established in the family circle of heaven.

"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."
(Matthew 12:48-50)

And so to us, as we follow the Master, may come the keenest of all trials, the misunderstanding that separates from us our dearest friends and makes us as strangers and aliens to all human love. If it comes, let us go with Him all the way, but let us not be embittered against our friends. Let us love them still with His love and let us cease to need their love; loving with the love that seeks their good rather than ours, and God may be pleased at last to lead them even unto Him. But let us pass on in spirit to the heavenly family circle and the new circle of those whom He calls "brother and sister and mother" (12:50).

In conclusion, surely the one lesson that stands out above all other lessons is that the sin of sins is the rejection of Jesus Christ. Our eternal destiny hangs, not on our obedience or disobedience to any or all of the commandments, but on our attitude toward Jesus Christ. As someone has said, "It is not the *sin* question, but the *Son* question."

How do you stand toward that question? "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Matthew 10:1-23

In Matt. 10:16, what did Christ mean when he said "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"?

Matthew 10:24-42

Whether we are ministers or hearers, whether we teach or are taught, it makes little difference: we must carry “a cross.” We must be content to lose even life itself for Christ’s sake. We must submit to the loss of man’s favor, we must endure hardships, we must deny ourselves in many things, or we shall never reach heaven at last. So long as the world, the devil, and our own hearts, are what they are, these things must be so.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God’s truth abideth still;
His Kingdom is forever.
(Martin Luther)

What does Christ mean when He says in Matt. 10:39 “He that findeth His life shall lose it, and He that loseth His life for My sake shall find it”?

John 12:25

Matthew 11:1-19

It seemed, no doubt, hard to him (John) that his Master should let him lie so long in prison for his fidelity—useless to his Master’s cause and a comparative stranger to His proceedings—after having been honored to announce and introduce Him to His work and to the people. And since the wonders of His hand seemed only to increase in glory as He advanced, and it could not but be easy for Him who preached deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, to put it into the heart of Herod to set him at liberty, or to effect his liberation in spite of him, he at length determines to see if, through a message from the prison by his disciples, he cannot get Him to speak out His mind, and at least set his own at rest. This, we take it, was the real object of his message. The message itself, indeed was far from a proper one. It was peevish; it was presumptuous; it was all but desperate. He had gotten depressed; he was losing heart; his spirit was clouded; Heaven’s sweet light had, to some extent, departed from him; and this message was the consequence. As it was announced that he should come in the spirit and power of Elijah, so we find him treading in that prophet’s steps rather more than was desirable (see 1Kings 19:1-4).

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

How should we deal with frustrations and depression in our lives? Can they be seen as stepping-stones into Christ’s victory for our lives? By what means?

Rom. 8:18-28 2 Cor. 4:16-18

Matthew 11:20-27

For while nowhere is there a more explicit declaration than here of the one doctrine—That the saving knowledge of the Father depends absolutely on the sovereign “will” of the Son to impart it; yet nowhere is there a brighter utterance of the other also—That this knowledge, and the rest it brings, is open to all who will come to Christ for it, and that all who sigh for rest unto their souls are freely invited, and will be cordially welcomed, under Christ’s wing.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

What has the Father “hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes”? (Matt. 11:25)

Ps. 8:2 Matt. 16:17 Luke 10:21-24 1 Cor. 1:19-31

Matthew 11:28-30

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). In those words Christ voiced the conditions which men must meet if they are to obtain rest of soul. We are required to take His yoke upon us. The yoke is a figure of subjection. The force of this figure may be understood if we contrast oxen running wild in the field with oxen harnessed to a plow, where their owner directs their energies. Hence we read, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:27). That means unless youths are disciplined, brought under subjection, and taught to obey their superiors, they are likely to develop into sons of Belial,

intractable rebels against God and man. When the Lord took Ephraim in hand and chastised him, he bemoaned that he was like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jeremiah 31:18).

The natural man is born "like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12), completely unmanageable and self-willed, determined to have his own way at all costs. Having lost his anchor by the Fall, man is like a ship entirely at the mercy of winds and waves. His heart is unmoored, and he runs wild to his own destruction. Thus he has a need for the yoke of Christ if he is to obtain rest for his soul. In its larger sense, the yoke of Christ signifies complete dependence, unequalled obedience, unreserved submission to Him. The believer owes this to Christ both as his rightful Lord and his gracious Redeemer. Christ has a double claim upon him. He is the creature of His hands, and Christ gave him being, with all his capacities and faculties. Christ has redeemed him and acquired an additional claim on him. The saints are His purchased property. Therefore, the Holy Spirit says, "Know ye not that... ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

"Take my yoke upon you." By which Christ meant: Surrender yourself to My Lordship, submit to My rule, let My will be yours. As Matthew Henry pointed out:

We are here invited to Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, to be saved, and *in order to this*, to be ruled and taught by Him. As the oxen are yoked in order to submit to their owner's will and to work under his control, so those who would receive rest of soul from Christ are here called upon to yield to Him as their King. He died for His people that they should not henceforth live unto themselves, "but *unto him* which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). Our holy Lord requires absolute submission and obedience in all things, both in the inward life and the outward, even to "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Alas that this is so little insisted upon in a day when the high claims of the Savior are whittled down in an attempt to render His Gospel more acceptable to the unregenerate.

It was different in the past, when those in the pulpit kept back nothing profitable for their hearers. God honored such faithful preaching by granting the anointing of His Spirit, so that the Word was applied in power. Take this sample:

No heart can truly open to Christ that is not made willing, upon due deliberation, to receive Him with His cross of sufferings and His yoke of obedience: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me... .Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Matthew 16:24; 11:29). Any exception against either of these is an effectual barrier to union with Christ. He looks upon that soul as not worthy of Him that puts in such an exception: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). If thou judgest not Christ to be worthy of all sufferings, all losses, all reproaches, He judges thee unworthy to bear the name of His disciple. So, for the duties of obedience—called His "yoke"—he that will not receive Christ's yoke can neither receive His pardon nor any benefit by His blood. (John Flavel, 1689)

"Take my yoke upon you." Note carefully that the yoke is not laid upon us by another, but one which we place upon ourselves. It is a definite act on the part of one who seeks rest from Christ, and without which His rest cannot be obtained. It is a specific act of mind, an act of conscious surrender to His authority, to be ruled only by Him. Saul took this yoke upon him when, convicted of his rebellion and conquered by a sense of the Savior's compassion, he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). To take Christ's yoke upon us signifies setting aside of our wills and completely submitting to His sovereignty, acknowledging His Lordship in a practical way. Christ demands something more than lip service from His followers, even a loving obedience to all His commands, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. . . .Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Matthew 7:21, 24).

"Take my yoke upon you." Our coming to Christ necessarily implies turning of our backs upon all that is opposed to Him. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him" (Isaiah 55:7). So taking His yoke presupposes our throwing off the yoke we had worn before: the yoke of sin and Satan, of self-will and self-pleasing. "O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us" confessed Israel of old (26:13). Then they added, "But by thee only will we make mention of thy name." Thus, taking Christ's yoke upon us denotes a change of master, a conscious, cheerful change on our part. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin... . Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:13, 16).

"Take my yoke upon you." It may sound much like a paradox—to bid those who labor and are heavy laden, who come to Christ for "rest," to take a "yoke" upon them. Yet, in reality, it is far from the case. Instead of the yoke of Christ bringing its wearer into bondage, it introduces a real liberty, the only genuine liberty there is. The Lord Jesus said to those who believed in Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). There must first be a continuing in His Word, a constant walking in it. As we do this, He makes good His promise: "And ye shall know the truth": know it in an experiential way, know its power and its

blessedness. The consequence is: "The truth shall make you free"—free from prejudice, from ignorance, from folly, from self-will, from the grievous bondage of Satan and the power of sin. Then the obedient disciple discovers that divine commandments are "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). David said, "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts" (Psalm 119:45).

(The Nature of God, A. W. Pink)

Explain how rest comes through labor.

Matthew 12:1-13

When the Lord Jesus appeared we find Him at once facing the Sabbath question, and we notice two distinct attitudes which He takes from the beginning. The first is a positive recognition of the Sabbath as one of the institutions which He assumed and incorporated into His kingdom and took under His direction and authority. "So the Son of Man," He says, "is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). In the parallel passage in Matthew 12:1-8, He assumes still more authoritative direction of this day; and, after citing several Old Testament precedents for a proper freedom in the observance of the day, as, for example, in the case of David and the priests themselves, who were obliged to minister in the many manual services, He then adds the strong expression of His authority to deal with the Sabbath supremely: "I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. . . . For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:6, 8). The Lord Jesus thus distinctly recognizes the Sabbath; but, on the other hand, He has distinctly set His face against the severe Jewish conception of it, and from the very beginning insisted upon the new construction of its meaning and a new charter of liberty and beneficence in its observance.

He openly defied the prejudices of the people by walking through the grainfields on the Sabbath day and allowing His disciples to pluck the heads of grain. He healed the man with the withered hand when He knew they were waiting to watch Him and condemn Him for it.

He met their prejudices with the keenest sense of showing the inhumanity and cruelty of straining their conventional ideas to the extent of allowing a poor brute to lie in a ditch rather than break the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:11), and He most distinctly laid down the law that true Sabbath observance always carries along with it a spirit of thoughtful love which would not hesitate to perform any work of real necessity or mercy. While He recognized the Sabbath as an institution of Christianity, He also recognized His right to change it and set it free from all that was peculiar to the transitory system of Judaism that had encrusted around it. Not in any sudden or formal propaganda of a new Sabbath law did He startle and shock even His disciples, but gently He allowed a new character and significance of the day to grow up out of incidents and events, as He allowed almost all the important acts and ordinances of His kingdom to develop out of the circumstances that gave them birth.

The gospel did not start out as a rigid system of theology laying down cardinal principles and enacting written laws like the Mosaic economy, but it grew out of living facts so that every institution and ordinance of Christianity has behind it an incident rather than a proclamation. Even the Lord's Supper grew out of the farewell meeting of Christ with His disciples. The very assemblies of Christianity evolved themselves out of the simple gatherings of the apostles. The government of the Christian Church was not laid down in any textbook or manual of laws, but evolved gradually out of the history of the early Church. So it was with the Sabbath and its important changes. He wanted it to spring spontaneously in their hearts as the new memorial of something dearer than even the deliverance from Egypt, or the first creation. So keeping ever before their minds the great fact of His coming resurrection as the central point of the Christian faith and hope, He ordered that glorious event to come, not on the Jewish Sabbath, which was not fitted to signalize it, for it marked rather the end of things than the beginning of a new series of glorious events which ran through eternal ages.

Having thus struck the new keynote, He prolonged it by arranging His meetings with them after His resurrection on the same day. Again and again He marked it by coming back to them on the first day until they quickly took the hint and in a far sweeter way than if it had been a rigid commandment, and as often as it returned it found them waiting for His coming until it came to be to them the memorial day of faith and love. Doubtless it was then that the name was attached to it, which we find afterwards repeated by John from the lonely isle of Patmos, "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10).

So identified was the hallowed day with the resurrection of Christ that in the early Church the customary salutation on the first day morning always was, "The Lord has risen indeed."

Thus two beautiful ordinances were linked together as comparison pictures: the Lord's Supper, representing Calvary, and the Lord's Day, representing the resurrection. Established thus by such beautiful and repeated precedents, it is not strange that we find the early Church after His ascension still coming together on the same day. For a time their continuous Pentecostal blessing swept all days into one great tidal wave of blessing, but when things settled down to their normal condition, they began to assemble on this day for religious worship, fellowship and especially the observance of the Lord's Supper. And so we find in the 20th chapter of Acts, verse seven, like a glint of sunshine on a stormy sea, the picture of one of these meetings. In a chain of evidence one fact is as good as a thousand. It shows what the habit of the disciples was. The sea captain often traverses the whole Atlantic with just one observation from the heavens, and this

single beam of light is enough to illumine the whole practice of the early Church. Here they had come together, not by special summons, because Paul was there, but to break bread according to their usual custom to keep the Lord's Supper. It was their stated time of worship, and Paul himself had waited through the week for this very day to come; and when it came it was so precious that he just spent the whole day and half the whole night with them in teaching and preaching; and before the time was over God had honored that wondrous New Testament Sabbath with the opening of the gates of death and the bringing back of a soul from the world of spirits.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

To whom (what people) was given the Sabbath? What rules or guidelines are there for the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day and what meaning should it have for us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Mark 2:27 Mark 16:9 Luke 6:5 John 20:1, 19 Acts 20:7 1 Cor. 16:1-2 Rev. 1:10

Matthew 12:14-30

When we see the vast organized unseen kingdom of evil, though full of contradiction and division within itself, so tremendously harmonious in its opposition to truth and righteousness, what a consolation is it to know that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"(1 John 3:8), subvert his kingdom, and utterly bruise the serpent's head.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

The Pharisees were silenced and defeated by our Lord's arguments so they "went out, and held council against Him, how they might destroy Him." **Explain the desperate wickedness of the human heart and show how Christ can destroy the "works of the devil" in our lives.**

John 12:31

Matthew 12:31-50

The doctrine here taught is one that does not stand alone in Scripture. Paul says to the Hebrews, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;" "If we sin willfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment." (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26, 27) It is a doctrine of which we find mournful proofs in every quarter. The unconverted children of godly parents, the unconverted servants of godly families, and the unconverted members of evangelical congregations, are the hardest people on earth to impress. They seem past feeling. The same fire which melts the wax hardens the clay.—It is a doctrine, moreover, which receives awful confirmation from the histories of some whose last ends were eminently hopeless. Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Judas Iscariot and Julian, and Francis Spira, are fearful illustrations of our Lord's meaning. In each of these cases there was a combination of clear knowledge and deliberate rejection of Christ. In each there was light in the head, but hatred of truth in the heart. And the end of each seems to have been "blackness of darkness forever."

May God give us a will to use our knowledge, whether it be little or great! May we beware of neglecting our opportunities, and leaving our privileges unimproved! Have we light? Then let us live fully up to our light. Do we know the truth? Then let us walk in the truth. This is the best safeguard against the unpardonable sin.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

The concept of the unpardonable sin is difficult to comprehend because it seems to go against the Bible's teachings about grace. We understand that God's grace forgives every sin, but our Lord mentioned one that cannot be forgiven. **What do you say is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Why the Holy Spirit, and not Jesus Christ?**

Ps. 139:7-12 Isa. 59:1-4 Mark 7:15, 20-22 Acts 8:13-24 Acts 24:22-26 Acts 26:26-28 Rom. 1:18-20 1 Cor. 2:10-11

Matthew 13:1-17

The thirteenth chapter of Matthew marks a new division in the gospel, in which Jesus addresses Himself to the problem of what will occur when He goes back to heaven as the rejected King. The gospel of Matthew began with the proofs that Jesus was indeed the promised Son who would reign on the throne of David (chap. 1), supported by the visit of the wise men and the early ministry of John the Baptist (chaps. 2-3). After His temptation, Jesus presented the principles of His coming kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7), emphasizing spiritual and moral principles that

govern the kingdom of God, but especially as these applied to the prophesied kingdom on earth, which the Messiah-King was to bring when He came. The Sermon on the Mount accordingly contained timeless truths always applicable, some truths that were immediately applicable to Christ's day on earth, and some truths that were to have their fulfillment in the millennial kingdom.

Following the presentation of the principles of the kingdom, in Matthew 8-10, the miracles which served as the prophesied credentials of the King were itemized. It becomes apparent, however, that increasingly, the Jews were rejecting these evidences that Jesus was indeed their Messiah and prophesied King.

Accordingly, in chapter 11, His rejection and the postponement of the kingdom were anticipated. In most severe language, Jesus itemized their sinful rejection with severe indictment upon the cities where His mighty works were done. Chapter 11 closed with an invitation to individual believers to come to Him for rest. The further rejection of Jesus is recorded in chapter 12, climaxing in the charge of the Pharisees that He performed His miracles in the power of the devil. Jesus likened the state of His wicked generation to a man possessed of eight evil spirits (12:45).

With this as a background, chapter 13 faces the question, What will happen when the rejected king goes back to heaven and the kingdom promised is postponed until His second coming? The concept of a kingdom postponed must be understood as a postponement from the human side and not from the divine, as obviously God's plans do not change. It may be compared to the situation at Kadesh-Barnea, when the children of Israel, bound for the promised land, because of unbelief, had their entrance postponed for forty years. If they had believed God, they might have entered the land immediately.

What is contingent from the human standpoint, however, is always planned from the divine standpoint. The rejection of Christ by His own people and His subsequent death and resurrection were absolutely essential to God's program. Humanly speaking, the kingdom, instead of being brought in immediately, was postponed. From the divine viewpoint, the plan always included what actually happened. The human responsibility remains, however, and the rejection of the kingdom from this standpoint caused the postponement of the promised kingdom on earth.

This chapter, accordingly, does not only introduce a new subject and a new approach but also involves a new method of teaching, namely that of parables. While many of the illustrations which Christ used were designed to make plain the truth, parables were intended to reveal the truth only to believers and required explanation in order to understand them. In a sense, they were riddles which required a key, but supplied with the key, the truth became prophetically eloquent.

As Tasker expresses it, "Jesus deliberately adopted the parabolic method of teaching at a particular stage in His ministry for the purpose of withholding further truth about Himself and the kingdom of heaven from the crowds, who had proved themselves to be deaf to His claims and irresponsible to His demands . . . From now onwards, when addressing the unbelieving multitude, He speaks only in parables (Matt. 13:34), which He interprets to His disciples in private."

In this chapter are presented in the seven parables the mysteries of the kingdom. Only Matthew records seven parables. The parables of the sower and mustard seed are found in Mark 4:1-9, 13-20, 30-32, and in Luke 8:5-15. The parable of the leaven is found in Luke 13:20,21. The other four parables are only in Matthew. The parables are designed to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom, that is, the present age.

Mysteries, a word used of secret rites of various religious cults, refers to truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament but is revealed in the New Testament. More than a dozen such truths are revealed in the New Testament, all following the basic definition of Colossians 1:26, which defines a mystery as that "which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." A mystery truth, accordingly, has two elements. First, it has to be hidden in the Old Testament and not revealed there. Second, it has to be revealed in the New Testament. It is not necessarily a reference to a truth difficult to understand, but rather to truths that can be understood only on the basis of divine revelation.

The Old Testament reveals, in clear terms, the earthly reign of Christ when He comes as King to reign on the throne of David (which truths are not mysteries). Matthew 13 introduces a different form of the kingdom, namely the present spiritual reign of the King during the period He is physically absent from the earth, prior to His second coming. The mysteries of the kingdom, accordingly, deal with the period between the first and second advent of Christ and not the millennial kingdom which will follow the second coming.

(Thy Kingdom Come, John F. Walvoord)

What is the seed and what is good and bad growing soil?

Ezek. 33:32 John 6:63 John 15:16 1 Cor. 3:7 James 1:22

Who or what are the fowls in 13:4 that devour the seeds?

Matt. 13:19

Matthew 13:18-43

The phrase, "The kingdom of heaven," or "The kingdom of the heavens," really contains the keynote of the series. It does not mean the kingdom in relation to Israel, nor does it mean the history of the Church, but rather the progress of Christianity up to the coming of the Lord. It describes a mingled condition of good and evil, growing externally and marked by extraordinary prosperity and apparent success and yet full of corruption as well as righteousness, concealing the leaven as well as the treasure and the pearl, and only to be finally separated at the end of the age and the coming of the Lord.

This series of parables describes, first, the planting of the truth and then the sowing of the evil. This double work of good and evil is brought out in the first two parables. Then in the third parable of the mustard seed we see the rapid growth of this mingled system of good and evil until it fills the earth. But in the following parable of the oven, we get the inside view of this mingled system and we see that it is full of corruption. The next two parables, however, the treasure and the pearl, turn our attention to the brighter side of the picture, the hidden elements of good even in the heart of this mass of mingled elements. Finally, the parable of the draw net reveals the separation of the two elements in the day of judgment and the end of the age.

"But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat" (13:25). It is not hard to identify this enemy. A more difficult question is, "Where did he sow the weeds?" Does this parable teach that the Church is to be continually exposed to heresy, fanaticism and the unrestricted power of evil men and that we are to let this continue and make no effort to separate the evil from the good in the Church of God? No, not at all. It is not the Church that is here the field. "The field is the world" (13:38). This is the Master's own standard in interpreting these parables. It is right for us, as far as wise and watchful discipline can accomplish it, to purge out and keep out both error and wickedness from the Church of Christ. That is our business, but, as the apostle puts it so well, "God will judge those outside" (1 Corinthians 5:13a). It is in the world that the enemy sows his weeds—in immediate contact with the people of God and the Church of Christ. And these things surround us in our family, social, civil and business life, inexorably and incessantly. And the teaching of the parable is that this mingled condition will exist till the end of the age.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Show from Matthew 13:23 how Jesus describes the seed that grows in good ground. Has the professing church lived up to that description?

Nowhere on earth can we maintain a settlement of saints alone, as the parable about the wheat and tares teaches us. However, are there ways we can minimize the presence of tares in our church?

Gal. 2:12-19 Eph. 5:10-17

At the end of the age, how will the wheat be separated from the tares?

Matt. 13:41 Matt. 18:7 2 Pet. 2:1-4

Matthew 13:44-46

The Treasure

The Hidden Elements of Good

We turn to the next two parables and we behold a cheering contrast in the parable of the Treasure and the Pearl (13:44-46). These represent the good side of the inner life of Christendom. The first of these two parables, the Treasure hid in the field, appears to stand for Israel during the present age; the second, the Pearl, for the Church of Jesus Christ, containing only His holy and hidden ones. Israel was to disappear from the foreground because of her rejection of the Lord, but Israel was to have a remnant which would continue through the Christian age to represent God's chosen people and to claim at last their ancient covenant when Christ shall come again, and Israel shall come forth from the obscurity and suffering of all these sad ages to be the queen of nations on the Millennial earth. Israel is always God's earthly people, the Church, His heavenly people. Therefore, this treasure is "hidden in a field" (13:44), which means this world. Israel during the present age is hidden and in retirement from the stage of the prophecy, but it is for Israel's sake that God is preserving this old earth and is by and by to restore it and make it new.

Therefore we read that for the sake of that treasure, the Lord sold all that He had and bought the field in which the treasure was hidden. This is not said about the pearl. The pearl was taken out of the field, but the treasure remained in it. Israel is to remain on earth and at the Lord's return is to have the dominion of the earth. This is finely brought out in the symbolism of the parable, and as we thus understand it, a beautiful light is shed upon both the parable and the prophecies of Scripture concerning Israel.

The use of the word "treasure" is peculiarly appropriate to Israel. It is constantly employed in the Old testament concerning God's chosen people. "for the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasured possession" (Psalm 135:4). "For the LORD'S portion in his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance" (Deuteronomy 32:9). These are but some of the numerous references to Israel as the Lord's treasure.

The Pearl

The Place of the Church in the Plan of the Ages

This is finely set forth in the parable of the Pearl of Great Price. Unfortunately, this has been so often applied to Christ by inconsiderate teachers and expounders of the Scriptures that it is difficult to accustom Bible students to look at its true meaning. It does not describe Christ at all in this parable, for He is the One that found the pearl and gave all that He had to purchase it. Rather, it represents His people whom He describes as His jewels. More strictly speaking, it stands for the Bride of the Lamb, not Christians individually, but the whole body of His chosen ones as they shall at last be gathered and glorified at His coming, and as John describes them in the Apocalypse, in that vision of glory where the Lamb's wife is presented in the sublime imagery of all the combined jewels known to man. The description of the sacrifice by which the Lord obtained this pearl is applicable only to Him. How truly He "sold everything he had" (Matthew 13:46) that He might buy His people! How true it is that He has bought them and redeemed them from sin, Satan, death and hell to be a peculiar people unto Himself, and how beautiful the figure of the Pearl under which they are represented as united and glorified to adorn His crown in the New Jerusalem!

It will be noticed that just before giving these two parables, the Lord Jesus withdrew from the multitude and "went into the house" (13:36), vividly signifying by His act that these parables that He was about to speak had a more personal and intimate relation to His own disciples, while the other related rather to the world and the multitude. His significant action should also be noted in the very beginning of this series of parables, when we are told that He went out of the house and sat down by the seaside (13:1). His going out of the house was significant of His leaving Israel and turning to the Gentiles. They had now rejected His overtures of grace and He went forth from them to the world, always represented in the Bible by the sea and its troubled waters. His first act, therefore, was to retire from Israel and give utterance to the parables that related to the Gentile world and the Christian age. His next symbolic act was to withdraw from the multitude and come into the house, again symbolizing His messages to His hidden ones in the parable of the Treasure and the Pearl.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

What value is put on the treasure and the pearl in these two parables?

Matthew 13:47-52

The parable of the Net is the picture of the separation that is to come at last when the Lord Himself shall appear. He and His angelic ministers alone can make this separation. Man has tried long and vainly to eliminate the evil from the world. Wiser and stronger hands are needed for the task and those hands are soon to undertake it.

Meanwhile the net is drawing "all kinds" (13:47) from the great sea of human life, and slowly the cords are being drawn to the eternal shore, where at last the hands of mighty angels "will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (13:49b-50), and "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (13:43).

How very solemn is the picture of this mysterious net. How it suggests to us the silent and inevitable progress of time as the age is insensibly and yet inexorably rolling on to this awful crisis. What a touching spectacle those countless fishes, as they suddenly find themselves within the barriers of the enclosing net and vainly struggle to escape its meshes and get out into the freedom of the sea. Closer and closer draw those barriers as they dash from side to side and vainly struggle to escape. For a little they may think that they are free as they pass from one side to the other of the prison; but lo, they strike again upon the farther side and are hurled back into the writhing mass in the center, until the cords are tightened and with a sudden jerk the whole mass is hurled upon the strand, struggling, writhing, gasping for breath, and finding themselves helpless and hopeless in a new element in which they have never lived before.

Such is the picture of human life as the age rolls on. For a time men think that they are free as they follow their own will in the great unconfined ocean of human life. But every little while there is something to remind them that God's great net of providence and destiny is thrown around them and that a force unseen is steadily drawing them to the eternal strand. Every little while, something reminds them that they are being drawn to that eternal shore. Sometimes, it is the death of a friend, sometimes it is the solemn voice of reason and conscience reminding them that they are born to die. Then they strike out again and claim their liberty and refuse to listen to their fears. Closer and closer the lines are drawing, and some day they shall find themselves swept into that strange eternal world which will be as foreign to them as the ocean strand to the helpless fishes of the sea. Then mighty hands will make the final separation. Our struggles, our pleas will be in vain and each of us will find himself and herself taking the place for evermore for which we have been preparing here.

Well might the Master ask His little class of wondering disciples, after they had listened to these strange, deep teachings, "Have you understood all these things?" (13:51a). God help us to understand them and live under "the powers of the coming age" (Hebrews 6:5).

What sacraments and flattering teachings are being taught today in the church that are lulling many to sleep as the net is being closed around them? (Ex. Baptism, Partaking in the Lord's table, etc.)

Matthew 13:53-58

As we have already seen, the parables of the kingdom marked a stage in the rejection of the Lord Jesus and His withdrawal from the people that had refused these parables; we are now told that He departed from their midst.

Not all at once did He leave Galilee and the scenes of the past three years of His active ministry; but this was the beginning of the end. Gradually He commenced to withdraw. His back was turned on the scenes of His former labors, and after a few lingering visits and last messages, at length He took His final farewell and spent the last six months of His life in Judea and the regions about, returning no more to Capernaum, Bethsaida, Korazin and the cities where most of His mighty works had been done.

The first step in His retirement was one more visit to Nazareth, the city where He had been brought up (Matthew 13:54).

We may remember how, on a former occasion, He had been rejected here, and they had even sought His life and carried Him to the brow of the precipice on which the city was built, to hurl Him to death. We have also seen how even His mother and His brothers had concluded that He was insane, and had sought to restrain Him. Once more He visits these old scenes of His childhood, but His message is not received; His personality is altogether too familiar for these proud Jews; they know too much about Him to accept Him as a Rabbi, much less as a Prophet sent from God. They said, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?; And they took offense at him" (13:55-57).

This was the spirit of pure prejudice. What difference does it make about a man's family connections if he has a message from God and is himself a true man? It was the old spirit of prejudice that has so often kept people back from their best blessings. The effect of it was to send the Lord away and prevent Him from doing many mighty works because of their unbelief, and, as He left, He repeated the old proverb which has so often been true. "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor" (13:57b).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Why is it that a prophet is without honor in his own house and hometown?

The mere form of hearing a sermon can profit no man, unless he comprehends what it means: he might just as well listen to the blowing of a trumpet, or the beating of a drum; he might just as well attend a Roman Catholic service in Latin. His intellect must be set in motion, and his heart impressed: ideas must be received into his mind; he must carry off the seeds of new thoughts. Without this he hears in vain.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Matthew 14:1-13

That wicked woman had long been waiting for her opportunity to wreak her final vengeance on the brave man that had dared to challenge her crimes. At length the opportunity arrives. Seated in his banquet hall among his lords, and already half drunk with wine, Herod suddenly becomes infatuated with the bold and beautiful dancing of Salome, the fair daughter of his unlawful wife, and, in a fit of rashness, promises her with an oath to give her anything that she chooses to ask. Instructed by her cunning mother, who has been waiting for this hour, she immediately asks for the head of John the Baptist. The king was shocked and distressed, for he really was attached to John, but a false pride about the keeping of his oath left him no escape. So the executioner was dispatched, and in a few minutes the ghastly, bloody trophy was borne by those fair hands on a charger to her horrid mother, and the work of the great prophet was done. John's disciples, as soon as they heard of it, buried the body, and then "went and told Jesus" (14:12b). The effect of it upon Christ was very distressing. He loved John and grieved for his sad fate, but He also saw in it the certain harbinger of His own approaching death, and so He immediately retired for a little season that He might rest and also comfort the sorrowing disciples.

The story of John's murder has many fine lessons in which our present space will not permit us to dwell at length, but we cannot refrain from noticing the length to which human unbelief and sin will dare to go. The vile woman and weak man had refused the message of God through John, convicting them of their sin, and perhaps they never thought that they would go farther. But now we find their rejection of God's word leading them on to malignant hate and bloody crime. So

sin pursues its terrible progression in every age, and, when we disobey God, we never know where the last step of our downward course is to land us. And what a lesson this is on worldliness. Mr. Spurgeon might well say that whenever he saw a dance he felt a little nervous about the throat, and remembered that the first Baptist preacher lost his head on account of one. Our business is not to start crusades against the ballroom, but rather to get men right with God; but when they are right with God they will not want these things. What a lesson also of the folly of recklessness. Herod's hasty words caused him the violation of his conscience, the murder of his friend, and the eternal ruin of his soul. If we have sinned by speaking rashly, let us not add to our sin by completing the rash act as well as the reckless word. Far better break the foolish vow than keep it, if it is wrong.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Compare the character and motives of Herodias with that of the “Great Whore” of Rev. 17 that “Sitteth upon many waters” (waters represents the mass of humanity).

What role does Herod play in the death of John the Baptist?

Mark 6:19-24 Luke 9:7-9

Many people like Herod do not want to take sides when it comes to Christianity because of all the problems that can arise. **In the end times, can anyone remain neutral? For that matter, can anyone truly remain neutral now?**

John 3:18

Matthew 14:14-21

As the Lord Jesus multiplied on this occasion the meat that perisheth, so is the meat that endureth to everlasting life capable of indefinite multiplication. Look at the Scriptures at large; look at the glorious Gospel history; look at this one stupendous section of it. In bulk, how little is it—like the five barley loaves and the two small fishes it tells of. But what thousands upon thousands has it fed, and will it feed, in every age, in every land of Christendom, to the world's end!

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

What did Christ do with the loaves before He passed them out—could this be representative of what He also does now before He sends His own out into the world to minister for Him?

Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus was with them all the while, though they knew it not. His heart followed them with His eye, as the storm gathered; though in body far away, in spirit He was with them, giving command to the furious elements to be to them as was the burning fiery furnace to the Hebrew youths when they were in it, and the lions when Daniel was in their den—to do them no hurt. He pitied them as He “saw them toiling in rowing,” but for their own sake He would not come to them till the right time.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

Why did Peter start sinking? Though he failed, was he to be commended for his adventurous desire? And does this apply to us today?

Matt. 6:30 Matt. 8:26

Matthew 15:1-20

The Pharisees taught that holiness depended on meats and drinks; on bodily washings and purifications. They held that all who observed their traditions on these matters were pure and clean in God's sight; and that all who neglected them were impure and unclean.—Our Lord overthrew this miserable doctrine, by showing His disciples that the real fountain of all defilement was not without a man, but within. “Out of the heart,” He says, “proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man.”—He that would serve God aright, needs something far more important than bodily washings. He must seek to have a “clean heart.”

What an awful picture we have here of human nature, and drawn too by One who “knew what was in man!” What a fearful catalogue is this of the contents of our own bosoms! What a melancholy list of seeds of evil our Lord has exposed, lying deep down within every one of us, and ready at any time to start into active life! What can the proud and self-

righteous say, when they read such a passage as this! This is no sketch of the heart of a robber or a murderer: it is the true and faithful account of the hearts of all mankind. May God grant that we may ponder it well, and learn wisdom!

Let it be a settled resolution with us that in all our religion the state of our hearts shall be the main thing. Let it not content us to go to church, and observe the forms of religion: let us look far deeper than this, and desire to have a "heart right in the sight of God." (Acts 8:21) The right heart is a heart sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and purified by faith. Never let us rest till we find within the witness of the Spirit, that God has created in us a clean heart, and made all things new. (Psalm 51:10; 2 Cor. 5:17)

Finally, let it be a settled resolution with us to "keep our hearts with all diligence," all the days of our lives. (Prov. 4:23) Even after renewal they are weak: even after putting on the new man they are deceitful. Let us never forget that our chief danger is from within. The world and the devil combined, cannot do us so much harm as our own hearts will, if we do not watch and pray. Happy is he who daily remembers the words of Solomon: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." (Prov. 28:26)

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Explain the meaning of Prov. 28:26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

How does Matt. 15:17, which is literal, make clear the understanding of Matt. 15:18-19 which are figurative?

Matthew 15:21-28

Mark tells us that He went away with the view of getting quiet, and had first stopped for privacy in a house, but he adds, "yet he could not keep his presence secret" (Mark 7:24). Immediately a woman of the country, a Gentile and a heathen, appealed first to His disciples and then to Him for help for her afflicted daughter, who was possessed with an evil spirit (Matthew 15:21-28). The disciples appealed to the Master in vain to grant her request or stop her clamor by sending her away. She turned from them and renewed her pleading with the Master Himself, but His first answer seemed to shut the door in her very face, by telling her that the limitations of His commission as a Son of David and the Messiah of Israel forbade His extending His ministry to those who, like her, were outside the pale of Israel. He was perfectly truthful in this, and His answer was in strict accord with the Gospel of Matthew and the picture of the King which it presents. But she must have seen something in His glance that gave her hope assurance, for she still pressed her suit, and, when argument failed, she clung to His feet with impassioned entreaty and cried, "Lord, help me!" (15:25).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Do you think that this woman knew that although Jesus was Israel's Messiah there might be hope for those outside Judaism?

What qualities did this woman have to make her faith great? To what part of Jesus' character did she appeal?

Ps. 63:1-6 Jer. 31:10

Matthew 15:29-39

We read that "He called His disciples and said, I have compassion on the multitude." A great crowd of men and women is always a solemn sight. It should stir our hearts to feel that each is a dying sinner, and each has a soul to be saved. None ever seems to have felt so much when He saw a crowd, as Christ.

It is a curious and striking fact, that of all the feelings experienced by our Lord when upon earth, there is none so often mentioned as "compassion." His joy, His sorrow, His thankfulness, His anger, His wonder, His zeal, all are occasionally recorded. But none of these feelings are so frequently mentioned as "compassion." The Holy Spirit seems to point out to us that this was the distinguishing feature of His character, and the predominant feeling of His mind when He was among men. Nine times over,—to say nothing of expressions in parables,—nine times over the Spirit has caused that word "compassion" to be written in the Gospels.

There is something very touching and instructive in this circumstance. Nothing is written by chance in the Word of God: there is a special reason for the selection of every single expression. That word "compassion," no doubt, was specially chosen for our profit.

It ought to encourage all who are hesitating about beginning to walk in God's ways. Let them remember that their Savior is full of "compassion." He will receive them graciously; He will forgive them freely; He will remember their need abundantly. Let them not be afraid. Christ's mercy is a deep well, of which no one ever found the bottom.

It ought to comfort the saints and servants of the Lord when they feel weary. Let them call to mind that Jesus is "full of compassion." He knows what a world it is in which they live; He knows the body of a man and all its frailties; He knows

the devices of their enemy, the devil. And the Lord pities His people: let them not be cast down. They may feel that weakness, failure, and imperfection are stamped on all they do; but let them not forget that word which says, "His compassions fail not." (Lament. 3:22)

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Give other instances in scripture where the Lord had compassion.

Matthew 16:1-12

"Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Let us mark well what those words contain. To whom was this warning addressed? To the twelve apostles,—to the first ministers of the Church of Christ,—to men who had forsaken all for the Gospel's sake! Even they are warned! The best of men are only men, and at any time may fall into temptation. "Let Him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12) If we love life, and would see good days, let us never think that we do not need that hint: "Take heed and beware."

By what figure does our Lord describe the false doctrine against which He cautions His disciples? He calls them *leaven*. Like leaven, they might seem a small thing compared to the whole body of truth; like leaven, once admitted, they would work secretly and noiselessly; like leaven, they would gradually change the whole character of the religion with which they were mixed. How much is often contained in a single word? It was not merely the open danger of heresy, but "leaven," of which the apostles were to beware.

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Explain what is meant by leaven in this passage.

Gal. 3:1-5 Gal. 4:8-11 Gal. 5:7-9

Are we to beware of this same kind of leaven in our churches today? (Note: Leaven by nature is permeating and fermenting.)

Hos. 4:4-7 1 Cor. 5:6 Gal. 6:7, 8

What can be done if this doctrine has already crept in?

1 Cor. 3:21 2 Tim. 2:14-19

Matthew 16:13-20

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church"? Does it mean that the apostle Peter himself was to be the foundation on which Christ's Church was to be built? Such an interpretation, to say the least, appears exceedingly improbable. To speak of an erring, fallible child of Adam as the foundation of the spiritual temple, is very unlike the ordinary language of Scripture. Above all, no reason can be given why our Lord should not have said, "I will build my Church upon *thee*," if such had been His meaning, instead of saying, "I will build my Church upon *this rock*." The true meaning of "the Rock," in this passage, appears to be the truth of our Lord's Messiahship and Divinity, which Peter had just confessed. It is as though our Lord had said, "Thou art rightly called by the name Peter, or stone, for thou hast confessed that mighty *truth*, on which, as on a rock, I will build my Church."

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What did Christ mean when He said to Peter in Matt. 16:18 "on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"?

1 Cor. 3:11 1 Pet. 2:4-5

What did Jesus mean when He said to Peter in Matt. 16:19, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"?

Acts 2:38-42 Acts 10:34-48 Acts 15:7-11 Rev. 1:18

Matthew 16:21-26

This was his first explicit announcement of His crucifixion. It came as a shock to the disciples, and Peter, their impetuous spokesman, had no hesitation in expressing their utter dissent and protest against any such doctrine. He did not want a crucified Savior. He wanted a glorious and popular Messiah, subduing all earthly as well as spiritual enemies

and providing a kingdom in the present as well as in the future for His faithful followers. This doctrine of the cross was repugnant to all Peter's pride and ambition, and still more so to his love for his Master. But Peter only represented the natural thought of the human heart. Man does not want a crucified Savior. The doctrine of the cross too deeply recognizes the fact of human sin and the need of blood and sacrifice to wash it away. And further, it implies the painful and humbling truth that, for the disciple as well as the Master, there must also be a cross. If our Lord is crucified, we must also deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. If the world rejects Him, it will also reject us; if He must die for our sins, we must die to our sins. Men do not always like this at all, and, therefore, the cross has always been and always will be unpopular with the world.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Like Peter, is it possible for us to follow God one moment and Satan the next? Explain the reason for your answer.

Matthew 16:27-28

"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (16:28). At first sight, this almost looks like an announcement that some of the disciples should never die, but live on to the actual coming of the Lord Jesus. This, however, is not necessary. The words are sufficiently fulfilled if we understand them to mean that the transfiguration which followed shortly after was an actual exhibition and illustration of the words "coming in his kingdom," and that in seeing it they practically saw His kingdom come. This is more impressive when we note the next verse in the opening of the 17th chapter, which seems to follow as a direct explanation of this announcement: "After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them" (17:1-2). This, then, was what He meant when He said that they should see Him coming into His kingdom. The transfiguration was a revelation of His coming, and the more we look at it the more will we be struck with its complete foreshadowing of the second advent.

In the first place, the Father was there standing behind the scene and manifesting to the world the glory of Jesus Christ as His Son. This is to be fulfilled when Christ shall come again. He will come in the glory of His Father; He will occupy the center of the stage, and He will be the Judge and the King, and all the splendors of that hour shall cluster around His person and His throne.

Next, the presence of Moses on the Mount represented the resurrection of the dead at Christ's second coming. Moses had died at Mount Nebo, and God had evidently raised him from the dead and brought him back to take part in the scenes of the transfiguration. He stands, therefore, for that glorious multitude who sleep in Jesus, whom the Lord will bring with Him at His return.

Then Elijah stands for another class, the living saints of God who shall be on earth at the time of Christ's coming and who shall suddenly be changed and caught up to meet Him in the air. Elijah did not die, but was translated to Heaven in a chariot of fire, and so we are taught that when our Lord returns "we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). And again we read, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:51b-52a).

The Apostle Peter was one of the three disciples who saw this glorious event on the Mount. He refers to it in his second epistle, and he speaks of it as specially designed to set forth "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:16), and, as we take in all the circumstances of that glorious scene, there is nothing that more sublimely or accurately sets forth the chief events connected with the blessing hope of our Master's coming.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

To review what has just been said above, explain what Jesus meant when he said; "There are some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man 'coming in His kingdom' "?

Matthew 17:1-13

The transfiguration of Christ marked a turning point in His life and ministry. Up to that moment His path had ascended in successive revelations of His grace and glory until at last in that manifestation of His glory and majesty on Hermon's height, the veil of His humiliation for a moment was wholly cast aside and His disciples beheld Him in His primeval glory and in the glory of His second coming by-and-by.

But from this moment the pathway descended down through the lonely valley of humiliation, suffering and rejection until at last it led to the agony and mystery of the garden, the cross and the grave.

There was a further purpose in the heavenly vision, and perhaps the most important of all, namely: an object lesson of certain truths which the Lord had been proclaiming to His disciples during the past few weeks, and which were set forth in

a most striking manner in the vision of the transfiguration. He had taken them up on this northern journey, through the beautiful regions of Caesarea Philippi, as a sort of summer school, for the purpose of talking to them calmly and fully of the great truths of the kingdom which it was necessary that they should fully understand. After He had fully explained these truths to them in word, He took them up on the Mount that night and gave them a vivid illustration of them in the glorious scenes of the transfiguration.

The first of these truths was His own divinity and messiahship. "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13), was the question with which the discussion had begun. After they had told Him the various opinions of the people, He asked them more directly, "But what about you?... Who do you say I am?" (16:15). It was then that Peter uttered the great confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," which Jesus told him had been revealed to Him, not by flesh and blood, but by His Father in heaven (16:16-17).

Now, the transfiguration was a special and emphatic confirmation of this. First, the voice of God Himself from the overshadowing cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (17:5b). This was a distinct acknowledgment of the deity of Christ, accompanied with the manifestation of the glory of God in the illuminated cloud which was the unmistakable pledge of the divine Presence. The special command, "Listen to him," was a distinct acknowledgment of His superior claims to both Moses and Elijah. Hitherto, they had been hearing the voice of the Lawgiver and the voice of the Prophets, but now they were to hear Him as God's last and supreme Messenger to man. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2a).

Further, the appearance of Moses and Elijah in a place of subordination to Him and as messengers and ministers who simply waited upon His superior Majesty was a still further confirmation to the disciples that He was indeed the Messiah whom Moses and the prophets had foretold, and that their authority ended with His coming, even as the stars pale at the rising of the sun. To make the dramatic scene more effective, they, after they had waited upon Him in the vision, vanished away as a token that their ministry and their messages had given place to His, and the disciples "when they looked up ... saw no one except Jesus" (Matthew 17:8). Thus, the whole scene was a most striking and impressive confirmation of Peter's testimony and His own claim that He was indeed "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16).

The transfiguration was a fine object lesson of the estimation in which the heavenly beings hold the cross of Christ. This scene was a sort of drama in which the disciples were spectators and stood gazing upon a stage on which great truths were being set forth in dramatic action. They stood listening to the strange conversation of the glorious beings that had come forth from the upper world to their Master. These two that appeared that night on Hermon's height were the most illustrious men that had ever lived. One of them was the great lawgiver himself, revered by every Hebrew next to Jehovah Himself, Moses, the founder of their Jewish theocracy and the giver of their venerated law. The other was the great Elijah, the mighty prophet who had come in the darkest hour of the nation's sin, and, after performing miracles unprecedented even among the mightiest of the prophets, including the raising of men from the dead, had at last himself been swept to heaven in a chariot of fire without the intervention of death.

There could be no doubt to any Hebrew mind about the authority and importance of such witnesses as these. But now, these two illustrious men appeared in a posture of inferiority to the Lord Jesus, their glorious Master, uniting in the Father's testimony to His majesty, and, still more, bearing witness to His sufferings and death by speaking of that event as the one sole theme of their conversation. Looking at this wonderful spectacle, it must have seemed to the wondering disciples that the chief theme in the heavenly world was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). And it is still true that if we could pierce the heavens and listen for a moment to the songs and conferences of the heavenly beings above, we would find them engaged in the same great theme. In the book of Revelation the Apostle John has lifted the curtain upon that world, and the one song they sing and the one theme they celebrate is thus expressed: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5:12b).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Why did Jesus' face "shine like the sun, and His raiment was as white as light"? Do you see a comparison with the description of Christ as seen by John in Rev. 1:12-18?

Ps. 24:8 Ps. 26:8 Ps. 63:1-2 Prov. 25:2 Zech. 6:13 Matt. 16:13, 16, 17 John 1:14 John 17:5
2Cor. 4:4 1Pet. 4:14 Rev. 4:11

Matthew 17:14-21

The disciples anxiously inquired of our Lord, when they saw the devil yielding to His power, "Why could not we cast him out?" They received an answer full of the deepest instruction: "Because of your unbelief." Would they know the secret of their own sad failure in the hour of need? It was want of faith.

Let us ponder this point well, and learn wisdom. Faith is the key to success in the Christian warfare: unbelief is the sure road to defeat. Once let our faith languish and decay, and all our graces will languish with it. Courage, patience,

long-suffering, and hope, will soon wither and dwindle away: faith is the root on which they all depend. The same Israelites who at one time went through the Red Sea in triumph, at another time shrunk from danger like cowards, when they reached the borders of the promised land. Their God was the same who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; their leader was that same Moses who had wrought so many wonders before their eyes: but their faith was not the same. They gave way to shameful doubts of God's love and power. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." (Heb. 3:19)
(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What is the spiritual purpose of fasting; is it necessary for those desiring an apostolic walk in Christ?

Ps. 35:10-13 Isa. 58:6-12 1 Cor. 9:27

Signal triumphs in the kingdom of grace are not to be won by an easy faith, or by stationary, slothful, self-indulgent believers; they are to be achieved only by much nearness to God and denial of ourselves.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

Matthew 17:22-23

As the time for Jesus' crucifixion draws closer He reveals to His disciples what would happen to Him. **The disciples were exceedingly sorry when they heard Jesus' words, but do you really think they comprehended what was going to happen?**

Matthew 17:24-27

What manifold wonders are there in the one miracle of this section! The exact sum required was found in a fish's mouth; Jesus showed that He knew this; this very fish came to the spot where Peter's hook was to be cast, and at the very time when it was cast; that fish took that hook, retained it till drawn to land, and there yielded up the needed coin!

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

What does this say about the Sovereignty (absolute control of all things) of God?

Ps. 8:6-8 Isa. 65:25 Col. 1:16-18

Can you give a bible verse for your dependence upon God as your complete Resource?

Matt. 18:1-6

Matthew 18:1-6

"Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). The spirit of a child is the true picture of a newborn soul, for childhood tells of birth, and salvation begins with a new birth. Childhood comes forth naked and empty-handed; so the newborn soul begins at nothing. Childhood has an infinite capacity for trusting and receiving; so conversion begins with believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and taking as a free gift His grace. Childhood is a state of utter dependence. A little child has to lean upon a strong arm, and the true child of God must learn to lean upon Christ and draw all his strength from Him as completely as the babe lives upon its mother's life and leans upon its mother's arm.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Although childhood represents the beginning of the Christian life, how does it also represent its highest attainment?

Matthew 18:7-14

It might be thought that, considering the weakness of the flesh and of nature, Christ pressed too severely on men, and therefore he anticipates all such complaints. The general meaning is, that however difficult, or severe, or troublesome, or harsh, any commandment of God may be, yet no excuse ought to be pleaded on those grounds, because the justice of God ought to stand higher in our estimation, than all that we reckon most precious and valuable. "You have no right to object to me, that you can scarcely turn your eyes in any direction, without being suddenly drawn away by some

temptation: for you ought rather to part with your eyes, than to depart from the commandments of God." And yet Christ does not mean, that we must mutilate our body, in order to obey God: but as all would readily wish, that they should not be restrained from the free use of their senses, Christ employs an exaggerated form of speech to show, that whatever hinders us from yielding that obedience to God which he requires in his law, ought to be cut off. And he does so expressly, because men allow themselves too much liberty in that respect. If the mind were pure, the eyes and hands would be obedient to it; for it is certain, that they have no movement of their own. But here we are deeply to blame. We are so far from being as careful as we ought to be, to avoid allurements, that we rather provoke our senses to wickedness by allowing them unbounded liberty.

(Calvin's Commentaries Vol 16, John Calvin)

What was Jesus' meaning when He said, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out"?

Matt. 5:29-30

Jesus does not prescribe literal self-mutilation, but what does He demand in the way of control over our members of the flesh?

Gal. 5:16-25

Matthew 18:15-17

Let us notice *how admirable are the rules laid down by our Lord for the healing of differences among brethren.*

If we have unhappily received any injury from a fellow-member of Christ's Church, the first step to be taken is to visit him "alone," and tell him his fault. He may have injured us unintentionally, as Abimelech did Abraham (Gen. 21:26); his conduct may admit of explanation, like that of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, when they built an altar as they returned to their own land (Joshua 22:24): at any rate, this friendly, faithful, straightforward way of dealing is the most likely course to win a brother, if he is to be won. "A soft tongue breaketh the bone." (Prov. 25:15) Who can tell but he may say at once, "I was wrong,"— and make ample reparation ?

If however this course of proceeding fails to produce any good effect, a second step is to be taken. We are to "take with us one or two" companions, and tell our brother of his fault in their presence and hearing. Who can tell but his conscience may be stricken, when he finds his misconduct made known, and he may be ashamed and repent? If not, we shall at all events have the testimony of witnesses, that we did all we could to bring our brother to a right mind, and that he deliberately refused, when appealed to, to make amends.

Finally, if this second course of proceeding prove useless, we are to refer the whole matter to the Christian *congregation* of which we are members: we are to "tell it to the Church." Who can tell but the heart which has been unmoved by private remonstrances, may be moved by the fear of public exposure? If not, there remains but one view to take of our brother's case: we must sorrowfully regard him as one who has shaken off all Christian principles, and will be guided by no higher motives than "a heathen man and a publican."

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What must we do if we have offended our brother or our brother has offended us?

Matt. 5:23-24 Matt. 18:21

Matthew 18:18-20

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). It is this which constitutes the Christian Church, a company of true believers gathered together, not in, but unto, the name of the Lord. It is not unto the name of some human leader or sect, but the name of the Lord; He is the true Head and front of His own Church. Even a little company of true believers thus gathered unto His name really constitute the New Testament Church, although there may be neither bishop nor presbytery nor high authority, nor long tradition, nor illustrious human names. Where there are even two or three so gathered unto His name, there is always One more.

The expression, "there am I with them" (18:20), denotes much more than the spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus in the hearts of individual believers. That is always true, but this is something quite different. It is the Lord Jesus "with them," as well as in the heart; it is the presence of the Head of the Church, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Glorious One, who is "head over everything for the church, which is his body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). And He is in the midst not only by His Holy Spirit, but in His providence, in His power and with all the authority of His kingly rights as the Son of God and mediatorial Lord and King. He is in the midst, as He was at the Red Sea, at the Jordan, and on the day of Pentecost. He is in the midst to clothe with His authority, to anoint with His Spirit, to defend by His power and to sanction with His name that which is done in His name and for His glory.

What is the principle of “binding and loosing”? (Matt. 18:18) Give an example of its use for today.

Matthew 18:21-35

The Lord Jesus proceeds from this point to unfold to His disciples the law of love in the form of a striking parable, "the Unmerciful Servant" (18:23-35). The design of this parable is to show the estimation in which the Lord holds the spirit of charity and forgiveness and His indignation against all uncharitableness, censoriousness and harsh judging among brethren. The two unpardonable sins of the New Testament are unbelief in Christ and unlovingness toward our brethren, and we cannot claim forgiveness of the Lord unless we are equally forgiving one to the other. Even the infidel, Gibbon, was forced to admit that one chief secret of the extraordinary success of the early Church, notwithstanding the severest persecutions, was the mutual love of the brethren, a spectacle wholly new to the world and an armor that will ever prove invincible against human criticism and Satanic hate. A church without love would be as great a contradiction as a home without affection or a Heaven without God.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

What are the effects on a person that has an unforgiving and merciless spirit?

Matthew 19:1-12

The first part of the 19th chapter of Matthew is devoted to the discussion of the relation of marriage to the kingdom.

He tells us in the fourth verse that the primeval law of marriage was the creation of one man for one woman and one woman for one man. The true reading here is, "He made them a male and a female." The law of creation made no provision for the vice of polygamy, but created an equal number of both sexes, and such has substantially been the case among all nations. Still further He goes on to tell us of the provision in nature itself and its instincts for the marriage relation and how it is the divine order that "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh," and, "So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:5-6). The element of personal affection and mutual attraction is clearly involved here. Marriage is not a conventional arrangement of convenience, but a cleavage of hearts so strong that it supersedes the previous attachment of father and mother to the extent at least of allowing a still closer union, the union which makes them truly one. Surely, it is needless to say that marriage without such unity and love is not a sacrament, but a sacrilege.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Because of the hardness of the Israeli hearts they were permitted to divorce under Moses' law (Deut. 24:1-4); but this was not the divine decree. The Pharisees knew that the law was "stretched" to accommodate this hardness in men's hearts, but they desired to test Jesus by asking Him if one could divorce for any reason. **Are there legitimate reasons today for divorce? Are they in accord with Jesus' statement in verse 9? What is God's opinion about divorce?**

Gen. 2:24 Ex. 21:7-11 Mal. 2:14-16

Matthew 19:13-26

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (19:16, KJV). In answering him, the Lord Jesus paused a moment to show him that the word "good" could be applied to none but God: "If I am good I must be God, for no human being can claim that title." This must have been a rude shock to this young man's self-confidence, for he felt quite certain that he at least was good.

Then the Master proceeds to show him his own heart and convict him of his utter selfishness. He does this by meeting him first on his own plane and assuming that, according to the law of righteousness, if he is really good he will inherit eternal life as a matter of simple justice and righteousness. Therefore He answers: "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (19:17). "Which ones?" replies the young man. The Lord then quotes the second table of the law covering our duties to our neighbor, all summed up in one closing command, "love your neighbor as yourself" (19:19). This is familiar ground to the young man, and he confidently declares: "All these I have kept. . . . What do I still lack?" (19:20)

Then the Lord presses the keen edge of the sword of truth into his hypocrisy that had so long deceived him. It was as if He had said, "You think you have obeyed the second table of the law and loved your neighbor as yourself, for that is the real spirit of the law. Well, I am going to apply a simple test. If you love your neighbor as yourself, it will not be difficult for

you to share him your wealth; and if you love the Lord with all your heart, it will be no sacrifice to you to give up all and follow Him. Therefore, as a simple test of your love to your neighbor and your love to God, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

And lo, that young man's castle of self-righteousness crumbled into dust. In a moment he saw himself in his true selfishness. The very thought of parting with his wealth and becoming a humble, despised follower of the Son of God filled him with sorrow and despair. He could not make such a sacrifice. He did not love his brother or his God. He loved himself and his own wealth and comfort, and he was unwilling to give these up for any higher plane. Alas! The illusion was gone, his dream of righteousness and eternal life melted into air, and he went away sorrowful for the strangest reason in the world—because he had great wealth (19:18-22).

Most people are sorrowful because they have so little; but he found the cause of his deepest sorrow in the fact that he was unwilling and unable to part with his earthly treasures for the sake of his neighbor and his God. He had committed no act of gross immorality or open sin; he was not in any sense a bad man as the world understands it, and yet he saw himself to be utterly selfish and bound to earth and its pleasures and aims by bonds that he was utterly unable to break.

And so, when the light of God comes into the soul, we find that sin does not consist so much of gross crimes against the laws of man, or even the laws of God, as in the subtle spirit of self-love. Therefore it comes to pass that the self-righteous and moral sinners are much harder to reach than the profligate and the drunkard; and the Lord Jesus had to say to the religious Pharisees of His own time, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (21:31).

Dear friend, have you become convicted of the spirit of selfishness, the love of your own self, your own reputation, your own ease and pleasure, even your own religious merit and righteousness? This is the essence of human depravity, and in this begins the very first stepping of the work of grace and salvation. The Lord Jesus takes occasion, after the departure of this young man, to say, “it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (19:23-24). The eye of the needle to which He here referred was a certain gate in Jerusalem which was so low that a loaded camel could not pass through it. It had to unload its burden and kneel, before it could pass the gate of the needle's eye. What a striking figure of the necessity of our unloading our earthly treasures and self-righteousness before we can enter into the heavenly kingdom.

The disciples are amazed at His strong language, and ask in sorrow, “Who then can be saved?” (19:25) and the Lord replies, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (19:26). Nothing but a miracle of grace and power can bring the proud, self-satisfied human heart to see its emptiness, to part with its idols, and to pass on its knees through the narrow gate that leads to life.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

The rich young ruler came to Christ and asked what good thing he should do to obtain eternal life. **Why didn't Jesus tell him to repent and believe in Him as Lord and Savior in order for him to be saved, instead of asking him to keep the commandments and to sell what he had?**

Deut. 8:2-3 Col. 3:22 Heb. 10:22 Eph. 6:5 Luke 10:25-28 Matt. 22:37

Matthew 19:27-20:16

The parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) unfolds some deep principles in connection with the subject of reward. First, let us closely understand the difference between free grace and reward. Salvation is the gift of God's free grace; but after we are saved, our services for Christ are rewarded according to the measure of our sacrifices and love. We cannot obtain the entrance into the kingdom of heaven by our own good works; this is bestowed upon the sinner freely for Christ's sake. But having entered the kingdom, we are all competitors for various prizes which are bestowed on the principle of service and love.

These rewards are various. It does not look like this at first, as we study the parable, for each of the laborers seems to receive the same amount, a penny a day. But when we look more closely into the matter, we find that the first laborers worked twelve hours for their penny and the last only one hour for the same sum, so that they really received 12 times as much pro rata as the others. The picture is a very graphic one. The Master comes to His vineyard in the morning at six o'clock and finds a lot of idle men around. He engages a number of laborers under a special contract at a penny a day, equal to about 15 cents in our money. This would be fair wages in the East today. Later, at nine o'clock, and again at noon, and again at three o'clock in the afternoon He went to the vineyard and found others standing idle and He sent them to work, but on a different contract. There was no stipulation of a penny a day, but simply the promise, “I will pay you whatever is right” (20:4). It was work for wages, but there was a degree of trust about it. But at five o'clock when the day was almost gone and only one hour was left for work, He found still others standing idles, and He sent them into the vineyard to work, but said nothing to them about wages. The reading in our old [King James] version of verse 7 is wrong. The revised version [and NIV] has given it correctly by leaving out the clause about wages. He simply sent these men to

work without any promise or agreement whatever. When the evening came all received their wages, these last laborers received the same as the men that had toiled all day long, practically 12 times as much as the first workmen.

When we come to inquire into the reason for this, we cannot forget that these last laborers worked in simple faith without any agreement at all, while the others labored under a law and contract. Truly, this represents the highest spirit of service, "all for love and nothing for reward." The first represents work done under the law; the second, perhaps, for the class of Christians that try to get through as cheaply as possible; the third for those who go purely under the principle of grace, who give their lives to God in simple faith and trust Him for everything. Their reward will be the largest of all. It is quite possible for us to be working for a reward rather than for the Master with love. And this form of selfishness, even though it is spiritual selfishness, will vitiate much of our best service. How beautiful is the picture in the 25th chapter of Matthew of the persons whom the Master praised for their ministries to Him: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink . . . I was in prison and you came to visit me" (25:35-36), and they were quite surprised and had forgotten all about it, and answered simply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you" (25:37). The very unconsciousness of their own merit was their highest merit, and the Lord rewarded them all the same, adding with supreme beauty: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (25:40).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

How does Matt. 19:27-30 relate to the parable of the laborers in Matt. 20:1-16?

Matthew 20:17-28

It was natural for the mother of Zebedee's children to want a high position in the kingdom for her sons, but what she asked for was not an easy thing to grant. Those saints listed in Hebrews 11 went through great trial and persecution before they were worthy to be considered as men and women of faith.

He says to them, "Ye know not what ye ask." They had asked to share in their Master's reward, but they had not considered that they must first be partakers in their Master's sufferings. (1 Pet. 4:13) They had forgotten that those who would stand with Christ in glory, must drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism; they did not see that those who carry the cross, and those alone, shall receive the crown. Well might our Lord say, "Ye know not what ye ask."

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

What does Jesus say for us to be and do in order to be true disciples of His kingdom?

Gal. 6:1 Phil. 1:27-29 Phil. 2:1-5

Matthew 20:29-34

The time had now come when the Lord Jesus was to be publicly manifested as the Son of David and the King of Israel. Hitherto He had refused the demands of the multitude, who, after His Galilean miracles, had tried "to come and make him king by force" (John 6:15). But now as the end draws near, it is proper that He should literally fulfill the announcements of ancient prophecy, and for a brief moment, at least, appear as the heir to David's throne and the answer to all the Messianic hopes of Israel.

It was strange that the first to recognize Him as Israel's King should be two blind beggars. That which the rulers of Israel, with all their wisdom, failed to comprehend, was discovered by poor old Bartimaeus and his blind companion. Calling Him by His Messianic name, they cried, as the procession pressed by, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 20:31b). When Jesus heard that name, He instantly ordered the procession to halt, and, calling them to Him, granted their petition like a king, bidding them receive their sight and follow Him in the way.

So still it is ever true, "you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children" (11:25). The wisdom of the world and even the culture of theological science have blinded men to the vision of God, and it is the lowly and often illiterate to whom the Holy Spirit reveals "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (13:11) and the blessed hope of the coming once more of our glorious King.

How did these blind men know that Jesus was the Son of David? With their inner senses they felt after Him until they found Him. It is still so that the hungry heart finds the Savior. Reaching out in our darkness and sense of need, groping for One who we feel can meet and satisfy our need, we press our way toward the light even as the blind man who, while he cannot discern the objects before him, can see vaguely at least the glare of the light and press closer to it. Even so we can press toward God, and He will meet the seeking soul and reveal Himself in the vision of light and love even as He did to them.

Seeker for Christ, follow the light you have and He will give more as you follow on, and you, too, will hear Him say, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you" (Luke 18:42).

Why would the two blind beggars have keener spiritual insight than the great multitude?

Matthew 21:1-11

Ancient prophecy had foretold the coming of the King of meekness, truth and love, and his triumphal entry into Jerusalem was a striking fulfillment. Zechariah especially had literally described the scenes portrayed in this chapter: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

For the first time in His earthly ministry, our Lord permits Himself to be borne by the beast of burden, which had always been recognized as the bearer of kings. Riding upon a little colt never ridden before, draped with the garments of His disciples as they walked beside, and accompanied by the mighty multitude surging up from the city at this, the Passover time, when the population of Jerusalem was multiplied tenfold, he slowly descended from Bethany toward the city. At every step the enthusiasm of the crowd grew higher. Cutting down branches from the palm trees, they strewed them in the way, and even their garments they flung in homage at His feet, while their voices rose to a mighty shout as they cried in the language of an old prophetic psalm, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 21:9).

But his own demeanor was in strange contrast to all these scenes of tumultuous excitement. Truly, He came as the King of meekness, lowliness and love. This became still more apparent when the city suddenly burst upon their view, and the sight of it drew from Him an outburst of sorrow and compassion, and amid all the pageant of popular acclamation He gave way to bitter tears and lamentations over the certain doom which He saw impending upon the scenes that lay spread before Him in all their glorious beauty. But the procession swept on, and in a little while He entered the city and the temple.

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the foreshadowing of that glorious time when He shall come again as Israel's long expected Messiah and take His place upon the throne of David, never again to leave it.

It is also typical of His entrance upon the throne of the individual heart when we receive Him as our Lord and King. The little foal on whom no man had sat before, is the exquisite type of the heart that gives Him its exclusive affection. He comes to reign, not as tyrant, but as a King of gentleness and love in all the attractive attributes so finely set forth in the ancient picture that we are considering. He does not come to repress, but to satisfy. He does not dominate us as a despot, but He meets all the needs as longings of our being, and so blends with our nature and our will that we become His willing subjects and the very partners of His kingdom and His throne. Have we thus received Him and known Him as our King?

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

How will Jesus come back to Jerusalem when He returns again?

Isa. 66:15-24 Isa. 27:12-13 Amos 9:11-15 Micah 5:1-15 Zech. 9:9, 10 Acts 15:16-18 Matt. 24:29-31 Rev. 19:11-21

Matthew 21:12-13

"Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple." (21:12)

Let us see in our Lord's conduct on this occasion, a striking type of what He will do when He comes again the second time. He will purify His visible Church as He purified the temple; He will cleanse it from every thing that defiles and works iniquity, and cast every worldly professor out of its pale; He will allow no worshipper of money, or lover of gain to have a place in that glorious temple, which He will finally exhibit before the world. May we all strive to live in the daily expectation of that coming! May we judge ourselves that we be not condemned, and cast out in that searching and sifting day! We should often study those words of Malachi: "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like the fuller's soap." (Mal. 3:2.)

(Expository Thoughts on Matthew, J.C. Ryle)

Do you think there will be a spiritual cleansing, a profound work of sanctification among the people of God before He returns the second time?

Isa. 56:7 Jer. 7:11

Matthew 21:14-22

In the closing verses of our lesson, the Lord reveals the secret of His own power and tells the disciples how they may share it also. The secret of it is faith. "Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, "throw yourself into the sea," and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer"' (Matthew 21:21, 22).

And so He passes over to us His very scepter, and tells us that we may exercise the same omnipotence of faith through which He wrought His mighty works. It was by faith that He overcame and became for us "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). But we, too, may exercise the same faith. Some time in that coming kingdom we shall be like Him and exercise a power over the universe of God at which, could we fully realize it now, we would be amazed and appalled. But He is training us now in the use of this mystic scepter, and teaching us the lessons of that faith of which He once said, "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26); "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

We have but touched its borderland, beloved. There are great continents of faith and power and prayer for us yet to explore. "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), help our unbelief (Mark 9:24) and give us "the faith of God" (Romans 3:3, KJV).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Are we prepared to let God do what He wants with us?

Are we prepared to be separated from the outward, evident blessing of God?

Are we serving His goals, or ours?

Do we have His kind of faith to persevere?

All of the above qualities come from throwing ourselves with abandon and total confidence on God. Where are you?

Matthew 21:23-46

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—
And he will delight in the fear of the Lord.*

*He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breadth of his lips he will slay the wicked.
(Isaiah 11:2-4)*

This prophetic picture of the Messiah finds a striking and marvelous illustration in the series of incidents that will form the subject of this chapter, revealing the Lord Jesus as the One "greater than Solomon" (Matthew 12:42) and as the "Wonderful Counselor," as well as the "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6).

Hitherto we have seen the triumphs of the Lord Jesus in His miracles of power. We are now to see a series of miracles of wisdom not less wonderful than His victories of might.

We have already noticed the account of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His public recognition as the Son of David, the King of Israel and the Lord of the temple. This occurred on the day corresponding to our Sunday, which was the day immediately following the Jewish Sabbath. On the following Monday He again visited Jerusalem from Bethany and spent the day in teaching and preaching in the temple. The incidents of the present chapter occurred on the next day, which would correspond to our Tuesday. Returning to the city from Bethany early in the morning of that day, He had resumed His teaching and preaching in the presence of the multitude. Then His enemies began a battle royal against Him with the evident purpose of ensnaring Him in some hasty word and affording a basis for accusing Him before the Roman Governor. Their plans were adroitly laid, and the story of their attack and defeat is one of the most thrilling dramas of all literature, sacred or profane.

The conflict begins by the Sanhedrin sending an official deputation to Him to demand His authority for the audacious things that He was daring to do and say (Matthew 21:23). The Lord tactfully answered them by propounding another question to them and promising, as soon as they answered it, that He would tell them by what authority He was

acting. "John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?" (21:25). He had a perfect right to ask this question because as the great national Council they had sent three years before to John a deputation to ask him, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" (John 1:22). It was only natural and right that the people should know the result of their inquiry.

Immediately the deputation found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If they answered "from heaven," very naturally Christ would ask, "Then why didn't you believe him?" (Matthew 21:25). But if they went so far as to deny John's prophetic character, they would array the multitude against themselves, for all counted John a prophet. They were, therefore, driven to say, "We don't know," and of course the Lord replied, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things" (21:27).

There are times when we, like the Master, are justified in avoiding or evading the foolish questions of the enemies of the truth. "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself" (Proverbs 26:4). Servants of Christ should exercise the profound wisdom of their Master and claim it from Him for similar emergencies that will ever meet us in our life and work. "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:6).

The Lord followed the repulse of the Pharisees with three parables addressed immediately to the multitude, but really directed in part against them. The first was the parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32). In this parable He contrasted the false professions of the Pharisees as represented by the second son with the conduct of the tax collectors and the prostitutes as represented by the first, who said: "I will not," . . . but later he changed his mind and went" (21:29), and He applied the parable to the incident of the hour by adding, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him" (21:31c-32).

Then He followed with a second parable still more severe and pointed, the Wicked Tenants (21:33-44). In this He represented the faithfulness of the Jewish nation to their great trust, their rejection of the messengers God had sent through successive dispensations until at last He sent to them His own Son, only to be rejected and murdered by their wicked hands. Then comes the pointed question: "What will he do to those tenants?" (21:40) and the multitude is ready with the answer: "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end . . . and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time" (21:41). The Lord takes up the words of the multitude and echoes them back: "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed" (21:43-44).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

What is the meaning of Matthew 21:43?

Matthew 22:1-14

The parable related in these verses is one of very wide signification. In its first application it unquestionably points to the Jews.—But we may not confine it to them. It contains heart-searching lessons for all among whom the Gospel is preached: it is a spiritual picture which speaks to us this day, if we have an ear to hear. The remark of a learned divine is wise and true: "Parables are like many-sided precious stones, cut so as to cast luster in more than one direction."

Let us observe that *the salvation of the Gospel is compared to a marriage feast*. The Lord Jesus tells us that a "certain King made a marriage for his son."

There is in the Gospel a complete provision for all the wants of man's soul: there is a supply of everything that can be required to relieve spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. Pardon, peace with God, lively hope in this world, glory in the world to come,—are set before us in rich abundance. It is "a feast of fat things." All this provision is owing to the love of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. He offers to take us into union with Himself, to restore us to the family of God as dear children, to clothe us with His own righteousness, to give us a place in His kingdom, and to present us faultless before His Father's throne at the last day. The Gospel, in short, is an offer of food to the hungry, of joy to the mourner, of a home to the outcast, of a loving friend to the lost. It is glad tidings. God offers, through His dear Son, to be at one with sinful man. Let us not forget this. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.)

(Expository thoughts on Matthew, J. C. Ryle)

Describe those who made light of the invitation and went about their business (Matt. 22:5).

What is the Biblical meaning of the wedding garment?

1 Pet. 5:5 1 Cor. 1:30 Phil. 3:9 Jam. 2:23 2 Cor. 5:1-5 Rom. 4:5-8, 11 Rev. 3:5 Rev. 6:11

Describe the person spoken of in Matthew 22:11-12.

Matthew 22:15-22

But now the second stage of the conflict comes. The Pharisees have held a lobby and have been reinforced by a new company of auxiliaries. These are called Herodians, a political party, who, in opposition to the popular Jewish element, were adherents of the royal dynasty and Roman power and usually bitter enemies of the Pharisees. But now they united in a common hatred to the Lord and joined forces to overthrow Him. They brought to Him a subtle political question, "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (22:17). It placed Him in a very difficult and embarrassing position. If He had said, "No," He would at once have been open to arrest as a ringleader of sedition against the authorities and would have speedily been added to the number of those whose blood, we are told in the Gospels, about this time, Pilate "had mixed with their sacrifices" (Luke 13:1). Had He taken the other ground as a rabbi, that it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, He would have offended the popular sentiment of the nation, who hated the Romans and their taxes, who looked upon it as almost disloyal to Jehovah to recognize any king but God, and who had a secret hope that Jesus Christ was about to deliver them from the Roman yoke and reestablish the old theocratic kingdom.

The question was forged in the very pit of hell, it was deep as the serpent's guile, but it was not too deep for His instinctive and unerring wisdom. Fathoming instantly their purpose, He simply called for a coin, and, holding it up, He asked whose image or superscription it bore. They, of course, answered "Caesar's" (22:21). The Jewish law did not permit them to put any graven image on any coin, or indeed, on anything, and yet they accepted these coins as money and constantly received and paid them in secular business. They were already committed to this by their daily life, and habitually acknowledged the Roman authority by accepting the Roman currency. It was the simplest and most natural thing in the world to add next: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (22:21).

This simple and profound answer, which has settled for 20 centuries the connection between secular and sacred duty and rendered it possible for us to be loyal citizens and yet holy saints, was so obvious and so wise that they really had nothing to say, and the evangelist adds with quiet force: "When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away" (22:22). They were struck so quietly and softly that they scarcely knew what had hit them, and yet they were no less struck and paralyzed and driven from the field feeling themselves, as everybody else felt, that they were again baffled and utterly defeated.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

How do you separate what is Caesar's and what is God's?

Matthew 22:23-33

They soon returned, however, with a third onslaught. This time they had a new auxiliary, namely, a company of Sadducees. These also were a Jewish sect of limited number but great influence. They were the educated and skeptical element, the "higher critics" of the day. They disbelieved in the supernatural and especially in the resurrection; they were materialists and would have been found today among the agnostics. They also, it is held by some, discredited a large portion of the Old Testament Scriptures. They had their question ready for the Master and it seemed also unanswerable.

It was a rather coarse story about a woman who had been married in succession to seven different brothers as they had successively died and she had married the next according to the Levitical law. At last she herself died, and now the absorbing question arises in their earnest and inquiring minds: "What are they all to do in the resurrection? What a perplexing time they will have, and which of them is to be her true husband then?"

It was a taxing question, and for a moment there must have been many in the crowd that caught the ludicrousness of the idea. Nothing but infinite wisdom could have turned aside the force of the blow. But again the Lord was equal to it. The "one greater than Solomon" (12:42) was there. With quiet dignity He turns upon them with their own words: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (22:29). And then He proceeds to explain the true doctrine of the resurrection and to show them that it is not a resumption of the coarser material forms of our earthly life, but a higher existence in which we shall have passed beyond the laws of reproduction and shall dwell in a loftier fellowship with one another, even as the angels now, and all the mere human relations shall pass into divine relationships.

Then He follows this by a striking quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially from that portion which they believed without question, the Pentateuch, where God said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (22:32). Then the Lord added, "He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (22:32). They had passed out of the human sight and human touch, but not from the fellowship of God. They were with Him and He spoke of them as living men, although they had long since been moldering in their graves. The force of this argument was unanswerable and the multitude instantly caught it. "When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. Hearing that

Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together" (22:33-34). The Greek word here is "muzzled." He had muzzled the Sadducees; it was a case of lockjaw, and soon after, of paralysis too.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Why do many intellectually gifted people try to entangle Jesus instead of trying to understand His purpose?

John 12:42-43

Matthew 22:34-46

They next put forth one of their own number, a doctor of the law, with a subtle question respecting the interpretation of the law of Moses, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (22:36). Now, we are told that in the Rabbinical writings there were no less than 613 commandments recognized. Of these, 248 were affirmative statutes, corresponding to the number of members in the human body, and 365 were negative, corresponding to the number of days in the year. Some of these were called "light" and others "heavy," somewhat like the distinction that the Roman Catholics make between "moral" and "venial" sins.

This Pharisee wanted to know which were the lighter and which were the heavier commandments. By a great flash of celestial light, the Lord illuminates the subject in a single sentence and tells him that the one supreme commandment of the law is not the question of tithes or fringes, but simply love to God, and the second is but another form of it, namely, love to man. So truly there is but one great principle in the divine law, and that is love. Like the law of gravitation, which has simplified all men's former notions of the universe and swings the planets in their orbits and the constellations in their courses and holds in cohesion all the elements of matter without an effort, so love to God keeps us right with Him and one another without the bondage of a thousand petty exactions and constraints.

It was so simple, so beautiful, so conclusive that the young lawyer surrendered, and, as another Gospel tells us, acknowledged that this was "more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Why did Christ's claim concerning the Son of David overwhelm them?

Matthew 23:1-39

Terrible indeed must have been the holy indignation and the burning force with which the holy lips of Jesus poured forth these withering words upon these self-convicted and guilty men, rising at last to the very climax of invective indignation: "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" (23:33).

And that was Jesus. Oh, do not dream in your carelessness and sin that that gentle and forgiving One was incapable of the most awful severity and the most consuming judgment. Above all other wrath the sinner may well fear "the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16).

But the torrent has spent its force, the heart of Jesus cannot long brook even this merited outburst of judgment and condemnation. Suddenly pausing in the midst of His fiery rebukes it would seem as if a gush of tears must have poured from His eyes and with broken voice and unearthly tenderness He cries again: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (23:37).

And that was Jesus, too. Blessed be His name, that is the Jesus that we are still permitted to approach. Oh, do not wait until He shall have put on the robes of judgment and risen up to pronounce the sinner's doom. Still He is speaking to us with the same tenderness and reminding us in the same terms how often He has sought us and how often we have rejected Him.

Is there anyone reading these lines to whom He is speaking now? Hasten beneath the shelter of His wing from the coming storm, and do not wait until He shall have nothing left for you but His compassion and His tears.

It is said that once a distinguished judge, after pronouncing sentence upon a man before him and sending him forth to end his days in a penal colony, put off his judge's cap and looking the man in the face said, "Why have you forced me to do this? You were the friend of my childhood; I have loved you as I have loved few men; why have you made it necessary that I should speak these awful words that doom you to a misery worse than death? And he could only weep, and yet his tears did not avail to avert that stroke of judgment.

And so, even Jesus, in these tender, passionate words, did not take back the sentence that He had passed. In condemning them His heart was breaking with tenderness and sorrow, but nonetheless did He pause and close this solemn chapter by adding, "Look, your house [Mine no longer, you can have it now] is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (23:38, 39).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

When will the Jews say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matt. 23:39)?

Isa. 25:6-9 Isa. 66:5-14 Zech. 12:10 Matt. 24:3, 27-31 Rom. 11:25-27

Matthew 24:1-51

In Matthew 24:3, the disciples had asked three questions: (1) “Tell us, when shall these things be?”; (2) “What shall be the sign of thy coming?”; and (3) What shall be the sign “of the end of the world?” Matthew’s gospel does not answer the first question, which relates to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This is given more in detail in Luke, while Matthew and Mark answer the second and third questions, which actually refer to Christ’s coming and the end of the age as one and the same event. Matthew’s account of the Olivet discourse records that portion of Christ’s answer that relates to His future kingdom and how it will be brought in, which is one of the major purposes of the gospel.

Expositors have taken various approaches to the introductory remarks of Christ. G. Campbell Morgan, for instance, regards the whole section of Matthew 24:4-22 as already fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. Morgan states, “Everything predicted from verse six to verse twenty-two was fulfilled to the letter in connection with the Fall of Jerusalem within a generation.” Alfred Plummer goes a step further and includes verse 28 as fulfilled in A.D. 70.

Both Morgan and Plummer ignore the identification of the “great tribulation” in Matthew 24:15, 21 as a specific future period of time, and also ignore the details of the prophecy, not even attempting an exegesis of most of the verses. Accordingly, if the interpreter of this section wants to take the prophecies literally and find a reasonable explanation of the predictions, he must limit the introductory section to Matthew 24:4-14. While variations in interpretation occur, H. A. Ironside expresses a plausible view that verses 4-8 give general characteristics of the age, and that verses 9-14 emphasize the particular signs of the end of the age.

Other premillennial interpreters, however, prefer to take Matthew 24:4-14 as a unit, describing the general characteristics of the age leading up to the end, while at the same time recognizing that the prediction of the difficulties, which will characterize the entire period between the first and second coming of Christ, are fulfilled in an intensified form as the age moves on to its conclusion. If Matthew 24:4-14 deals with general signs, then verses 15-26 may be considered as specific signs. The second coming of Christ is revealed in verses 27-31, which should be compared with the more detailed prophecy of Revelation 19:11-21.

In Matthew 24:4-14, at least nine major characteristics of this general period are described. These characteristics may be itemized as follows: (1) false Christs, 24:4, 5; (2) wars and rumors of wars, 24:6, 7; (3) famines, 24:7; (4) pestilence, 24:7; (5) earthquakes, 24:7; (6) many martyrs, 24:8-10; (7) false prophets, 24:11; (8) increasing evil and loss of fervent love, 24:12; and (9) worldwide preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, 24:13, 14.

In general, these signs have been at least partially fulfilled in the present age and have characterized the period between the first and second coming of Christ. They should be understood as general signs rather than specific signs that the end is near. As stated in verse 8, these are the beginning rather than the end of the sorrows which characterize the close of the age.

Accordingly, through the centuries, there have been many false religious leaders or false Christs. War, famine, and pestilence are still with us. There is some evidence that there is an increase in earthquakes, and, of course, Scriptures record that the greatest earthquake of all time will occur just before the second coming of Christ (Rev. 16:18-20). There have been many martyrs through the centuries and probably more in the twentieth century than even in the first century. False prophets and false teachings have plagued the church and the world. The increase in iniquity and loss of fervent love are all too evident in the world, and are detailed, for instance, in Christ’s message to the churches of the first century in Revelation 2-3. Throughout the age also there is the announcement of the coming kingdom when Christ will reign on earth, which, of course, will be preached in intensified form as the end approaches. The age in general, climaxing with the second coming of Christ, has the promise that those that endure to the end (Matt 24:13), that is, survive the tribulation and are still alive, will be saved, or delivered, by Christ at His second coming. This is not a reference to salvation from sin, but rather the deliverance of survivors at the end of the age as stated, for instance, in Romans 1:26, where the Deliverer will save the nation Israel from its persecutors. Many, of course, will not endure to the end, in the sense that they will be martyred, even though they are saved by faith in Christ, and the multitude of martyrs is mentioned in Revelation 7:9-17.

Taken as a whole, the opening section, ending with Matthew 24:14, itemizes general signs, events, and situations which mark the progress of the age, and, with growing intensity, indicate that the end of the age is approaching. The signs, however, by their very characteristics and because they have occurred throughout the present age, do not constitute a direct answer to the question of “the sign” of the coming of the Lord.

This portion of the Olivet discourse is crucial to understanding what Christ reveals about the end of the age. The tendency to explain away this section or ignore it constitutes the major difficulty in the interpretation of the Olivet discourse. In the background is the tendency of liberals to discount prophecy and the practice of some conservatives of not interpreting prophecy literally. If this prediction means what it says, it is referring to a specific time of great trouble

which immediately precedes the second coming of Christ. As such, the prediction of the great tribulation is “the sign” of the second coming, and those who see the sign will be living in the generation which will see the second coming itself. Accordingly, the interpretation of G. Campbell Morgan, which relates this to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the view of Alfred Plummer, which relates to the second coming of Christ as fulfilled in the first century, are unjustified interpretations, if the passage is taken seriously.

The fact that the book of Revelation, which practically all expositors date after the destruction of Jerusalem, coincides so exactly with this presentation makes it clear that Christ was not talking here about fulfillment in the first century, but prophecy to be related to His actual second coming to the earth in the future. William Kelly states it concisely, “The conclusion is clear and certain: in verse 15 of Matthew 24, our Lord alludes to that part of Daniel which is yet future, not to what was history when He spoke this on the mount of Olives.”

The sign of the future tribulation is identified with what Christ calls the sign of “the abomination of desolation” (v. 15). Jesus said, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (vv. 15, 16). The event is so specific that it will be a signal to the Jews living in Judea at the time to flee to the mountains. What did Christ mean by the expression “the abomination of desolation”?

This term is found three times in the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Its definition is found in Daniel 11:31 in the prophecy written by Daniel concerning a Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned over Syria 175-164 B.C., about four hundred years after Daniel.

In his prophecy, Daniel predicted, “They shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate” (11:31). As this was fulfilled in history, it is comparatively easy to understand what Daniel meant. Antiochus Epiphanes was a great persecutor of the people of Israel, as recorded in the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees. In attempting to stamp out the Jewish religion, he murdered thousands of Jews, including women and children, and desecrated the temple of Israel, which precipitated the Maccabean revolt.

Antiochus, in attempting to stop the temple sacrifices, offered a sow, an unclean animal, on the altar, to render the Jewish temple abominable to the Jews (cf. 1 Mac. 1:48). According to 1 Maccabees 1:57, the abomination of desolation was actually set up, and a statue of a Greek god was installed in the temple. For a time, the sacrifices of the Jews were stopped, and the temple was left desolate. The action of Antiochus in stopping the sacrifices, desecrating the temple, and setting up an idol in the temple is going to be repeated in the future as the signal of the beginning of the great tribulation.

The future abomination is described in Daniel 9:27: “He [the prince that shall come] shall confirm the covenant with many [Israel] for one week” (literally, “one seven,” meaning seven years, as practically all commentators, even those who are liberal, agree). The prophecy continues, “And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate.” The prediction is that a future prince will do just what Antiochus did in the second century B.C.

Further light is cast on this in Daniel 12:11, where it states, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days,” or approximately three-and-a-half-years preceding the second coming of Christ. H. A. Ironside summarizes it, “Our Lord tells us definitely here that His second advent is to follow at once upon the close of that time of trouble; so it is evident that this day of trial is yet in the future.”

The New Testament, in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, describes the same period, with the ruler setting himself up as God in the temple. Revelation 13:14, 15 also records that an image of the ruler will be set up in the temple. These events did not take place in the first century in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and are closely related to the future fulfillment on the second coming of Christ.

These predictions have raised questions concerning the meaning of Israel’s present occupation of the city of Jerusalem. If sacrifices are going to be stopped in a Jewish temple in the future, it requires, first, that a Jewish temple be built, and second, that the sacrifices be reinstated. This has led to the conclusion that the present possession of Israel of the temple site since 1967 may be a divinely ordered preparation, that in God’s time, the temple will be rebuilt and the sacrifices begun again. Although this is difficult to understand in view of the fact that the shrine, the Dome of the Rock, is apparently on the site of the ancient temple and hinders any present erection of such a temple, many believe that, nevertheless, such a temple will be rebuilt and these prophecies literally fulfilled. If upon this revival of their sacrificial system such a future temple is suddenly desecrated, it would constitute a sign to the nation of Israel of the coming time of great trouble just preceding the second coming of Christ.

The sign is so specific that on the basis of it, Christ advised the children of Israel to flee to the mountain without hesitation when it occurs. His instructions were dramatic, as recorded in Matthew 24:16-20. They were to flee immediately to the mountains of Judea, not return to take clothes or other provisions, and pray that their flight will not be in the winter, when it would be most uncomfortable, or on the Sabbath, when their flight would be noticeable. Especially difficult would be the lot of those with small children. Christ summarizes these predictions in 24:21, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor even shall be.”

The great tribulation, accordingly, is a specific period of time beginning with the abomination of desolation and closing with the second coming of Christ, in the light of Daniel’s prophecies and confirmed by reference to forty-two months. In

Revelation 11:2 and 13:5, the great tribulation is a specific three-and-a-half-year period leading up to the second coming and should not be confused with a general time of trouble, such as was predicted earlier in Matthew 24:4-14.

Jesus also predicted that the period would be “shortened” (v. 22), literally, terminated or cut off (Gr. *Ekolobothesan*). This does not mean that the period will be less than three-and-a-half years, but that it will be definitely terminated suddenly by the second coming of Christ.

That the period would be a time of unprecedented trouble is brought out clearly in Revelation 6-19. One of the various judgments, the fourth seal (6:7, 8), predicts a fourth part of the earth perishing. In Revelation 9:13-21, the sixth trumpet refers to a third part of the world’s population being killed. These are only part of the great catastrophes which fall one after another upon the world and which will climax in a great world war (16:12-16). The final judgment just before the second coming, described as the seventh bowl of the wrath of God (vv.17-21), consists in a great earthquake, which apparently destroys cities of the world, and a hailstorm, with hailstones weighing a talent, or as much as eighty pounds. Putting all these Scriptures together, it indicates that the great tribulation will mark the death of hundreds of millions of people in a comparatively short period of time.

Because the great tribulation is unprecedented in history and consists largely in judgments of God on an unbelieving world, many interpreters have come to the conclusion that the church will not have to go through this period. If the church must endure the great tribulation, the chances of survival are quite remote as it is obvious that many who do turn to Christ in that period perish as martyrs. They are described as “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev. 7:9), referring to both Jews and Gentiles who will die in the great tribulation. The possibility of rapture for the few that survive is not “the blessed hope” which is held before Christians in the New Testament.

Our hope is not the horrors of the tribulation, but the blessed expectation of Christ’s coming for His own (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Having introduced the specific sign of the second coming, which is the great tribulation, Jesus then described other details of the period. Just as there have been false Christs throughout the age, so there will be an intensification of this at the end of the age. Jesus stated, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). He went on, in verse 25, to state, “Behold, I have told you before.” Here, He was referring to His frequent mention of false prophets (cf. Matt. 7:15; 15:3-14; 16:6-12; 23:1-36; 24:11). While false Christs and false prophets have always been in evidence, they will be especially prominent at the end of the age in Satan’s final attempt to turn people from faith in Christ.

One who believes the prophetic Scripture will have no difficulty identifying the second coming of Christ, because it will be a public event. Accordingly, Christ, in 24:26, stated, “Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.” Unlike the rapture of the church, which apparently the world will not see or hear, the second coming of Christ will be witnessed both by believers and unbelievers who are on the earth at that time. Christ described it in verse 27, “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Apparently, the heavens will be ablaze with the glory of God. According to Revelation 1:7, “Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

This declaration is supported by a cryptic statement in Matthew 24:28, “For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” The meaning is that the glorious coming of Christ is the natural sequence to blasphemy and unbelief, which characterizes the preceding period. Just as when an animal dies, the vultures gather, so when there is moral corruption, there must be divine judgment.

This is further described in verses 29-30, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” The frightening display of divine disruption of the heavens, which precedes the second coming described graphically in Revelation 6:12-14 and in many other of the judgments of God described in the book of Revelation, will be climaxed by the glorious appearing of Christ in heaven (cf. Rev 19:11-16). This will be a coming of the Lord to judge and subdue the earth and to bring in His earthly kingdom, and is in contrast to the rapture of the church, which is an entirely different event and with a different purpose.

(Thy Kingdom Come, John F. Walvoord)

In chronological order give the order of events of that which will occur just prior to Christ’s return to the earth.

Joel 2:30-32 Mark 13:5-37 Luke 21:7-38 Acts 2:17-21 Rev. 4-20

What is meant by the “secret chamber” of Matt 24:26? Whose image will be setup in place of where the sacrifices are made in the temple?

Dan. 9:27 Ex. 25:20 Ezek. 10:5 Ps. 18:10 1 Cor. 10:20 Mal. 3:1 2 Thess. 2:4 Rev. 13:14, 15 Mark 13:14
Dan. 12:11

Matthew 25:1-13

The foolish virgins represent not the irreligious and immoral, but unsaved church members, those who have “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the (not “their”) Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 2:20), but who have never experienced a miracle of grace in their hearts. Though having lamps in their hands, they had no oil “in their vessels” (vv. 3, 4)—no grace in their souls! This calls for writer and reader to make honest and careful examination of themselves, to “give diligence to make his calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10).

(Practical Christianity, A. W. Pink)

What does the oil represent?

Ex. 25:6 Ex. 27:20 Ex. 30:31 Ps. 92:10 Ps. 104:15 Ps. 133:2 Ps. 141:5 Joel 2:28, 29 Acts 1:8 Acts 2:38, 39 Acts 10:38 Eph. 5:8, 18 Zech. 4:2-6 Jas. 5:14 Rev. 6:6

Matthew 25:14-30

The parable of the 10 Virgins has reference to our sainthood; the parable of the Talents has reference to our service. It is found in the paragraph Matthew 25:14-30.

The endowment of these talents stand for everything in our natural, spiritual and providential conditions which God has given us for the purpose of fitting us for service and usefulness, everything in a word, which may tell in your life for the glory of God and the good of others. These talents, He says, were given “each according to his ability” (25:15). God has put each one of us in the very best position to accomplish our own work for Him. There is something you can do that no one else can do, there is someone you can reach that no one else can reach. Your talent may consist of natural ability, social influence, financial resources, position in the church or the world or special opportunities brought to you in connection with your life work. It is the sum of all the possibilities of usefulness in your life. God expects you to make the most of it for Him and others and is going to call you to account at the coming of Christ for the use you have made of your life.

The principle on which He will judge you will not be the amount of your talent, but the measure in which you have improved it. The man who had but two talents was rewarded as much as the man who had five if it was found that he had made a proportionate improvement of his little endowment. The reward that the Master is to give at His coming will be a higher form of service. The coming of age and the future kingdom is not to be a luxurious sinecure, but a magnificent opportunity for higher work and holy activity.

There is one figure in this picture which stands out in awful distinctness. It is the servant who had but one talent, and because it was so little, made no use of it, but wrapped it up in a napkin and brought it back to his Lord with his trifling and insulting excuses. How solemnly it reminds us that the people that are mostly to miss the mark are the ordinary people that think they amount to very little and therefore do little or nothing. Oh, you who think you have but one talent, watch and pray, lest through false humility you lose even that and meet the Master in fearful disappointment and condemnation.

The deep secret, however, of this man’s failure was his utter lack of faith and love toward Christ. He said, “I knew that you are a hard man. . . . I was afraid” (25:24,25). It was the spirit of the natural heart. Faith and love will make a very little ability go a great way; and without them, the largest gifts are vain. When the Master comes He is to judge our works. Oh, that He may find us faithful now and accepted then.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Explain how the good works of the unbelievers will be of no use to them at the judgment.

Matt. 25:28-30 Luke 12:46-48 Eph. 2:8-9

Matthew 25:31-46

The time of the judgment is stated to be the period following the second coming of Christ, Matthew 25:31, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” This judgment, therefore, should be distinguished from the judgment of the church in heaven, the judgment of the wicked at the end of the millennium, and the judgment of Israel.

At this judgment, “all nations,” better translated “all Gentiles,” are gathered before Him and are described as sheep and goats intermingled. In the judgment, the sheep are put on His right hand and the goats on His left. The sheep are invited to inherit His kingdom, and Christ will address them: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me

drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (vv. 34-36).

The King will then address the goats and dismiss them into everlasting fire, declaring that they have not done these deeds of kindness. When they protest, asking when they omitted these deeds, the King will reply, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of thee, ye did it not to me” (v. 45). The passage concludes with the goats dismissed into everlasting punishment and the righteous entering into the blessings of eternal life.

This judgment, which results in the goats being cast into everlasting fire, is in keeping with the previous prediction of Christ in the parable of the wheat and tares and the parable of the dragnet (Mt. 13:24-30, 31-43, 47-50), and is also clearly taught in Revelation 14:11 and 19:15. No adults who are not converted will be allowed to enter the millennial kingdom. The judgment here is not a final judgment, but is preparatory to establishing the kingdom of righteousness and peace, of which many Scriptures speak.

Taken as a whole, the Olivet discourse is one of the great prophetic utterances of Scripture and provides facts nowhere else given in quite the same way. In it, Christ, the greatest of the prophets and the master Teacher, described the end of the age as the climax of the troubles of earth in a great tribulation. The time of unprecedented trouble will be terminated by the second coming of Christ. The saved and unsaved will be separated, and only the saved will enter the millennial kingdom. This is the final word, which Matthew brings in answer to the leading question of this first gospel, concerning the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament of a glorious kingdom on earth. Matthew states clearly that while Christ, in His first coming, suffered and died and was rejected as both King and Savior by His own people, He will come again and, in triumph, will bring in the prophesied kingdom literally, just as the Old Testament prophecies had anticipated. There is postponement but not annulment of the great prophecies of the kingdom on earth.

It is clear that the disciples did not understand these prophecies at the time. In the few days that followed, they were to witness the death and then the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were to ask again the question of when the kingdom would be brought in on the day of the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:6). As further revelation was given in the writing of the New Testament, and the disciples pondered the words that they had not understood before, they gradually comprehended the truth that Christ was first coming for His own in the rapture of the church, but then that there would be a fulfillment of the the predicted time of trouble. This, in turn, would be climaxed by the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom. Not one prophecy will be left unfulfilled when history has completed its course and the saints are gathered in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth.

(Thy Kingdom Come, John F. Walvoord)

What is the difference between the works of the sheep and that of the goats, and are the wheat and the tares In Matt. 13:24-30 the sheep and the goats?

Ps. 1:6 Dan. 7:18 John 5:28, 29 Rev. 20:7-15

Matthew 26:1-5

Next we see the conspiracy of His murderers. It was led by the religious rulers of the people and was hatched in the very palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. The ancient Levitical types had provided that the sin offering should be presented by the leaders of the people for the whole nation. In exact fulfillment of this, it was thus divinely ordered that the death of Jesus Christ should be the official act of the Jewish rulers. Not only so, in the narrative given us in the Gospel of John we are even told it was revealed to Caiaphas that it was necessary that “one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50), and in gathering the council together to plan for the arrest and condemnation of Christ this was the very reason that he alleged for so doing. The death of Christ thus becomes the exact fulfillment of God’s ancient plan and the men that brought it about to gratify their own personal vindictiveness were unconsciously fulfilling “God’s set purpose and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23). Thus again the death of Jesus Christ is lifted above any mere accident or human aspect and placed in the divine program of redemption.

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

If we get a plan to do something in our mind how do we determine if we should carry it out? Was Caiaphas ready to carry out the plan put in his mind to sacrifice Jesus?

Matthew 26:6-13

This beautiful incident in the house of Simon, the leper, who was probably the husband of Martha at Bethany, was more than a sentimental expression of Mary’s love to her Teacher and Lord. It was an act of faith, a faith which had already detected the great purpose of His life and understood as none other had that He had come to die. The Lord expressed this very delicately and yet distinctly as He vindicated her from the unworthy and harsh criticism of Judas and

the others and claimed her personal gift as a service accepted for Himself, and added: "She has done a beautiful thing to me. . . . When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial" (26:10, 12). Here again, we have the hand of God above the hand of man and we see the divine purpose moving calmly on and choosing every instrument and every incident to set it forth and work it out as God's great purpose of love and grace in spite of man's purpose of cruel hatred.

How impressively this incident reminds us that there are ministries our Lord asks for Himself alone which are higher far than all our works of charity and gifts for the poor and the church. Our highest service should be for Him. Are we pouring the incense of our love and worship at His feet? Still again, we are reminded that there are gifts which may be kept too late. Mary had purposed reserving this until after His death and then using it to anoint His lifeless body, but an opportunity came to give it to Him while He was still alive, and her act of timely love was lifted to the dignity of an eternal priesthood and a ministry of which even the Master said: "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (26:13).

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

What is of the utmost importance when we attempt something for the Lord?

Song of Sol. 1:12 Rom. 12:9-15 2 Cor. 8:9-12

Matthew 26:14-25

The crime of Judas is too apt to be viewed as something exceptional in character and atrocity. But the study of its different stages is fitted to dissipate that delusion. First, *Covetousness* being his master passion, the Lord suffered it to reveal itself and gather strength, by entrusting him with "the bag" (John 12:6), as treasurer to Himself and the Twelve. Next, in the discharge of that most sacred trust, he began to pilfer, and became "a thief," appropriating the store from time to time to his own use. Then Satan, walking about seeking whom he might devour, and seeing this door standing wide open, determined to enter by it; but cautiously (2 Cor. 2:11)—at first merely "putting it into his heart to betray him" (John 13:2), or whispering to him the thought that by this means he might enrich himself, and that possibly, when the danger became extreme, He who had wrought so many miracles, might miraculously extricate Himself. The next stage was the conversion of that thought into the settled purpose to do it; to which we may well suppose he would be loath to come till something occurred to fix it. That something, we apprehend, was what took place at the house of Simon the leper; from which he probably withdrew with a chagrin which was perhaps all that was now wanted to decide him. Still starting back, however, or mercifully held back for some time, the determination to carry it into immediate effect was not consummated, it would appear, till, sitting at the Paschal supper, "*Satan entered into him*," (John 13:27); and conscience, now effectually stifled, only rose, after the deed, to drive him to despair.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

How can a Christian learn to resist covetousness and temptation?

Jas. 1:2-6, 12-16 Jas. 4:7-10

Matthew 26:26-29

The Passover, commemorative of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt by the blood of the slain lamb (Ex. 12), was to be fulfilled in Christ's death, as the true Paschal Lamb. At the last Passover, vv. 17-25, the King therefore introduced the new memorial, the Lord's Supper, with the new meaning, vv. 26-30, "This do in remembrance of *Me*" (1 Cor. 11:24-25). The dividing line between the O.T. and N.T. is not the blank page between Malachi and Matthew, but Jesus' "blood of the new testament, which is shed for many (those who receive Him) for the remission of sins."

(Ungers Bible Handbook, M.F. Unger)

What message does the shed blood of the New Testament give us, and how does it differ from that of the Old Testament? Can we, of the N.T., find greater reason to rejoice?

Gen. 4:3, 4 Ex. 12:1-13 Lev. 17:11 Prov. 16:6 Luke 22:20 John 1:29 John 6:54 Acts 20:28 Rom. 5:9 1 Pet. 1:2,18-19 1 John 1:7 Rev. 12:11

Matthew 26:31-35

"The accuser of the brethren who accuseth them before God day and night" (Rev. 12:10), is here represented as accusing these disciples of Christ of hollowness in their attachment to Him; and alleging that if, as in the case of Job (Job

1:6-12, 2:1-6), he were only permitted to “sift them,” it would soon be seen that there was chaff among the wheat, if indeed there would be found, after that sifting, any wheat at all.

(The Four Gospels, David Brown)

Explain why Peter was so vulnerable at this point?

Matthew 26:36-46

Gethsemane involved no fear of death, but the contact of His sinless soul with the sin of the whole world as its vicarious Bearer and Expiator through the death on the cross (Isa. 53:10; 2 Cor. 5:21). This was the cup He prayed might pass from Him (v. 39), but *only* in the Father’s will. His was in infinite anguish, as His infinitely holy soul faced the ordeal of “being made sin” and knowing the prospect of the hiding of the Father’s face (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46). The betrayal and arrest of Jesus followed the great spiritual struggle in the garden, but the victory was won there and Calvary was a spontaneous outcome.

(Ungers Bible Handbook, M.F. Unger)

Jesus’ true victory and overcoming in His spiritual struggle was fully accomplished alone in the garden in His heartbreaking prayer with His Father, as He surrendered His will. **Where and how do you find relief in your times of great struggle and decision-making? Do you have a special place where you go, and how do you receive inner peace and direction?**

Matthew 26:47-68

It was only when Jesus was directly challenged as to His unique relationship to God that He opened His lips. There is an evident reference in His words to Dan. 7:13, 14. The court instantly recognized that in His reply He claimed to be equal with God. To be the Son of God was to be God. See also John 5:18. Note that word “hereafter,” which suggests that though it is hidden from us, the kingdom is already set up, as was David’s even when Saul was still on the throne.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F.B. Meyer)

When will the high priest see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds?

Dan. 7:13, 14 Matt. 24:29-31 Acts 7:55, 56

Matthew 26:69-75

He (Peter) had boasted of his superiority to all his brethren; had relied on his own braggart resolutions; had counted himself strong because he could speak strongly and loudly when danger was not near; had thought that he could cope with Satan, though arrayed in no stronger armor than that which his red-hot impulse forged. He thought his resolutions wheat and his Master’s cautions light as chaff; he had to learn his weakness and see his confidence winnowed away as clouds of chaff while Satan sifted him. The resolutions of the evening are not strong enough to carry us victoriously through the morning conflict. We must learn to watch and pray, to lie low in humility and self-distrust, and to be strong in the grace which awaits all tempted ones in God.

(Gospel of John, F.B. Meyer)

In the book of Acts, Peter is continuously bold in his witness for Christ. **Speak to this change in his life—what does he now have that he lacked before?**

Heb. 10:19-23 Acts 2:38 Acts 3:6 Acts 4:8 Acts 5:9 Acts 15:8, 9

Matthew 27:1-10

Then the full significance of Judas’ sin burst upon him. The veil fell from his eyes, and he stood face to face with his crime in all its naked horror—his ingratitude, his treachery, his petty pilfering, his resistance of a love which the strong waters of death could not extinguish. And the money scorched his hand. A wild and haggard man, he made his way into the presence of the chief priests and scribes, as they were congratulating themselves on the success of their plot. There was despair on his face, a piercing note in his voice, anguish in his soul; the flames of hell were already consuming him, the thirst of the bottomless pit already parching his lips; his hand convulsively clutched the thirty pieces of silver. “I have

sinned,” he cried. “I have sinned. He whom you have condemned is innocent; take back your money, only let Him go free; and oh, relieve me, ye priests, accustomed to deal with burdened hearts, relieve me of this intolerable pain.” But they said, with a gleam as of cold steel, “What is that to us? That is your business. You made your bargain, and you must stand to it; see thou to it.” He knew that it was useless to parley with them. That icy sarcasm, that haughty indifference, told him how man must ever regard his miserable act. He had already refused the love of God, and dared not expect anything more from it. He foresaw how coming ages would spurn and abhor him. There seemed, therefore, nothing better than to leap into the awful abyss of suicide. It could bring nothing worse than he was suffering.

(Gospel of John, F.B. Meyer)

“It had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matt 26:24). Jesus, with broken heart, said this about Judas. **At this point could Judas wholeheartedly repent, with Godly sorrow, and be saved? Give scriptures to prove your answer.**

Matthew 27:11-26

Pilate is one of the most notable instances in history of the fatal error of preferring expediency to principle. He wished to do right, but not to do it avowedly because it was right. He wished to do right without seeming to do it, or making a positive stand for it. And in consequence he was finally entrapped into doing the very deed which he had taken the greatest trouble to avoid. Therefore, on the plains of time he stands as a beacon and warning; and to all who do not dare to oppose the stream of public passion and practice with the single affirmation of inflexible adherence to righteousness, the voice of inspiration cries aloud, “Remember Pilate!” However promising a tortuous course may look, it will certainly end in disaster. However discouraging a righteous one may appear, it will at last lead out into the open. And in doing the right thing, be sure to speak out firmly at once. It may be harder for the moment, but it will be always easier afterwards. One brave word will put you into a position of moral advantage, from which no power shall avail to shake or dislodge you.

(Gospel of John, F.B. Meyer)

Even though Pilate washed his hands of the matter, was he really innocent of the blood of this righteous man? Was his concern about his position as a governor under Caesar greater than his desire to release an innocent man?

Ps. 19:12 Ps. 119:104, 118 Isa. 28:14-15 Ezek. 36:25

Comment on Matthew 27:25.

Matthew 27:27-56

Do you wonder that He felt thus, and question how such a forsaking had been possible at such an hour? There is but one explanation. This was not a normal human experience. Only once in the history of the race has all iniquity been laid on one head; only once has the curse of the sin of the world been borne by one heart; only once has it been possible, in drinking the cup of death, to taste death for every man. “He who knew no sin was made sin for us. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.” On no other hypothesis than that Jesus was the Lamb of God, bearing away the sin of the world, can you account for the darkness of that midday midnight which obscured His soul. I cannot tell what transpired; I have no philosophy of the Atonement to offer; I only believe that the whole nature of God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; and that, in virtue of what was done there, we may apply for forgiveness to the faithfulness and justice of God.

(Gospel of John, F.B. Meyer)

What is the meaning behind the veil of the temple being torn in two, and the graves being opened?

Ex. 26:31-34 Heb. 4:14-16 Heb. 6:19,20

Matthew 27:57-66

The practical conclusion of the whole is, however, contained in Romans 6. Just as the body of Christ after crucifixion was buried in the grave, so our sinful, sensual, selfish selves must be done away in the grave of forgetfulness and oblivion and disuse—buried with Christ, “that like as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.”

(Gospel of John, F.B. Meyer)

In studying Rom. 6:3-14, can we honestly hold onto *any* of the self life and expect to be ALL that Jesus desires us to be? Remember, flesh and spirit are constantly at war with each other (Rom. 8:2-11). Speak to this in your own life.

John 12:24

Matthew 28:1-10

Ere the sun had risen, and while the glory of the dawn was faint in the Eastern sky, the women were well on their way. But He whom they sought had gone. How often we look down into the grave of the dead past, or we peer for help into the diaries, prayers and rites of departed saints or a moribund church—but we do not find the Lord. The divine Leader of souls is not behind us, but before; not in the grave of the dead past, but in the vanguard of the world's march. Lo, He beckons us on to follow the ascension mountain and the opened Heaven!

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F.B. Meyer)

How does the angel's strong message, "He is not here, He is risen" speak to your heart?

Matt. 28:19

Luke 10:19

John 4:35

Rom. 8:18-39

1 Cor. 15:17-19, 57, 58

2 Cor. 5:1

Matthew 28:11-20

Christ's resurrection was His victory over sin. He went down into that tomb as a person might go into a dungeon under a sentence for debt and crime. Had He remained in that prison, it would have shown that the debt was still uncanceled and the sentence still in force. But when He comes forth in victory and glory, all the officers of heaven's court of justice waiting upon Him and the Father Himself recognizing Him and taking Him to sit down by His side on the Ascension Throne, then we may know that the debt is paid, the cross is canceled and the power of sin destroyed. His deliverance was your deliverance for "he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Therefore faith can shout its triumph: "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (8:34).

But not only does His resurrection cancel the curse that was against us, it brings the power of His life to dwell within us and purifies from the dominion of sin. Our life is just an impartation of His resurrection life. He rose from the dead not Himself but in union with His body, the Church, and that resurrection guarantees to each of us the power to rise above sin and into all the resources of His grace and the fullness of His life. Sanctification as well as salvation springs from the open tomb and the life of the risen Lord and the very secret of it is:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as these who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (6:11-13)

(The Christ in the Bible, A. B. Simpson)

Explain your identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and the role of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in your transformed life.

Ps. 91:10

Matt. 28:18

Matt. 28:20

John 3:34, 35

John 11:42

John 15:22

John 17:2

Acts 2:33, 36

Rom.

6:1-23

Heb. 4:14, 16

Heb. 11:34