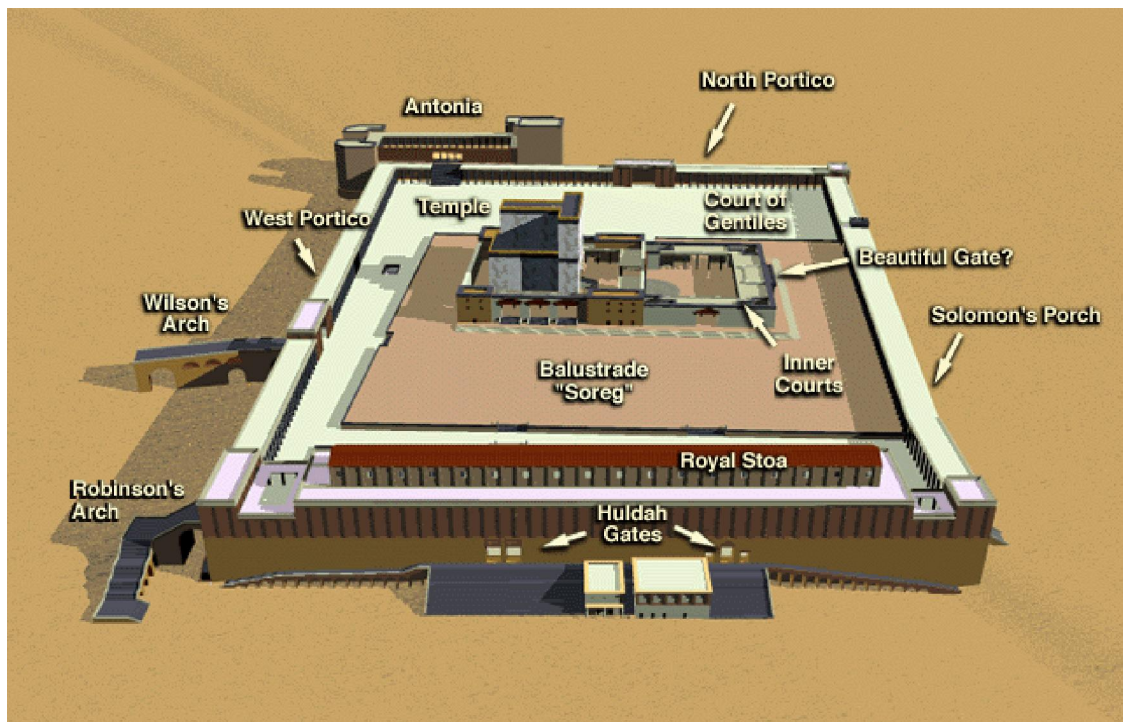
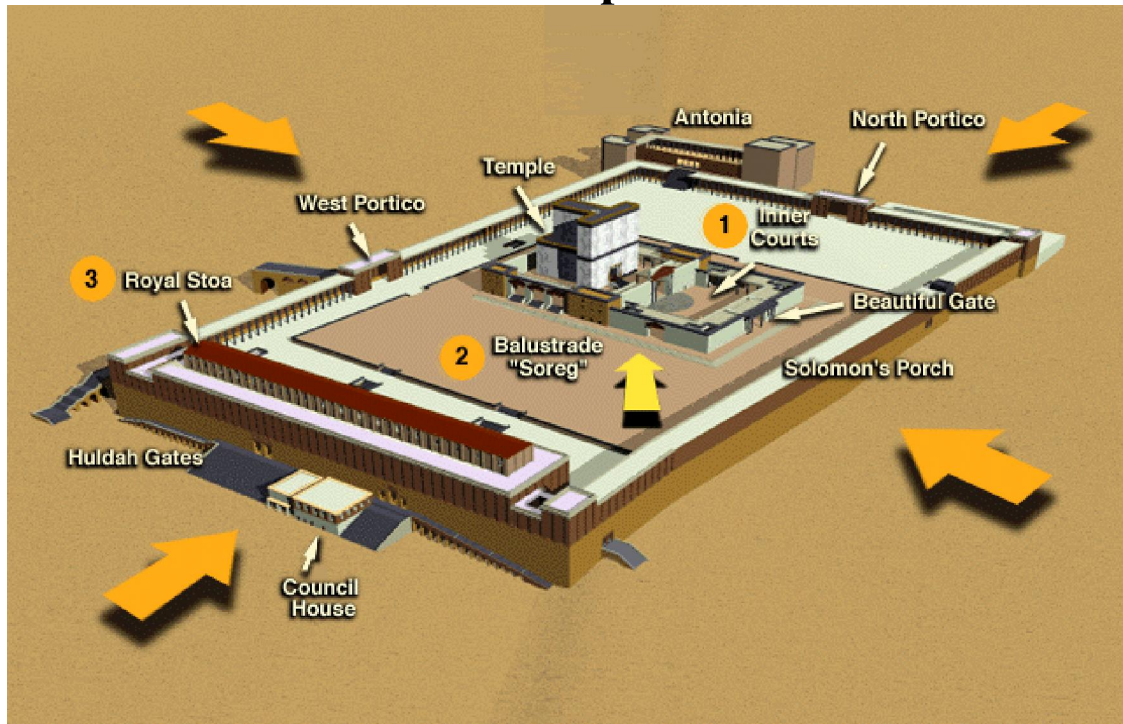
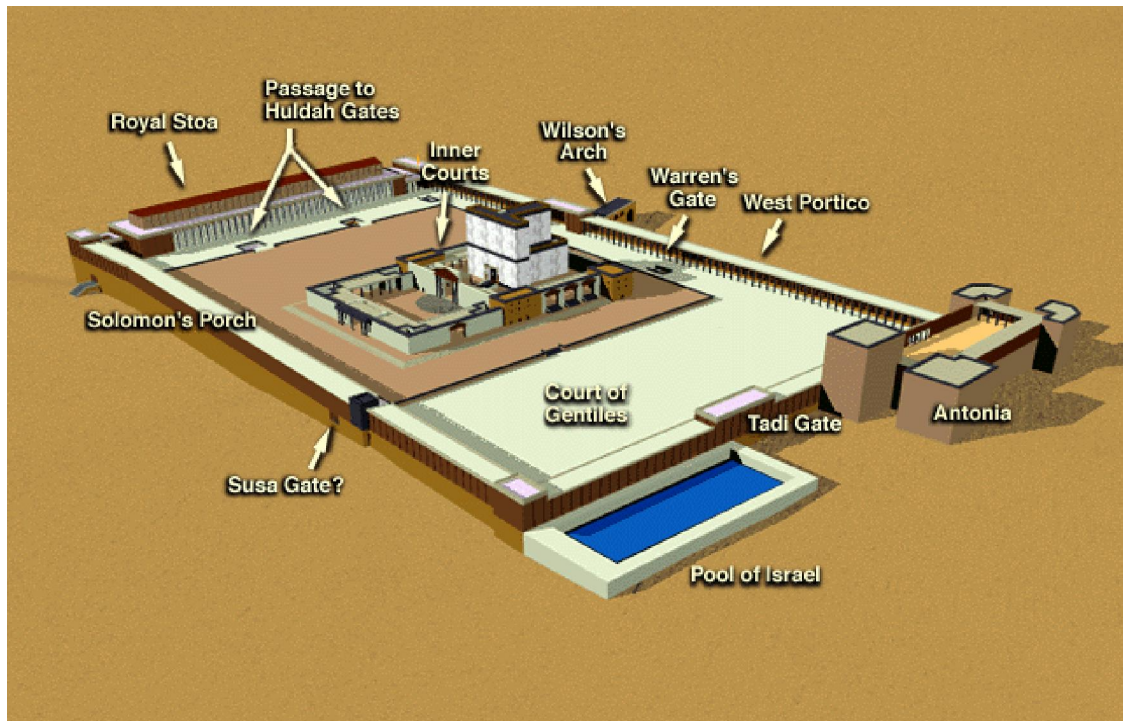
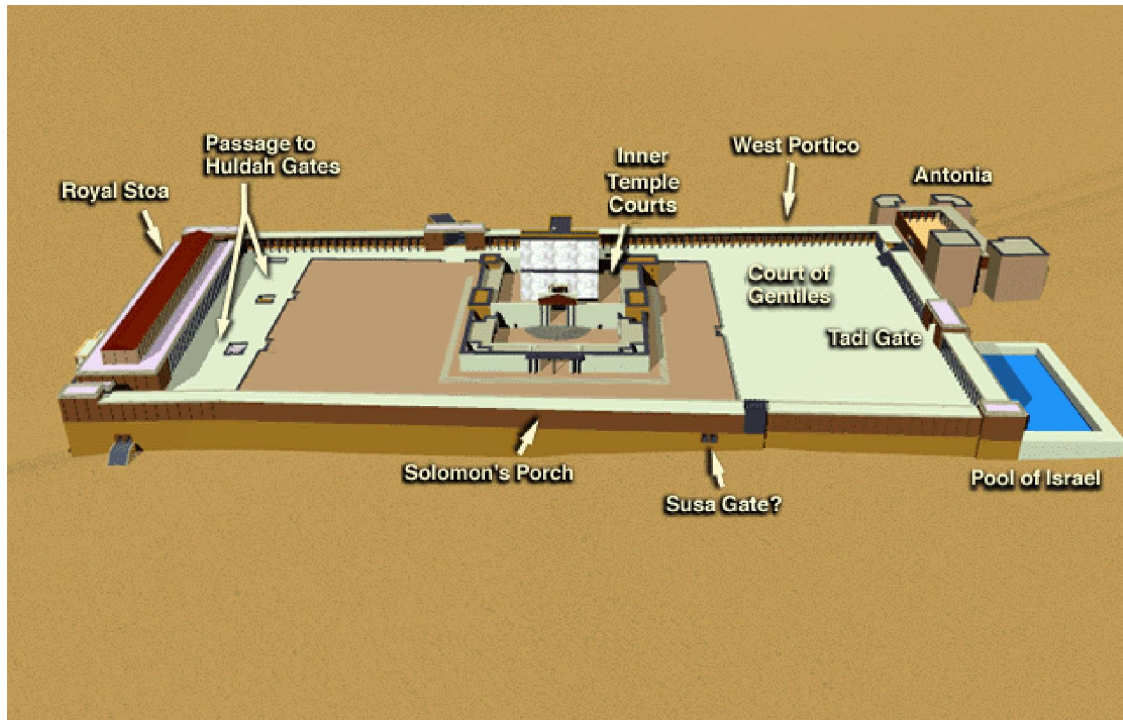
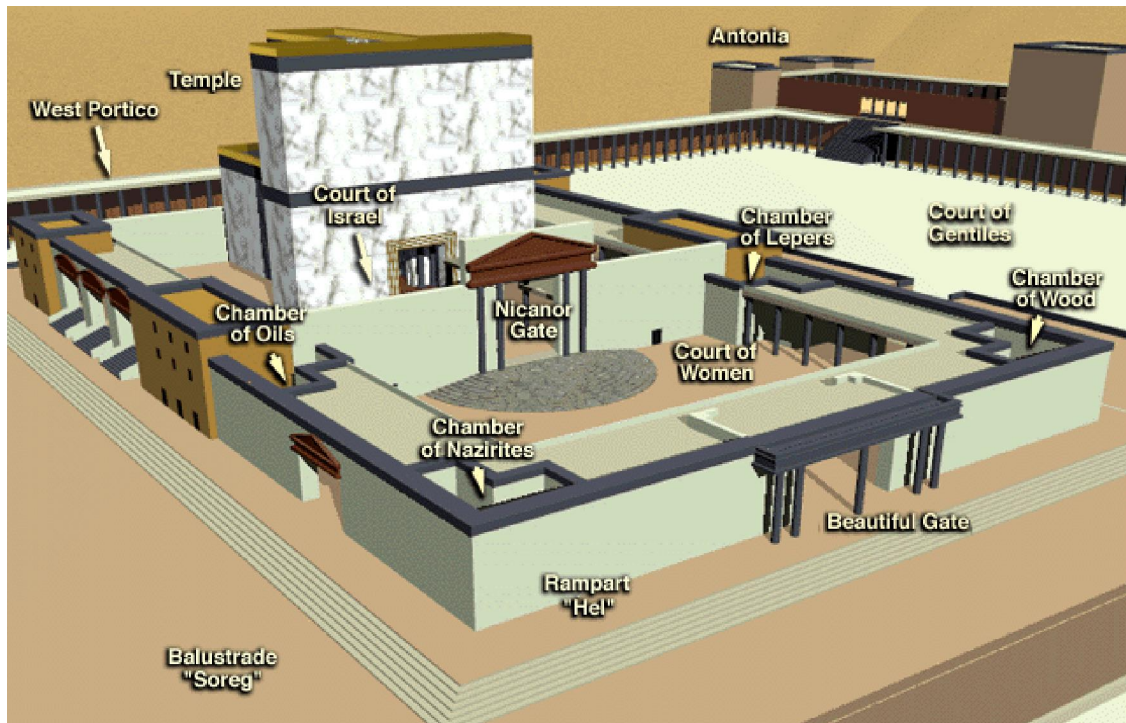
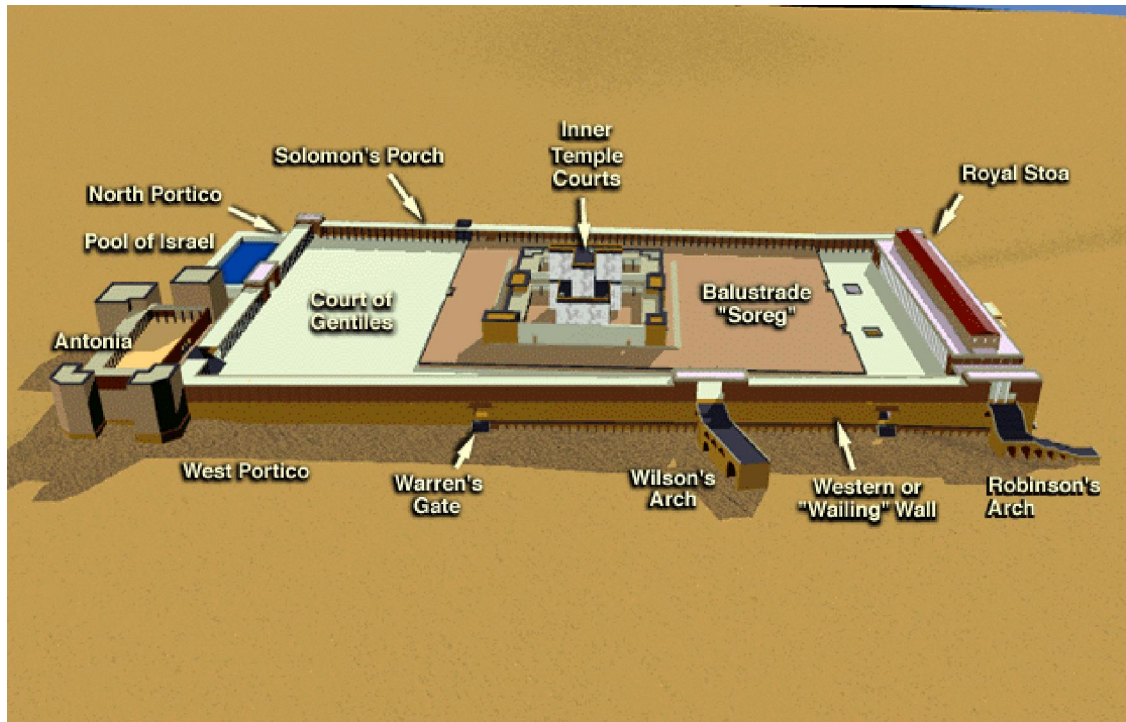


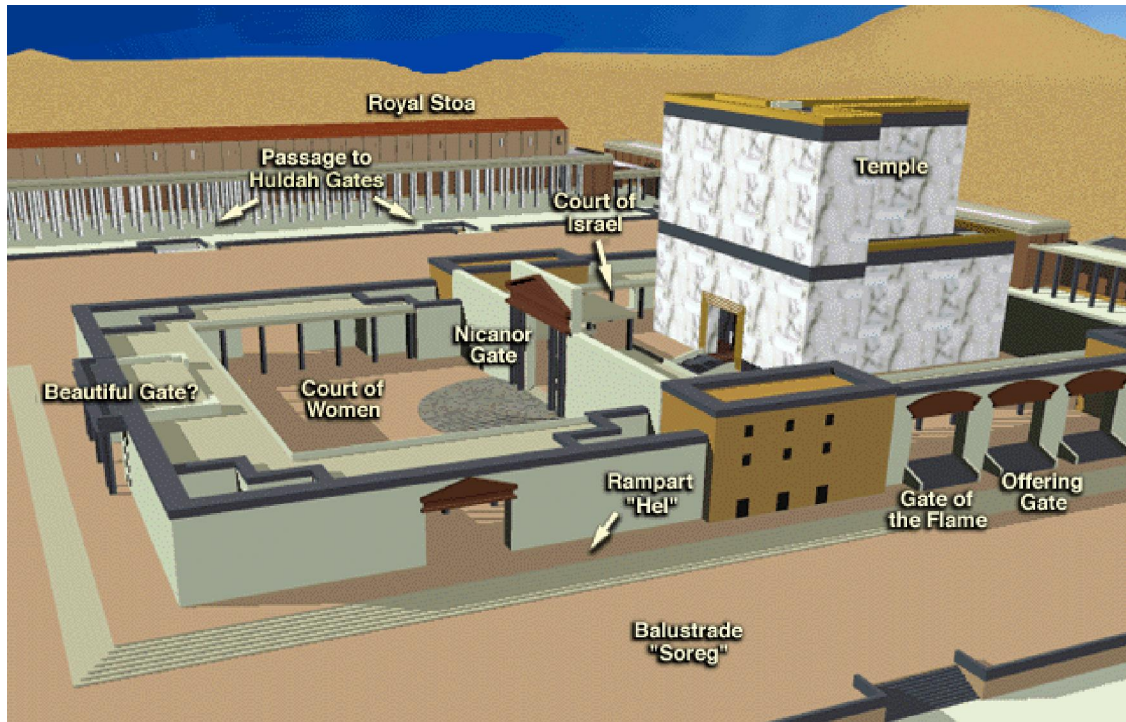
Herod's Temple Mount



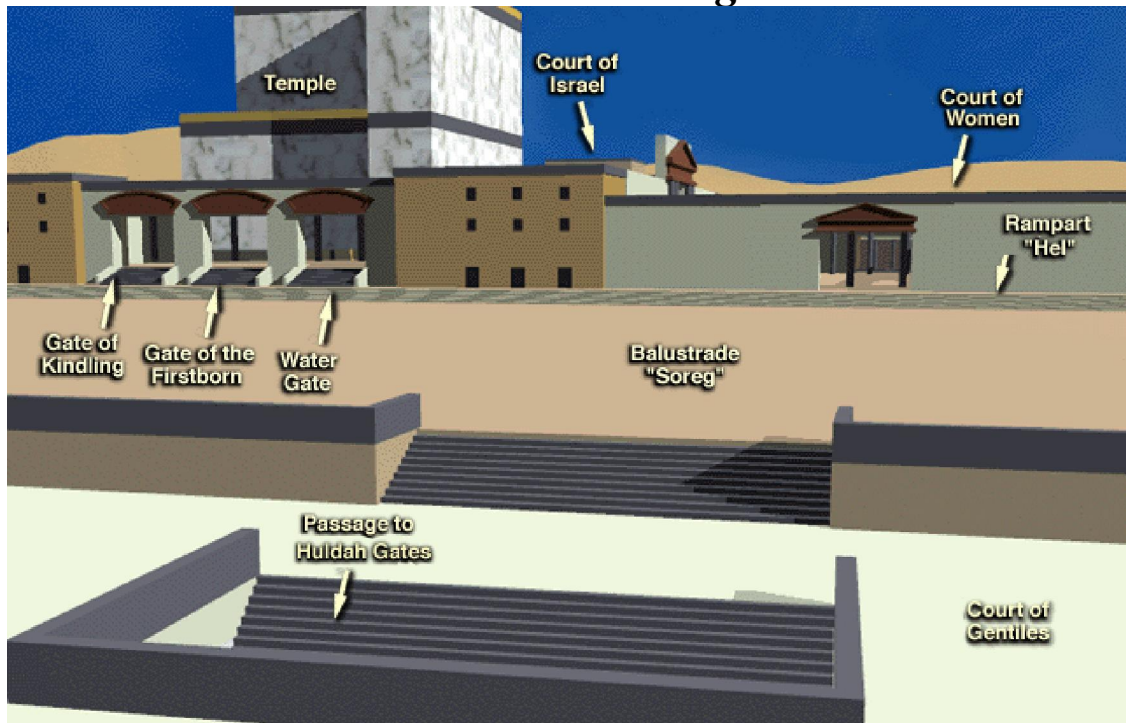




Inner courts



Balustrade Soreg



Royal Stoa



The Gospel According to ST. MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The most ancient of the extant Greek NT manuscripts entitle the book “According to Matthew.” The title appearing in the KJV, “The Gospel According to St. Matthew,” is found in the majority of the later manuscripts, but without the “Saint.” The title in the Textus Receptus (see p. 142), “The Holy Gospel According to Matthew,” is found only in late manuscripts. In the Scriptures the term “gospel” (Gr. *euaggelion*) means “good tidings”; that is, the good tidings of salvation as set forth in the life and teachings of Jesus. It is not applied to the written record itself. However, after the period of the NT the term was applied also to the writings themselves, either singly or collectively.

2. Authorship. Ancient Christian writers unanimously and consistently attribute the first of the four Gospels to Matthew the disciple. Internal evidence indicates that the book was obviously written by a Jew converted to Christianity. Such was Matthew (Matt. 9:9; cf. Mark 2:14). Being a publican prior to his call to discipleship, he was presumably accustomed to preserving written records, a qualification doubtless of great value to one composing a historical narrative. The modest reference to himself at the feast (Matt. 9:10; cf. Luke 5:29) is comparable to the manner in which John (John 21:24) and possibly Mark (Mark 14:51, 52) refer to themselves, and hence may be an indirect testimony to his authorship.

About A.D. 140 Papias of Hierapolis, as quoted by Eusebius (*Church History* iii. 39, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, vol. 1, p. 173), stated that “Matthew wrote the oracles [sayings] in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.” According to Irenaeus half a century later, as quoted by Eusebius (*Church History* v. 8, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, vol. 1, p. 222), “Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the church in Rome.” On the basis of these and similar statements by later writers some have concluded that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Aramaic (the “Hebrew” of Papias and Irenaeus) and later translated into Greek. This theory, however, has not met with general acceptance. The evidence submitted to date is far from conclusive. In view of the fact that numerous “works” are known to have circulated among the Jews in oral form only, it is thought that Papias’ reference to Matthew’s writing of the “oracles” of Jesus designates an oral rather than a written composition, and that the “gospel” of Irenaeus may also have been an oral account. There is no evidence that Papias and Irenaeus refer to what we know today as the Gospel of Matthew. The reasons for concluding that the Gospel of Matthew as we have it today was originally written in Greek are as follows:

1. The Greek text of Matthew does not reveal the characteristics of a translated work. Supposed Aramaisms occur in the other Gospels also, and may reflect nothing more than that the writer thought in Aramaic as he wrote in Greek. The book of Revelation is replete with Aramaic idiomatic expressions.
2. The uniformity of language and style convey the distinct impression that the book was originally written in Greek.
3. The great linguistic similarities to the Greek of Mark, in particular, and to a less extent of Luke, seem to preclude the possibility of the Greek being a translation.

Concerning the origin of the four Gospels see pp. 175-181.

3. Historical Setting. Throughout the lifetime of Christ the land of Palestine was under the jurisdiction of Rome, whose legions, led by Pompey, subjugated the region and annexed it to the Roman province of Syria in 64–63 B.C. Having enjoyed political independence for some 80 years before the coming of the Romans, the Jews profoundly resented the presence and authority of foreign civil and military representatives. The appointment by the Roman Senate of Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.) as king over a large part of Palestine, made the lot of the Jews even more bitter. See pp. 39-42.

Understandably, the desire for independence became a national obsession and affected practically every phase of national life. Above all else, this desire colored the religious thinking of the day and the interpretation of the Messianic passages of the OT. The subjugation of the Jews by Rome was the direct result of disobedience to the divine requirements (see Vol. IV, pp. 30-33). Through Moses and the prophets God had warned His people of the sufferings that would follow disobedience.

Quite naturally the Jews looked for deliverance from the twofold yoke imposed upon them by Caesar and Herod. Repeatedly, would-be messiahs arose to champion the rights and redress the wrongs of their people—by the sword. The Jews fondly believed that the Messianic prophecies of the OT promised a political messiah who would both deliver Israel from foreign oppression and subdue all nations. The political aspirations thus distorted the Messianic hope, and since Jesus of Nazareth did not fulfill these false

expectations, national pride effectively prevented the recognition and acknowledgment of Him as the One to whom the prophets had borne witness.

For a more complete discussion of the historical background of the Gospels see pp. 41-67.

4. Theme. The theme of each of the four Gospels is the incarnation, exemplary life, public ministry, vicarious death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was not by accident that all four Gospels became part of the sacred canon of the NT. Each has its own distinctive contribution to make to the Gospel narrative. So much was involved in the mission of the Son of God to this earth that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, even for one most closely associated with Jesus, to grasp the significance of every detail of that wonderful life. In order that there might be preserved for future generations as complete a picture as necessary of the life and ministry of Jesus, Inspiration led and qualified four men to preserve a record of the Gospel narrative, perhaps each from the point of view that appealed to him personally. Each of the four evangelists was guided by a distinct objective as he wrote. Each omitted certain incidents mentioned by the others and added details of his own. See pp. 191, 192.

The Roman World at the Birth of Jesus.

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¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



It is as if four painters sat down to produce a portrait of Jesus, each one from a different point of view. With each the subject is the same but the aspect is different. Taken together, all four portraits provide a more complete and perfect concept of Jesus than any single picture. The composite picture presented by the four evangelists enables us to see the life of Christ in true perspective. All we need to know about the Saviour has been revealed (see CW 158).

Guided by Inspiration, each evangelist selected incidents and arranged them in the pattern that seemed most appropriate to the objective from his point of view. Thus, he often omitted incidents narrated by the others, with the result that it is at times difficult to correlate the various parts of the Gospel narrative and assign each its correct place in the sequence of events. "There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures. The miracles of Christ are not given in exact order" (EGW MS 24, 1886). For a suggestive arrangement of events in the life of Christ, see pp. 196-201.

Each of the four evangelists introduces Jesus to his readers in a characteristic manner, in keeping with the objectives of his Gospel narrative. Matthew and Luke both present Him with emphasis upon His role as the Son of man; Mark and John place emphasis upon His true divinity and point to Him as the Son of God. Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of Abraham, a Jew, the One who came in fulfillment of promises made to the fathers. Luke points to Him as the Son of Adam (Luke 3:38), and thus the Saviour of all mankind. Taking His divinity for granted, Mark simply states that He is the Son of God (Mark 1:1). John affirms that the true humanity of Jesus (John 1:14) in no way depreciates the fact that He is divine in the absolute sense of the word (John 1:1-3).

One distinctive characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew is the completeness with which the author reports the sermons and other discourses of the Saviour. He presents Christ as the great Teacher. His Gospel contains six major discourses, reported at considerable length, which the other Gospels record either briefly or not at all. These are as follows: (1) the Sermon on the Mount, chs. 5–7, (2) the discourse on discipleship, ch. 10, (3) the Sermon by the Sea, consisting entirely of parables, ch. 13, (4) the discourse on humility and human relations, ch. 18, (5) the discourse on hypocrisy, ch. 23, (6) the discourse on Christ's return, chs. 24, 25.

A second important characteristic has to do with those aspects of the Gospel that clearly reveal the kind of reading audience Matthew primarily had in mind as he wrote. This audience seems to have consisted largely of Jewish Christians and unbelieving Jews. It was evidently his purpose to convert the latter to faith in Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy, and to confirm the faith of the former. More than all the other Gospel writers combined, Matthew presents Jesus as the One to whom the types of the OT pointed forward and the One in whom they were fulfilled. He presents Jesus as coming, not to set aside "the law," but to fulfill it (ch. 5:17). He presents Jesus as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, the father of the nation and its most illustrious king.

It was their false concept of the person of Messiah and of the nature of His kingdom that led the Jews to reject Him. The Messiah of their dreams was a great king who would lead the nation to independence and world supremacy. But of Messiah as the King of righteousness, the One who would lead them to conquer sin in their own lives and to realize true spiritual freedom, they had no understanding. The Jews were unable to reconcile those passages of the OT that envision a suffering Messiah with others that foretell His glorious reign, with the result that they ignored the former and misapplied the latter (see DA 30, 212, 257, 777). For the Jews these seemingly contradictory passages were apparently an insoluble paradox. They looked exclusively for what they took to be the kingdom of His glory—and found no place in their plans for the kingdom of His grace, the necessary prerequisite to the kingdom of glory (see on chs. 4:17; 5:2, 3). Matthew seems to have had a burden to resolve the dilemma that the conquering Messiah was also a suffering Messiah. He solves this problem by showing that Jesus was indeed the King of Israel and the "Seed" promised to David, yet also a suffering Messiah. See on Matt. 2:1.

Another important fact to remember in studying the book of Matthew is that this Gospel presents the life of Christ in essentially a logical, topical order, rather than a chronological one. To be sure, there is general chronological sequence in the arrangement of the major phases of Jesus' life and ministry. But the sequence of events within any given period does not necessarily follow the true chronological order. In fact, Matthew deviates from strict chronological sequence to a greater degree than any of the other Gospel writers, his major objective being to develop a concept of the life and mission of Jesus that will contribute to his primary purpose in writing. He is not the chronicler, recording events as they transpire, but the historian, reflecting upon the significance of those events against the larger background of their setting in the history of the chosen nation. See pp. 191, 192.

5. Outline. The following brief outline reflects Matthew's purpose in his arrangement of the Gospel story. For a more detailed, chronological outline see pp. 196-201.

- I. Birth, Infancy, and Childhood, 1:1 to 2:23.

- A. Before the birth of Jesus, 1:1–25.
- B. The childhood of Jesus, 2:1–23.
- II. Preparation for Ministry, Autumn, A.D. 27, 3:1 to 4:11.
 - A. Ministry of John the Baptist, 3:1–12.
 - B. The baptism, 3:13–17.
 - C. The temptation, 4:1–11.
- III. Galilean Ministry, Passover to Passover, A.D. 29–30, 4:12 to 15:20.
 - A. Early Galilean ministry, 4:12–25.
 - B. The Sermon on the Mount, 5:1 to 8:1.
 - C. Jesus' power over disease, nature, and demons, 8:2 to 9:34.
 - D. Instruction on methods of evangelism, 9:35 to 11:1.
 - E. The delegation from John the Baptist, 11:2–30.
 - F. Conflict with the Pharisees, 12:1–50.
 - G. The Sermon by the Sea: parables of the kingdom, 13:1–52.
 - H. The close of public ministry in Galilee, 13:53 to 15:20.
- IV. Retirement From Public Ministry, Spring to Autumn, A.D. 30, 15:21 to 18:35.
 - A. Ministry in regions bordering on Galilee, 15:21–39.
 - B. Further conflict with the Pharisees, 16:1–12.
 - C. Looking forward to the cross, 16:13 to 17:27.
 - D. The problem of humility in human relations, 18:1–35.
- V. Peraean Ministry, Autumn to Spring, A.D. 19:1 to 20:34.
 - A. Teaching and healing in Peraea, 19:1 to 20:16.
 - B. The last journey to Jerusalem, 20:17–34.
- VI. Closing Ministry at Jerusalem, Passover, A.D. 31, 21:1 to 27:66.
 - A. Conflict with the scribes and Pharisees, 21:1 to 23:39.
 - B. Instruction regarding the second coming of Christ, 24:1 to 25:46.
 - C. The arrest and trial, 26:1 to 27:31.
 - D. The crucifixion and burial, 27:32–66.
- VII. The Resurrection; Postresurrection Appearances, 28:1–20.

CHAPTER 1

1 *The genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph.* 18 *He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary when she was espoused to Joseph.* 191 *The angel satisfieth the misdeeming thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the names of Christ.*

1. The book of the generation. [*The Human Ancestry of Jesus*, Matt. 1:1–17=Luke 3:23b–38. Major comment: Matthew and Luke.] This is Matthew's title for the family record of Jesus appearing in vs. 1–17, and has been rendered variously as "genealogy," "book of the genealogy," "book of the nativity," "ancestry," or "birth roll." The opening words of ch. 2:1 favor the view that Matthew may also have intended this title to cover his narrative of the circumstances leading up to the birth of Jesus (ch. 1:18–25).

In composing an account of the life of Jesus designed primarily for readers of Jewish birth (see p. 273), Matthew begins in typical Jewish style by giving Jesus' family pedigree. Because the coming of Messiah is a matter of prophecy, he shows that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the One to whom Moses and the prophets bore witness. Inasmuch as Messiah was to be the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16), the father of the Jewish nation, and of David, founder of the royal line (Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1; Acts 2:29, 30), Matthew presents evidence that Jesus qualifies as a descendant of these two illustrious men.

Without such evidence, His claim to Messiahship would be held invalid, and additional proofs could be dismissed without further examination of His claim (cf. Ezra 2:62; Neh. 7:64).

At the time Matthew wrote, it was probably possible to verify his genealogy of Jesus by comparing it with accessible public records. A large part of it (vs. 2–12) could be checked against OT lists (1 Chron. 1:34; 2:1–15; 3:5, 10–19). The fact that, so far as we know, no contemporaries of Matthew, even the avowed enemies of the Christian faith, ever challenged the validity of this family pedigree is excellent testimony favoring the genuineness of the genealogical list.

Jesus. Gr. *Iēsous*, equivalent to the Heb. *Yehoshua*‘, “Joshua” (see Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8, where Luke and Paul refer to Joshua as “Jesus”). The name has generally been taken to mean “Jehovah is salvation” (see Matt. 1:21). Some scholars suggest the translation, “Jehovah is generosity.” Joshua’s original name (see Vol. II, p. 169), Oshea, was changed to Jehoshua (see on Num. 13:16). Joshua is an abbreviation of Jehoshua. When Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the common language of the Jews, after the Babylonian captivity, the name became *Yeshua*‘, the form transliterated into Greek as *Iēsous*. *Yeshua*‘ was a common name given Jewish boys in NT times (see Acts 13:6; Col. 4:11), in harmony with the Hebrew custom of selecting names having religious connotations (see also on Matt. 1:21).

Today, names are but little more than identification tags. But in Bible times a name was chosen with the greatest of care because it signified the faith and hope of the parents (see PK 481), the circumstances of the child’s birth, his own personal characteristics, or was related to his life mission—particularly when the name was divinely appointed.

The name Jesus is fraught with historic and prophetic memories. As Joshua led Israel to victory in the earthly promised land, so Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, came to open for us the gates of the heavenly Canaan. But not only is Jesus the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), He is also “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Heb. 3:1). The high priest, upon the return from Babylonian captivity (see on Ezra 2:2), bore the name Joshua (Zech. 3:8; 6:11–15). As Hosea (the name is identical in the Hebrew with the Oshea of Num. 13:16) loved an undeserving wife, sought in vain, for a time, to win her affections, and finally bought her back at the slave market (Hosea 1:2; 3:1, 2), so Jesus came to set the human race free from the slavery of sin (Luke 4:18; John 8:36).

Christ. Gr. *Christos*, a translation of the Heb. *Mashiach* (see on Ps. 2:2), “Messiah,” meaning “Anointed,” or “Anointed One.” Before the resurrection, and commonly so in the four Gospels, Jesus is generally referred to as *the* Christ, making the term a title rather than a personal name. After the resurrection the definite article was generally dropped from common usage and “Christ” became a name as well as a title.

In OT times the high priest (Ex. 30:30), the king (2 Sam. 5:3; cf. 1 Sam. 24:6), and sometimes prophets (1 Kings 19:16) were “anointed” upon consecration to holy service, and were therefore *mashiach*, “anointed” (Lev. 4:3; 1 Sam. 24:6; 1 Chron. 16:21, 22). In Messianic prophecy the term came to be applied specifically to *the* Messiah, who, as Prophet (Deut. 18:15), Priest (Zech. 6:11–14), and King (Isa. 9:6, 7), was the One ordained to be our Redeemer (Isa. 61:1; Dan. 9:25, 26). As Prophet He came to represent the Father before men, as Priest He ascended to represent men before the Father, and as

King He liberates those who believe in Him, not only from the power of sin in this life, but also from the kingdom of sin—and reigns over them in the kingdom of glory.

Christos is from *chriō*, a verb which means, “to rub,” “to massage,” “to anoint.” In the NT, Christ is said to be “anointed” (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9).

Used together, as in Matt. 1:18; 16:20; Mark 1:1; etc., the two names “Jesus” and “Christ” constitute a confession of faith in the union of the divine and human natures in one Person, of belief that Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary, Son of man, is indeed the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God (see Acts 2:38; etc.). See Additional Note on John 1; see on Matt. 1:23; John 1:1–3, 14; Phil. 2:6–8; Col. 2:9.

Son of David. This was the popular designation by which rulers (Matt. 22:42; Mark 12:35; Luke 20:41) and common people (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9; Mark 10:47, 48; Luke 18:38, 39; cf. John 7:42) alike referred to the expected Messiah. Its use as a Messianic title points to an understanding of the prophecies predicting the Davidic descent of the Messiah. To a people weary of the Roman yoke it implied also the restoration of their kingdom to the independence and prosperity of David’s illustrious reign. David himself had understood that the promise of a son to sit upon his throne (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Ps. 132:11) would be fulfilled by the one who was to redeem Israel (Acts 2:29, 30; see on Deut. 18:15). Again and again the prophets of old spoke thus of the Messiah (Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1; Jer. 23:5, 6; etc.). NT writers repeatedly apply the title “seed of David” to Christ (Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; etc.). As the Son of David, Jesus became heir both to David’s throne and to the Messianic promises given to David.

Son of Abraham. Among the heroes of faith, Abraham had the distinction of being called the “Friend” of God (James 2:23; cf. 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8). Because of his faithfulness (see Gal. 3:7, 9) Abraham was selected to become the father of God’s chosen people. The promise that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed was, according to Paul, a definite Messianic prediction (Gen. 22:18; cf. Gal. 3:16). In harmony with his endeavor to convince the Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus, Matthew appropriately and purposefully carries Christ’s genealogy back to Abraham, whereas Luke, writing for Gentile Christians, considered it essential to trace Christ’s ancestral record back to the father of our race. To show that Jesus descended from Abraham, and was thus eligible for consideration as heir to the promises made to him, was sufficient for Matthew’s purpose. See on John 8:35, 39.

For a discussion of differences between the lists of Matthew and Luke see on Luke 3:23.

2. *Abraham begat Isaac.* Except for variations owing to the Greek transliteration of Hebrew names, and for certain intentional omissions (see on vs. 8, 11, 17), Matthew’s genealogy from Abraham to Zorobabel agrees with similar lists in the OT (see 1 Chron. 1:28, 34; 1 Chron. 2:1, 4, 5, 9–12, 15; 3:15–19; cf. Ruth 4:18–22). There are no records with which to compare the names of the intertestamental period from Zorobabel to Christ.

Judas. That is, Judah (see on Gen. 29:35). Paul states that it was “evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda” (Heb. 7:14).

His brethren. Matthew here alludes to the other sons of Jacob, perhaps with the intention of reminding Jews of other tribes that Jesus of the tribe of Judah was *their* Saviour too.

3. Phares and Zara. These were children of Thamar (Tamar) by Judah (see on Gen. 38:6-30). Thamar, probably a Canaanite (see Gen. 38:2, 6), was Judah's daughter-in-law.

Thamar. It is the exception, rather than the rule, to find women named in Hebrew genealogical lists. Even so, Matthew refers to them incidentally rather than specifically as genealogical links. The fact that the names of such honored women as Sarah and Rachel are omitted suggests that the four women mentioned were probably in each case included because of unusual circumstances. It is likely that all four—Thamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bath-sheba—were of Gentile origin. Herein lies an implied rebuke to Jewish exclusiveness, and a tacit recognition of the fact that Jesus belongs to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

With the exception of Ruth, scandals were attached to the names of all these women. A merely human historian might have chosen to pass over their names in silence for fear that the honor of the Messiah be tarnished. But Matthew specifically quotes the Master as saying to the Pharisees that He came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (ch. 9:13). It may be that Matthew, himself a publican and therefore sometimes classed with harlots (see ch. 21:31, 32), found in his heart a tender place for others who were generally shunned as living beyond the pale of respectability.

5. Salmon. See Ruth 4:20; cf. 1 Chron. 2:11. Salmon was a near relative of Caleb and Ephrath (1 Chron. 2:9-11, 19, 24) and of Bethlehem (whose father is another "Salma," see 1 Chron. 2:50, 51, 54), and hence of a family known to have settled Bethlehem Ephratah (see 1 Chron. 2:24, 51, Moffatt; Micah 5:2; see on Gen. 35:19). Some commentators suggest that Salmon may have been one of the spies sent by Joshua into the city of Jericho before Israel crossed the Jordan (Joshua 2:1).

It is sometimes objected that Rahab of Jericho cannot be Rahab the wife of Salmon because the generations Matthew lists between Salmon and David are too few to span the time interval between Rahab of Jericho and David. But this objection is not necessarily valid because: (1) Matthew elsewhere intentionally omits certain of the ancestors of Jesus (see on vs. 8, 11, 17), and following the author of Ruth, may possibly have done so here as well. (2) Rahab was probably young at the time of her marriage (see Joshua 6:23), Booz (Boaz) was evidently no longer young when he married Ruth (Ruth 3:10), and Jesse was along in years when David was born (1 Sam. 17:12-14).

Rahab. See Vol. II, p. 424; see on Ruth 1:1; 2:1. There appears to be little reason to doubt that this is Rahab the Canaanite, the harlot of Jericho who protected the Hebrews sent to spy out that city prior to its capture (Joshua 2; see on ch. 6:23). She is the only person by that name mentioned in the Bible, and the Gr. *Rhachab* of Matthew is an accurate transliteration of the Heb. *Rachab*. However, in Heb. 11:31 and James 2:25 the spelling is *Raab*. (The "Rahab" of Ps. 87:4; 89:10; and Isa. 51:9 is from the Heb. *rahab*, and is a symbolic name for Egypt.) Also, the fact that Rahab is mentioned by name, contrary to the usual rule of not mentioning women in genealogical lists, suggests that Matthew had some special reason for including her. Whatever the case, the Rahab of Joshua 2 holds an honored place in the hall of heroes of faith (Heb. 11:31), and James refers to her as an example of faith in action (James 2:25).

Ruth. The Moabitess who accompanied Naomi upon her return from Moab to Bethlehem (see Ruth 4:18–22; 1 Chron. 2:3–15). The beauty of her devotion to Naomi (Ruth 1:16) and her unobtrusive winsomeness are unsurpassed in the annals of any age.

6. David the king. Even under the Hebrew monarchy the government of Israel was, in principle at least, a theocracy (DA 737, 738; see Vol. IV, p. 27). As supreme Ruler, God sought to direct national policy through His ambassadors, the prophets. David was responsive to divine leadership and sought to maintain a spirit of true humility before the Lord. When reproved for an evil course of action, he manifested an attitude of genuine repentance. He acknowledged his guilt, sought forgiveness, and set out anew to obey the voice of the Lord (2 Sam. 12:1–13; 24:10, 17; Ps. 51:4, 10, 11; etc.). It was David's contrition of heart that made it possible for God to exalt and prosper him (see 1 Kings 3:6; 8:25; Isa. 57:15; Micah 6:8).

Solomon. The second son of Bath-sheba, born after David's sincere repentance and forgiveness (2 Sam. 12:13–24; 1 Kings 1:11–40).

8. Josaphat. That is, Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41–43). Variations in the spelling of names is common in the Bible. Most of the variations in the genealogical list are due to the fact that the names in Matthew's Greek text appear in the main as they do in the LXX. The translators of the KJV simply transliterated the Greek names instead of going back to the Hebrew names of which these Greek names were a transliteration. Sometimes individuals were also known by different names. Thus Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6) was also called Jeconiah (1 Chron. 3:16) or Jechonias (Matt. 1:11), on the basis of the Greek text.

Joram begat Ozias. Here Matthew omits the names of three successive kings of Judah between Joram (Jehoram) and Ozias (Uzziah or Azariah; see 1 Chron. 3:11, 12), namely, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah. This omission could hardly have been accidental, for the royal genealogy, which appears repeatedly in the OT, was a matter of common knowledge; nor could it have been a copyist's error (see on Matt. 1:17). It has been suggested that it may have been Matthew's purpose to reduce the 19 names from Solomon to Jehoiachin to 14, to correspond to the number of generations from Abraham to David (v. 17).

It has also been suggested that Matthew considered these three least worthy of a place in the genealogy of Jesus. Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah were the immediate successors of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and wife of Joram (2 Chron. 22–25). It was Athaliah who introduced Baal worship into the southern kingdom (see on 2 Kings 11:18), as her mother had into the northern kingdom (see 1 Kings 16:31, 32). Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah all did evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Chron. 22:3, 4; 2 Chron. 24:17, 18; 2 Chron. 25:14), at least in the latter part of their reigns.

9. Achaz. See 2 Kings 16.

Ezekias. That is, Hezekiah (2 Kings 18–20). One of the good kings of Judah; but his son Manasses (Manasseh), though he lived to repent of his evil ways, devoted a long and wicked reign to the task of obliterating the reforms of his father.

10. Amon begat Josias. Following the wicked reigns of Manasses (2 Kings 21:1–18) and Amon (2 Kings 21:19–26), Josias (Josiah, 2 Kings 22:1 to 23:28), greatgrandson of Ezekias, and last of the good kings of Judah, ascended the throne. Of the 20 rulers in the ruling house of the southern kingdom over a period of 345 years, a minority served the Lord. In striking contrast, 20 kings representing ten dynasties reigned in the northern

kingdom over a period of 209 years, but there was not one among them who remained faithful to the Lord.

11. Jechonias. Here occurs the the second certain omission in Matthew's list (see on v. 8). Jechonias (Jehoiachin, 2 Kings 24:6, Jeconiah, 1 Chron. 3:16, or Coniah, Jer. 22:24) was actually the son of Jehoiakim and thus literally the grandson, not the son, of Josias (1 Chron. 3:15, 16). Some have suggested that the addition of Jehoiakim to the list would make a more symmetrical division of the generations mentioned in Matt. 1:17 (see comments there), and that Matthew may have originally included the name of Jehoiakim but that it was accidentally lost at a later time, owing to its similarity to Jehoiachin. There is some textual evidence (see p. 146) for inserting the name Jehoiakim between Josias and Jechonias.

His brethren. If Jehoiakim were included (see the foregoing under "Jechonias"), then the "brethren" would refer to actual blood brothers—Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (see on 1 Chron. 3:15). Otherwise, the expression "his brethren" would be true only in a loose sense. Three of the sons of Josias—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah—reigned on the throne of Judah, but one was actually the father and the other two were uncles of Jechonias.

Carried away to Babylon. Thus closes the second division of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (see on v. 17). The period covered deals with the monarchy from its golden age under David and Solomon down to its dissolution and the dark age of Jewish history—the Babylonian captivity.

Between David and Salathiel, Luke lists six more genealogical links than Matthew gives (see Luke 3:27–31). The taking into account of the four omissions by Matthew (see on v. 8 and the foregoing under "Jechonias") leaves a difference of only two. These may simply indicate that the ancestral line followed by Luke contained two more generations than the royal line followed by Matthew. Such a difference is easily possible in a period of five centuries. Between David and Jesus—a period of about 1,000 years—Luke lists 15 more generations than does Matthew, implying further omission on the part of Matthew.

12. Jechonias begat Salathiel. According to the prophecy of Jeremiah (ch. 22:30), Jechonias was to die "childless," but this is immediately explained as meaning that "no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David." Several sons of Jechonias, including Salathiel (Shealtiel), are listed in 1 Chron. 3:17, 18. It is possible that one or more of these accompanied him to Babylon (see on Jer. 22:28). Jechonias was a young man of 18 at the time of his captivity (see 2 Kings 24:8). Upon the death of Nebuchadnezzar, 37 years later, he was released from prison, "dined regularly at the king's table" (2 Kings 25:29, RSV), received a regular allowance from the royal treasury, and enjoyed royal favor, apparently, during the remainder of his life (see on 2 Kings 25:27–29).

Salathiel begat Zorobabel. See on Luke 3:27. In compliance with the decree of Cyrus, which brought the 70 years of captivity to a close, Zorobabel led some 50,000 Jews back to Jerusalem. See on Ezra 2:2.

15. Matthan begat Jacob. Nothing more is known of the eight persons listed from Abiud to Matthan (vs. 13–15) than their names, none of them being mentioned elsewhere. These eight generations span five centuries. Matthew may have omitted certain names here in order that the third section of his genealogy might correspond to the first two

sections (see on Matt. 1:17; Ezra 7:5). The facts that (1) the number of generations listed hardly seems proportionate to the length of time, that (2) Luke lists, for this period, nine more generations than Matthew, and that (3) Matthew omitted four names from the second section of his genealogy (see on vs. 8, 11) at least hint at such a possibility.

It has been suggested that the names Matthan, in Matthew, and Matthat, in Luke (ch. 3:24), are both variant spellings for Matthew (not the evangelist), and that therefore the two names “Matthan” and “Matthat” in reality indicate one and the same person. If so, Jacob and Heli (Luke 3:23) would be brothers. Heli is thus presumed to have had no male heir and to have adopted Joseph, his nephew, as his own legal son and heir (cf. on Luke 3:27). The objective of this suggestion is to make Joseph properly the “son of Heli,” as in Luke (ch. 3:23), as well as the son of Jacob, as in Matthew. According to another theory, Jacob married the childless widow of his brother Heli, in harmony with the levirate marriage law (Deut. 25:5–10). Joseph, the first son born to this union, would actually be the son of Jacob but legally the son and heir of Heli. Both of these suggestions, originally advanced by certain early Church Fathers, are based upon supposition and therefore open to serious question. For a further discussion of the problem see on Luke 3:23.

16. Joseph the husband. Matthew carefully avoids stating that Joseph “begat” Jesus. Joseph was related to Jesus, says Matthew, not as His father, but as the husband of His mother. The generic link “begat,” employed up to this point, is dropped, Matthew thereby emphasizing the fact of the virgin birth.

Mary. Gr. *Maria*, *Mariam* in the LXX, from the Heb. *Miryam*. Like Joseph, Mary was of the house of David (DA 44; cf. Acts 2:30; 3:23; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8), for it was through her alone that Jesus could literally be “the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3; cf. Ps. 132:11). The fact that Mary’s “cousin” (Luke 1:36) was “of the daughters of Aaron” (Luke 1:5) in no way requires that Mary be of the tribe of Levi instead of the tribe of Judah. For the word translated “cousin” see on Luke 1:36.

It seems that Mary spent her early life in Nazareth (Luke 1:26). She had a kinswoman, Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias (Luke 1:36). Also, she had relatives in Cana, a village near Nazareth (see John 2:1, 5; DA 144, 146). The idea that her mother’s name was Anna is based exclusively on tradition. Mary was highly favored of the Lord and blessed among women (Luke 1:28, 42). From the first promise of a deliverer, who was to be of the “seed” of the woman (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:5), devout mothers in Israel hoped that their first-born might be the promised Messiah (DA 31). To Mary this great and unique honor was given.

Mary was no doubt chosen primarily because at the appointed time (Dan. 9:24–27; Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4) her character more closely reflected the divine ideals of motherhood than that of any other daughter of David. She was one of that select minority who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25, 38; Mark 15:43; cf. Heb. 9:28). It was this hope that purified her life (cf. 1 John 3:3) and qualified her for her sacred role (PP 308; PK 245; DA 69). Every mother in Israel today may cooperate with Heaven as Mary did (DA 512), and may, in a sense, make of her children sons and daughters of God. See on Luke 2:52.

Of whom. In Greek this expression is in the feminine singular, thus making “Mary” the antecedent and expressly excluding Joseph as the natural father of Jesus. But by his marriage to Mary, Joseph became the legal, though not the literal, father of Jesus (see ch. 13:55).

17. All the generations. It is clear from the record that Matthew omits at least four names he would have included had it been his intention to provide a complete genealogy (see on vs. 8, 11). There may have been other omissions in that part of the list covering the intertestamental period, for from Abraham to Christ, inclusive, Luke lists 56 names to Matthew's 41 (see on Matt. 1:15). Therefore, by "all the generations" Matthew clearly refers to those he has listed, and not to all the progenitors of Christ who actually lived and might have been included in a full list. It is possible that the number of names in the second and third sections of the genealogy were adjusted to correspond with the number in the first section.

Matthew may have adopted the device of an abbreviated, numerically symmetrical list, as an aid to the memory. Abbreviated lists are found in the OT, as, for example, in Ezra (see on Ezra 7:1, 5). But that abbreviated genealogy was evidently considered adequate proof of Ezra's descent from Aaron, at a time when others were denied admission to the priesthood because they could not give acceptable proof of their ancestry (Ezra 2:62; Neh. 7:64). The Jewish philosopher Philo and the Jewish historian Josephus, both of whom were practically contemporary with Jesus, gave abbreviated genealogies that they evidently considered adequate to establish their pedigrees. An Arab today commonly gives his ancestry by mentioning a few prominent names, his purpose being, not to provide a complete list, but simply to establish descent.

Matthew's threefold division of the genealogy is historically sound, for each section constitutes a distinct period in Jewish history. During the first, from Abraham to David, the Hebrew economy was essentially patriarchal; during the second it was monarchic; and during the third the Jews were under the dominion of various foreign powers.

Fourteen generations. Three divisions, each composed of 14 generations, would total 42 instead of the 41 listed by Matthew. This seeming discrepancy has been explained in various ways. Some propose that the name Jechonias should be counted twice, as the last name in the second group and the first in the third group. Others are of the opinion that Matthew originally listed the name Jehoiakim between those of Josias and Jechonias (see on v. 11).

Unto Christ. Literally, "unto the Christ" (see on v. 1). Matthew is thinking of Christ in historical perspective as the Messiah of prophecy.

18. The birth. [*The Announcement to Joseph; His Marriage, Matt. 1:18–25.* See The Nativity.] Perhaps Matthew mentions no more of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus than were necessary by way of evidence that His coming constituted a fulfillment of the OT prophecies (see v. 22). In harmony with the purpose of his Gospel, Matthew, in contrast with Mark and Luke, omitted much of the human interest side of Jesus' life in order that he might concentrate on Jesus' teachings (see p. 191).

His mother Mary. Jesus was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Mary was as much in need of salvation from her sins as any other son or daughter of Adam (Rom. 3:10, 23). There is but "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Espoused to Joseph. That is, betrothed, or engaged, to him. Both Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth (Luke 1:26, 27; 2:4), "their own city" (Luke 2:39), though, as descendants of David, they considered Bethlehem their ancestral home (see DA 66). The fact that they found lodging in Bethlehem only with difficulty suggests that neither of them had close relatives living there at the time. Both Joseph and Mary were of the house

and lineage of David (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:26, 27; 2:4; see on Matt. 1:16). They were probably members of the small circle that eagerly studied the prophecies and looked for the coming of the Messiah (DA 44, 47, 98). If so, knowing that the time was near, they, like other members of this group, no doubt prayed that God would hasten His coming (see Luke 2:25, 26, 38). It seems that Joseph was a widower at the time of his marriage to Mary. He had at least six other children (Matt. 12:46; 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3; DA 90, 321; four brothers and an unspecified number of sisters are mentioned), all probably older than Jesus (DA 86, 87). See on Matt. 1:25.

Before they came together. Matthew has already indicated that Joseph was not the father of Jesus (v. 16). Here, he reaffirms the fact. During the time of betrothal the prospective bride and groom were bound legally as husband and wife though they did not live together (Deut. 22:23, 24). Betrothal constituted a legal relationship, a solemn covenant that could be broken only by legal means, that is, by divorce (see Mishnah, *Gittin* 8. 9, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 389; *Kiddushin* 3:7, 8, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 318, 320).

Found with child. See on Luke 1:26–38. The angel had appeared to Mary after her betrothal (Luke 1:26, 27), but prior to the time of her conception (Luke 1:31, 35). Of the visit of the angel to Mary, Joseph apparently knew nothing till later. The appearance of the angel to Joseph did not occur until he already knew that Mary was “with child” (Matt. 1:18, 20).

Holy Ghost. Better, “Holy Spirit.” “Ghost” is from an old Anglo-Saxon word. The expressions translated “Holy Ghost” and “Holy Spirit” (Luke 11:13; etc.) are identical in the Greek. The Holy Ghost is represented as the Agent through whom the creative and life-giving power of God is exercised (cf. Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; John 3:3–8; Rom. 8:11; etc.). The role of the Holy Spirit in the birth of Jesus is more clearly stated by Luke than by Matthew (Luke 1:35). It was by the agency of the Holy Spirit that “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14), and that the Son of Mary could be called the “Son of God” (see on Luke 1:35).

In an endeavor to discredit Jesus as the Messiah, the Jews manufactured the fiction that He was an illegitimate child (John 8:41; 9:29). But it is worthy of note that the most learned Jewish scholars today recognize that story to be sheer invention. Joseph Klausner, for instance, says that “there is no historical foundation for the tradition of Jesus’ illegitimate birth” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 36).

The incarnation of Jesus is a sublime and unfathomable miracle. He was “in the form of God” (Phil. 2:6; John 1:2), adored by the heavenly hosts and seated upon the throne of the universe. But as the King of glory He chose to “give back the scepter into the Father’s hands” (DA 22, 23), that He might “for a little while” be made “lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:7, 8, RSV), “in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). Afterward, He would again receive “all power” (Matt. 28:18), be “enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels” (AA 38), and be crowned “with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:7, RSV; see also Isa. 52:13–15). The mystery of the incarnation, however, is far surpassed by the mystery of the condescending love that prompted it (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 4:9). The “mystery of godliness” is the grand ministry of all time (1 Tim. 3:16). See on Phil. 2:7, 8; see Additional Note on John 1.

19. Just. Gr. *dikaios*, which may describe one who is correct, as observant of rules and customs, or righteous, as in accordance with what is right. In the NT *dikaios* is often used in the broad sense of correspondence to the divine standard. Thus Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke 1:5, 6), Simeon (Luke 2:25), and Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50) are all described as *dikaios*. Pilate's wife referred to Jesus as a "just man," Gr. *dikaios* (Matt. 27:19). From the Jewish point of view a "just man" was a strict observer of the laws of Moses and of rabbinical traditions. As a result, Joseph may have questioned whether it would be morally right for him to marry someone who, it appeared, was an adulteress.

Not willing. Joseph tempered his sense of justice with mercy for the supposed offender. He was "not willing" to bring upon Mary additional embarrassment and suffering. The presumed offense was against himself. He could legally "put her away" merely by declaring that she did not please him (Matt. 19:3, 8; Mark 10:4), without mentioning his reason for doing so.

A public example. The fact that Joseph sought to spare Mary the embarrassment of a public trial is evidence of his own integrity as well as of his considerateness toward her.

Minded to put her away. Or, "resolved to divorce her" (RSV). From the time of betrothal both parties were legally bound, each to the other, and might be separated only by divorce (see on chs. 1:18; 5:27).

20. The angel. This was probably Gabriel, who had already appeared to Zacharias (Luke 1:11, 19); and to Mary (see on Luke 1:19).

In a dream. Luke (ch. 1:26–38) implies that the angel appeared to Mary visibly, not in a dream or a vision: he "came in unto her" (v. 28). To Joseph, however, the angel appeared in a dream while he was brooding over the problem that perplexed him. Inspired dreams are one of God's appointed ways of revealing His will to men (Num. 12:6; Joel 2:28; cf. Gen. 20:3; 31:11, 24; 41:1; etc.).

Thou son of David. Joseph knew, of course, that he was of the royal line. He may even have been heir apparent to the throne of David, as could be implied by Matthew's genealogy.

Fear not. He was not to hesitate or to question Mary's virtue. As a "just man" (v. 19) Joseph need have no fear that by taking Mary he would forfeit righteousness. In fact, God required this act of faith.

Wife. Gr. *gunē*, meaning (1) woman in general (chs. 9:20; 13:33; etc.), (2) a wife (chs. 14:3; 18:25), (3) one betrothed (Gen. 29:21, LXX; Deut. 22:23, 24, LXX; cf. Rev. 21:9). Here the third meaning evidently applies.

21. She shall bring forth. The angel did not tell Joseph that his "wife" would bear him a son, as he had told Zacharias concerning John (Luke 1:13). Jesus was to be born "the Son of God," not the son of Joseph (Luke 1:35), but from the moment of Jesus' birth Joseph was to be as His father. Like other children, Jesus would be benefited by a father's companionship, guidance, and protection.

Call his name. Joseph was to have the privilege of naming his "Son," an act usually considered to be the paternal prerogative (see Luke 1:59–63). Mary was also to participate in the naming of Jesus (Luke 1:31). Names of Jewish children were officially bestowed a week after birth, on the child's eighth day, when the rite of circumcision was performed (Luke 2:21).

Jesus. See on v. 1.

He shall save. The name Jesus means “Jehovah is salvation” (see on v. 1). The word translated “he” is emphatic, as if the angel had said, “For he it is who shall save,” etc.

Echoing down through the ages of antiquity had sounded the promise, “Lo, I come” (Ps. 40:7; Zech. 2:10; Heb. 10:7). For centuries the Hebrew people—His people—had waited expectantly for the coming of their Deliverer. Now, “when the fulness of the time was come” (Gal. 4:4), the finger of destiny pointed to the One who was to fulfill these expectations. See on John 1:14.

From their sins. Sin had bound men (Rom. 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19) in its prison house (Isa. 42:7). Christ came that He might loose the bonds, open the prison doors, and deliver the captives from the sentence of death (Isa. 61:1; Rom. 7:24, 25). He came to save us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins. He came, not only to save us from sins actually committed, but from our potential tendencies that lead to sin (Rom. 7:23–5; 1 John 1:7, 9). He came to redeem us from “all iniquity” (Titus 2:14), including every hereditary and cultivated tendency to evil (DA 671).

Christ did not come to save His people from the power of Rome, as the Jews fondly hoped, but from the power of a far more formidable foe. He did not come to “restore again the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6), but to restore the dominion of God in the hearts of men (Luke 17:20, 21). Christ did not come primarily to save men from poverty and social injustice (Luke 12:13–15), as many apostles of the social gospel claim today, but from *sin*, the fundamental cause of poverty and injustice.

22. *All this was done.* Every important aspect of the life and mission of Jesus—His nature, His birth, the events of His life, and most particularly His sufferings and death—were all foretold by the prophets of old (see DA 242, 820). Not only so, but every act of His life was performed in fulfillment of a plan that existed from eternity. Ere He came to earth that plan lay before Him in all its details, and each event had its appointed hour (DA 147, 451; see on Deut. 18:15; Luke 2:49).

That it might be fulfilled. Expressions of this nature are characteristic of Matthew (see chs. 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9, 35). The Greek construction here employed may indicate either *purpose* or simply *result*. Accordingly this clause may be translated either, “in order that it might be fulfilled,” or, “as a result it was fulfilled.” Matthew uses this construction in both ways, and the context must determine in each case which is intended. The predictions concerning Christ had been made supernaturally; their fulfillment came about largely in a natural way, so far as men could see, yet with events ordained by Him who “ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 4:17; DA 147; see on Luke 2:49). Certain things happened, not *to* fulfill prophecy, but rather *in* fulfillment of prophecy. The sense of Matthew’s statement, “that it might be fulfilled,” would therefore be rendered more appropriately, “in fulfillment of” (see on Deut. 18:15).

23. *A virgin.* Literally, “*the virgin.*” Directly and indirectly Matthew and Luke supply evidence to confirm the truth of the virgin birth: (1) Both affirm that Jesus was born of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). (2) They declare that Mary was to “bring forth a son” who was not to be the son of Joseph (see on Matt. 1:21) but the Son of God (Luke 1:35). (3) Mary remained a virgin “till she had brought forth” Jesus (Matt. 1:25). (4) Mary affirmed her virginity to the angel (Luke 1:34). Thus the virgin birth of Jesus is fully attested, even apart from the word “virgin” itself, and would stand even if Matthew had never used that word in this setting.

Matthew and Luke, writing as they did under divine direction, would not have related the story of the virgin birth if it had not been true. They knew well how the Jewish leaders had taunted Jesus because of the mysterious circumstances surrounding His birth, and that they were giving critics further opportunity for ridicule by repeating the story (see DA 715).

There can be no doubt that Matthew here uses “virgin” in the strict sense of the word, in reference to Mary as a chaste, unmarried young woman. For a consideration of the objection that the prophecy of Isaiah, “a virgin shall conceive,” applied only to a local situation in his day, see on Isa. 7:14. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Matthew applies Isaiah’s prediction to Christ, and in doing so uses the word *parthenos*, which strictly means “virgin” and nothing else. For a complete discussion of the problem of Isa. 7:14 see *Problems in Bible Translation*, pp. 151–169.

Rejecting all miracles, modern Bible critics generally dismiss the idea of the virgin birth as unworthy of an enlightened mind. They direct attention to the fact that, of all NT writers, only Matthew and Luke even mention it. They stress the fact that neither Mark, presumably the earliest of the Gospels, nor John, written to confirm the divinity of Jesus, nor Paul, the great theologian of the NT, so much as allude to it. The critics conclude that Mark knew nothing of the virginity of Mary, and that John and Paul considered the idea too fanciful to be worth mentioning.

These are all arguments from silence, and as such prove nothing. Matthew and Luke refer to the virginity of Mary as one detail of the birth narrative, and since Mark and John do not record the birth narrative at all they have no comparable reason for referring to this particular detail of it. The same is true of Paul, who stresses the incarnation, the union of divinity with humanity, as the great central fact implicit in the birth of Jesus. As the means by which the incarnation was accomplished, the virgin birth is, in a sense, incidental to the greater truth. The Pauline concept of the deity of Jesus Christ is wholly consistent with the virgin birth (see Phil. 2:6–8; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:1–9; etc.). Except for the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection Paul is almost altogether silent concerning details of the life narrative of our Lord, and he deals with these three events simply as historical facts.

The critics point to the fact that pagans attributed the greatness of such men as Alexander, Pythagoras, Plato, and Augustus Caesar to descent from the gods and to supposed virgin birth. But this is no more valid an argument than to say that the existence of spurious coins and counterfeits of the great masterpieces of art proves that there are no genuine ones.

If the statements of Matthew and Luke relative to the virgin birth are to be dismissed as incredible because the truth thus expressed transcends human knowledge and experience, many other passages throughout the Gospels must be discarded on the same basis. If the human mind is made the standard for determining the reliability of Scripture, the Bible ceases to be the Word of God to man and becomes merely a human document.

It should not be forgotten that the entire plan of salvation is a miracle, a “mystery” (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:9; 3:9; Col. 1:27; 2:2; Rev. 10:7). In the first place, it is a mystery that God could love sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). It is likewise a mystery that infinite wisdom could devise a plan whereby mercy might be combined with justice (Ps. 85:10) so as to meet the just claims of God’s holy law and at the same time save the sinner from its penalty (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23). It is a miracle that man, who is naturally at enmity

with God (Rom. 8:7), can come to live at peace with Him (Rom. 5:1). It is a miracle that Christ can deliver from the reign of sin and death a man bent on evil (Rom. 7:24; Rom. 8:1, 2), and enable him to live a perfect life in harmony with the divine character (Rom. 8:3, 4). It is a miracle that a man can be born again (John 3:3–9), that an imperfect man (Rom. 3:23) can be transformed (Rom. 12:2) by the grace of Christ into a perfect man (Matt. 5:48) and become a son of God (1 John 3:1–3). The virgin birth, the perfect life, the vicarious death, the glorious resurrection of Jesus, are all mysteries of the human mind. The Christian religion makes no apology for the great mysteries of the plan of salvation, for God's redeeming love is itself the greatest of all mysteries.

The incarnation of the Son of God is the sovereign fact of all time, the cornerstone of the Christian faith. But apart from the virgin birth there could be no true incarnation, and without the incarnation and virgin birth the Bible becomes mere fable and legend, Christianity a pious hoax, and salvation a disappointing mirage. See Additional Note on John 1.

With child. That is, by the Holy Spirit, as Luke also testifies (Luke 1:35). "When the fulness of the time" came (Gal. 4:4), God brought His Son into the world, having prepared for Him a body (Heb. 10:5).

Emmanuel. The Greek transliteration of the Heb. *'Immanu' El*, literally, "God with us." The Son of God came to dwell, not only among us, but to be identified with the human family (John 1:1–3, 14; Rom. 8:1–4; Phil. 2:6–8; Heb. 2:16, 17; DA 23). See Additional Note on John 1; see on John 1:1–3, 14. "Emmanuel" was not so much a personal name as it was a title descriptive of His mission (cf. Isa. 9:6, 7; 1 Cor. 10:4).

24. Took unto him. See vs. 18, 20. When God spoke, Joseph acted, without doubt or delay. In this perhaps more than in any other aspect of the character of Joseph is it apparent why he was suited to be the earthly protector of Mary and her child Jesus. In taking Mary to his house, Joseph acted on faith. Such an event as that announced by the angel was unknown in the annals of human experience, but Joseph believed that "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26; cf. Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17; Zech. 4:6; Luke 1:37; Rom. 4:21).

The role of Joseph was humble yet indispensable, and his prompt compliance with the angel's instructions made a great deal of difference, both to Mary and to public opinion.

25. Knew her not. The form of the verb in Greek is against the Roman Catholic tradition of Mary's perpetual virginity, for it implies that Mary's virginity continued only until the birth of Jesus. However, the word "till" (Gr. *heōs*) is not conclusive either for or against perpetual virginity. The most natural meaning of v. 25 is that although Mary did not live with Joseph as his wife before the birth of Jesus, she did so afterward. Compare the uses of *heōs* in the LXX of Gen. 8:7; 1 Sam. 15:35; 2 Sam. 6:23 and in Matt. 5:26; 12:20; 18:30; 22:44. Jesus had both brothers and sisters, but the brothers, at least, were older than Jesus, and therefore Joseph's children by a former marriage (see on Matt. 12:46). The fact that Jesus committed His mother to the care of John (John 19:27) may imply that Mary had no other children of her own. On the other hand, she may have had children who were not in a position to care for her or who were unsympathetic toward both her and Jesus. See on Matt. 1:18.

Her firstborn son. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of the word "firstborn." However, such an omission in no way affects the

certainty that Jesus was Mary's first-born, for these same manuscripts have the statement in Luke 2:7.

Among the Jews the term "firstborn" was frequently used in a technical, legal sense. As a result of the deliverance of Israel's first-born from the tenth Egyptian plague, God claimed all the first-born sons of Israel as His own (Ex. 13:2; Num. 3:13). At Sinai the tribe of Levi was accepted for the service of the sanctuary in the place of the first-born of all the tribes, but the Lord required that every first-born son be redeemed (Num. 3:45, 46). Technically, the "firstborn" might be an only child.

Called his name Jesus. Names were officially conferred on children on the eighth day after birth (Luke 2:21). At that time "Jesus" was registered as the son of Mary and Joseph. See on Matt. 1:1.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

21 4T 251

23 DA 19, 24, 25, 26; Ed 83; ML 290

CHAPTER 2

1 *The wise men out of the east are directed to Christ by a star. 11 They worship him, and offer their presents. 14 Joseph fleeth into Egypt, with Jesus and his mother. 16 Herod slayeth the children: 20 himself dieth. 23 Christ is brought back again into Galilee to Nazareth.*

1. When Jesus was born. [*Visit of the Magi, Matt. 2:1–12.* See Childhood and Youth of Jesus; the Synopsis of the Life of Christ and the Suggestive Chronology of Christ's Birth.] Matthew mentions but briefly the fact of Jesus' birth (ch. 1:25), and omits the various incidents connected with that event that are recorded in Luke 1:26 to Luke 2:40. Inasmuch as Matthew places emphasis on Jesus as the Messiah of OT prophecy, he proceeds to demonstrate the fact that Jesus did, in fact, fulfill all of those prophecies (see on ch. 1:22). He appears to mention, by way of introduction, chiefly such incidents connected with the infancy of Jesus as were matters of prophecy and such as pointed to the kingship of the Messiah (see chs. 1:1, 6, 17, 23; 2:2, 6, 15, 17, 18, 23). On the other hand, Luke, writing more for the Gentiles (see on ch. 1:3), emphasizes that Jesus, the Son of God (vs. 32, 35, 76), grew up and lived as a man among men in order that He might be the Saviour of all men (ch. 2:10, 14, 31, 32).

For the purposes of this commentary the birth of Jesus is tentatively assigned to the autumn of 5 B.C. (see p. 240; a Synopsis of the Life of Christ and a Suggestive Chronology of Christ's Birth).

Bethlehem. Literally, "house of bread." Its earlier name, Ephrath (Gen. 48:7), or Ephratah (Micah 5:2), means "fertility" (see on Gen. 35:19). The region of Bethlehem, its hills and valleys covered with vines, fig trees, olive groves, and grain, was probably, in part, the breadbasket of Judea. This vicinity was filled with memories for the Jewish people of Christ's day, as it is for Christians today. It was in this area that Ruth had gleaned in the fields of Boaz (Ruth 2–4, and that David had watched his father's flocks (1 Sam. 16:1, 11, 17:15). Here also Samuel anointed David king (1 Sam. 16:13). For further information concerning Bethlehem see on Gen. 35:19; Ruth 3:3; 4:1. See Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus.

Of Judaea. To distinguish Bethlehem "of Judaea" from Bethlehem of Galilee, a town about 7 mi. (11.26 km.) northwest of Nazareth (Joshua 19:15).

Herod. That is, Herod the Great (see pp. 39–42).

Wise men. Gr. *magoi*, which designated men of the various educated classes. Our word “magicians” comes from this root. But these “wise men” were not magicians in the modern sense of sleight-of-hand performers. They were of noble birth, educated, wealthy, and influential. They were the philosophers, the counselors of the realm, learned in all the wisdom of the ancient East. The “wise men” who came seeking the Christ-child were not idolaters; they were upright, men of integrity (DA 59, 61).

They studied the Hebrew Scriptures, and there found a clearer transcript of truth. In particular, the Messianic prophecies of the OT claimed their attention, and among these they found the words of Balaam: “There shall come a Star out of Jacob” (Num. 24:17). They probably also knew and understood the time prophecy of Daniel (Dan. 9:25, 26), and came to the conclusion that the Messiah’s coming was near. See pp. 61, 62.

On the night of Christ’s birth a mysterious light appeared in the sky, which became a luminous star that persisted in the western heavens (see DA 60). Impressed with its import, the wise men turned once more to the sacred scrolls. As they sought to understand the meaning of the sacred writings, they were instructed in dreams to go in search of the Messiah. Like Abraham, they knew not at first where they were to go, but followed as the guiding star led them on their way.

The tradition that there were but three wise men arose from the fact that there were three gifts (Matt. 2:11), and is without support in Scripture. An interesting but worthless legend gives their names as Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior. The unfounded idea that they were kings was deduced from Isa. 60:3 (cf. Rev. 21:24).

For comment on the extent of Jewish influence throughout the Roman world of Christ’s time see pp. 59-62.

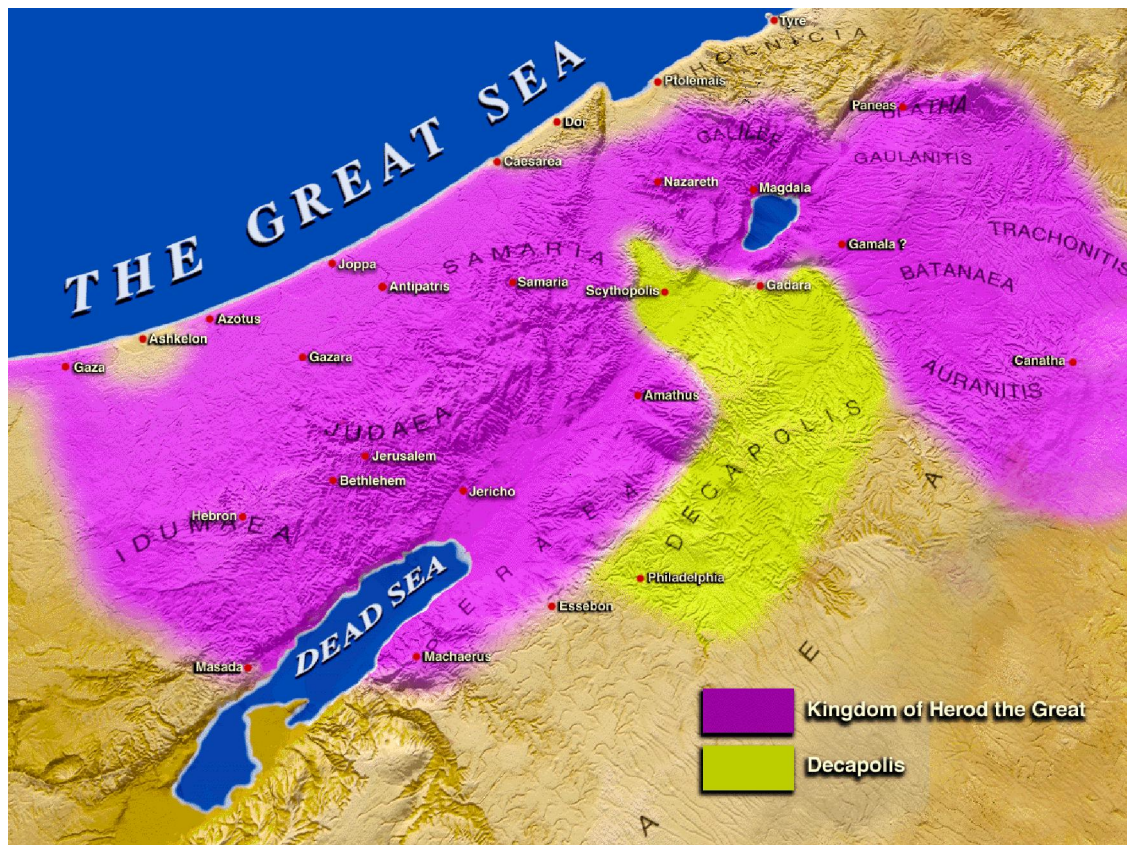
From the east. The Jews regarded the regions of northern Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia as “east.” Thus Haran was in “the land of the people of the east” (Gen. 29:1, 4). The king of Moab later brought Balaam “from Aram [that is, Syria], out of the mountains of the east” (Num. 23:7; see on ch. 22:5). Isaiah spoke of Cyrus, the Persian, as “the righteous man from the east” (Isa. 41:2) and “a ravenous bird from the east” (ch. 46:11).

Some have thought that the wise men were from the same section of the “east country” as was Balaam (see DA 59, 60), whose home has recently been identified with the Sajûr Valley between Aleppo and Carchemish, a short distance from the Euphrates (see on Num. 22:5; see also PP 438, 439). If such was the case, their journey to Bethlehem would be some 400 mi. in length and would require two or three weeks of steady travel if they rode, perhaps a month if they walked. In view of the fact that they journeyed by night in order to keep the star in view (DA 60), it may be that their traveling time was even longer. However, their point of origin may have been farther to the east, and thus their traveling distance even greater.

To Jerusalem. Finally, their long journey brought them to the crest of the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. Just before dawn, perhaps, the star faded (DA 60), and soon the glistening marble dome and walls of the sacred Temple reflected the light of a new day. The fact that the wise men were directed to Jerusalem rather than to Bethlehem (DA 61) is an indication of the divine purpose that their visit should be the means of calling the attention of the leaders of the nation to the birth of the Messiah (see vs. 3–6). The attention and interest of the people were stirred as they learned of the mission of the wise men, and their minds were directed to the prophecies.

Palestine Under Herod the Great

2



The leaders of the Jews were offended at the thought that the wise men were Gentiles, and refused to believe that God would pass them by in favor of men who were heathen (see DA 62, 63). For his part, Herod was enraged by the seeming indifference of the priests and scribes (vs. 3, 4), and construed the visit of the wise men to be related in some way to a plot on his own life (DA 61, 62).

2. Born King of the Jews. The question implies that the wise men were not Jews; otherwise they would have said “our king.” It seems to have been generally recognized that the savior-king expected by the nations round about was to arise in Judea (see on v. 1). Upon entering Jerusalem, the wise men first made their way to the Temple, over which the star had faded from sight, but in its sacred precincts they found only ignorance, surprise, fear, and contempt (DA 60, 61).

His star. Neither a conjunction of planets, as some have thought, nor a nova, as others have suggested. The “star” that appeared on the night of Christ’s birth was a “distant company of shining angels” (DA 60; v. 7). The wise men were led to interpret this unusual phenomenon as the fulfillment of Balaam’s prophecy of “a Star out of Jacob” (Num. 24:17; see DA 60).

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

East. Gr. *anatolē*, literally, “rising.” The word translated “east” in v. 1 is *anatolai*, plural of *anatolē*. Also, in the Greek, *anatole*– has the definite article, whereas *anatolai* has not. This difference between the two expressions has led some to the conclusion that in v. 2 Matthew is not referring to the east either as the direction in the sky in which the star appeared or as the designation of the country from which the wise men came, but rather uses *anatolē* in its literal meaning, “rising.” The clause may be translated “for we have seen his star in [its] rising,” that is, when it first appeared. This proved to be the point in their story that most interested Herod (v. 7). The other interpretation, “for we have seen his star in the east country” is, of course, also possible.

3. He was troubled. The catalogue of atrocities by Herod, particularly the murder of various members of his immediate family whom he suspected of plotting to do away with him and usurp his throne, testifies eloquently to the feelings of his heart upon hearing that One destined to be “King of the Jews” had been born (see pp. 61, 62). The seeming reticence of the priests to divulge information concerning the Messianic prophecies, which the wise men had no doubt mentioned, led Herod to suspect the priests of conniving with the wise men in a plot to unseat him from his throne, perhaps by exciting a popular tumult. Furthermore, it is probable that Herod himself knew of the popular expectation that a prince was to be born in Judea who was destined to rule the world. Not only so; he appears to have regarded himself as the Messiah and to have had secret longings to rule the world (see Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 374).

All Jerusalem. It is little wonder the whole city was “troubled” also, because its residents were too familiar with the atrocities of which Herod was capable. Fearing a popular tumult, he might well decree the slaughter of hundreds or thousands of the people.

4. The chief priests. Probably the officiating high priest and living priests who had formerly held that office, all having been appointed and later deposed by Herod himself. During his reign of about 33 years Herod appointed altogether nine high priests to this sacred office, which was originally intended to be hereditary and for life (Ex. 28:1; 40:12–15; Lev. 21:16–23; Num. 16:40; 17; Num. 18:1–8; Deut. 10:6). Simon, son of Boethus, may have been high priest at this time (Josephus *Antiquities* xv. 9. 3), or Matthias or Joazar, son-in-law and son of Boethus, respectively, who followed Simon in rapid succession (*ibid.*, xvii. 4. 2; 6. 4; 13. 1). Others have suggested that the “chief priests” were heads of the 24 courses (see on Luke 1:5). The group Herod summoned seems to have been the learned men of the nation, who would be most likely to have the information he desired.

Scribes. These men are often spoken of as lawyers (Matt. 22:35; Mark 12:28), or “doctors of the law,” literally, “teachers of the law” (Luke 5:17, 21). They were learned men whose duty it was to study, preserve, copy, interpret, and expound the Law, or sacred writings (see p. 55; see on Mark 1:22).

Demanded. Or, “inquired,” the form of the verb, in Greek, implying that Herod inquired persistently. The priests apparently evaded a direct answer. Herod had to draw it out of them. The wise men had probably referred to their study of the Hebrew Scriptures, and if so, Herod could rightly have surmised that the doctors of the law must have known more than they appeared to. They were by no means as ignorant as they pretended to be, either of the prophecies themselves or of recent events that pointed to their fulfillment.

They knew, no doubt, of the vision of Zacharias (Luke 1:22), of the report of the shepherds (see on Luke 2:17), and of the prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:27, 28, 34, 35). But pride and envy closed the door of their hearts to light, for obviously God had passed them by in favor of uncouth shepherds and uncircumcised heathen, as they thought. They branded the reports as fanaticism and unworthy of attention (see DA 62, 63).

Where Christ should be born. Here Herod seeks to ascertain the *place* of Christ's birth, as later, from the wise men, the *time* (v. 7).

5. Thus it is written. The quotation (v. 6) given by the chief priests and scribes does not agree entirely with either the Hebrew text of Micah 5:2 or with the LXX. It seems, rather, to be a paraphrase, or possibly from a Targum, or their own free rendering at the moment. That the import of Micah 5:2 was commonly known, even among the people, is clear from John 7:42.

6. Princes. The Hebrew of Micah 5:2 reads "thousands," which may also be rendered "families," that is, the major family subdivisions of a tribe (see on Ex. 12:37; Micah 5:2).

Rule. Gr. *poimainō*, "to shepherd." Isaiah had foretold that the Messiah would "feed his flock like a shepherd" (Isa. 40:11). Jesus spoke of Himself as the "good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14), Paul called Him "that great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20), Peter, "the chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4), and John, "the Lamb" that "will be their shepherd" (Rev. 7:17, RSV).

Diligently. Rather, "accurately." Herod demanded specific information. The reference is to the exactness of the information rather than to Herod's diligence in seeking it.

What time. Herod had already learned from the chief priests and the scribes *where* the Christ was to be born (vs. 4–6), now he turns to the wise men to learn *when*.

8. He sent them. Herod carefully concealed his own thoughts behind an exterior of professed sympathetic interest. He hoped that the wise men would return his seeming kindness. Their visit to Bethlehem would arouse no suspicion and would permit him to carry out his evil design without unnecessarily arousing the populace. The chief priests and scribes may have surmised Herod's intent, for they knew his attitude toward pretenders to the throne.

Diligently. Or, "accurately" (see on v. 7). The wise men were to press their search until they found the Messiah and verified their discovery.

9. Went before them. Setting out from Jerusalem at twilight, in keeping with their custom of traveling at night (see on v. 1), the wise men found their faith renewed by the reappearance of the star.

11. The house. By this time Jesus was at least 40 days old, perhaps older (see on Luke 2:22).

Fell down. A common Oriental manner of expressing supreme respect and reverence, to men, to idols, and to God (see Esther 8:3; Job 1:20; Isa. 46:6; Dan. 3:7; etc.).

Worshipped him. In spite of their earlier disappointments the wise men knew that this Child was the One for whom they had journeyed far.

Their treasures. Gr. *thēsauroi*, meaning either "caskets," "treasure chests" used as receptacles for valuables, or "treasures." The word is translated "treasures" in Matt. 6:20 and in Col. 2:3. The singular (*thēsauros*) denotes a storehouse in Matt. 13:52.

Gifts. In Oriental lands one would never think of paying a visit to a prince or any high official without presenting a gift as an act of homage. Compare the presentation of gifts

to Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 43:11), to Samuel (1 Sam. 9:7, 8), to Solomon (1 Kings 10:2), and to God (Ps. 96:8).

Frankincense. A white or pale yellow resinous gum obtained by making incisions in the bark of trees of the genus *Boswellia*. It is bitter to the taste but fragrant when burned as incense. It was used as an ingredient in the sacred incense for the sanctuary (Ex. 30:8, 34). It was usually imported from Arabia (Isa. 60:6; Jer. 6:20).

Myrrh. Another aromatic gum highly prized in ancient times, bitter and slightly pungent in taste. It was probably obtained from a small tree, the *Balsamodendron*

myrrha or *Commiflora myrrha*, native to Arabia and East Africa. It was an ingredient used in compounding the holy oil (Ex. 30:23–25), and perfume (Esther 2:12; Ps. 45:8; Prov. 7:17), and was used as an anodyne, mixed with wine (Mark 15:23), and for embalming (John 19:39).

13. A dream. [*Flight to Egypt*, Matt. 2:13–18. See Childhood and Youth of Jesus; a Synopsis of the Life of Christ] The manner in which the angel had first appeared to Joseph (ch. 1:20).

Flee into Egypt. Egypt was now a Roman province, and thus beyond the jurisdiction of Herod. The traditional border of Egypt was the so-called River of Egypt, the *Wādī el-‘Arīsh*, some 100 mi. (160 km.) southwest of Bethlehem. Great numbers of Jews lived in Egypt at this time, and Joseph would not therefore find himself completely among strangers. There were synagogues in the cities, and at one time, even a Jewish temple. Heliopolis (On, cf. Gen. 41:45, 50; Gen. 46:20) is the traditional place where Joseph and Mary fled for safety.

14. By night. Joseph doubtless obeyed without delay, probably leaving the same night or as soon thereafter as preparations could be made for the journey. The gifts presented by the wise men provided the necessary means for the journey (DA 65).

15. The death of Herod. He died soon after his slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem (DA 66), 4 B.C. (see pp. 42, 241), of a most painful and loathsome disease.

Might be fulfilled. The quotation as here given is from the Hebrew text of Hosea 11:1. The LXX reads, “Out of Egypt I called his children.” In their original setting in Hosea the words of this prophecy refer to the deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egypt. When calling upon Pharaoh to release them, Moses said, “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Ex. 4:22). For Matthew’s application of the words of Hosea 11:1 to Christ see on Deut. 18:15.

16. Mocked. They had “tricked” him. He felt that they had outwitted him and made a fool of him. Herod took this as an insult, and doubtless as further proof of a deep and dark plot against him.

Slew all the children. Probably only the male children. Critics of the accuracy of the Bible record observe that Josephus, in his lengthy record of atrocities committed by Herod, makes no mention of the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem. It has been estimated, however, that in a small town whose population was probably no more than about 2,000, including its surrounding districts, there would have been only about 50 or 60 children of the age indicated, and only half that many males. Some estimate the number slightly higher. Josephus might have considered the incident relatively minor when compared with the long catalogue of more heinous crimes of Herod that he does mention. A deed such as this accords well with the callous character of Herod. It was one

of the last acts of his life (DA 66). Furthermore, should Josephus mention this evil deed he would be expected to account for it, as he does at length with similar events he does record. This might involve a discussion of the Messianic claims of Jesus of Nazareth, a subject which, as a Jew, he might choose to avoid. And, inasmuch as he was writing an apology of Judaism for the Romans, particularly for the emperor Vespasian, he would avoid mentioning anything that might antagonize Rome. See pp. 75, 76, 94.

Coasts. Literally, “borders,” hence, “regions.” In Old English, “coast” meant “frontier,” or “border.”

Two years old. According to Oriental reckoning, which still survives in some areas, a child is called “one year old” in its first calendar year, that is, between its birth and the next New Year’s Day; and “two years old” in its second calendar year—even if it had lived only a few days or weeks. If the Jews of Christ’s time counted age thus, by calendar years, it is not necessary to suppose that He was born two years before Herod died, or even that Herod, in order to make sure of his objective, set the “two-year” age limit beyond the time indicated by the wise men (Matt. 2:7). A child born at any time in 5/4 B.C. would be “two years old” in 4/3 B.C., the year of Herod’s death. As to the probable time of Jesus’ birth, see pp. 240-242.

17. Then was fulfilled. See Jer. 31:15. For the original application of this prophecy see on Jer. 31:15, and for the Messianic application see on Deut. 18:15.

18. Rama. Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the identity of Rama. Several towns by this name are mentioned in the OT. It is probably to be identified with Ramallah in Ephraim, about 9 mi. (14.5 km.) northwest of Jerusalem (see Additional Note on 1 Sam. 1). This town was near the border between the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, the grandson and son, respectively, of Rachel, the wife of Jacob.

Rachel weeping. The words of Jeremiah here cited originally referred to the bitter experiences of the Hebrew captives taken to Babylon in 586 B.C. (see on Jer. 31:15). Rachel’s death in the near vicinity, at the birth of Benjamin (Gen. 35:18–20), makes the figure particularly appropriate. She named her son Ben-oni, “son of my sorrow” (see Gen. 35:18). By inspiration Matthew applies the words of Jeremiah to Herod’s slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem (see on Deut. 18:15).

19. When Herod was dead. [Return to Nazareth, Matt. 2:19–23=Luke 2:39, 40. Mayor comment: Matthew and Luke; see Childhood and Youth of Jesus ; charts, The Reigns of the Herods, Palestine Under the Herodians.] See p. 42.

20. Land of Israel. A general term denoting all of Palestine.

They are dead. Some think the plural refers to Herod and his son and heir apparent, Antipater (slain a short time prior to Herod’s death); others, that it includes the soldiers who participated in the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem.

22. Archelaus. In his will Herod divided his domain into four parts, giving two to Archelaus and one each to Antipas and Philip (see pp. 63-65).

Archelaus proved to be the worst of the living sons of Herod. His tyranny and incompetence led the Jews and the Samaritans to appeal to Rome for his removal, which was granted in A.D. 6, tenth year of his reign. Augustus banished him to Gaul (now France), where he died.

Notwithstanding. Gr. *de*, “and” or “but.”

A dream. This was Joseph’s third recorded dream (see chs. 1:20; 2:13, 19).

Turned aside. Perhaps Joseph and Mary, understanding the prophecies of the Messiah as the Son of David, had intended to take up residence in Bethlehem.

Galilee. A transliteration of the Heb. meaning *Galil*, or *Gelilah*, meaning “circle,” and thus a “circuit,” or “district.” Its populace was a mixture of Jew and Gentile, and the religious prejudices of dominantly Jewish Judea were less evident there. It had no large cities. The people lived mostly in rural areas and villages, and engaged in the common, toilsome pursuits of life. Its inhabitants were despised by the residents of the more sophisticated province of Judea (John 7:52; cf. Matt. 26:69; John 1:46).

From the account as given by Luke (ch. 2:39) it might appear that Joseph and Mary returned to Galilee immediately upon the presentation of Jesus at the Temple. However, Matthew makes it plain that the sojourn in Egypt intervened (see on Luke 2:39). There is no valid reason whatever for supposing the two accounts are in any way contradictory. See Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus.

23. Nazareth. A small country town about 64 mi. (102 km.) north of Jerusalem, and between the lower end of the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean, on approximately the same site as the modern *en-Nâsirah*. The ancient village was probably situated on the western slope rising from the floor of a depression surrounded by hilltops. The depression is pear-shaped, about a mile across, with the neck of the pear pointing southward and opening by a narrow, winding ravine into the broad plain of Esdraelon. The village was situated 1,144 ft. (c. 348 m.) above sea level, and about 920 ft. (c. 280 m.) above the plain. It lay in the territory anciently assigned to the tribe of Zebulun. See illustration facing p. 512.

Some have traced the name Nazareth, or Nazareth, to a root meaning “to protect,” or “to guard,” and assign it the meaning “watchtower,” an apt description of its location high in the Galilean hills. Others derive it from a root meaning “branch” or “sprout,” which would make it a descriptive name suggestive of the dense brushwood in the hills round about. The exact form of the original name, and thus its meaning, are both uncertain.

This is the first Biblical mention of Nazareth, which may imply that it was either insignificant or nonexistent in earlier times. Josephus does not include it in a list of some 200 towns and villages of Galilee. It was proverbial for its wickedness even among the people of Galilee (see on Luke 1:26).

From the top of the hill above the town a magnificent view may be had in every direction. About 20 mi. (32 km.) to the west lie the blue waters of the Mediterranean. To the south is the broad, fertile plain of Esdraelon, with the mountains of Samaria beyond. About 5 mi. (8 km.) to the east rises Mt. Tabor, and in the distance, beyond the depression of the Jordan, the plateau of Gilead. To the north are the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains.

The prophets. The fact that no specific prophecy resembling the one here referred to appears in the OT has led critical students of the Bible to point to this statement as an error, and therefore evidence that Matthew was not inspired. However, it is worthy of note that in previous instances where Matthew quotes a specific prophecy he speaks of “the prophet” (chs. 1:22; 2:5, 15, 17). His use of the plural form of the word “prophets” in this instance clearly implies reference, not to a particular prophetic statement, but to several, which, taken together, led to the conclusion here stated (see on Ezra 9:11; Neh.

1:8). It is possible, also, that Matthew quotes inspired writings that did not become a part of the canon of Scripture.

Nazarene. Some have suggested that this name was derived from the Heb. *nazir*, “nazirite,” meaning “separated one,” and that Matthew’s statement originally read, “He shall be called a Nazirite” (see on Num. 6:2). But the derivation is extremely unlikely. Furthermore, Jesus was obviously not a Nazirite (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:33, 34; cf. Num. 6:2–4). The more likely root is *nasar*, from which is derived *nešer*, a “sprout,” “sprig,” or “shoot.”

Nešer is translated “Branch” in Isa. 11:1, a clear Messianic prophecy. The more common word for “Branch” in Messianic prophecy is *šemach* (Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). It is possible therefore that the derivation of Nazareth from *nešer* may be correct, and that the prophecies of Jesus as the “Branch” could appropriately be applied to the fact that He grew up in the city of Nazareth (see on Deut. 18:15).

Others have seen in Matthew’s statement concerning Christ as a Nazarene a reference to the reproach that came, first upon the town of Nazareth, and later upon Jesus and His followers. The popular attitude toward Nazareth is evident from John 1:46; cf. ch. 7:52. The Messiah would be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3; see also Ps. 22:6–8). Jesus was to appear, not as a celebrated ruler, but as a humble man among men. He was not even to be known as a Bethlehemite, and to have what honor might attach to Him as a citizen of the city of David. Either this or the preceding solution to the problem would seem to be in accord with Scripture.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AH 477
- 1, 2 DA 33, 59, 231
- 1–10GC 315
- 1–23DA 59–67
- 2 DA 62
- 3, 4 DA 61
- 5–8DA 62
- 6 PK 697
- 9–11DA 63
- 11 AH 481; CT 60; 7T 143
- 12–14DA 64
- 16–18DA 65
- 18 DA 32
- 19–23DA 66

CHAPTER 3

1 *John preacheth: his office: life, and baptism. 7 He reprehendeth the Pharisees, 13 and baptizeth Christ in Jordan.*

1. In those days. [*Ministry of John the Baptist, Matt. 3:1–12 = Mark 1:1–8 = Luke 3:1–18.* Major comment: Matthew and Luke; see The Ministry of Our Lord] That is, when Jesus “dwelt in a city called Nazareth” (Matt. 2:23). Jesus commenced His public ministry when He “began to be about thirty years of age” (see on Luke 3:23). This was in the autumn of A.D. 27 (DA 233; see pp. 242–247; see on Luke 3:1). John was about six

months older than Jesus (see on Luke 1:39, 57), and it is reasonable to think that his ministry began about six months prior to that of Christ. Thus John may have begun in the spring of the same year, perhaps about the Passover season. Great throngs would be approaching or leaving Jerusalem in the vicinity of the very spot where John was preaching (see p. 295, “Wilderness of Judea;” see on Luke 3:1).

The apt illustrations John used in his preaching imply that the time of the (spring) harvest was not far away (see on Matt. 3:7, 12).

“In those days” the Jews living in Palestine, particularly in Judea, were on the verge of revolution. Since the assignment of Roman procurators to govern Judea in A.D. 6, upon the banishment of Archelaus by Augustus (see on ch. 2:22), the presence of Roman officers and soldiers, the exercise of Roman authority, and the resulting influx of heathen customs had resulted in one uprising after another. Thousands of the bravest men of Israel had paid for their patriotism with their blood. Conditions were such that the people longed for a strong leader to deliver them from the cruel bondage of Rome. See p. 54.

John the Baptist. For the meaning of the name John see on Luke 1:13; and for his youth and early training see on Luke 1:80. Jesus said of John that “among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet” (Luke 7:28). He was “more than a prophet” (see on Matt. 11:9). John’s influence with the people eventually became so great that Herod Antipas at first hesitated to harm him (Matt. 14:1, 5; Mark 11:32), and the Jewish leaders did not dare speak openly against him (Matt. 21:26; Luke 20:6). Josephus gives a vivid account of John the Baptist that closely parallels that of the Gospels (*Antiquities* xviii. 5. 2).

Wilderness of Judaea. This expression generally refers to the rugged, barren hills between the Dead Sea and the crest of the central mountain range of Palestine, a region of little rainfall and few inhabitants (see Early Ministry and Baptism to First Passover). John had spent much of his time as a youth and young man in the wilderness (Luke 1:80). His parents had probably lived in or near Hebron, not far from the western borders of this “wilderness.”

In NT times the term wilderness was used to refer to both the rugged hills west of the Dead Sea and the lower part of the Jordan valley. According to Luke 3:3, John went from place to place, up and down the Jordan valley. Between Jericho and the Dead Sea the wilderness of Judea met that of the Jordan. John’s ministry apparently began in this vicinity.

When arrested by Herod Antipas, John must have been in Herod’s territory—probably Peraea—and, according to Josephus, was imprisoned at Machaerus, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea (*Antiquities* xviii. 5. 2). In view of the fact that baptism was so important a feature of his evangelistic program, John seems never to have been far from a place where “much water” (John 3:23) was available. This probably explains, in part at least, why he carried on most of his work in “the region round about Jordan” (Matt. 3:5; cf. DA 220). At the time of Jesus’ baptism John was preaching and baptizing at Bethabara (Bethany Beyond Jordan), not far from where Israel had crossed the Jordan (DA 132; see on John 1:28; Joshua 2:1; 3:1, 16). Later he carried on his work at “Aenon near to Salim” (John 3:23). See Early Ministry and Baptism to First Passover; Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus.

2. Repent. Gr. *metanoēō*, literally, “to think differently after,” hence, “to change one’s mind,” “to change one’s purpose.” It includes far more than confession of sin,

though in the preaching of John that was, of course, included (v. 6). Theologically the word includes not only a change of mind but a new direction of the will, an altered purpose and attitude. See on ch. 4:17.

Kingdom of heaven. See on Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15. Christ made it clear that the kingdom He established at His first advent was not the kingdom of glory (see DA 234). That would only be, He said, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him” (Matt. 25:31). Nevertheless, Jesus admitted before Pilate that He was indeed a “king” (John 18:33–37); in fact, this was His purpose in coming into this world (John 18:37). But He explained further that this “kingdom” was “not of this world” (John 18:36). The kingdom He came to establish “cometh not with observation,” but is a reality within the hearts of those who believe in Him and become the sons of God (Luke 17:20, 21; cf. John 1:12). See on Mark 3:14.

3. This is he. John himself declared that he was the “voice” of Isa. 40:3 (John 1:23), and Jesus identified him with the “messenger” of Mal. 3:1 (Matt. 11:7–14).

Esaias. That is, Isaiah. The spelling Esaias is from the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word for Isaiah. The prophecy referred to is Isa. 40:3. The reading is almost verbatim that of the LXX. Luke quotes v. 4 as well as v. 3 in his account of the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:4, 5). See on Mark 1:2.

The voice. Only a voice, but what a voice! Its echo is heard yet, ringing down through the centuries. As a prophet, John was the “voice” of God to the men of his generation, for a prophet is one who speaks for God (see Ex. 4:15, 16; Ex. 7:1; Eze. 3:27). John was the “voice” of God announcing the coming of the living, incarnate “Word” of God (John 1:1–3, 14).

In the wilderness. See on v. 1.

Prepare ye the way. John not only proclaims the establishment of the “kingdom of heaven” (v. 2) but announces the imminent arrival of its king. The figure of speech employed represents the preparations to be made in advance of the announced coming of the king. When an Oriental monarch intended to visit parts of his realm he would dispatch messengers to each district to be visited, announcing his anticipated visit and summoning the inhabitants to prepare for his arrival. The local inhabitants of each district were expected to “prepare” the highway over which he would travel, inasmuch as little was ordinarily done to maintain roads. In some Oriental lands it is still customary to repair the roads over which the king or some other celebrity is about to travel.

Make his paths straight. Inasmuch as “the kingdom of God is within” those who become its subjects (Luke 17:21), the work of preparation must obviously be done in their hearts. Straightening the crooked places of men’s hearts is therefore the preparation of which John here speaks. This is why John preached a “baptism of repentance” (Mark 1:4), literally, a “baptism of a change of mind” (see on Matt. 3:2). The high places of human pride and power were to be cast down (Luke 3:5; DA 215).

4. Raiment. Not only did John turn the minds of his hearers to the messages of the prophets; he wore the garb of the prophets (2 Kings 1:8; cf. Zech. 13:4; DA 102). This was a silent witness to the fact that in him the prophetic office was now—after a period of silence—restored to Israel. By both manner and dress John reminded men of the seers of old.

John’s plain dress was also a rebuke to the excess of his time, to the “soft raiment” worn “in kings’ houses” (Matt. 11:8), and was appropriate to his message of revolt

against the evils in the world. The “kingdom” John proclaimed was “not of this world” (John 8:23); his garments reflected disdain for the things of this world. John lived, as he preached, for the invisible “kingdom.” His outward appearance was a token of the message he bore.

John was a Nazirite from birth (DA 102), and his simple, abstemious life was in accord with the requirements of that sacred vow (see Luke 1:15; cf. Num. 6:3; Judges 13:4). But it is not necessary to conclude that he was an Essene (see pp. 53, 54), similar as their ways of life may have been. The Essenes withdrew from society and became ascetics. John spent considerable time alone in the wilderness, but he was not an ascetic, for he went forth from time to time to mingle with men, even before the commencement of his official period of ministry (see DA 102). It is true that there were at this time Essene communities in the “wilderness of Judaea” (v. 1), particularly along the western shore of the Dead Sea (see p. 53), but there is no historical evidence whatever that John associated with this austere sect. At the same time, there are noteworthy similarities between John and the Essenes.

Camel’s hair. Not camel’s hide, as some have thought, but a coarse garment of hair, roughly woven (see the foregoing).

Leathern girdle. Probably of sheepskin or goatskin, and worn about the waist to bind the long, flowing outer garment.

Meat. Gr. *trophē*, “nourishment,” “food,” “victuals.” *Trophē* is used of food in a general sense. In Acts 14:17 and James 2:15 it is translated “food,” the obvious meaning elsewhere (see Matt. 6:25; 10:10; Acts 2:46; 27:33–38; etc.). “Meat” is Old English for “food.”

An abstemious diet is essential to mental strength and spiritual insight, and to a right understanding and practice of the sacred truths of God’s Word (DA 101). These qualities were essential for John, who came “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17), and they are essential for those who are to bear the Elijah message to the world today.

Locusts. Gr. *akrides* (see Additional Note at the end of chapter).

Wild honey. Probably not the sap of certain trees, as some have thought, but honey gathered by swarms of wild bees and deposited in the hollows of trees or perhaps in rocks. Some Bedouins still derive an income by collecting wild honey.

5. *Then went out.* The form of the Greek verb implies continued action—the people “kept on going out.” The crowds kept coming to see and hear John and to be baptized by him. The fact that people kept on coming testifies to the glowing reports carried back by those who had already heard him. The fact that they were willing to drop their work and go for miles out into the wilderness bears witness to the magnetic drawing power of the message he bore.

All Judaea. John’s ministry, like that of Christ, began in the vicinity of Judea, perhaps to give the Jewish leaders themselves the first opportunity to hear and accept the message (Mark 1:5; cf. DA 231, 232).

All the region. Gradually, as the word was spread by those who returned from hearing John, people came from yet greater distances (cf. Luke 3:3). It is evident, also, that John himself moved about from place to place, the better to reach people everywhere (see on v. 1).

6. Baptized. Gr. *baptizō*, “to dip,” “to immerse.” *Baptizō* was used of immersing cloth in dye, and of submerging a vessel in order to fill it with water. It was also used metaphorically of bloody wounds received in a fight, as in Aeschylus of dyeing (literally, “baptizing”) a man in the red dye of Sardis. *Baptizō* was also used of a man drowning, as it were, in debt.

The meaning of the word itself, together with specific details of the narrative in the Gospels, makes it clear that John’s baptism was administered by immersion. John the evangelist emphasizes the fact that John the Baptist “was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there” (John 3:23). Furthermore, all four Gospel writers note that most, if not all, of John’s ministry was carried on in the immediate vicinity of the Jordan River (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5, 9; Luke 3:3; John 1:28). Had John not baptized by immersion he would have found sufficient water almost anywhere in Palestine.

The same was apparently true also of Christian baptism, for in the description of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch it is noted that both the one baptizing and the one baptized “went down . . . into the water” and came “up out of the water” (Acts 8:38, 39). Had pouring or sprinkling been permissible, the eunuch, instead of waiting until they “came unto a certain water” before requesting baptism (v. 36), might have offered Philip water from his flask.

Furthermore, only immersion accurately reflects the symbolism of the baptismal rite. According to Rom. 6:3–11 Paul teaches that Christian baptism represents death. To be “baptized,” Paul says, is to be “baptized into his [Christ’s] death” (v. 3), to be “buried with him by baptism into death” (v. 4), to be “planted together in the likeness of his death” (v. 5), to be “crucified with him” (v. 6). Paul then concludes, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (v. 11). Obviously, pouring and sprinkling are not symbols of death and burial. Paul makes his meaning doubly clear by pointing to the important fact that coming forth from baptism symbolizes being “raised up from the dead” (v. 4). It is evident that the writers of the NT knew only of baptism by immersion.

That John the Baptist was probably not the first to introduce the practice of baptism is evident from ancient sources. The Jews early followed the practice of baptizing proselytes to Judaism. It is not certain when the practice was adopted, but incidental details concerning the procedure were a point of dispute between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel in the 1st century A.D. Since by that time the practice was apparently already well established, it is highly probable that the baptism of proselytes dates from pre-Christian times. See Mishnah *Pesahim* 8. 8, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 490, 491; Talmud *Pesahim* 92a, Soncino ed., pp. 491, 492; see also Tosephta *Pesahim* 7. 13 and Jerusalem Talmud *Pesahim* 8. 36b. 31, both cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 103.

It is also well established that the mode of proselyte baptism was immersion. The regulations required that the entire body be covered with water (see Talmud *‘Erubin* 4b, Soncino ed., p. 20; *Yebamoth* 47a, 47b, Soncino ed., pp. 311, 312). Finds at Qumrân and in Cairo (see pp. 53, 54, 90-92) reveal that the Jewish sect known as Essenes baptized themselves daily by immersion, symbolically washing away their sins. Qumrân is in the “wilderness of Judaea,” where John preached.

It is apparent that the Jews who flocked to John in the wilderness understood the meaning of the rite and considered it an appropriate procedure. Even the representatives of the Sanhedrin sent to question John did not challenge the rite of baptism itself, but only John's authority to perform it (see John 1:19–28).

That the rite of Christian baptism is simply a symbol and does not convey divine grace, is evident throughout the NT. Unless a man believes in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:37; cf. Rom. 10:9) and repents of sin (Acts 2:38; cf. ch. 19:18), baptism can be of no value to him. In other words, there is no saving power in the rite itself, apart from faith in the heart of the one receiving the rite. From these and other considerations it is clear that infant baptism is a meaningless procedure so far as the salvation of the child is concerned. Baptism can become meaningful only when the child is old enough to understand salvation, faith, and repentance.

Although the Jews recognized the validity of proselyte baptism, the rite was only for Gentile converts to Judaism. That John required it of the Jews themselves—even of their religious leaders—was the striking aspect of his baptism. Furthermore, he considered his baptism only preparatory to the baptism to be administered by Christ (Matt. 3:11). Unless the Jews accepted John's baptism and the subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ, they were no better than the heathen. Their descent from Abraham would avail them nothing (Matt. 3:9; cf. John 8:33, 39, 53; Rom. 11:21; Gal. 3:7, 29; James 2:21; etc.).

Confessing. When we confess, God forgives (1 John 1:9). John the Baptist felt an intense hatred for all kinds of sin and wrongdoing. God never sends messages to flatter the sinner; that would be fatal for eternal life. One of the marks of genuine reformation is sincere repentance of sin and a turning away from it. Similarly, it is one of the marks of the genuineness of a message from God that the communication points out sin and calls for repentance and confession. Thus it was with the prophets of old (see Isa. 1:1–20; 58:1; etc.), thus it was in NT times (Matt. 3:7; 23:13–33; Rev. 2:5; 3:15–18), and thus it is today (3T 254). John's baptism was a "baptism of repentance" (Mark 1:4); that was its most prominent characteristic. It was the sins of Israel that lay at the root of all their personal and national woes (Isa. 59:1, 2; Jer. 5:25; etc.). From these calamities they sought in vain for deliverance. They longed and prayed for release from the yoke of Rome, but most of them failed to realize that sin had to be separated from the camp before God could work for them. See Vol. IV, pp. 30–33.

7. Pharisees. For a sketch of the Pharisees and Sadducees see pp. 51, 52.

Generation of vipers. Or, "offspring of vipers," or "brood of vipers." Christ Himself later used almost identical language in addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees (chs. 12:34; 23:33). They prided themselves on being children of Abraham (see on ch. 3:9), but they failed to "do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39), and were therefore children of their "father the devil" (v. 44).

Warned you to flee. They were not sincerely seeking the repentance to which John called men and women as the only consistent preparation for the kingdom of Messiah, and this being the case, why had they come?

Wrath. It is possible that, by inspiration, John was here looking forward to those indescribable scenes of woe that accompanied the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman armies in A.D. 70—the days for which Jesus told the women of Jerusalem to weep (Luke 23:27–29), and because of which He counseled His disciples to flee from the city (Matt. 24:15–

21; Luke 21:20–24). Of course, beyond is the great day of God’s “wrath,” the last great day of judgment (Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 5:9; Rev. 6:17; etc.).

8. *Bring forth.* See on v. 10. The fruit borne reveals the inner character (ch. 7:20; cf. ch. 12:33). The test of conversion is a transformation in the life. The proof of the sincerity of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to John’s baptism would be the radical change of mind and conduct implicit in the word “repent” (see on ch. 3:2). Mere profession is worthless.

The divine Husbandman waits patiently for the fruit of character to ripen in the lives of those who profess to serve Him (see Luke 13:6–9). But fruit “meet for repentance,” that is, appropriate to or corresponding with a profession of repentance, is the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:5–7), and except for the presence of the Spirit in the life, cannot be brought forth. Apart from “the vine” there can be no fruit bearing (John 15:4, 5).

Repentance. See on v. 2.

9. *Think not.* Or, “do not begin to entertain this thought in your minds.” It was the fruit of faith in the life, not descent from Abraham, that mattered (John 8:39; Gal. 3:7, 29). The fruit of which John spoke would have to be produced in the life of each individual, and was not inherited from one generation to the next (Eze. 14:14, 16; 18:5–13). It is not descent from Abraham, but the works of Abraham—spiritual descent—that is essential.

Abraham. The Jews flattered themselves that descent from Abraham made them better than other men. According to the Talmud, a single Israelite is worth more before God than all the people who have ever been or who shall be. They considered this connection a substitute for the repentance and good works for which John and Jesus called. They wanted the rewards of well-doing without meeting the requirements; in fact, they substituted their works for the faith of Abraham.

Descent from Abraham constituted the perennial boast of the Jews (John 8:33, 39). He was “the rock” whence they were “hewn” (Isa. 51:1, 2). But “God is no respecter of persons,” and “in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35). Only those who emulate Abraham may enjoy the privilege of claiming him as their father (Gal. 3:9).

These stones. Pebbles and rocks lay in profusion along the banks of the Jordan.

Children. In the Aramaic, in which John the Baptist spoke, there is a play on words—“stones” being *’abenin*, and “children,” represented either by *benin*, *berin*, or *banim*. Later Jesus used an expression of similar significance (Luke 19:40). Possibly, John means that it would be easier for God to raise up children to Abraham from the stones than to turn the stony hearts of the Pharisees and Sadducees into spiritual children of their professed father. Or he may simply mean that these leaders were not indispensable, and that God could replace them by turning the stones into human beings.

10. *The axe.* A symbol of judgment.

Laid unto. The meaning seems to be that the ax is placed there ready for action. The implication is that it is soon to be used.

Every tree. Trees are often used in the OT as symbols of people (see Eze. 17:22–24; cf. Ps. 1:3), and John’s hearers fully understood whereof he spoke. Like John, Christ used a tree to represent the people of Israel (Luke 13:6–9; Matt. 21:19, 20).

Bringeth not forth. See on Luke 13:6–9. Under the symbol of a vineyard that produced nothing but “wild grapes,” Isaiah had pictured the tender care of God for His people and their utter rejection for failing to “bring forth grapes” (Isa. 5:1–7; cf. Matt. 21:33–41).

Good fruit. Only a good man can grow a crop of good habits, from which there may be harvested a good character (see Gal. 5:22, 23).

Hewn down. Compare Isaiah’s parable of the wild grapes (Isa. 5:1–7) and Christ’s parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9). Implicit in Jesus’ parable is the fact that God is long-suffering, but that if His offers of mercy are not appreciated, they are eventually withdrawn. The Jewish nation had practically outlived its day of mercy, and was about to be rejected. See Vol. IV, pp. 30–36.

Cast into the fire. In Jewish literature “fire” was a distinguishing feature of the final judgment.

11. With water. John shows clearly that he understood his baptism to be only preparatory to the work of Christ.

He that cometh. John had already spoken of his own task as that of a herald announcing the coming of the Lord (v. 3). “He that cometh,” or “the coming One,” was common Jewish phraseology for the Messiah.

After me. That is, in point of time. John was the “messenger” sent “before” the “face” of the Lord (Mark 1:2).

Mightier than I. John later testified concerning Christ, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). John’s preaching was so filled with power that many of the people believed him to be the Messiah. Even the leaders of the nation were forced to consider the question seriously (John 1:19, 20). Christ Himself said of John that there “hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist” (Matt. 11:11). Despite this public acclaim John ever maintained a true sense of his relationship to the One who was to be “mightier than” he. Blessed is the man who meets with success and popularity, yet remains humble in his own eyes!

Shoes. Gr. *hupodēmata*, literally, “things bound underneath.” These “shoes” were soles bound under the foot with straps, actually “sandals.” The Romans, but not the Jews, wore shoes.

Not worthy to bear. According to Luke, “not worthy to unloose” (ch. 3:16). Matthew’s phrase means to take off the sandal. To the Jews a shoe was the humblest part of man’s clothing. The expression “over Edom will I cast out my shoe” (Ps. 60:8; 108:9) was expressive of utter disdain. In the presence of God, Moses was commanded to remove his shoes (Ex. 3:5). To buy or sell the needy for a pair of shoes (Amos 2:6; 8:6) was to put the lowest possible price upon them. To “unloose” the shoes or to “bear” them away was the menial work of a slave. In affirming his own unworthiness to perform even this service for Christ, John was placing himself below the level of a slave. It was as if John had said, “whose slave I am unworthy to be.” The followers of a great teacher were expected to perform many personal services for him, but according to a rabbinical saying, “All manner of service that a slave must render to his master a student must render to his teacher, except that of taking off his shoe” (Talmud *Kethuboth* 96a, Soncino ed., p. 610).

Holy Ghost. Or, “Holy Spirit.” The Jews were familiar with this term. David had prayed, “Take not thy holy spirit from me” (Ps. 51:11). Isaiah stated that Israel “vexed” God’s “holy Spirit” (Isa. 63:10, 11), and referred to “the Spirit of the Lord God” that was

to rest upon the Messiah (ch. 61:1). John seems not to have emphasized baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2–6). For the meaning of this expression see on Matt. 1:18.

Fire. Fire and water are two great natural purifying agencies, and it is appropriate that both should be used to represent the regeneration of the heart. In a similar way, they are the two agencies by means of which God has purified, or will purify, this earth from sin and sinners (2 Peter 3:5–7). If men persistently cling to sin, they must eventually be consumed with it; how much better it is to permit the Holy Spirit to carry forward the purifying work now, while probation still lingers! A man will be either purged of sin or purged along with it. Paul said, “Fire shall try every man’s work” (1 Cor. 3:13).

The sense in which Christ was to baptize with fire is not certain. This statement may have pointed forward to Pentecost, when the disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost under the symbol of fire (Acts 2:3, 4). Again, it may refer to the fires of the last day, as may be implied by the parallel nature of Matt. 3:12 (see on v. 12). It may refer to the grace of God purifying the soul. Or, again, it may refer to the fiery trials that Peter speaks of as testing the Christian (1 Peter 4:12; cf. Luke 12:49, 50). Perhaps the words of John the Baptist include more than one aspect of the Bible symbolism relating to fire.

12. Fan. Gr. *ptuon*, a “winnowing shovel” with which grain was lifted from the threshing floor and thrown against the wind to clear it of chaff (see on Ruth 3:2). The grain would fall back to the floor, and the chaff would be blown off to one side, and eventually burned.

Thoroughly purge. Gr. *diakatharizō*, “to cleanse thoroughly, completely,” or “to cleanse from end to end.” “Thoroughly” is an obsolete form of the word “thoroughly.” The illustration is that of a farmer beginning at one side of his threshing floor and proceeding systematically across it to the other side.

Gather his wheat. The process of separating the righteous from the wicked takes place at the “end of the world” (see ch. 13:30, 39–43, 49, 50).

Garner. Or, “granary.”

Burn up the chaff. As was frequently done by the Judean farmer once the wheat had been safely stored away. Compare on Ps. 1:4.

Unquenchable. Gr. *asbestos*, “inextinguishable,” “not quenchable,” or “unquenched.” Doubtless John the Baptist based his message on the words of Malachi (ch. 3:1–3; 4; see Mark 1:2). Christ specifically stated that John fulfilled the prediction of Malachi (Mal. 4:5; cf. Matt. 11:14; 17:12). When John spoke of “unquenchable fire” he may have had in mind the words of Mal. 4:1, concerning the day of the Lord, “that shall burn as an oven,” when all the wicked will “be stubble.” The fire of that great day, Malachi continues, would “burn them up” so completely that “neither root nor branch” would remain (ch. 4:1; see also ch. 3:2, 3). See Josephus *War* ii. 17.6 [425].

Far from conveying the idea of a fire that burns eternally in which the wicked are endlessly tormented, the Scriptures emphasize the fact that the wicked are to be burned up so completely that nothing will be left of them. The idea of an eternally burning hell fire is foreign to the Inspired Word, as it is to the character of God. The Scriptures state concerning Sodom and Gomorrah that they are “set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7; cf. 2 Peter 2:6). But the fires that consumed those wicked cities went out long ago; they are not burning today. Yet those cities are given as an “example” of what the fires of the last great day will be like.

In a similar way, Jeremiah predicted that God would kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem that would consume even the palaces of the city, and “not be quenched” (Jer. 17:27). This was literally fulfilled a few years later when Nebuchadnezzar took the city, in 586 B.C. (Jer. 52:12, 13; cf. Neh. 1:3). Quite obviously the fire is not burning today. As chaff from a Judean threshing floor was utterly consumed, and nothing but ashes remained, so the wicked will be burned with “unquenchable fire” on the last great day until nothing but their ashes remain (Mal. 4:3). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), eternal death, not eternal life miraculously preserved by a vengeful God, in the midst of fire that never goes out. The righteous are promised eternal life (Rom. 2:7), and the death of the wicked will be as permanent as the life of the righteous. See on Isa. 66:24.

13. Then cometh Jesus. [*The Baptism*, Matt. 3:13–17=Mark 1:9–11=Luke 3:21–23^a. Major comment: Matthew and Luke. See Early Ministry and Baptism to First Passover; The Chronology of Luke, The Reigns of the Herods.] It was now the autumn of A.D. 27, and John the Baptist had, possibly, been preaching for about six months (see on Matt. 3:1). The autumn was the time of three important festivals: (1) Rosh Hashanah, or the festival of the blowing of the trumpets (see Vol. I, p. 709; see on Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1); (2) Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (see Vol. I, pp. 705, 706, 710; see on Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16); (3) the Feast of Tabernacles (see Vol. I, p. 710; see on Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:34). At the third festival all males were expected to appear before the Lord at Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14–17). Inasmuch as the baptism of Christ occurred in the autumn, it is reasonable to think that it may have been in connection with His presence there at this festal season. The route frequently taken by Jews traveling between Galilee and Jerusalem lay through the Jordan valley (see on Luke 2:42), and if Jesus took this route in His journey to Jerusalem, He would pass close to where John was preaching and baptizing at Bethabara (Bethany Beyond Jordan) in Peraea, opposite Jericho (see John 1:28; DA 132; see on Matt. 3:1).

When Jesus heard of the message proclaimed by John He recognized His call (DA 109). This marked the close of His private life in Nazareth and the commencement of His three and a half years of public ministry, from the autumn of A.D. 27 to the spring of A.D. 31 (DA 233; cf. Acts 1:21, 22; 40>10:37–40). See The Chronology of Luke 3:1, 2.

From Galilee to Jordan. See on Mark 1:9. The distance from the Lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea is about 64 mi. (102 km.).

To be baptized. Jesus had heard of John’s message while still in the carpenter shop at Nazareth (DA 109), and departed, never to return to take up His tasks there.

14. Forbad him. The Greek may be rendered “had a mind to prevent him,” “would have prevented him,” “tried to prevent him.” Though Jesus and John were related by blood, they had had no direct acquaintance (DA 109; cf. John 1:31–33). John had heard of the events connected with the birth and childhood of Jesus, and believed Him to be the Messiah (DA 109). Also, it had been revealed to John that the Messiah would seek baptism at his hands, and that a sign would then be given identifying Him as the Messiah (DA 110; cf. John 1:31–33).

I have need. John was impressed with the perfection of the character of the One standing before him and with his own need as a sinner (DA 110, 111; cf. Isa. 6:5; Luke 5:8). Thus it is ever when a sinner enters the divine presence; there comes first a consciousness of the majesty and perfection of God, and then a conviction of one’s own unworthiness and need of God’s saving power. When the sinner realizes and

acknowledges his lost condition, his heart becomes contrite and ready for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit (see Ps. 34:18; 51:10, 11, 17; Isa. 57:15; 66:2). Where there is not first a sense of one's need of the Saviour, there is no desire for the gracious gift God has to offer the repentant sinner. Consequently there is nothing Heaven can do for him. See on Isa. 6:5.

Comest thou to me? Face to face with the One mightier than he was (v. 11), John, possessing a spirit of humility and sensing his own unworthiness, shrank from administering the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4) to One who was without sin (see John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). It seemed to him inappropriate that he should baptize Jesus. Doubtless John did not fully grasp the fact that Jesus was to set a pattern for every sinner saved by grace.

15. Suffer. That is, "let," "permit." He was not to deny Jesus' request for baptism, however inappropriate that request might at the moment seem to him.

It becometh. That is, "it is fitting," "it is proper." It was not fitting or proper to baptize Jesus in acknowledgment of personal sins, for He had no sins of which to repent. But as our example it was both fitting and proper for Him to accept baptism (see DA 111).

Fulfil all righteousness. At His baptism Jesus laid aside His private life; He was no longer simply a perfect man among men—He was henceforth to engage in His active, public ministry as their Saviour. Christ's submission to baptism by John was the seal that confirmed John's ministry and placed Heaven's stamp of approval upon it.

He suffered him. That is, John agreed to comply with the request.

16. Straightway. That is, immediately.

Out of the water. Coming forth from the Jordan, Jesus knelt upon the bank of the river in prayer, particularly for evidence that the Father accepted humanity in the person of His Son, and for the success of His mission (Luke 3:21; DA 111, 112).

Lo. Or, "behold," a common expression in Matthew and Luke. It is generally used either to introduce a new section of the narrative or to focus attention on details of an account the author considers particularly important.

3

Heavens were opened. Momentarily the gates of the unseen world swung ajar, as upon other significant occasions (see Acts 7:55–57).

He saw. Matthew and Mark (ch. 1:10) observe that Jesus beheld the visible descent of the Holy Spirit; John remarks that the Baptist also witnessed the divine manifestation (ch. 1:32–34). Luke simply notes that it took place (ch. 3:21, 22). A few others, perhaps certain of John's disciples and other devout persons whose souls were attuned to heaven, also saw what occurred (DA 112, 137). Otherwise, the assembled multitude witnessed only the light of heaven upon the Saviour's upturned face and felt the holy solemnity of the occasion. This manifestation of the Father's glory and voice came in response to the Saviour's prayer for strength and wisdom to pursue His mission. In it John also recognized the token that had been promised whereby he was to recognize "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (see John 1:29–34). Finally, the sublime

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 2:2). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

scene was to strengthen the faith of those who witnessed it and prepare them for the announcement by which John pointed out the Messiah 40 days later.

The Spirit of God. There is no reason for supposing that the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit had not accompanied Jesus ever since His birth. What is here pointed out is a special anointing with power to accomplish the task appointed Him (Acts 10:38; see on Luke 2:49), as the prophet Isaiah had foretold (Isa. 11:2, 3). The work of the Holy Spirit in the development of character is to be distinguished from the gift of the Spirit qualifying men for certain tasks (1 Cor. 12:4–11).

Like a dove. That is, light in the shape of a dove (DA 112), perhaps similar to the tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). The dove was a rabbinical symbol for Israel as a nation. Christian artists have generally made use of the dove as a symbol for the Holy Spirit, doubtless on the basis of this incident.

17. A voice from heaven. Upon three occasions during the life of Christ the Father's voice was heard from heaven testifying of His Son—at His baptism, at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; 2 Peter 1:16–18), and as He departed from the Temple for the last time (John 12:28).

This is my beloved Son. Or, “This is my Son, the beloved.” Slight textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the reading “thou art” instead of “this is” (cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

This statement combines the words and ideas of Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1. According to Matthew, the Father, using the third person apparently, addressed John and a few bystanders (see on Matt. 3:16), whereas according to Mark and Luke, the Father addressed Jesus directly (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Some have seen in this difference a discrepancy in the Gospel record. On this and other alleged discrepancies see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2.

I am well pleased. Compare the words of Isa. 42:1.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

Note 1

According to Matt. 3:4 and Mark 1:6 the diet of John the Baptist consisted of “locusts [Gr. *akrides*, plural of *akris*] and wild honey.” Whether the Gospel writers meant that John ate nothing else, or only that these constituted his principal articles of diet, we do not know. It is also possible that “locusts and wild honey” were considered to be the distinguishing diet of a prophet, even as “raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle” marked him a successor to the ancient prophets (see DA 102). John may have subsisted on “locusts and wild honey” only at such times as other foods were not readily available. Again, “locusts and wild honey” may simply be representative of various articles of food available in the wilderness, and the expression thus a graphic Oriental way of giving emphasis to his lonely, abstemious life, far from the haunts of men.

Because the English word “locust” properly denotes both an insect and certain kinds of trees, the question naturally arises as to what, with honey, constituted the diet of John.

Elsewhere in the Scripture, and also in contemporary Greek literature, for that matter, the word *akris* always refers to an insect, the locust. This undeniable fact has led most commentators today to conclude that in the record concerning John the Baptist this insect is intended. It is also a fact that the locust has been part of the diet of the peoples of the Middle East from ancient times. According to the law of Moses certain kinds of locusts

are clean food (Lev. 11:22), and would therefore be permissible in the diet of a Jew.

These facts have led commentators in our day quite uniformly to the conclusion that *akris* in Matthew and Mark should be understood as designating the insect by the name “locust” rather than a species of tree.

However, from very early Christian times there has come down a tradition, widespread, emphatic, and persistent, to the effect that, in Matthew and Luke, the word *akris* denotes something other than an insect. Small wild birds, crabs, crayfish, wild pears or other fruit, cakes of bread, carob pods, etc., have been suggested. Tatian’s Diatessaron (see p. 122) reads “milk” instead of “locusts.” Most of these are obviously mere guesses, but for one—the carob pod—there appears to be a basis of linguistic and anthropological evidence.

The carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) is cultivated extensively in lands bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, and is common in Palestine from Hebron northward. Its fruit, which matures in the late spring, is borne in flat pods somewhat the shape of the Lima bean, and from six to ten inches in length. The pods and beans may be eaten raw, cooked, or ground into flour and made into bread. They may be dried and preserved indefinitely. Though not particularly palatable, the carob has a substantial nutritive value, and has long been a staple article of the diet of the poorer classes in the Near East. The Tosephta (*Ma’aseroth* 2. 19 [84]) lists carob pods as a kind of food, and the Mishnah (*Ma’aseroth* 1. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 256) specifies that, as a food, they are to be tithed. The “husks” fed by the prodigal son to the swine were carob pods (see on Luke 15:16). Incidentally, in English, the carob is commonly known as a locust, and its beans are popularly called “St.-John’s-bread.” English grain dealers are said to supply carob pods as feed for cattle under the name “locusts.”

Evidence tending to favor the fruit of the carob tree as the “locusts” that John the Baptist ate is as follows:

1. Available evidence indicates that the insect locust is a very poor source of food and that it would be incapable, in itself, of sustaining human life. According to Hastings’ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (art. “Locust”), “the nutritious value of the insect locust is extremely small, and insufficient, [even] with honey, to support life.” The fact that the “locusts” John ate seem to have constituted a major element of his diet is against the insect locust and tends to favor the fruit of the carob tree. This fact concerning the inadequacy of insect locusts as food must be accorded considerable weight in the argument that some other food than the insect is indicated by the word *akris*.

It is an interesting fact that carob beans were a food of the very poor in various Near Eastern lands, and still are. Anciently the Jews had a saying that “when a Jew has to resort to carobs, he repents” (Midrash Rabbah, on Lev. 11:1, Soncino ed., p. 168). It is not irrelevant to remark in this connection that John was the great preacher of repentance, and that a diet of carob beans and wild honey would certainly be appropriate in the light of the then-current concept of what a preacher of righteousness would eat. As already noted, the austere diet of John may, like his rude clothing, have been intended to characterize him in the popular mind as resembling the prophets of old.

2. Among the earliest to challenge the idea that John’s diet included insect locusts were the Ebionites, a Jewish-Christian group of Syria whose origin may be traced to the

Judaizing elements of NT times. Like the Essenes (see p.), they were somewhat ascetic in their tendencies and advocated a vegetarian diet. Apparently the Ebionites omitted mention of “locusts” altogether in ch. 3:4, though Epiphanius, a Christian writer of the 4th century, charges that they substituted *egkrides*, “cakes,” for *akrides*, “locusts” (see M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 9; H. A. W. Meyer, *Commentary on the New Testament*, on Matt. 3:4). It does not seem that the Ebionites had received Gospel manuscripts reading *egkrides*, but that they may have made this substitution or alteration in harmony with their dietary principles. All extant ancient Bible manuscripts read *akrides*.

3. The Greek Church Fathers, who may be presumed to have had a better knowledge of the usage of Biblical Greek than later writers, were very far from agreeing that *akris* in Matthew and Mark means the insect we know as locust. Most of them, in fact, seem to have thought otherwise. For example, many considered the *akrides* (or *akridas*) of the Gospels to be equivalent to *akrodrua*, “fruits,” or the tender tips of the branches of trees or herbs.

In a sermon on the prophecy of Zacharias erroneously attributed to Chrysostom (c. A.D. 400) a comparison is drawn between Elijah and John the Baptist in which it is said that “the one lived in the mountains, the other spent his time in the desert; the one was fed by ravens, the other ate plant locusts [*akridas botanōn*].” The phrase *akridas botanōn* is translated into the Latin as *herbarum summitates*, meaning the “tips” or “shoots of plants” (see Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 50 cols. 786, 787). In another sermon similarly attributed to Chrysostom, on John the Baptist, the expression *akridas ek botanōn* occurs in a description of his diet, and is translated into Latin as *summitates plantarum*, “shoots of plants” (*ibid.*, vol. 59, col. 762). A note to the Latin translation explains that the Latin Vulgate has *locustas* for *akrides*, and adds that by *locustas* the Vulgate means not only locusts but also *summitates plantarum*, “tips of plants.” A note to the Greek text states that Isidore of Pelusiota, repeatedly, and many other writers, give the same explanation of *akrides*. Isidore of Pelusiota (c. A.D. 425) specifically states (Epistle 132) that “the locusts which John ate are not as some ignorant persons think, scarab-[beetle-]like creatures. Far from it, for in reality they are the tips [Gr. *akremones*; Latin *summitates*] of plants or trees” (*ibid.*, vol. 78 col. 270). In Epistle 5 Isidore again speaks of John’s food as “the tips of plants and of leaves” (*ibid.*, cols. 183, 184). In his *Commentary on Matthew* (on ch. 3:4), Theophylact of Bulgaria (c. A.D. 1075) observes, “Some say the locusts [*akrides*] are plants, which are called black-horned; others [say they are] wild summer fruits” (*ibid.*, vol. 123, cols. 173, 174). In his *Ecclesiastical History* (i. 14) Callistus Nicephorus (c. A.D. 1400) says that John “retired to the remote wilds, making use of the tender parts of trees for food” (*ibid.*, vol. 145, cols. 675, 676). Numerous others might be cited to the same effect. The Greek writers and their Latin translators both apparently understood the “locusts” of ch. 3:4 to be a vegetarian article of diet.

It cannot be said of these Fathers of the church that their thinking was influenced, as that of the Ebionites seems to have been, by any hesitancy to accept the idea that John the Baptist ate flesh food. So far as is known, Church Fathers were not vegetarians. It would seem most difficult to provide a valid explanation for the rather general agreement of the Fathers that the *akrides* of the Gospels designates something other than insect locusts unless there was some foundation linguistically or in the habits of the people of the early Christian centuries.

4. It appears that the name “St.-John’s-bread,” as applied to the fruit of the carob tree, was introduced into various European languages by medieval pilgrims returning from the Holy Land. In the German, for instance, this is the specific name for that fruit. According to the Oxford English Dictionary “St.-John’s-bread” appeared in an English-Spanish dictionary of the year 1591, as a synonym for “carob.”

5. T. K. Cheyne, an eminent Bible scholar who wrote at the turn of the century, takes the position that John the Baptist’s food consisted of carob beans and wild honey. He reasons that the word *akrides*, in all known instances of its use, means specifically the insect, that insect locusts have been eaten from ancient times, but that “common sense, however, tells us that locusts would not have been preferred by the Baptist as his habitual food to nourishment supplied by the soil. Humility would not pass over the ordinary food of the poorest class, viz. carob-pods” (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, art. “Husks”).

6. Confusion as to the meaning of *akris* in the Gospels seems to be related to the fact that, in various languages, the word “locust” designates both a species of insects and a species of trees. The English word “locust” is from the Latin *locusta*, which originally denoted a lobster or similar crustacean, and later, because of some resemblance in shape, the insect locust as well. The true locust is an insect belonging to the family *Acridiidae*, a term derived through the Latin from the Gr. *akrides*.

Accounting for the application of the term “locust” to the carob and certain other trees, the Oxford English Dictionary comments: “The Gr. name *akris*, properly denoting the insect, is applied in the Levant to the carob-pod, from some resemblance in form; and from very early times it has been believed by many that the ‘locusts’ eaten by John the Baptist were these pods” (art. “Locust”). In modern Arabic the word *nabat*, designating the insect locust, is similarly applied also to the fruit of the carob tree. The appropriateness of applying the term “locusts” to carob pods is evident from the fact that, in Greek, they are called *keratia*, literally, “little horns,” a name descriptive of their shape, and that the type of locust properly called *akris*, of the family *Acridiidae*, is “characterized by short horns” (Oxford English Dictionary, art. “Locust”). This resemblance in shape appears to be the basis for the double meaning of the word “locust” in the English language as well as in colloquial Levantine Greek and Arabic. According to Hastings’ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. “Locust,” “the resemblance between the insect and the bean is the reason for the identity of name [in English].”

7. Whether the same resemblance was reflected by the Hebrew and Aramaic we cannot say. However, it may be noted that the Heb. *chagab*, “locust” or “grasshopper,” is translated *akris* by the LXX in Lev. 11:22; Num. 13:33; 2 Chron. 7:13; Eccl. 12:5; Isa.

40:22. In Mishnaic Hebrew *charub* denotes the carob pod, and is equivalent to the Arabic *kharrūb*, from which our word carob comes, and to the Gr. *keratia*. Some have suggested that in Palestine and Syria, where the Aramaic was long used by Christians, the consonantal form *ch-r-b* may at some time have been confused with *ch-g-b*, because of a similarity of sound and spelling. According to this explanation, *charub*, “carob,” became *chagab*, “locust,” and this substitution was reflected in the Greek text of Matt. 3:4 and Mark 1:6.

Some, suggesting that the Heb. *cheryonim* of the Masoretic text should read *charubim*, have thought that carob pods are referred to in 2 Kings 6:25 (see comment there). They also suggest that the Heb. *chereb*, rendered “sword” in Isa. 1:20, should be *charub*, “carob.” In the Hebrew consonantal text the two words are identical. The translation would then be, “you shall eat the carob,” which agrees well with the context. Some have thought that Matthew, with a Hebrew background, and thinking of the *charub*, “carob,” by its colloquial name *chagab*, “locust,” may have selected the Gr. *akris*, “locust,” when writing. It is also possible that a similar colloquial terminology existed in Greek at that time.

8. From the strictly linguistic point of view the argument favors equating *akris* with the insect. But in view of all the contrary evidence here summarized, it is far from certain that this is the correct understanding of the term in Matt. 3:4 and Mark 1:6. Available evidence does not warrant a dogmatic conclusion as to precisely what foods John ate. It is worthy of note that Ellen G. White characterizes John as a vegetarian (3T 62; CH 72).

Note 2

In various places in the Gospels the writers report differently the words of Christ. They also give different accounts of certain matters, for example, the inscription on the cross. These variations have been seized upon by skeptics as proof that the Gospel writers are unreliable, even false, and thus certainly not inspired. A careful examination proves the opposite. Those who wrote the Gospels, along with the other followers of Christ, considered themselves witnesses of the events of our Lord’s life. They staked everything on the truthfulness of their witness.

Now in a court, today, if witnesses all testify precisely the same regarding an incident, the conclusion is, not that they are truthful, but that they are perjurers. Why? Because experience teaches us that no two people see an event exactly alike. One point impresses one witness; another point impresses another. Again, they may all have heard exactly the same words spoken in connection with the event, but each reports the words a little differently. One witness may even report certain parts of a conversation that the other witnesses do not report. But so long as there is no clear contradiction in the thought or meaning of the variant statements, the witnesses may be considered to have told the truth. Indeed, apparently contradictory statements may often prove to be not contradictory at all, but rather complementary. See on Matt. 27:37; Mark 5:2; 10:46.

It has been well remarked that only an honest man can afford to have a poor memory. Those who have a false story to foist on the public must keep rehearsing their story to make it hold together. The honest man may not retell his story each time in exactly the

same language—almost certainly he will not—but there is an inner consistency and harmony to the story that is evident to all. What is more, such a story lives and sparkles before our eyes because the teller of it is reliving the spirit and feeling of the incident. But when a man tells and retells a story with phonograph-like sameness, the most charitable thing we can say regarding him is that he has become a boresome slave to a mere form of words, and does not present a living picture of what actually happened or what actually was said. And if we are not charitably-minded, we may even become suspicious of his veracity, or at least sure of his senility.

All experience, and especially the experience of the courts through the long years, leads to the conclusion that truthful witnessing need not be—indeed, should not be—equated with carbon-copy identity of testimony of the different witnesses to an event, including their testimony as to what was said at the particular event.

Hence, the charge that the Gospel writers are unreliable because their reports differ, stands revealed as groundless. On the contrary, those writers provide the clearest proof that there was no collusion between them, that they independently reported what most particularly impressed their divinely illumined minds regarding the life of Christ. They wrote at different times and in different places their more or less different accounts. Yet there is no difficulty in discovering harmony and unity in what they wrote regarding incidents and events, including the words of our Lord and, for example, the inscription on the cross (see on ch. 27:37).

In the light of these facts the related charge that their variant reporting of Christ's words proves the Gospel writers uninspired, seems pointless. What warrant does the skeptic have for assuming that if they were inspired they would give verbatim the words of our Lord? None whatever. Words are merely a vehicle for expressing thought, and unfortunately, human language is often inadequate to express fully a speaker's thought. Might not the very fact that the Gospel writers stated our Lord's words in variant forms provide in itself a proof of their inspired insight into the range and intent of His words? Incidentally, Christ spoke in Aramaic; the Gospels were written in Greek. And is it not true that different scholars may produce most faithful translations of a certain man's writings and yet differ in the words used? Indeed, slavishly literal translations generally sacrifice something of the real thought or intent of the mind of the original writer.

We may here apply, with proper adaptation, the words of Scripture: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." There is a life-giving spirit that breathes through the four Gospels, a spirit that might easily have been smothered or stifled had the writers conformed to the skeptics' artificial standard of reporting—a slavishly identical form of words. God inspired His penmen thousands of years before carbon paper was invented.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 EW 230

1–3EW 154; 8T 9

1–4FE 109, 310, 423; 4T 108

1–17DA 97–113

2 CM 40; COL 35, 276; DA 104, 506; GW 54, 55; MB 2; PK 715; 8T 332; 9T 122

2, 3 7T 139

3 DA 134, 224; MM 327; 3T 279; 7T 56; 8T 33, 329

4 DA 102; 3T 62

5 DA 104, 231

7 GW 149; 3T 557; 5T 227; 8T 252
 7, 8 1T 321; 5T 225
 7–9DA 105
 8 EW 233
 10 Ev 272; EW 154, 233; 1T 136, 192, 321, 383, 486
 10–12DA 107
 12 DA 215, 392; TM 373; 5T 80
 13 DA 110
 14, 15 DA 111
 15 MB 49
 16, 17 DA 112
 17 CG 525; COL 274; DA 113, 119, 579; FE 405; ML 260; Te 274, 284; 7T 270

CHAPTER 4

1 *Christ fasteth, and is tempted.* 11 *The angels minister unto him.* 13 *He dwelleth in Capernaum,* 17 *beginneth to preach,* 18 *calleth Peter, and Andrew,* 21 *James, and John,* 23 *and healeth all the diseased.*

1. Then. [*The Temptation*, Matt. 4:1–11=Mark 1:12, 13=Luke 4:1–13. Major comment: Matthew. See the Early Ministry and Baptism to First Passover; The Ministry of Our Lord.] Gr. *tote*, a favorite word with Matthew. It occurs in his Gospel about 90 times compared with 6 times in Mark and 14 times in Luke (see Matt. 2:7; 3:13; 4:1, 5; etc.). It indicates a transition of thought and locates the new section of the narrative at a definite point of time, which may immediately follow the preceding incident.

Led up. The “wilderness” was literally “up” from the Jordan River—up in the hills, either of Judea, or of Peraea across the Jordan. The exact site of the temptation is not known.

Of the spirit. From birth Jesus had been under the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit (see on Matt. 3:16; Luke 2:52), but at the time of His baptism the Spirit descended upon Him in rich measure to endow Him with wisdom and skill for His appointed mission (Acts 10:38; cf. ch. 1:8). Jesus was “guided, step by step, by the Father’s will,” in harmony with “the plan” that “lay out before Him, perfect in all its details,” “before He came to earth” (DA 147; see on Luke 2:49). Mark uses an even stronger expression, saying, “The spirit driveth him into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12).

Into the wilderness. The traditional site of the temptation is in the rugged, barren hills that rise to the west of Jericho, called the Quarantania in allusion to the 40 days of Jesus’ stay in the wilderness. The baptism occurred in the Jordan east of Jericho (see on ch. 3:1), and the fact that Jesus returned thither at the close of the 40 days implies that the wilderness of temptation was at no great distance. This being the case, it is entirely possible that Jesus retired to the wilderness region in the vicinity of Mt. Nebo in the Mountains of Abarim, east of the Dead Sea (see on Num. 21:20; Num. 27:12; Deut. 3:17). It was from the lofty heights of Mt. Nebo that “the Lord shewed him [Moses] all the land” (Deut. 34:1–4; PP 471–477), and it may have been from the same spot, “an exceeding high mountain,” that the devil presented to Christ “all the kingdoms of the world” (Matt. 4:8).

To be tempted. Gr. *peirazō*, “to attempt” (Acts 9:26; 16:7; Acts 24:6; etc.), “to test,” with a commendable motive in view (John 6:6; 2 Cor. 13:5), and “to test” with an evil

motive in view (Matt. 19:3; Luke 11:16), particularly in the sense of luring a person to commit sin (1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Thess. 3:5; James 1:13). Here *peirazō* is used in the latter sense.

Jesus did not invite temptation, nor did He consciously place Himself on the devil's enchanted ground. He retired to the wilderness to be alone with His Father and to meditate upon the task that lay before Him.

Jesus took upon Himself human nature, and with it the possibility of yielding to sin (DA 117). He was permitted to "meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss" (DA 49). Only thus could it be said that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Otherwise, if, as some assert, Jesus, being divine, could not be tempted—then His temptation was a farce. It was through His human nature that He experienced temptation (cf. DA 686). Had His experience with temptation been in any degree less trying than our experiences with it, "He would not be able to succor us" (DA 117). See Additional Note on John 1; see on Luke 2:40, 52; John 1:14; Heb. 4:15; EGW Supplementary Material on Matt. 4:1–11; Rom. 5:12–19.

We have a representative before the Father who can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He "was in all points tempted like as we are." Hence we are bidden to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" for "grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15, 16). Jesus knows by experience what humanity can endure, and He has promised to temper the power of the tempter according to our individual strength to endure, and to "provide the way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13, RSV). Within the domain of every human heart the great conflict through which Christ passed in the wilderness of temptation is repeated. Without testing—without the opportunity to choose to do right or to do wrong—there can be no character development. It is by resisting temptation that we develop power to withstand temptation.

The devil. Gr. *diabolos*, from *dia*, "through," and *ballō*, "to thrust," as an adjective meaning "slandorous" and as a substantive "slanderer," from which the English word "devil" is derived. In the LXX *diabolos* translates the Heb. *śāṭan*, "adversary" (see on Zech. 3:1). When referring to Satan, *diabolos* generally appears with the article (1 Peter 5:8 is an exception). Without the article it is used of people (John 6:70; 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3).

There are those who contend that there is no personal devil, but the very words *diabolos*, "slanderer," and *śāṭan*, "adversary," are based on the concept of the devil as a personal being. Christ "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Only a personal being could fill the role of the devil of the temptation account (Matt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11), and answer to the other statements made concerning the devil by the various NT writers (John 13:2; Heb. 2:14; James 4:7; 1 John 3:8; Jude 9; Rev. 2:10; 20:2, 7–10).

2. Fasted. The word thus translated is generally used in the NT for abstinence from food as a ritual practice. But this was obviously not a ritual fast. Throughout His life Jesus was censured for the fact that His disciples did not comply with fast days prescribed by the Pharisees (Matt. 9:14; Luke 5:33; cf. Luke 18:12). There is danger today, as there was in Bible times, that fasting be thought of as a means of earning merit before God—of doing something to commend oneself to God. But that is not the kind of

fast God enjoins upon men (see Isa. 58:5, 6; cf. Zech. 7:5). If men fast today, it should be with the purpose of achieving clarity of mind, the antithesis of the drowsiness that comes from overeating. Spiritual perception of truth and the will of God is markedly increased by an abstemious diet, and perhaps at times even by complete abstinence from food. Fasting does not always mean complete abstinence from all food. However, Luke remarks that Jesus ate nothing while in the wilderness of temptation (ch. 4:2).

Forty days. Compare with similar fasts by Moses (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8). Attempts to find in the number 40 a mystical significance are pointless. See on Luke 4:2.

3. The tempter. The devil always attacks us at our times of greatest weakness, for it is then we are most likely to fall. For this reason it is of vital importance to preserve the physical, mental, and emotional powers at a high level of strength and efficiency. Anything that weakens these powers weakens our defense against the wiles of the tempter. Such things as overwork, lack of exercise, overeating, a faulty diet, lack of sleep, or anything that lessens intellectual alertness and emotional control tends to open the way for the evil one to enter the soul. To entertain thoughts of discouragement, defeat, or resentment will have the same effect. We must set our thoughts and affections on things above (Col. 3:2) and fill our minds with things that are true, honest, pure, and lovely (Phil. 4:8). We must bring the body into subjection to the laws of our physical being, for it is impossible fully to appreciate things of eternal worth if we live in violation of the natural laws that govern our being.

Came to him. It was a personal devil that “came” to Jesus; it was a personal devil that Jesus defeated and routed. There is not the least hint given by any of the Gospel writers that the temptation was a subjective experience that occurred exclusively within the mind of Jesus, as some have contended.

If thou be. Satan had witnessed the baptism of Jesus and had heard the proclamation from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (ch. 3:17; see DA 116, 119). As far as outward appearances were concerned there seemed to be reason to doubt the truth of that proclamation. Pale, worn, emaciated, and famished beyond measure (see DA 137), Jesus hardly gave the appearance of being the Son of God. Satan’s words, “If thou be,” confronted Jesus with the question, “How do you know that you are the Son of God?” Similarly, in the Garden of Eden it had been the tempter’s purpose to lead Eve to disbelieve the clearly stated words of God in regard to the tree of knowledge. In the same way Satan approaches men and women today, endeavoring to get them to disbelieve the plain truths clearly stated in the revealed Word of God. Only those whose faith, like that of Jesus, rests firmly on what “is written,” on a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. A temptation always poses a challenge to some clearly known truth. It proposes that circumstances justify departure from principle.

The Son of God. A clear echo of the words of the Father at the Jordan 40 days previously (see on ch. 3:17). With haughty contempt Satan addressed the One against whom he had spoken so bitterly in heaven before he was cast out. In fact, Jesus now looked more like a human being ready to die than like the Son of God (DA 118, 137). The words of Satan upon this occasion were later echoed by the scornful Jewish leaders as they addressed Christ on the cross (ch. 27:40). See on Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:35; John 1:1–3, 14.

Command. On occasions during His ministry Jesus was requested to authenticate His Messiahship by the display of miraculous power (Matt. 12:38; 16:1; Mark 8: 11, 12; John 2:18; 6:30). But He refused to perform miracles when challenged to do so. Rather, each miracle met some specific need of the people to whom He sought to minister. True, the forces of nature and the elements of nature might be expected to obey the command of their Creator (Matt. 8:26; John 2:6–11; etc.). But Jesus did not call upon the power of Heaven to provide for Himself anything not available to us. See p. 209.

These stones. Satan probably pointed to stones lying on the ground at Jesus' feet some of which may have been roughly in the shape of the disklike Oriental loaf of bread. Satan may even have picked up one of the stones (cf. Luke 4:3) and offered it to Jesus, as he had plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree and placed it in the hands of Eve (PP 55).

Bread. Bread here represents the material requirements of man's physical nature. It stands for the materialistic philosophy of life, which assumes that a man's life consists in the abundance of things that come into his possession, and that he lives by bread alone. And appeal to the appetite was thus the basis of Satan's opening attack on the Son of God, even as it was the basis of his approach to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Many of the temptations that come to men fall in this class. In the first place, Satan knows that temptations to the physical nature of man are more likely of immediate success. In the second place, he directs his temptations to the enfeeblement and degradation of the physical powers of man, knowing full well that through the physical nature, through the senses, he can gain access to the whole being. The physical nature must be constantly under the control of the higher powers of the mind, the will and the reason, in order to avoid ruin. The body is the medium through which the mind and soul are developed, through which character is formed (MH 130). It was the fact that, as the Son of God, Jesus *did* have power to satisfy His hunger by creating food, that made this temptation real.

The temptation consisted in Satan's suggestion that Christ satisfy His hunger in a wrong way, that is, without regard to what the Father's will might be. Satan's proposal covertly insinuated that God must be unkind to leave His Son alone to suffer hunger, particularly when it was entirely unnecessary.

Compare the temptations in the wilderness at the beginning of Christ's ministry with those in Gethsemane at its close (see on ch. 26:38).

4. Answered and said. See on Job 3:2.

It is written. Christ's faith in God and His knowledge of God's will were founded on the Scriptures. From childhood Christ had studied the Scriptures with diligence and was intimately acquainted with them (DA 70). In this lay the secret of His strength to meet temptation. It is faith that brings victory over the world (1 John 5:4), and faith is developed through a study of the Scriptures (Rom. 10:17). Here Christ affirms that adherence to the written Word of God is of greater value and importance than even the performance of a miracle. Christ's quotations from Scripture upon this occasion were all taken from the book of Deuteronomy.

Man shall not live. A quotation from Deut. 8:3, a truth Christ had revealed to Moses 15 centuries previously. When the temptations were over, Jesus was almost at the point of death (DA 131). Satan may have insinuated that unless Christ departed from what He deemed to be the path of duty, He would die. If so, by His response Jesus affirmed that death within the orbit of God's will is preferable to life apart from it. This form of

temptation Satan presses upon many who seek to be obedient to the revealed will of God. He who sets out to live by and for “bread” alone does not really live at all, and at best is doomed to die, for “bread” without God brings death and not life.

The first words of Jesus declare complete and unquestioning submission to the Father’s will as expressed in the Word of God. Jesus accepts the binding nature of that Word (cf. John 15:10), and denies the prime importance of material things. Spiritual things are of transcendent value and importance. See on Matt. 6:24–34; John 6:27.

Bread alone. Man is more than an animal; his most urgent needs are not physical and material. Jesus affirmed, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). While, on the one hand, Jesus maintained the vital importance of assisting those in need in every way possible (Matt. 25:31–46; etc.), He also made clear that this was not to take the place of loyalty and devotion to Him personally as the Messiah (ch. 26:11). True, men are “to do justly, and to love mercy” (Micah 6:8), and to love their neighbors as themselves (Matt. 22:39); but they are also to walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:8). Christ’s reply to the devil is a condemnation of the materialistic philosophy of life in whatever form it may appear. The possession of *things* is not the ultimate, nor even a desirable aim of life (see Luke 12:15). See on John 6:27–58.

Every word. Jesus said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” (John 4:34). Jeremiah spoke of finding and eating the words of God, and of their becoming to him “the joy and rejoicing” of his heart (ch. 15:16). Job declared, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (ch. 23:12). Jesus, the living Word (John 1:1–3), was “the living bread which came down from heaven” (ch. 6:48–51). Paul spoke of tasting “the good word of God” (Heb. 6:5). Peter referred to the “sincere milk of the word” (1 Peter 2:2), by which the Christian is to grow.

It is of vital importance, furthermore, to heed *every* word of God. Man is not at liberty to select from the Word of God those portions that appeal to him, and reject others. God has provided a balanced spiritual diet for His earthborn children, and those who eat only what pleases their fancy cannot expect to enjoy a healthy Christian experience or to reach Christian maturity. Even the “least commandments” of God (Matt. 5:19) are indispensable for the one who would enter the kingdom of heaven.

5. Then. In Luke the order of the second and third temptations as they appear in Matthew is reversed. We do not know what was the actual chronological order, but there is reason to believe that the three temptations occurred in the order given by Matthew. A careful study of the nature and purpose of each temptation leads to the conclusion that the three reach a climax when Satan takes Jesus to an “exceeding high mountain” (v. 8) and shows Him the kingdoms of this world. In the first two, as listed by Matthew, Satan appears in the role of an angel of light, but in the third he overtly demands that Christ worship him (v. 9). It is this blasphemous suggestion that, according to Matthew, elicits the peremptory command, “Get thee hence, Satan” (v. 10). It is also worthy of note that *The Desire of Ages* comments on the three temptations in the order given by Matthew (see DA 129). See on v. 9.

The sequence of events as given in one of the Synoptic Gospels often differs from that in the others. It should be noted that none of the evangelists claim to have arranged the narrative in strictly chronological sequence (see p. 274), and it is certainly evident that not all of them have done so. See Additional Notes on Chapter 3, Note 2.

The holy city. Some Maccabean coins bear the inscription “Jerusalem the Holy.” The Arabic name for Jerusalem today is *el-Quds*, “the Holy.” It is obvious that Satan did not select the Temple as a site for his second temptation because of the lack of heights and precipices in the mountains of the wilderness; there must have been another motive. It may be that Satan sought to surround the second temptation with an air of sanctity.

Pinnacle. Gr. *pterugion*, diminutive form meaning, literally, “little wing,” thought by some here to represent the outer rim of the Temple. A later Greek writer uses the nondiminutive form *pterux* to represent the point of a building. Hence *pterugion* may describe a turret, battlement, pointed roof, or peak. The English word “pinnacle” is from the Latin, *pinna*, a diminutive form of *pinna*, “wing.”

Temple. Gr. *hieron*, a term used to refer to the entire Temple area and the buildings it contained. The sanctuary building itself, comprising the holy and most holy places, is called, in Greek, *naos*. Both *hieron* and *naos* are rendered “temple” in the NT.

6. If thou be. See on v. 3. On the surface, a failure to provide an answer to Satan’s challenge would appear to be a tacit admission on the part of Jesus that He was not the Son of God. In meeting the first temptation Jesus had proved loyal as a Son to the Father’s will. Now the tempter proposes that He prove His loyalty and faith by an act that would, allegedly, give conclusive proof of the fact.

Cast thyself down. Surely, urged Satan, such an act of faith in God would be a supreme demonstration that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. The rabbis taught that “when the king Messiah reveals himself, then he comes and stands on the roof of the holy place” (Midrasg *Pesiqtha Rabbathi* 36 [162^a], cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. I, p. 151). Had Jesus cast Himself down, none would have witnessed the act but Satan and the angels of God (1SG 33).

It is written. Satan misinterprets and misapplies the passage he now offers Jesus as a reason for departing from the path of duty. He manipulates the Word of God in such a way as to make it appear that it approves a sinful course of action; he twists its meaning and uses it deceitfully (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2).

Give his angels charge. Satan quotes from Ps. 91:11, 12, but omits the words “to keep thee in all thy ways.” Perhaps this was designed to obscure the fact that the protecting care of God is available to us only when we remain in ways of God’s own choosing. Satan well knew that when a man departs from the straight and narrow way he leaves God’s chosen ground and steps over onto the enchanted ground of the enemy. But Jesus refused to depart from the pathway of strict obedience to the will of the Father.

7. It is written. Satan had removed the words of Ps. 91:11, 12 from their context (see on Matt. 4:6). In order to set forth the true meaning of the words quoted from Ps. 91 and to prove that the devil had misapplied them, Jesus quoted another passage (Deut. 6:16), whose context sets forth the circumstances under which one may claim the blessing of God (see vs. 17–25). Texts isolated from their context often prove to be misleading. Also, a given passage must be understood in harmony with all others. The claim that the Scriptures may be made to teach anything and everything is true only when this principle is violated. When the Word of God is taken as a whole its truths are clear and harmonious.

Not tempt. The words used by Christ to foil the tempter were originally spoken by Moses with reference to the first occasion in the wilderness when the children of Israel murmured for water (see Ex. 17:1–7). God had provided abundant evidence of the fact that He was leading His people and would provide for their every need, as, for example, the wonders of divine power displayed in Egypt, the dramatic deliverance at the Red Sea, and more recently, the sending of the manna. Upon being supplied with food, the people had humbly promised that in the future they would trust the Lord (PP 297); yet a short time later, when given an opportunity to exercise faith, they accused Moses of intending to dispose of them in order that he might enrich himself by their possessions (Ex. 17:1–4; PP 297, 298). In spite of the evidence of divine solicitude for their needs, they “tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?” (Ex. 17:7). They put God to the test; that is, they challenged Him to prove His divine power. Their sin consisted in the fact that they came to God in the wrong spirit—one of demand and petulant anger rather than of humble, patient faith. Unless their demand was met they refused to believe in God.

It was in this same spirit that Satan now proposed that Christ should put His Father to the test. Instead of accepting by faith the Father’s proclamation at the Jordan, affirming Him to be the Son of God, Jesus was to experiment in order to prove to His satisfaction that this was so. But such an experiment would reflect doubt rather than faith.

We are never to place ourselves unnecessarily or carelessly in a position where God will have to work a miracle in order to save us from the untoward results of a foolish course of action. We are not to presume upon God to rescue us when we rush unbidden into danger. Mature faith will lead us to order our lives in harmony with what God has already revealed to us, and then to trust Him for the rest.

8. An exceeding high mountain. Inspiration has not revealed the site of the third temptation. Some have suggested Mt. Nebo, from whose advantageous heights (2,644 ft.) Moses viewed the entire Promised Land (Deut. 34:1–4), and then, in vision, the course of the plan of salvation down through the ages (PP 472–477).

Sheweth him. Matthew remarks that the devil showed Jesus “*all* the kingdoms of the world, and the *glory* of them” (ch. 4:8), and Luke notes that this occurred “in a moment of time” (ch. 4:5). It is futile to speculate as to how Satan may have been able to present before Jesus the colorful panorama that now passed before His eyes.

Casting aside his guise as an angel from the realms of glory, Satan now stood before Christ in his assumed role of prince of this world (DA 129). He did not hold title to this earth by right, but rather, by wresting from Adam and Eve their God-given domain. Satan claimed to have replaced Adam as the lawful ruler of the world (see Gen. 1:28; Job 1:6, 7), but he ruled as a usurper. Nevertheless, Christ did not directly contest Satan’s claim, and denied only that Satan had any right to accept worship. Jesus even spoke of Satan as the “prince” of this world, in recognition of his *de facto* rulership (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

The world. Gr. *kosmos*, “world,” or “universe,” from the viewpoint of its orderly arrangement in space. Luke says *oikoumenē*, the “inhabited world” (ch. 4:5), the word appearing in Matt. 24:14; Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28; 17:6; etc. A third word translated “world” in the NT is *aiōn*, “age,” or “world,” particularly the world from the viewpoint of sequences of happenings in time (Matt. 12:32; 13:39; 24:3; 28:20; Luke 18:30; etc.).

The glory of them. Satan effectively hid the seamy side of his kingdom, and presented only the dazzling glories of human prowess. He offered Jesus the role of political Messiah, a role in which the Jewish nation would have accepted Him (see John 6:15; see on Luke 4:19).

9. All these things. See on v. 8. Religiously and politically Satan effectively exercised his control over the affairs of the world (see Luke 4:6). “These things” were, of course, stolen property, but so long as they were in his hands Satan proposed to trade with them to his own advantage. Christ was the true owner, and His ownership was based on the fact that He had made “all things” (John 1:3). He had never abdicated His rights. Satan knew that Jesus had come to contest his claim, and now offered to surrender it without a conflict—but on conditions. Satan’s control of the human race was not complete; there were still some who had not yielded allegiance to him. He realized the challenge implied in the sinlessness of Christ.

Will I give thee. Satan made it appear that Jesus was getting something for practically nothing—“all these things” for the paltry price of prostrating Himself once before the one who posed as their rightful owner. It was as if Satan said, “You came to earn title to this world, did You not? Accept it as a gift from me. Power and honor may be Yours for the taking.” In return, all Satan asked was a transfer of personal allegiance from the Father to himself.

In refusing to comply with Satan’s proposal, Christ also disavowed any unholy alliance between church and state. Christ refused to interfere with the nations of His time—consistently and completely. His only advice on matters of church-state relations was to “render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (ch. 22:21).

Fall down and worship me. In Oriental lands even today prostration is the sign of absolute submission and fealty. This diabolical proposal—that God incarnate should worship the devil—constitutes the climax of blasphemy. The great issues at stake and the unholy boldness of the proposal seem to represent the maximum limit of diabolical ingenuity, and suggest that Matthew’s order of the three temptations, rather than that of Luke, represents the chronological order. Having made his boldest move, Satan had nothing more to offer.

10. Get thee hence. The climax had been reached. Satan had unmasked himself and had appeared in his true role. The prince of this world had come to Christ offering to satisfy the cravings of human desire (1) for the material creature comforts and necessities, (2) for the privilege of doing as one pleases and of enjoying the privilege of disobedience without accepting its responsibilities, (3) for pride and popularity, and (4) for power and authority over other men.

The prince of this world came to Christ and found nothing in Him that responded, even in the very least degree, to temptation (see John 14:30). The Son of God, “in the likeness of sinful flesh, ... condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3), and if we but come to Him in faith—if we choose to “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4)—He will, by His grace, enable us thus to walk. If we will but submit ourselves to God, we too may resist the devil, and he will flee from us (see James 4:7, 8). God will be to us a sure defense (Prov. 18:10).

Satan. See on v. 1.

Worship the Lord. A quotation from the LXX of Deut. 6:13. The belief that man can serve two masters is a deception of the devil (see Matt. 6:24). Any philosophy of life that offers us “all these things” and heaven too is part and parcel of the devil’s own doctrine.

Shalt thou serve. Jesus had now affirmed His loyalty to principle in the realm of the body, the mind, and the soul. Throughout His life it was the will of the Father, and not His own, that guided His choice in all things (see ch. 26:39).

11. Then. See on v. 1.

Devil leaveth him. Not permanently, but “for a season” (Luke 4:13). Even from infancy His life had been “one long struggle against the powers of darkness” (DA 71, 116; see on Luke 4:2). The devil had tempted Christ, but was powerless to compel Him to sin; and so it is with us. His fiercest temptations are powerless unless and until we consent to sin (see 5T 177). When we “resist the devil ... he will flee” from us (James 4:7). Christ came forth from the battle triumphant—the devil departed a defeated foe.

Ministered. When the temptations were ended Jesus fell exhausted to the earth with the pallor of death upon His face. He lay there like one dying (DA 131).

Satan had promised the ministry of angels outside the circle of obedience to the will of God, but Jesus refused. Now, heavenly angels came and ministered to Him upon the pathway of obedience. Their assurances of the Father’s love and of the appreciation and joy of all heaven in His victory must have greatly comforted and strengthened the Saviour.

12. Now. [*Opening of the Galilean Ministry*, Matt. 4:12=Mark 1:14, 15=Luke 4:14, 15. Major comment: Matthew. See *Early Galilean Ministry*; *The Duration of Christ’s Ministry*, the *Opening of the Galilean Ministry*, and *The Ministry of Our Lord*.] None of the three Synoptic Gospels report what is commonly known as the early Judean ministry of Christ. This period extended from the temptation to the beginning of the Galilean ministry, that is, from the Passover of A.D. 28 to that of A.D. 29, with a temporary withdrawal to Galilee during the winter of 28–29 (see *Additional Note on Luke 4*; the *Opening of the Galilean Ministry*). Inspiration has provided no direct explanation of the silence of the synoptic writers on the early Judean ministry. Luke speaks of the ministry of Jesus as if it began in Galilee (see Acts 10:37, 38).

Something of the success of Jesus’ early Judean ministry is apparent from the complaint of John’s disciples that “all men come to him” (John 3:26), and from John’s reply, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (ch. 3:30). In spite of Christ’s apparent popularity and success (see DA 181), His Judean ministry bore little fruit (DA 194, 245). Though the brief remarks of John constitute our sum of information of what took place during this period, it is clear that a considerable period of time was thus occupied (cf. DA 214, 231). Evidently (John 3:22–24) John the Baptist and Jesus were both preaching in Judea during this time, and that the tide of popularity was gradually ebbing from John and flowing toward Jesus (ch. 3:26; DA 178).

It was not long before His power over the multitudes exceeded even that of John, which had for a time been greater than that of the rulers themselves (DA 178, 181). See on John 3:22, 26; 4:3.

The rejection of Jesus by the Sanhedrin after the healing at Bethesda (John 5:16, 18) brought His work in Judea to a close and led to His departure for Galilee and to the formal commencement of His ministry there. Another contributing factor was the recent imprisonment of John the Baptist (Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; see on John 4:1).

When Jesus had heard. It is interesting to note that the imprisonment of John the Baptist coincide approximately with Jesus' rejection by the Jewish leaders and the close of His early Judean ministry (see the Opening of the Galilean Ministry), and that John's death came about a year later, shortly before the crisis that brought Christ's work in Galilee to a close (see ch. 14:10–21; The Ministry of Our Lord). It was John's imprisonment, together with His own rejection by the Jewish leaders, that led Jesus to withdraw to Galilee and carry on His work there (see Additional Note on Luke 4).

Cast into prison. See on Luke 3:19, 20. The word translated "cast" means, literally, "delivered up." It may be that the Jewish leaders, jealous of John's popularity with the people, agreed, in advance, to John's imprisonment. They could thus be rid of the prophet without themselves being held responsible by the people. The fact that the Sanhedrin publicly denounced Jesus at about the same time (see Additional Note Luke 4) implies a close connection between the two events. Thus the threat of the Sanhedrin after the healing at Bethesda (DA 213) was no doubt intended to frighten Jesus into discontinuing His public labors.

Departed. That is, transferred His field of ministry to that region. This was in the spring of A.D. 29, after the Passover, and was at least the third time since His baptism that Jesus "departed" from Judea for Galilee. The first of these departures for Galilee came in the winter of A.D. 27–28 (see John 1:43), and the second, a year later, in the winter of A.D. 28–29 (see on John 4:1–4). After leaving Judea following the Passover of A.D. 29, Jesus did not return again till the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn of A.D. 30 (DA 393, 395, 450–452). The departure from Jerusalem in the spring of A.D. 29 marks the formal beginning of what is commonly called the Galilean ministry (DA 231, 232; MB 2). At a distance from the Jewish authorities, now bent on His death, Jesus could carry on His work with less interference.

By conducting His work first in Judea, Jesus purposed to give the Jewish leaders the opportunity to accept Him as the Messiah. Had they done so, the Jewish nation would doubtless have rallied to Him and would have been privileged to represent Him before the nations of the world—as had been the original plan envisioned by the holy prophets of old (see Vol. IV, pp. 25–28).

Galilee. See on ch. 2:22. Being at some distance from Jerusalem, and thus less subject to the influence of the religious leaders there, the Jews of Galilee were more simple-hearted and open-minded. They were less under the control of religious prejudice than were their fellow countrymen in Judea. They were more earnest and sincere, and more ready to listen to the message of Christ without bias. In fact, their eagerness to hear what He had to say made it necessary at times for Him to go from place to place, lest enthusiasm rise to such a pitch as to be construed by the authorities as endangering the peace and security of the nation.

13. Leaving Nazareth. [Removal to Capernaum, Matt. 4:13–17=Luke 4:31^a. Major comment: Matthew. See Early Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] Matthew says nothing of the rejection of Jesus by His own townsfolk, the people of Nazareth (see on Luke 4:28, 29). His silence with regard to many of the incidents noted in more detail by the other Gospel writers is thought to be because of the fact that he is more concerned with the teachings of Jesus than with the things Jesus did (see p. 191). For the circumstances that prompted this removal see on Luke 4:16–30.

Capernaum. The name may be derived from the Hebrew words *kaphar*, “village,” and *nachum*, “Nahum,” and thus mean “the village of Nahum.” Some have suggested that Capernaum may have been the home of the prophet Nahum, but of this there is no confirmation whatever. It is thought that the town was situated on the site of the modern *Tell Hûm* (some suggest *Khân Minyeh*), on the northwestern shore of the Lake of Galilee. Since the lake was 685 ft. (209 m.) below the level of the Mediterranean, Capernaum enjoyed a mild, genial climate.

Capernaum was the chief Jewish center of the region (cf. ch. 11:23). Being situated on one of the main highways from Damascus, with Tyre and Sidon on the north, Jerusalem on the south, and the Mediterranean on the west, Capernaum became an important toll station. There was, as well, maritime trade with Decapolis, to the south of the territory of Philip. Perhaps Capernaum was not so large as Sepphoris, which, at least before the building of Tiberias, was the chief city in Galilee. It is thought that Capernaum did not exist before the Babylonian exile; if it did, it must have been an insignificant village, for it is not mentioned in the OT.

Capernaum formed an ideal center from which news of the teachings and miracles of Jesus would spread rapidly to all parts of Galilee, and beyond. The healing of the nobleman’s son (see John 4:46–54) the preceding winter (A.D. 28–29, see The Ministry of Our Lord) had already kindled a light in Capernaum (see on Luke 4:23). The nobleman and his entire family were converted (DA 200), and no doubt spread the news of Jesus and of the healing of the son throughout the city, thus preparing the way for Christ’s personal ministry.

Jesus made Capernaum His home and headquarters for approximately the next year and a half. Peter had already been following Jesus for more than a year (cf. John 1:40–42), and it seems that he opened his own home to Jesus whenever He was in Capernaum (see Mark 1:29–31; 2:1; DA 259, 267). Capernaum came to be known as “his own city” (Matt. 9:1). It was from this center that Jesus set out on each of His evangelistic tours through the towns of Galilee.

The sea coast. That is, of the Lake of Galilee.

Zabulon and Nephthalim. The tribal allotment of Naphtali bordered the Lake of Galilee on the west, whereas that of Zebulun lay still farther to the west (see Joshua 19:10–16, 32–40). These tribal boundaries had long since ceased to have significance. Matthew makes note of the fact that the ministry of Jesus in Galilee centered in the area formerly occupied by these two tribes. He does so in anticipation of his citation from Isa. 9:1, 2 (see Matt. 4:15, 16). Nazareth was within the ancient tribal boundaries of Zebulun, as Capernaum was of Naphtali.

14. Might be fulfilled. See on ch. 1:22. A quotation from Isa. 9:1, 2, with slight variations from the Hebrew and the LXX. Isaiah wrote (about 734 B.C.) when the Assyrian armies were ravaging the northern section of the kingdom of Israel. These tribes were among the first to bear the brunt of the ruthless Assyrian invasions (see 2 Kings 15:29; cf. 1 Chron. 5:26).

15. Way of the sea. See on Matt. 4:13; Mark 2:14.

Beyond Jordan. Or, “across the Jordan,” that is, within the boundaries of the Promised Land.

Gentiles. After the deportation of the ten tribes to Assyria in 722 B.C. the region known as Galilee (see Isa. 9:1) was inhabited almost exclusively by non-Jews. By the time of Christ many Jews had settled there, with the result that the population was particularly cosmopolitan—an admixture of Jew and Gentile.

16. Sat in darkness. The “darkness” was the gloom of captivity; the “light” was deliverance from captivity. Now, Christ comes as the great deliverer, dispelling the dismal gloom of bondage to sin and proclaiming the glorious light of truth that makes men free indeed. See on John 1:5.

Great light. That is, Jesus, “the true Light” (see on John 1:4, 7, 9).

Shadow of death. Ever since the entrance of sin men have lived in the “shadow of death.” Jesus came to deliver those “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15).

Light is sprung up. Light has ever been the symbol of the divine presence (see on Gen. 1:3). Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5), whose bright beams dispel the darkness of sin and death. See on ch. 1:14.

17. From that time. See on Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:15.

Began to preach. That is, in Galilee. The phrase does not necessarily imply that this was the first occasion upon which Jesus preached. About a year and a half of His public ministry was already in the past (see on v. 12).

Repent. Gr. *metanoēō*. For the meaning see on ch. 3:2. The Jews regarded repentance a most important doctrine. They emphasized repentance as a necessary prerequisite to salvation by a Messiah. The rabbis had a saying that “if the Israelites would repent for one day, the Messiah son of David would come immediately.” According to their teachings, repentance included sorrow for sin, restitution wherever possible, and the resolution not to repeat the sin. See on chs. 3:2; 5:2, 3.

The kingdom of heaven. An expression used exclusively by Matthew (31 times) in the NT, in preference to the more common term “kingdom of God,” which Matthew himself uses five times, and the other NT writers use exclusively. The substitution of “heaven” for “God” is in harmony with the custom of the Jews of Christ’s day to avoid uttering the sacred name for God, in the same way as they used the expressions “name of heaven” for “name of God”; “fear of heaven” for “fear of God”; “honor of heaven” for “honor of God,” etc. (see Vol. I, p. 172). The expression “kingdom of heaven” is not found in the OT, though the idea is implicit throughout the prophetic writings (Isa. 11:1–12; 35; 65:17–25; Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 22, 27; Micah 4:8; etc.).

The “kingdom of heaven,” or “kingdom of God,” constituted the theme of Jesus’ teaching (Luke 4:43; 8:1). He introduced many of His parables with the words, “The kingdom of heaven is like [or likened]” (see Matt. 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47). He taught His disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom (ch. 6:10). His gospel was the good news of the kingdom (ch. 4:23; etc.). His disciples were the “children of the kingdom” (ch. 13:38). The Father was pleased to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32), which they were to inherit (Matt. 25:34). In this life Christians must make the kingdom supreme in their affections and the great aim of life (ch. 6:33). When He sent forth the Twelve He instructed them to “preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:2, 60).

John proclaimed the imminence of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 3:2). Jesus also declared the kingdom to be “at hand” (ch. 4:17) and instructed His disciples, when He sent them forth to preach, to bear the same message (ch. 10:7).

The “kingdom of heaven” was established at the first advent of Christ. Jesus Himself was King, and those who believed in Him became its subjects. The territory of the kingdom was the hearts and lives of the subjects. Obviously, the message Jesus bore referred to the kingdom of divine grace. But, as Jesus Himself made clear, this kingdom of grace was preparatory to the kingdom of glory (see DA 234; GC 346, 347). Concerning the latter, the disciples inquired on the day of the ascension, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (see Acts 1:6, 7). The kingdom of grace was near in Christ’s day (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7), but the kingdom of glory was future (ch. 24:33). Only when the Son of man should “come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him” would “he sit upon the throne of his glory” (ch. 25:31).

At hand. See on Mark 1:15.

18. Jesus. [*The Call by the Sea*, Matt. 4:18–22=Mark 1:16–20=Luke 5:1–11. Major comment: Luke.] Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 146) the reading “he.”

Simon. The Greek form of the Heb. *Shim’on*, Simeon. In the days of Christ many Jews took Greek names or adopted Greek forms for their Hebrew names. This was particularly true of Jews living outside Palestine. But even in Palestine it was convenient to have a Greek name in view of the fact that Greek was the common commercial and intellectual language of the world of that day. See pp. 25, 29.

Peter. Gr. *Petros*, “a stone,” or “a rock” (see on ch. 16:18), a translation of the Aramaic *Kepha*, a word rendered in English as Cephas, and also meaning “rock,” or “stone” (John 1:42). For a biographical sketch of Peter see on Mark 3:16.

Andrew. See on Mark 3:18.

A net. Gr. *amphiblēstron*, a casting net, in contrast with *diktuon*, a general term for a fishing or hunting net, or *sagēnē*, a “dragnet” (see on ch. 13:47).

19. Follow me. In the sense of becoming a full-time disciple. Henceforth Peter and Andrew were to make it their full-time business to be learners in the school of Jesus (see on Luke 5:11).

Fishers of men. See on Luke 5:10.

21. James. Gr. *Iakōbos*, equivalent to the name Jacob (see on Gen. 25:26; Mark 3:17). When James and his brother John are named together, as here, James is mentioned first with only one exception (Luke 9:28). James was the older of the two (see DA 292).

Zebedee. Gr. *Zebedaios*, the equivalent of the Heb. *Zabday*, meaning, probably, “Jehovah has given.” His wife was probably Salome (Matt. 27:56; cf. Mark 15:40; 16:1).

John. See on Mark 3:17. For the meaning of the name see on Luke 1:13. John was the youngest of the Twelve (DA 292).

Mending. That is, to make them ready for the next fishing expedition.

He called them. See on Mark 1:17.

22. Left the ship. See on Luke 5:11.

Their father. See on Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:20.

Followed him. See on Luke 5:11. Prior to this at least three of the four disciples now called to full-time discipleship had intermittently followed Jesus and returned to their regular business as fishermen.

23. Went about all Galilee. [*First Galilean Tour*, Matt. 4:23–25=Mark 1:35–39=Luke 4:42–44. Major comment: Mark.] In his gospel account Matthew does not

always follow a strictly chronological sequence of events (see p. 274). He tends to group incidents according to kind rather than time. Matthew's narrative of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and of the sick and afflicted who gathered at the door of Peter's home at the close of the Sabbath in ch. 8:14–17 should be inserted between vs. ch. 22 and 23 of 4 in order to provide a chronological sequence. This is clear from the account as given by Mark, who follows this sequence of events—the call by the sea, the healing of the demoniac in the Capernaum synagogue, the events at Peter's home, and the beginning of the first missionary tour through Galilee (see Mark 1:16–39).

Matthew here gives a brief summary of the first missionary tour conducted by Jesus in the cities, towns, and villages of Galilee during the summer of A.D. 29 (see on Mark 1:39). The form of the verb translated “went about,” indicates a more extended tour than the brief record of the various synoptic writers might seem to imply. According to Josephus, Galilee was a densely populated area, dotted by upward of 200 towns and villages. The only specific incident recorded of events on the first missionary tour is that of the healing of a leper, which Matthew relates in ch. 8:2–4.

The gospel. This is the first occurrence of the word “gospel” in the book of Matthew (see on Mark 1:1).

Sickness. Gr. *nosos*, frequently used of diseases of a serious nature, hence, perhaps, better translated “disease.”

Disease. Gr. *malakia*, a general term for weaknesses such as result from some disease. Here the word describes physical and mental illnesses, perhaps of a less severe type than *nosos*. The two words *nosos* and *malakia* appear together in the LXX of Deut. 7:15.

24. Fame. Gr. *akoē*, better, “report” (see on Mark 1:28).

Syria. The sense in which Matthew here uses the term “Syria” is not entirely clear. It is possible that he refers to regions beyond Galilee, for later on in His ministry people in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon knew of Jesus (ch. 15:21, 22) and came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases (Luke 6:17). The context, however, suggests that Matthew here uses the term “Syria” in a more general sense, to include Galilee as part of Syria (geographically if not politically), or perhaps to refer to the northernmost regions of Galilee bordering on Syria proper (see vs. 23, 25). Either of the latter suggestions seems the more probable, particularly in view of the fact that those who came to Him in response to the report they heard of Him came from Galilee, Decapolis, Judea, and Peraea (v. 25). At this time Palestine belonged to the Roman province of Syria.

Divers diseases. That is, “various diseases.”

Torments. Or, “pains.”

Possessed with devils. See on Mark 1:23.

Lunatick. From the Gr. *sele-niazomai*, literally, “to be moonstruck,” a word occurring in the NT only here and in ch. 17:15. From the symptoms given in ch. 17:15 many have concluded that *selēniazomai* means “to be epileptic,” but may have had wider connotations.

Palsy. From the Gr. *paralutikos*, whence our English word “paralytic.”

25. Decapolis. See p. 46.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 DA 114
1-3PK 174
1-4EW 155; Te 20, 275, 285; 3T 380, 490; 4T 29, 36
1-11CS 209; DA 114-131; Te 282; 3T 372; 4T 44, 576
2 CD 167, 186; MM 264; MH 333; 3T 486, 488; 4T 32, 293
2-4CD 169; DA 117; 3T 161; 4T 257; 5T 510; Te 109, 161
3 DA 24, 49, 118, 119, 664, 746; MH 422; 2T 508
3, 4 MYP 58; 1T 293
4 AA 51; CH 423; COL 39; CS 155, 210; CSW 27, 32, 43; DA 85, 86, 88, 120, 121, 123, 390, 391, 677; Ed 126, 171; GC 51, 559; GW 264, 309; LS 93; MB 52; MH 21, 181; MM 89, 97, 125; PP 208; Te 276, 286; TM 441; 4T 45; 5T 330, 434; 6T 19, 81, 132, 153, 160, 347; 7T 223; 9T 16, 68
5, 6 DA 124; Te 285
5-7EW 156
5-8MYP 52; 1T 299, 341
5-9GC 501
6 DA 746
6, 7 DA 125
7 MM 15; 3T 482
7-104T 45
8, 9 CS 144; DA 129; MYP 54; 3T 477; 4T 495; 6T 14
8-11DA 24; GC 50; Te 286; 1T 293
9 CS 210, 214; 3T 479; 4T 37; 9T 24
10 DA 130; PK 625; Te 278; 6T 10
10, 11 3T 457
11 DA 131; EW 158; SR 202; Te 20; 3T 526
13 CH 500; 9T 121
13-16CH 316
15, 16 CH 387; DA 245; MH 20
16 DA 32; GC 299; PK 688; PP 476
17 MB 2
18 4T 488
18-22DA 244-251; GW 24, 113
18-24CH 317
19 AA 18; CT 548; DA 249; FE 339, 359; GC 171; MH 25; MYP 303; PK 60, 65; 3T 383; 4T 615; 7T 298; 8T 56
20 AA 365; Ev 632; MH 480
23 CH 535; DA 821; Ev 54; 9T 170
24, 25 MB 3
25 MB 5

CHAPTER 5

- 1 *Christ beginneth his sermon in the mount: 3 declaring who are blessed, 13 who are the salt of the earth, 14 the light of the world, the city on an hill, 15 the candle: 17 that he came to fulfil the law. 21 What it is to kill, 27 to commit adultery, 33 to swear: 38*

exhorteth to suffer wrong, 44 to love even our enemies, 48 and to labour after perfectness.

Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus

4



1. Seeing the multitudes. [*Sermon on the Mount*, Matt. 5:1 to 8:1=Luke 6:17–49. Major comment: Matthew. See Early Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] Apparently, the “great multitudes” of ch. 4:25 that followed Jesus after His first major missionary tour through the cities and villages of Galilee. The Sermon on the Mount was probably delivered in the late summer (MB 2, 45) of the year A.D. 29, about midway of the three and one-half years of His ministry. Luke clearly connects the Sermon on the Mount with the appointment and ordination of the Twelve (Luke 6:12–20; cf. MB 3, 4), and preserves the correct sequence of events on that notable day: (1) the night spent in prayer, (2) the ordination of the Twelve, (3) descent to the plain, (4) the sermon (see DA 298). He omits only notice of the fact that Jesus “went up [again] into a mountain” (Matt. 5:1), and this omission has led some to think that the sermon recorded in Luke was not delivered at the same time and in the same place as the one in Matthew.

Matthew, on the other hand, makes no mention of the appointment and ordination of the Twelve here, but refers to them in connection with his account of the third preaching

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 3:17). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

tour a few months later (ch. 10:1–5). However, Matthew prefaces his reference to the crowds that followed Jesus with an account of the call by the Lake of Galilee (ch. 4:18–25). It seems apparent from the various Gospel accounts that the appointment of the Twelve came in response to the obvious need of more trained workers to care for the throngs that attended Jesus wherever He went.

The appointment of the Twelve constituted the first step in the organization of the Christian church. Christ was King in this new kingdom of divine grace (see on v. 23); the Twelve were its charter citizens, or subjects (see on Mark 3:14). On the very day the Twelve became charter subjects of the kingdom the King gave His inaugural address, in which He set forth the conditions of citizenship, proclaimed the law of the kingdom, and delineated its objectives (see DA 298; MB 3, 4). The Sermon on the Mount is thus at once Christ's inaugural address as King of the kingdom of grace and also the constitution of the kingdom. Soon after the formal establishment of the kingdom and the proclamation of its constitution came the second tour through Galilee, during which Jesus gave a vivid and complete demonstration of the ways in which the kingdom, its principles, and its power can be of benefit to men (see on Luke 7:1, 11).

A mountain. Compare ch. 8:1. It was apparently the same mountain on which He had spent the night in prayer and where He had, a little earlier the same morning, ordained the Twelve (see DA 290, 298; see on Mark 3:14). The identity of the mountain here designated is not known. Since the time of the Crusades the *Kurn Hattin*, "Horns of Hattin," 5 mi. (8 km.) west of ancient Tiberias, have been pointed out as marking the site, but this tradition cannot be traced earlier than the Crusades, and is therefore not reliable.

The mountain on which Christ delivered the Sermon on the Mount has been called the "Sinai of the New Testament," inasmuch as it holds the same relationship to the Christian church as Mt. Sinai did to the Jewish nation. It was on Sinai that God proclaimed the divine law. It was on the unknown mountain of Galilee that Jesus reaffirmed the divine law, explaining its true meaning in greater detail and applying its precepts to the problems of daily life.

When he was set. That is, "when he was seated." It is reasonable to conclude that, in harmony with ancient custom, Jesus usually sat as He taught and preached (see Matt. 13:1; 24:3; Mark 9:35; see on Luke 4:20). This was the usual manner of the rabbis. A teacher was expected to sit while teaching. On this occasion, at least, the multitude also sat down on the grass (DA 298).

His disciples. This includes, of course, the Twelve appointed and ordained earlier that morning (see on Mark 3:13, 14; cf. Luke 6:12–19). As the most intimate associates of Jesus, they formed an inner circle and naturally took their places next to Him; but there were, in addition, many others who followed Jesus and were also known as disciples (DA 488; see on Mark 3:13). Later in His ministry, at least, there were several women as well who accompanied Him and who ministered to the needs of the disciples (Luke 8:1–3; cf. Matt. 27:55). Some of these devout women were probably present upon this occasion. However, the audience was composed largely of peasants and fishermen (DA 299; MB 39). Spies were also present (DA 307; MB 47; see on ch. 4:12).

2. Opened his mouth. Luke observes that Jesus "lifted up his eyes" (ch. 6:20) as He began to speak. In spite of certain differences in the report of the sermon and its attendant circumstances, as reported by Matthew and Luke, there can be little question that the two reports refer to the same occasion. The similarities exceed the seeming differences in the

two accounts, and the differences are apparent rather than real. The sermon was doubtless much longer than here indicated, and the two writers give independent summaries of the address. They embody in their synopses those features the Holy Spirit impressed them to include (see p. 274). Thus the reports are not mutually exclusive, but, rather, complementary. We are then to accept all points mentioned by both evangelists. Thus it is our privilege to have a more complete report of what Jesus said upon this occasion than either report alone would provide. See Additional Notes on Matt. 3, Note 2.

Matthew's report of the sermon is practically three times as long as that of Luke. This may be due to the fact that Matthew, more than Luke, was concerned with, and devoted special space to, the teachings of Jesus. Luke, as he plainly states in his prologue (ch. 1:1–4), had a prime concern for the historical narrative. Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount contains much that Luke does not mention, though Luke reports some things that Matthew omits. See p. 191. The major points of similarity are as follows:

<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i>
5:3, 4, 6	6:20, 21
5:11, 12	6:22, 23
5:39-42	6:27-30
5:42-48	6:32-36
7:1, 2	6:37, 38
7:3-5	6:41, 42
7:12	6:31
7:16-21	6:43-46
7:24-27	6:47-49

Numerous other sections of the Sermon on the Mount as given in Matthew appear in scattered places throughout the Gospel of Luke, no doubt as Christ repeated these same thoughts upon various occasions later in His ministry. See on Luke 6:17–49.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ discussed the nature of His kingdom. He also refuted the false ideas about Messiah's kingdom that had been inculcated in the minds of the people by the Jewish leaders (MB 1, 3; see on chs. 3:2; 4:17). The Sermon on the Mount sets forth in striking contrast the character of Christianity and that of the Judaism of Christ's day.

To appreciate fully the significance of the Sermon on the Mount it is important to understand not only each principle as it is individually set forth but also the relationship of each principle to the whole. The discourse is bound together by an over-all unity which is not apparent to the casual reader. The outline given below stresses this inherent unity and sets forth the relationship of the various parts of the discourse to the sermon as a whole.

3. *Blessed.* Gr. *makarioi*, singular *makarios*, “happy”; Heb. *’ashre*, “happy,”

“blessed” (see on Ps. 1:1). *’Ashre* and *makarios* are both generally translated “blessed” in the KJV, though occasionally as “happy” (1 Kings 10:8; Ps. 127:5; Prov. 29:18; John 13:17; Acts 26:2; 1 Peter 3:14). The English word “blessed,” in modern usage, is more nearly parallel to the Gr. *eulogētos*, “blessed” (Luke 1:68; 1 Peter 1:3; etc.), from the root *eulogeō*, “to speak well of,” “to praise,” “to honor” (Matt. 5:44; 21:9; 26:26; Rom. 12:14).

Our English word “beatitude” is from the Latin *beatitudo*. In the Latin Vulgate each statement in the first section of the sermon opens with the word *beati*, equivalent to *makarioi*.

The word *makarios* appears nine times in vs. 3–11. But vs. 10, 11, refer to the same aspect of Christian experience, and are therefore to be considered one beatitude, thus leaving eight rather than nine beatitudes. Luke gives only four beatitudes, the first, fourth, second, and eighth of Matthew, in that order (Luke 6:20–23), but he adds four corresponding woes (vs. 24–26).

In the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ addresses Himself to the supreme desire of every human heart—happiness. This desire was implanted in man by the Creator Himself, and was originally ordained to lead him to find true happiness through cooperation with the God who created him. Sin is involved when men attempt to achieve happiness as an end in itself, by a short cut that by-passes obedience to the divine requirements.

Thus at the commencement of His inaugural address as King of the kingdom of divine grace Christ proclaims that the main objective of the kingdom is to restore the lost happiness of Eden to the hearts of men, and that those who choose to enter in by the “strait” gate and the “narrow” way (Matt. 7:13, 14) will find true happiness. They will find inward peace and joy, true and lasting satisfaction for heart and soul that come only when “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” is present to keep their “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). When Christ returned to the Father He left this peace with His followers, a peace that the world cannot give (John 14:27). Happiness comes only to the hearts of those who are at peace with God (cf. Rom. 5:1) and their fellow men (cf. Micah 6:8), walking according to the two great commandments of the law of

OUTLINE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Privileges and Responsibilities of Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven

- I. Perfection of Character the Goal of Citizenship, ch. 5.
 - A. How to become a citizen of the kingdom, ch. 5:3–12.
 - B. Citizens of the kingdom as living representatives of its principles, ch. 5:13–16.
 - C. The standard of conduct in the kingdom of heaven, ch. 5:17–47.
 - D. Transformation and perfection of character the goal of citizenship, ch. 5:48.
- II. Incentives to Right Living and Exemplary Citizenship, ch. 6.
 - A. Right motives in worship, service, and human relations, ch. 6:1–18.
 - B. The aim of life: planning and living for the kingdom of heaven, ch. 6:19–24.
 - C. God provides for those who make the kingdom first, ch. 6:25–34.
- III. Privileges and Responsibilities of Citizenship, ch. 7.
 - A. The golden rule and power to apply it, ch. 7:1–12.
 - B. Obedience and self-discipline the test of citizenship, ch. 7:13–23.
 - C. A call to decisive action, ch. 7:24–27. love (see Matt. 22:37–40). This disposition of mind and heart belongs only to those who are true members of the kingdom of grace.

Poor. Gr. *ptōchos*, a word indicating deep poverty, from *ptassō*, “to crouch,” “to cower” (see on Mark 12:42; Luke 4:18; Luke 6:20). Here *ptōchos* refers to those who are in dire spiritual poverty and sense keenly their need of the things the kingdom of heaven has to offer (cf. Acts 3:6; see on Isa. 55:1). Those who do not feel their spiritual need, who think themselves “rich, and increased with goods” and in “need of nothing,” are, in the sight of Heaven, “wretched, and miserable, and poor” (Rev. 3:17). None but the “poor in spirit” will ever enter the kingdom of divine grace; all others feel no need of heaven’s riches, and decline its blessings.

Their’s. A sense of one’s need is the first condition of entrance into the kingdom of God’s grace (see MB 7, 8). It was through consciousness of his own spiritual poverty that the publican in the parable “went down to his house justified” rather than the self-righteous Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14). There is no room in the kingdom of heaven for the proud, the self-satisfied, the self-righteous. Christ bids the poor in heart to exchange their poverty for the riches of His grace.

The kingdom of heaven. See on Matt. 4:17; Luke 4:19. It is important to note that Christ was here speaking not so much of His future kingdom of glory as of the present kingdom of divine grace. In His teachings Christ dealt often with the kingdom of grace in the hearts of those who accept His sovereignty, as illustrated by the parables of the Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Dragnet (Matt. 13:24, 31, 33, 47), and many others (see MB 8, 108).

The Jews conceived of the kingdom of heaven as a kingdom based on force that would compel the nations of earth to submit to Israel. But the kingdom Christ came to establish was one that begins within men’s hearts, permeates their lives, and overflows into other men’s hearts and lives with the dynamic and compelling power of love.

4. Mourn. Gr. *pentheō*, a word that generally denotes intense mourning in contrast with *lupeomai*, a more general word meaning “to grieve” (Matt. 14:9; 1 Peter 1:6). Thus, the profound spiritual poverty of the “poor in spirit” (see on Matt. 5:3) is matched by the deep mourning of the persons described in v. 4. In fact, it is a deep sense of spiritual need that leads men to “mourn” for the imperfection they see in their own lives (see MB 9; cf. DA 300). Christ here refers to those who, in poverty of spirit, long to reach the standard of perfection (cf. Isa. 6:5; Rom. 7:24). There is a message of comfort here also for those who mourn because of disappointment, bereavement, or other sorrow (see MB 10–12).

Shall be comforted. Gr. *parakaleō*, “to call to the side of,” “to call to aid,” “to call in,” “to send for”; then “to exhort,” “to cheer,” “to console,” “to encourage,” and “to comfort.” A friend so summoned is a *paraklētos*, and his ministration a *paraklēsis*. In 1 John 2:1 Jesus is called a *paraklētos*. Upon His departure He promised to send “another Comforter” (see on John 14:16), Gr. *paraklētos*, the Holy Spirit, to abide with us as an ever-present friend.

As God meets the sense of spiritual need with the riches of the grace of heaven (see on v. 3), so He meets the mourning over sin with the comfort of sins forgiven. Except there be first a sense of need, there will not be mourning for what one lacks—in this case, righteousness of character. Mourning for sin is thus the second requirement made of

those who present themselves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and follows naturally in sequence after the first step.

5. Meek. Gr. *praeis*, singular *praiis*, “mild,” “gentle,” “meek.” Christ spoke of Himself as “meek [*praiis*] and lowly in heart” (ch. 11:29), and because He is, all “that labour and are heavy laden” (v. 28) may come to Him and find rest for their souls. The Hebrew equivalent of *praiis* is ‘*anaw*, or ‘*ani*, “poor,” “afflicted,” “humble,” “meek.” This Hebrew word is used of Moses, who was very “meek” (Num. 12:3). It appears also in the Messianic passage of Isa. 61:1–3 (cf. on Matt. 5:3), and in Ps 37:11, where again it is translated “meek.”

Meekness is the attitude of heart and mind and life that prepares the way for sanctification. A “meek” spirit “is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:4). “Meekness” is often mentioned by NT writers as a cardinal Christian virtue (see Gal. 5:23; 1 Tim. 6:11). “Meekness” toward God means that we accept His will and His dealing with us as good, that we submit to Him in all things, without hesitation (cf. MB 15). A “meek” man has self under complete control. Through self-exaltation our first parents lost the kingdom entrusted to them; through meekness it may be regained (MB 17). See on Micah 6:8.

Inherit the earth. Compare Ps 37:11. The “poor in spirit” are to receive the riches of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3); the “meek” are to “inherit the earth.” It is certain that the “meek” do not now inherit the earth, but rather the proud. Nevertheless, in due time the kingdoms of this world will be given to the saints, to those who have learned the grace of humility (cf. Dan. 7:27). Eventually, says Christ, those who humble themselves—those who learn meekness—will be exalted (see on Matt. 23:12).

6. Hunger and thirst. This metaphor was especially forceful in a country where the average annual rainfall is not more than 26 in. (see Vol. II, p. 110; see on Gen. 12:10). What is true in Palestine is generally true throughout large sections of the Near East. Bordering on large desert areas, even much inhabited land is semi-arid. No doubt many in the audience now listening to Jesus had experienced pangs of thirst. As illustrated in the case of Hagar and Ishmael, a traveler who lost his way or who missed one of the few springs en route could easily find himself in serious straits (see on Gen. 21:14).

But Jesus spoke of the hunger and thirst of the soul (see Ps. 42:1, 2). Only those who long for righteousness with the eager anxiety of a man starving for lack of food or famishing for want of water, will find it. No earthly source can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul, whether it be material riches, profound philosophies, the satisfaction of physical appetites, or honor and power. After experimenting with all of these things, Solomon concluded that “all is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2, 14 3:19; 11:8; 12:8; cf. 2:1, 15, 19; etc.). None brought the satisfaction and happiness for which every human heart longs. The wise man’s conclusion was that recognition of the Creator and cooperation with Him provided the only enduring satisfaction (Eccl. 12:1, 13).

Six or eight months after the Sermon on the Mount (see The Ministry of Our Lord) Jesus gave another great discourse, on the Bread of Life (John 6:26–59), in which He discussed more fully the principle here briefly set forth. Jesus Himself is the “bread” for which men should hunger, and by partaking of which they can sustain spiritual life and satisfy the hunger of their souls (see John 6:35, 48, 58). Those who hunger and thirst are graciously invited to come to the heavenly Provider and receive supplies of food and

drink “without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1, 2). The longing in one’s heart for righteousness is evidence that Christ has already begun His work there (MB 19).

Righteousness. Gr. *dikaiosunē*, from the root *dikē*, “custom,” “usage,” and thus “right” as determined by custom. In the NT it is used of “right” as determined by the principles of the kingdom of heaven. In every instance of its use in the NT (94 times) *dikaiosunē* is translated “righteousness.” Among the Greeks “righteousness” consisted in conformity to accepted customs. To the Jews it was essentially a matter of conformity to the requirements of the law as interpreted by Jewish tradition (see Gal. 2:16–21). But for Christ’s followers, righteousness took on a broader meaning. Instead of going about to establish their own righteousness, Christians were called to submit “themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). They sought for the righteousness “which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil 3:9).

The righteousness of Christ is both imputed and imparted. Imputed righteousness brings justification. But the justified soul grows in grace. Through the power of the indwelling Christ he conforms his life to the requirements of the moral law as set forth by Jesus’ own precept and example. This is imparted righteousness (see COL 3:10–3:12). It was this that Christ had in mind when He encouraged His listeners to think in terms of being “perfect” as their heavenly Father is perfect (see on Matt. 5:48). Paul observes that the perfect life of Jesus has made it possible for “the just requirement of the law” to “be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4, RSV).

7. Merciful. Gr. *eleēmones*, “pitiful,” “merciful,” “compassionate.” In Heb. 2:17 Christ is said to be a “merciful [*eleēmon*] and faithful high priest.” Our English word “eleemosynary,” meaning “relating or devoted to charity or alms,” is derived, through the Latin, from this word. The mercy of which Christ here speaks is an active manward virtue. It is of little value until it takes the form of merciful deeds. In Matt. 25:31–46 deeds of mercy are presented as being the test of admission to the kingdom of glory. James includes deeds of mercy in his definition of “pure religion” (James 1:27). Micah (ch. 6:8) sums up man’s obligation to God and to his fellow men as “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with God. Note that Micah, like Christ, mentions both humility before God and mercy toward men. These may be compared with the two commandments on which “all the law and the prophets” hang (Matt. 22:40).

Obtain mercy. This will be true both now and in the day of judgment, alike from men and from God. The principle of the golden rule (ch. 7:12) applies both to our treatment of others and to the kind of treatment they accord us in return. The cruel, hardhearted, mean-spirited man rarely receives kind and merciful treatment at the hand of his fellow man. But how often those who are kind and considerate of the needs and feelings of others find that the world often repays them in kind.

8. Pure in heart. The word translated “heart” designates the intellect (ch. 13:15), the conscience (1 John 3:20, 21), the inner man (1 Peter 3:4). Purity of heart, in the sense Christ used it, includes far more than sexual purity (MB 25); it includes all desirable character traits to the exclusion of all that are undesirable. To be “pure in heart” is equivalent to being clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness (see on Matt 22:11, 12), the “fine linen” with which the saints are arrayed (Rev. 19:8; cf. ch. 3:18, 19)—perfection of character.

It was not ceremonial purity that Jesus had in mind (Matt. 15:18–20; 23:25), but inward cleanness of heart. If the motives are pure, the life will be pure.

Those with pure hearts have forsaken sin as a ruling principle in the life, and their lives are without reserve consecrated to God (see Rom. 6:14–16; 8:14–17). To be “pure in heart” does not mean that one is absolutely sinless, but it does mean that his motives are right, that by the grace of Christ he has turned his back on past mistakes, and that he is pressing toward the mark of perfection in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13–15).

See God. Christ places emphasis upon the kingdom of divine grace in the hearts of men in this present age, though not to the exclusion of the kingdom of eternal glory in the age to come (see on v. 3). It is clear, therefore, that the words “see God” refer to spiritual as well as to physical sight. Those who feel their spiritual need enter the “kingdom of heaven” (v. 3) *now*; those who mourn for sin (v. 4) are comforted *now*; those who are humblehearted (v. 5) receive their title to the new earth *now*; those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Jesus Christ (v. 6) are filled *now*; the merciful (v. 7) obtain mercy *now*. In like manner, the pure in heart have the privilege of seeing God *now*, through eyes of faith; and eventually, in the glorious kingdom, it will be their privilege to see Him face to face (1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4). Furthermore, only those who develop the heavenly vision in this present world will have the privilege of seeing God in the world to come.

As with physical narcotics and intoxicants, the first effect of sin is to becloud the higher faculties of mind and soul. It was only after the serpent had charmed Eve into seeing with the eyes of her soul that “the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” that “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat” (Gen. 3:6). When the serpent said, “Then your eyes shall be opened,” he referred to figurative sight, for the result of their “eyes” being “opened” was a knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:5). The devil first blinds men by persuading them to believe that experience with sin will give them clearer sight. However, sin leads to further blindness. Sinners “have eyes,” but they “see not” (Jer. 5:21; cf. Isa. 6:10; Eze. 12:2).

Only those with singleness of heart will ever “see God.” When the “eye” of the soul is “single” the life will be full of “light” (Matt. 6:22, 23). Too many Christians become spiritually cross-eyed in the attempt to keep one eye fixed on the heavenly Canaan and the other on the “pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:25) and the “flesh pots” of Egypt (Ex. 16:3). Our only safety is to live by principle, to make God first in the life. Those today who see that the things of the world are to be “desired,” whose attention is fixed on the glittering baubles of earth that Satan displays, will never see the greater value of obeying God. The window of the soul must be kept clean if we would “see God.”

9. Peacemakers. Gr. *eirēnopoioi*, from *eirēnē*, “peace,” and *poieō* “to make.” Christ here refers particularly to bringing men into harmony with God (DA 302–305; MB 28). “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). But Christ, the Master Peacemaker, came to show men that God is not their enemy (see MB 25). Christ is “The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6, 7; cf. Micah 5:5). He was the messenger of peace from God to man, and “justified by faith, we have peace with God” through Him (Rom. 5:1). When Jesus had completed His appointed task and returned to the Father, He could say, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27; cf. 2 Thess. 3:16).

In order to appreciate what Christ meant when He spoke of “peacemakers” it is helpful to take note of the meaning of peace in Semitic thinking and speech. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *eirēnē*, is *shalom*, meaning “completeness,” “soundness,”

“prosperity,” “condition of well-being,” “peace.” In view of the fact that Christ and the common people used Aramaic, a language closely akin to the Hebrew, Jesus doubtless used the word with its Semitic connotations. Christians are to be at peace among themselves (1 Thess. 5:13) and to “follow peace with all men” (Heb. 12:14). They are to pray for peace, to work for peace, and to take a constructive interest in activities that contribute to a peaceful state of society.

Children of God. Literally, “sons of God.” The Jews thought of themselves as the “children of God” (Deut. 14:1; Hosea 1:10; etc.), a concept that Christians equally follow (1 John 3:1). To be a son of God means to resemble Him in character (1 John 3:2; cf. John 8:44). “Peace-makers” are the “sons of God” because they are at peace with Him themselves, and are devoted to the cause of leading their fellow men to be at peace with Him.

10. Persecuted. Here Christ refers primarily to persecution suffered in the process of forsaking the world for the kingdom of heaven. Since the entrance of sin there has been “enmity” between Christ and Satan, between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of this world, and between those who serve God and those who serve Satan (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:7–17). This conflict will go on until “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15; cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:27). Paul warned the believers that “through much tribulation” they must “enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Citizens of the heavenly kingdom may expect to have tribulation in this world (John 16:33), for their characters, ideals, aspirations, and conduct all bear silent witness against the evil of this present world (cf. 1 John 3:12). The foes of the heavenly kingdom persecuted Christ, the King, and they may be expected to persecute His loyal subjects (John 15:20). “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

Their’s is the kingdom. The same promise made in v. 3 to those who sense their spiritual need. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12; cf. Dan. 7:18, 27). Those who suffer most for Christ here are best able to appreciate what He suffered for them. It is appropriate that the first and last beatitudes should contain the assurance of membership in the kingdom. Those who experience the eight qualifications for citizenship here enumerated are worthy of a place in the kingdom.

11. Revile. Gr. *oneidizō*, “to reproach,” “to slander,” “to insult.” See also on Luke 6:22. Matt. 4:11, 12 does not constitute an additional beatitude; it is simply an explanation of the forms in which persecution may manifest itself.

For my sake. Or, “on account of me.” Christians suffer for the name they bear, the name of Christ. In all ages, as in the early church, those who truly love their Lord have rejoiced at being “counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41; cf. 1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:14; 4:14). Christ warned those who would be His disciples that they would be “hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Matt. 10:22), but hastened to add that whoever “loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (ch. 10:39). Christians must expect to “suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29).

12. Rejoice. Whatever life may bring, the Christian is to rejoice (Phil. 4:4), knowing that God will work all things for his good (Rom. 8:28). This is particularly true of temptation or trial (James 1:2–4), because suffering develops patience and other traits of character essential to citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

Be exceeding glad. Compare Luke’s statement “leap for joy” (ch. 6:23).

Great is your reward. See also on Luke 6:24–26. To the mature Christian the thought of reward is not uppermost (see COL 398). He does not obey the rules solely for the purpose of getting into heaven; he obeys because he finds cooperating with his Creator the supreme goal and joy of existence. The sacrifice may be great, but the reward is also great. When the Son of man comes in glory “he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt. 16:27; cf. Rev. 22:12).

The prophets. Such as Elijah, pursued by Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 18:7–10; 19:2), and Jeremiah, persecuted by his fellow countrymen (Jer. 15:20; 17:18; 18:18; 20:2; etc.). Persecution serves to purify the life and to purge the dross from the character (cf. Job 23:10).

13. Ye. In the Greek the pronoun “ye” is emphatic: “Ye are the salt of the earth.” It is important to remember that Jesus was addressing His disciples, particularly the Twelve, in their new role as charter members of the kingdom of His divine grace (see on vs. 1–3). Others were listening, principally peasants and fishermen (MB 39), but spies for the Pharisees were also present (DA 307; see on Mark 2:6).

Salt. In Palestine salt was gathered from marshes along the seashore or from inland lakes. The crude facilities for gathering it resulted in the presence of many impurities. In contact with dampness, or exposed to rain, the highly soluble salt itself would be washed away, leaving only the insipid impurities.

The underlying idea in comparing citizens of the kingdom to salt is in its quality as a preservative (cf. MB 35). Before the day of refrigeration and other modern modes of preserving food, salt and spices were largely used for preservation. In ancient Palestine salt was used almost exclusively for this purpose and for seasoning (see Job 6:6). In a similar way the Christian, by becoming an agent in saving others through the diffusion of the gospel, exerts a preserving and purifying influence in the world. The disciples were to recognize the salvation of their fellow men as their primary responsibility. They were not to withdraw from society, because of persecution (see Matt. 5:10–12) or for other reasons, but were to remain in close contact with their fellow men.

In his report of the Sermon on the Mount Luke does not include the content of Matt. 5:13–16, though he quotes a similar statement of Christ spoken upon another occasion (Luke 14:34, 35). Mark also has a similar passage, spoken to the disciples alone under other circumstances (Mark 9:50), and applied particularly to the trait of getting along with others. The fact that the same, or similar, sayings of Jesus are credited to Him at different times in His ministry by the various gospel writers has led some to conclude that the writers more or less casually and arbitrarily assigned the sayings to different times, irrespective of when He may actually have made the statements. This conclusion, however, is based on the naïve notion that Jesus gave expression to any particular idea once and only once during His ministry. But there is no valid reason to suppose that Jesus would not have repeated His remarks, in whole or in part, at various times to new audiences, and perhaps even to approximately the same audience.

Lost his savour. Or, “become insipid.” It would be as unthinkable for a Christian to lose his essential characteristics and still be a Christian as it would be for salt to lose its saltiness and still be considered and used as salt. If Christians are such in name only, their nominal citizenship in the kingdom of heaven becomes a farce. They are not Christians unless they reflect the character of Christ, regardless of what their profession may be.

Salted. That is, have its essential and useful quality as salt restored. When the love, power, and righteousness of Christ are lost from the life of a professed Christian, there is no other source to which he may turn to supply their lack. A nominal Christian cannot pass on to others that which he does not himself possess. Salt was added to every sacrifice in the ancient ceremonial ritual Lev. 2:13; Eze. 43:24; Mark 9:49), without which it was unacceptable. Here, the salt typified the righteousness of Christ (see DA 439). In order that our lives may be “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1), they must be preserved and seasoned by the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (see Gal. 2:20).

Good for nothing. A Christian from whose life the grace and power of Christ are lost is, as a Christian, “good for nothing.” Even more, he becomes a positive detriment to the cause of the kingdom by living a life that misrepresents the principles of the kingdom.

Trodden under foot. From where they sat, the listening throng could see pathways white with salt, cast there because it had become worthless (MB 36, 37).

14. Ye. In the Greek this pronoun is emphatic: “Ye are the light of the world.”

Light. Light has ever been a symbol of the divine presence (see on Gen. 1:3; 3:24). John refers to Jesus as “the light of men” shining forth amid the darkness of this world (ch. 1:4–9). Toward the close of His ministry Jesus referred to Himself as “the light of the world” (see on John 8:12; 9:5). Having accepted Jesus as the light of the world, a Christian, if true to his calling, becomes a reflector of that light. In Messianic prophecy Jesus is referred to as “a great light” (Isa. 9:2), and as the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2; see on Luke 1:79). When the true Light illumines men, they are admonished to “arise, shine” (Isa. 60:1–3). Those who love and serve the Lord are pictured as being like the “sun” (see on Judges 5:31), both here and in the hereafter (see Matt. 13:43). It was yet morning as Christ spoke (MB 38), and the sun was ascending the heavens toward the zenith (cf. Ps. 19:4–6). In a similar way the Twelve—and all future citizens of the kingdom as well—were to go forth and let their light shine abroad in the world, dispelling the darkness of sin and ignorance of the will and ways of God. See on John 1:4, 7, 9.

World. Gr. *kosmos* (see on ch. 4:8).

Set on an hill. Ancient Palestinian cities were commonly situated on hills, as their ruins testify today. Such a city would be visible from a considerable distance. From the place where Christ and the multitude sat, many towns and villages were visible on the surrounding hills (MB 39).

15. A candle. Gr. *luchnos*, “a lamp,” not a candle such as we use today. Ancient lamps consisted of a clay or metal bowl often in the shape of a saucer, with the wick floating in the oil and its lighted portion resting on the side of the dish or projecting through a special orifice. Compare similar statements in Mark 4:21 and Luke 8:16; 11:33.

A bushel. Gr. *modios*, a grain measure containing about .25 bu. (8.75 liters). It was often used at home as a flour bin. Christ spoke of *the* “bushel” because in the average home of that day there was usually only one in the room. It was commonly made of earthenware. As a nation the Jews were effectively hiding their light (cf. Isa. 60:1) under “a bushel”; Jesus pointed out that the light entrusted to them belonged to all men. See Vol. IV, pp. 26–30.

A candlestick. Gr. *luchnia*, “lampstand.” In the homes of the common people this was usually a low earthenware stand. At other times a shelf on the stone or wooden

center post supporting the roof served as a convenient stand for the lamp (see Ex. 25:31; Heb. 9:2; Rev. 1:12; 11:4; etc.).

Light unto all. All the members of a household may benefit from a lamp set properly on its lampstand. In a similar way it was God's design that the entire human family should benefit from the light of truth God had entrusted to the descendants of Abraham (see Gen. 12:3; Deut. 4:6; Isa. 60:1–3; etc.; see also Vol. IV, pp. 28-30). Compare also the "candle" used in searching for the lost coin (see on Luke 15:8).

16. Let your light so shine. The light of truth comes from heaven (John 1:4), but when it illuminates our own lives it becomes *our* light (Isa. 60:1–3; Eph. 5:14). The Twelve, so recently appointed, were Christianity's first commissioned light bearers. The effectiveness with which the disciples came to reflect the light of truth and the love of God became evident even to their most bitter foes, who "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). He it was who had shed abroad the light of heaven in the world (John 1:4). No greater compliment could the Jewish rulers have paid to the disciples; no greater recognition could they have made of the effectiveness of Christ's mission. He kindled a light in the hearts of men that was never to be extinguished.

See your good works. A lamp is known by the clearness and strength of the light it gives. The oil in a lamp on its stand may not be visible to those in the room, but the fact that the lamp gives forth light is evidence that there is a supply of oil in the lamp.

Glorify your Father. Satan has ever sought to misrepresent the Father. Christ came to dispel the darkness and to reveal the Father. This same work Christ committed to His disciples. Light shines, not so much that men may see the light, as that they may see other things because of the light. Our lights are to shine, not so that men may be attracted to us, but that they may be attracted to Christ, who is the light of life, and to things worth while (Matt. 6:31–34; John 6:27; cf. Isa. 55:1, 2).

This is the first time Matthew refers to God as "Father," a term he uses frequently hereafter (chs. 5:45, 48; 6:1, 9; etc.). The concept of God as Father, and of men as His children appears often in the OT (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4; etc.). But Christ endowed the Father-Son relationship with new meaning (COL 141, 142). In Jewish literature God is often represented as a "Father" in heaven.

17. Think not. As upon nearly all occasions during His last two years of ministry (see on Mark 2:6; Luke 6:11), spies assigned to investigate and report on the activities of Jesus were present. Even as He was speaking they were whispering to bystanders that He was making light of the law (DA 307; MB 47). But, as upon many other occasions (see on Mark 2:8; Luke 4:23; 6:8), Jesus read their thoughts (DA 307) and answered the objection they raised, so giving evidence of His divinity.

Am come. Or, "have come," or "came." Jesus here refers to His coming forth from the Father (John 16:28) into the world (ch. 18:37).

Destroy. Gr. *kataluō*, literally, "to loosen down," as a house or a tent, hence, "to make invalid," "to abolish," "to annul." It was Christ who had proclaimed the law on Mt. Sinai; why should He now annul it (see PP 366)? See on ch. 23:23.

The law. Gr. *nomos* (see on Rom. 3:19), here equivalent to the Heb. *torah*, which includes all of God's revealed will (see on Ps. 119:1, 33; Prov. 3:1). The expression "the law and the prophets" represents a twofold division of the OT Scriptures (see on Matt. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Rom. 3:21). The classification is found also in ancient Jewish literature (see 4 Macc. 18:10). However, the more common division

among the Jews was the threefold division, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44), or, according to the title of the Hebrew Bible, “Law, Prophets, and Writings.” The context indicates that Jesus here probably refers primarily to the moral law and the civil statutes contained in the books of Moses and confirmed by the prophets (DA 307; MB 45). In Matt. 5:21–47 Jesus selects certain precepts from the Ten Commandments (see vs. 21, 27) and from the laws of Moses (see vs. 33, 38, 43), and proceeds to contrast His interpretation of them with that of the scribes, the official expositors and teachers of the law (see p. 55; see on Mark 1:22; 2:6, 16; Luke 5:17).

Christ makes clear that not He but they are destroying the law, making it of none effect by their tradition (Matt. 15:3, 6). It is probable that the illustrations taken from the law (ch. 5:21–47) represent only part of what Christ said upon this occasion (see on v. 2). His discussion may have been much broader. When He spoke of His coming to fulfill the law and the prophets He may have emphasized, in addition, His fulfillment of the types of the ritual law that pointed to Him and His fulfillment of all the Messianic predictions throughout the entire Scriptures (see Luke 24:44). He had not come to abolish any part of the Scriptures He Himself had given (1 Peter 1:11; PP 366), and which testified of Him (John 5:39; cf. Luke 4:21).

The great point of contention between Christ and the scribes had to do with traditions by which they interpreted God’s holy law (see p. 56; see on Mark 1:22, 44; 2:19, 24; 7:1–14; Luke 6:9). From childhood Jesus had acted independently of these rabbinical laws, which were without foundation in the OT (DA 84). What He now set aside was the false interpretation given to the Scriptures by the scribes (DA 307), not the law itself.

To fulfil. Gr. *plēroō*, “to make full,” “to fill full.” In the Sermon on the Mount the Author of the law made clear the true meaning of its precepts, and the way in which its precepts, would find expression in the thinking and living of citizens of the kingdom He had come to establish (see on Isa. 59:7). The great Lawgiver Himself now reaffirmed the pronouncements of Sinai as binding upon those who would be His subjects, and announced that anyone who should presume to annul them either by precept or by example would “in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

The assertion that by fulfilling the moral law Christ abrogated that law is not in harmony with the context of Christ’s statement. Such an interpretation denies the meaning Christ obviously intended to convey, by making Him virtually say, contradictorily, that He did not come to “destroy” the law, but by fulfilling it to “abrogate” it! The interpretation ignores the strong antithesis in the word *alla*, “but,” and makes the two ideas virtually synonymous! By fulfilling the law Christ simply “filled” it “full” of meaning—by giving men an example of perfect obedience to the will of God, in order that the same law “might be fulfilled [*plēroō*] in us” (Rom. 8:3, 4).

18. Verily. Gr. *amēn*, from the Heb. *’amen*, “firm,” “established,” “sure.” In Hebrew usage *’amen* gave a confirmatory and emphatic answer to the saying of another (Num. 5:22; Deut. 27:15, 16; etc.). The same usage is carried over into the NT (1 Cor. 14:16). Amen is also frequent in the NT at the close of doxologies (Rom. 1:25; Gal. 1:5; etc.). But Jesus’ use of Amen to confirm and to strengthen His own saying is peculiar to Him. Many of His sayings are introduced by the phrase, “Verily I say unto you” (Matt. 6:2, 5,

16; etc.), or, as in the Gospel of John (25 times), “Verily, verily, I say unto thee” (John 3:3, 5, 11; etc; see on ch. 1:51).

Till heaven and earth pass. Compare Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17. The law being an expression of the will of God, and the plan of salvation an expression of the mercy of God, neither will fail. “The word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa. 40:8).

Jot. Gr. *iōta*, the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet, corresponding to the Heb. *yod* (see p. 14), the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

Title. Gr. *keraiā*, literally, “a little horn,” probably to be identified with the little hook on the letter *wau* (*w*; see p. 14) or a part of some other letter needed to distinguish it from one similar to it. A look at the Hebrew equivalents of *b* and *k*, *d* and *r*, *h* and *ch* on p. 14 will show the importance of the minute details of various Hebrew letters. The Jews had a tradition that if all the men in the world should attempt to abolish the least letter of the law, they could not possibly succeed. To do so would incur guilt so great, they reasoned, that the world would be destroyed.

In no wise. A strong negation in the Greek. A change in the moral law is no more possible than a transformation of the character of God, who changes not (Mal. 3:6). The principles of the moral law are as permanent as God is.

Fulfilled. Gr. *ginomai*, “to become,” “to take place,” “to be established.” God will not modify or alter His expressed will (see on v. 17). His “word” will accomplish His beneficent purpose, and “prosper” (Isa. 55:11). There will be no change in the divine precepts, to bring them into conformity to man’s will.

19. Break. Gr. *luō*, “to loose” (see ch. 18:18), of commandments, “to break,” “to annul,” “to cancel.” *Kataluō*, “destroy” (ch. 5:17), is a stronger form of the same word. By using the weaker form, *luō*, Christ may have intended to show that even a limited relaxing of the commandments warrants the reputation of “least in the kingdom.”

Least commandments. The scribes (see p. 55) had meticulously arranged all the precepts of the law of God, the laws of Moses, civil and ceremonial, and their own regulations in a scale of relative importance, on the presumption that when in conflict a requirement of lesser importance was nullified by one of presumably greater importance. By means of this petty legalism it was possible to devise means of circumventing the plainest requirements of the law of God. For illustrations of the application of this principle see Matt. 23:4, 14, 17–19, 23, 24; Mark 7:7–13; John 7:23. It was considered a rabbinical prerogative to declare certain actions “permitted” or “forbidden.” Jesus made it clear that, far from releasing men from the precepts of the moral law, He was even more strict than the official expositors of the law, the scribes and rabbis, for He granted no exceptions at any time. All were equally and permanently binding.

Teach men so. Compare the example of “Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 14:16).

Called the least. That is, looked upon as the least worthy. Christ in no way implied that one who broke the commandments and taught others to do so would go to heaven. He here states clearly the attitude that the kingdom will take toward lawbreakers—the evaluation that will be placed upon their characters. This point is made clear in v. 20, where the “scribes and Pharisees,” who broke the commandments and taught others how they might do so, are emphatically excluded from the kingdom.

20. Your righteousness. It should be remembered that Christ was addressing the newly appointed inner circle of disciples, the Twelve, in particular, and all others who were prospective citizens of the newly established kingdom (see on v. 1). Christ here sets forth in unmistakable language the lofty standard of citizenship.

Exceed. The “righteousness” of citizens of the kingdom of heaven must surpass that of the scribes, the official expositors of the law, and of the Pharisees, who affected superior piety (see p. 51). It was as if, in an athletic contest, the disciples as amateurs were pitted against professionals and champions, and told that the least they must do is to excel the champions.

The righteousness. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted in external adherence to the letter of the law; Christ called for insight into, and cooperation with, the underlying principles of the law. Like some modern religionists, the scribes made allowance for the weaknesses of human nature, so minimizing the seriousness of sin. Thereby they made it easy to disobey God, and encouraged men to do so (cf. GC 572). They taught that a man is to be judged by a majority of his deeds; that is, if his “good” deeds are in excess of his evil deeds, God will adjudge him righteous (Mishnah *Aboth* 3. 16, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 38, 39). To compensate for evil acts, they prescribed a system of works-righteousness, by means of which a person might earn sufficient merit to outweigh the unfavorable balance in his record. The Pharisees thought their system of works-righteousness a certain passport to heaven; in fact, that was their reason for being Pharisees. Here, Jesus brands their system as inadequate to qualify men so much as to step within the kingdom. Efforts to attain righteousness through formal acts or supposedly meritorious deeds are less than worthless (see Rom. 9:31–33).

Scribes and Pharisees. See pp. 51, 52, 55.

In no case. Gr. *ou mē*, an emphatic double negative.

21. Ye have heard. Jesus now proceeds to give specific examples of His interpretation of the law. As its Author, He is its only true exponent. Sweeping away the rubbish of rabbinical casuistry, Jesus restored truth to its original beauty and luster. The expression “ye have heard” implies that the majority of the audience upon this occasion had not read the law for themselves. This was only to be expected, for most of them were ordinary peasants and fishermen (MB 39). When conversing with the learned priests and elders, Jesus later inquired, “Did ye never read in the scriptures?” (ch. 21:42). But that very day a group of common people within the Temple court, in addressing Jesus said “We have heard out of the law” (John 12:34).

It was said. When citing earlier expositors of the law as authority, the rabbis frequently introduced their remarks with the words Jesus here uses. In rabbinical writings these words are also used to introduce citations from the Scriptures.

By them of old time. Or, “to them of old time,” that is, “to the ancients.” The Greek may be read either way.

Thou shalt not kill. The sixth commandment of the Decalogue (see on Ex. 20:13).

In danger of the judgment. That is, “liable to prosecution.” In cases of manslaughter, as distinct from murder, the law gave protection to the slayer (see on Num. 35:6; Deut. 19:3). Of course, the reference here is to intentional shedding of blood and to conviction and punishment by the duly constituted authorities.

22. But I say unto you. The rabbis cited tradition as their authority for the interpretation of the law; Christ spoke on His own authority, and this fact distinguished

His teaching from that of the rabbis, as the people were quick to observe (see Matt. 7:29; see on Luke 4:22). The expression “but I say unto you” appears six times in (see vs. 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44) Matt. 5. Christ showed that His requirements went far beyond the mere form of the law and that they included the spirit that would impart life and meaning to what was otherwise only form. He set forth six specific examples by way of making clear the distinction between outward acts and the motives that prompt those acts. This contrast, which runs like a thread of gold through the Sermon on the Mount, makes the address the supreme statement of the Christian philosophy of life, the greatest exposition of ethics of all time. Christ pointed out how far reaching the requirements of the law really are and emphasized that mere outward conformity to law avails nothing.

Angry with his brother. Murder is an end result of anger. But a man may hide his anger from his fellow men, even from those who are the objects of his anger. The best that the courts can do is to punish acts that result from anger; God alone is able to go to the root of the matter, and to condemn and punish a man for anger itself.

Without a cause. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the omission of this phrase (cf. MB 55). It appears to imply Christ’s approval of anger toward a “brother” who has done something to merit it, and seems contrary to Christ’s teachings with respect to loving one’s enemies and doing good to those who harbor hatred in their hearts (v. 44).

On the other hand, the Scriptures indicate that anger against sin may be justifiable (see on Mark 3:5), when the personal element is entirely absent and the righteous indignation is directed solely against evil itself (see Ex. 32:19; John 2:14–17; etc.). There is a certain sense in which God is spoken of as being angry (see Num. 25:4; Isa. 13:9; 30:27; 42:25; Dan. 9:16; etc.). It is thus clear that righteous indignation against acts that dishonor God or bring injury to innocent persons is not to be condemned (DA 310).

Judgment. This probably refers to the verdict of the local court of a town or city, and implies that the anger had found expression in threats or deeds.

Raca. Gr. *rhaka*, probably a transliteration of the Aramaic *reqa’* (Heb. *reqah*), meaning “good for nothing,” “stupid.” It is an expression of strong contempt. In rabbinical literature *reqa’* appears as the exclamation of an officer made to a man who had failed to salute him. The Christian will treat even the most ignorant and degraded with respect and tenderness (MB 57).

The council. Gr. *sunedrion*, here probably the local sanhedrin, or court, rather than the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

Thou fool. Gr. *mōros*, “dull,” “stupid,” “foolish.” It has been suggested that *mōros* is related to the Heb. *marah*, “to be contentious,” “to be refractory,” “to be rebellious.”

Whereas *rhaka* expresses contempt for one’s intelligence, or rather the lack of it, *mōros*, as here used, seems also to include contempt for one’s motives. In the first case the person is called “stupid,” in the second, “scoundrel,” implying malicious intent. If Christ refused to bring a “railing accusation” against the devil (Jude 9), we should refrain from doing so in regard to our fellow men. We are to leave with God the work of judging and condemning a man because of his motives.

According to the Talmud (*Ḳiddushin* 28a, Soncino ed., p. 133) a man who became guilty of slandering another by using the epithet “slave” was to be excommunicated from the synagogue for 30 days, and a man who called another “bastard” was to receive 40

lashes. In the case of a man who called another “wicked,” the one offended could “strive against,” or “touch” his life (by depriving him of subsistence, etc.).

Hell fire. Literally, “the Gehenna [Gr. *geenna*] of fire,” or “the hell of fire.” *Geenna*, “hell,” is a transliteration of the Hebrew *ge’ ben hinnom*, “valley of Hinnom,” or *ge’ ben hinnom*, “valley of the son of Hinnom” (Joshua 15:8), the valley to the south and west of Jerusalem that meets with the Kidron Valley immediately south of the City of David and the Pool of Siloam (see on Jer. 19:2). Wicked King Ahaz (see Vol. II, p. 86) seems to have introduced the barbaric heathen rite of burning infant children to Molech at a high place called Tophet, in the Valley of Hinnom (2 Chron. 28:3; cf. PK 57), during the days of Isaiah. For a further description of these revolting rites see on Lev. 18:21; Deut. 18:10; 32:17; 2 Kings 16:3; 23:10; Jer. 7:31. Manasseh, a grandson of Ahaz, restored this practice (2 Chron. 33:1, 6; cf. Jer. 32:35). Years later good King Josiah formally desecrated the high places in the Valley of Hinnom, where this appalling form of worship had been conducted (2 Kings 23:10), so bringing it to a halt. In retribution for this and other evils God forewarned His people that the Valley of Hinnom would one day become “the valley of slaughter” for “the carcasses of this people” (Jer. 7:32, 33; Jer. 19:6; cf. Isa. 30:33). Accordingly, the fires of Hinnom became symbolic of the consuming fire of the last great day of judgment and the punishment of the wicked (cf. Isa. 66:24). In Jewish eschatological thinking, derived in part from Greek philosophy, Gehenna was the place where the souls of the ungodly were reserved under punishment until the day of final judgment and rewards.

The tradition that makes the Valley of Gehenna a place for burning rubbish, and thus a type of the fires of the last day, appears to have originated with Rabbi Kimchi, a Jewish scholar of the 12th and 13th centuries. Ancient Jewish literature knows nothing of such an idea. The earlier rabbis base the idea of Gehenna as a type of the fires of the last day on Isa. 31:9. See Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 4, pp. 1029, 1030.

23. Gift. Gr. *dōron*, referring to presents generally or to special offerings. The ritual importance attached to a gift upon the altar is clear from ch. 23:18, 19.

Thy brother. Those who listened to the sermon no doubt understood “brother” to refer to a fellow Jew. To Christians he would be a fellow Christian. The term is rightly understood as designating those with whom we are closely associated in one way or another. But Christ later made it clear that all men are brothers, regardless of race or creed (see Luke 10:29–37).

24. Leave there. The act of offering a personal “gift,” or sacrifice, was considered to be among the most holy and important of all religious acts, but even it must take second place under the circumstances set forth. It is possible that the “gift” here mentioned was a sacrifice made to secure divine forgiveness and favor. Christ insists that men must make things right with their fellow men before they can be reconciled with God (see Matt. 6:15; 1 John 4:20). The more important obligation takes precedence over one of less importance. Reconciliation is more important than sacrifice. The living out of Christlike principles in the life (Gal. 2:20) is of far greater value in the sight of God than practicing the forms of religion (see 2 Tim. 3:5).

Be reconciled. See on chs. 6:12; 18:15–19.

25. Agree. Gr. *eunoēō*, “to be well inclined [toward someone],” related to *eunoos*, “well disposed,” “kindly,” “friendly.” Thus, to “agree” implies a change of attitude toward one’s former adversary.

Adversary. Gr. *antidikos*, “an opponent,” here an opponent in a lawsuit. The context implies that in this case the “adversary” is the “accuser,” and the person to whom Christ is speaking, the defendant. Compare Luke 12:58, 59.

In the way. That is, while on the way to court. It is preferable, Jesus says, to settle the case out of court.

The officer. Gr. *hupēretēs*, “a subordinate officer.” The term is used in the NT of synagogue assistants (see on Luke 4:20), of John Mark as an assistant to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5), and of ministers of the gospel (Luke 1:2; Acts 26:16; 1 Cor. 4:1; etc.).

26. Verily. See on v. 18.

By no means. Gr. *ou mē*, a double negative, and thus most emphatic.

Farthing. Gr. *kodrantēs*, Latin *quadrans*, about equal to the widow’s “two mites” (cf. Mark 12:42).

27. Ye have heard. See on v. 21. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 146) for omitting the expression “by them of old time.”

Commit adultery. A quotation from Ex. 20:14 (cf. Deut. 5:18).

28. But I say. See on v. 22. Fundamentally, Jesus’ discussion of the marriage relationship and its responsibilities is based on God’s original plan for the home as stated in Gen. 2:21–24 (see Matt. 19:8) and not on the Mosaic law (see Deut. 24:1–4). In that plan, marriage was intended to meet the need for companionship (Gen. 2:18), and to provide a home and proper training for the children that would be born (see Gen. 1:28; 18:19; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1–4). The home was thus established as an ideal environment in which both parents and children might learn of God and might develop characters that would measure up to the lofty ideals inherent in the divine purpose that led to their creation.

Looketh on a woman. Feminine beauty is a gift from a loving Creator, who is a lover of all true beauty. The pure appreciation of that beauty is both right and proper. Furthermore, the attraction each sex has for the other was implanted within men and women by the Creator, and when operating within the limits ordained of God, is inherently good, but when perverted to serve selfish, evil interests, becomes one of the strongest destructive forces in the world.

Lust. Gr. *epithumeō*, “to set one’s heart upon [a thing],” “to long for,” “to covet,” “to desire.” “Lust” is an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning “pleasure,” “longing.” “To lust” for a thing is to experience an intense, eager desire for it. *Epithumeō* is used in both a good and an evil sense. Jesus told the Twelve that with “desire” (*epithumia*) He had “desired” (*epithumeō*) to eat the last Passover with them (Luke 22:15). In its good sense *epithumeō* appears also in Matt. 13:17; Luke 17:22; Heb. 6:11; 1 Peter 1:12; etc.).

The related noun, *epithumia*, “desire,” is used similarly in Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17. One of the Hebrew equivalents of *epithumeō* is *chamad*, “to desire,” “to take pleasure

in.” *Chamad* is rendered “covet” in the tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17) and “desire” in Deut. 5:21 and Isa. 53:2. Christ was doubtless thinking of the tenth commandment when He warned against looking “on a woman to lust after her.” In other words, the man who orders his affections and his will in harmony with the tenth commandment is thereby protected against violating the seventh.

Heart. Gr. *kardia*, “heart,” here referring to the intellect, the affections, and the will. As a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Christ points out that character is determined, not so much by the outward act, as by the inward attitude that motivates the act. The outward act merely reflects and activates the inward attitude. He who would commit a wrong act if he thought he could escape detection, and who is restrained only by that fear, is, in the sight of God, guilty. Sin is first and above all else an act of the higher powers of the mind—the reason, the power of choice, the will (see on Prov. 7:19). The outward act is merely an extension of the inward decision.

29. Thy right eye. Compare ch. 18:8, 9. In ch. 5:28 Christ went behind the act to call attention to the motive that prompts the act, that is, to the attitude, or frame of mind, that gives birth to the act. Here He goes behind the motive or attitude to point to the avenues by which sin gains entrance into the life, the sensory nervous system. For the majority the strongest inducements to sin are those that reach the mind by way of the optic nerve, the auditory nerve, and other sensory nerves (AA 518).

He who refuses to see, hear, taste, smell, or touch that which is suggestive of sin has gone far toward avoiding sinful thoughts. He who immediately banishes evil thoughts when, momentarily, they may flash upon his consciousness, thereby avoids the development of a habitual thought pattern that conditions the mind to commit sin when the opportunity presents itself. Christ lived a sinless life because “there was in Him nothing that responded to Satan’s sophistry” (DA 123).

Offend. Gr. *skandalizō*, “to snare,” “to trip up,” “to cause to stumble,” from *skandalon*, the stick that springs a trap (see Rom. 11:9; 14:13; 1 John 2:10; Rev. 2:14).

Pluck it out. It would, in one sense of the word, be better to go through this life blind or otherwise maimed than to forfeit eternal life. But Christ here uses a figure of speech. He does not call for mutilating the body, but for controlling the thoughts. To refuse to behold that which is evil is fully as effective as making oneself blind, and has the added advantage that the power of sight is retained and may be applied to things that are good. A fox will sometimes gnaw off its own paw, held fast in a trap, in order to escape. Similarly, a lizard will sacrifice its tail, or a lobster its claw. By the plucking out of the eye or the cutting off of the hand Christ figuratively speaks of the resolute action that should be taken by the will in order to guard against evil. The Christian does well to follow the example of Job, who “made a covenant with ... [his] eyes” (Job 31:1 cf. 1 Cor. 9:27).

Hell. Gr. *geenna* (see comment on v. 22).

30. Thy right hand. That is, as an instrument of evil desires (see on v. 29).

31. It hath been said. See on v. 21.

Put away. Gr. *apoluō*, “to set free,” “to release,” here meaning “to divorce.”

A writing of divorcement. Gr. *apostasion*, “a certificate [of divorce],” from *aphistēmi*, “to separate,” “to put away.” The English word “apostasy” comes from the same root. As Christ later pointed out, divorce was not a part of God’s original plan, but came under the provisional approval of the law of Moses because of the “hardness” of men’s hearts (ch. 19:7, 8). As to the nature and purpose of the law of Moses with regard to divorce, see on Deut. 24:1–4. It should be emphasized that the law of Moses did not *institute* divorce. By divine direction Moses *tolerated* it and regulated it so as to prevent abuses. Christian marriage should rest on the basis of Gen. 2:24, not of Deut. 24:1.

32. Fornication. Gr. *porneia*, a general term applying to illicit sexual relationship. The liberal school of Hillel taught that a man might secure a divorce for the most trivial cause, such as his wife’s permitting his food to burn (Mishnah *Gittin* 9. 10, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 436, 437; cf. MB 63). The more conservative school of Shammai, however, interpreted the expression “some uncleanness” of Deut. 24:1 to mean “some unseemly thing,” meaning “immodest,” or “indecent” (Mishnah *Gittin* 9. 10, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 436). But Jesus made plain that there should be no divorce except in the case of marital infidelity. The marriage relationship had been perverted by sin, and Jesus came to restore to it the purity and beauty originally ordained by the Creator. See on Deut. 14:26.

In the providence of God the marriage institution was designed to bless and uplift humanity. The companionship of husband and wife was ordained of God as the ideal environment in which to mature a Christian character. Most of the personality adjustments of married life, and the difficulties encountered by many in making these adjustments, call for the exercise of self-restraint and sometimes self-sacrifice. True “love is patient and kind,” it “does not insist on its own way,” it “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:4–7, RSV). When Christians enter into the marriage relationship they should accept the responsibility of applying the principles here stated. Husbands and wives who thus apply these principles, and who are willing for the grace of Christ to operate in their lives, will find that there is no difficulty, however serious it may appear to be, that cannot be solved. Where dispositions are not congenial, the Christian solution is to change dispositions, not spouses.

To commit adultery. A wife put away would naturally seek to find a new home. But by marrying another she would commit fornication, because her previous marriage was not validly dissolved in God’s sight (cf. Mark 10:11, 12). Christ boldly set aside the rabbinical tradition of His day, especially that of the school of Hillel (see the foregoing under “Fornication”), which permitted divorce for any cause. It has been observed that no marriage existed among the Jews of the Mishnaic period from which the husband could not abruptly free himself in a legal fashion. Jesus emphasized that marriage was divinely ordained and, when properly entered into, was divinely ratified. What God had joined together no rabbinical tradition or practice could put asunder.

33. Again. This is the third illustration of Christ’s spiritual interpretation of the law. **Ye have heard.** See on v. 21.

It hath been said. What follows is not an exact quotation, but rather a summary of the teachings of Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:22.

Forswear. Gr. *epiorkeō*, “to swear falsely.” Christ here refers to solemn statements made in affirmation of the truth of what has been said or of promises to perform certain acts. He speaks not of profanity, in the usual sense of the term, but of perjury, particularly of perjury that invokes the name of God and thereby dishonors and profanes that name.

Perform ... thine oaths. Christ here speaks of promises, particularly those made to God. However, He thinks not so much of *what* is promised, but that the promise, whatever it be, is made good. He emphasizes, not the way the promises are *made*, but the way they are *kept*. For the solemnity and inviolability of vows made to God see on Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21.

34. But I say. See on v. 22.

Swear not at all. Jesus refers, not to the solemn judicial oath (MB 66; see on ch. 26:64), but to oaths common among the Jews. Generally speaking, to prefix an affirmation with the words “I swear” constituted the statement an oath. But, as in other things, the Jews contrived many devices by which to free themselves from obligations accepted under oath. Christ’s attitude toward the casuistry often involved in Jewish oath taking is set forth in greater detail in ch. 23:16–22.

Before Caiaphas, Christ Himself answered under oath (ch. 26:63, 64). Paul repeatedly invoked God as witness that what he said was true (2 Cor. 1:23; 11:31; cf. 1 Thess. 5:27). The Decalogue does not forbid oaths, but perjury (Ex. 20:7, 16). “If there is any one who can consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian” (MB 67).

When the disposition to speak the truth is in a man’s heart, oath taking becomes superfluous. The practice of invoking the name of God at certain times implies that what a man says under such circumstances is more to be depended on than what he says at other times. Christ enjoins truthfulness in all the relationships of life. “Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight” (MB 68).

Neither by heaven. The rabbis claimed that swearing “by heaven and by earth” did not render a man as culpable as did swearing by a supposedly inoffensive substitute for the divine name (see Vol. I, p. 172) or by one of the attributes of God (Mishnah *Shebu’oth* 4. 13, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 202, 203). But Jesus denied their contention.

35. His footstool. Compare Isa. 66:1. A poetic expression emphasizing the insignificance of the earth and its inhabitants as compared with God (cf. Isa. 57:15; Eccl. 5:2; Lam. 2:1).

The great King. That is, God.

36. Swear by thy head. Another common formula of swearing.

37. Your communication. Compare such passages of Scripture as Eph. 4:29.

Yea, yea. Compare James 5:12. For the Christian, for one who respects his word, a simple Yes or No carries as much weight and reliability as a more elaborate declaration.

Cometh of evil. Or, “cometh of the evil one” (cf. Matt. 13:19; 1 John 3:12).

38. Ye have heard. See on v. 21. Christ presents His fourth illustration of the spirit of the law in contrast with the mere form of obeying it. Verses 38–42 are concerned with the attitude a Christian should take when suffering injury at the hands of another.

It hath been said. See on v. 21. The quotation in this verse is based on Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21 (see on Ex. 21:24; see Vol. I, p. 618).

An eye for an eye. When this law was instituted it marked a great advance over the blood-feud system of justice common in ancient times, under which it was the general

practice to repay injuries with compound interest. The law was a civil statute, and the punishment was to be carried out at the direction of the courts. It did not justify personal revenge (MB 70). For a similar provision in the law of Hammurabi see Vol. I, p. 618.

39. *But I say.* See on v. 22.

Resist not evil. That is, do not seek revenge for wrongs suffered. Jesus here seems to refer to active hostility rather than to passive resistance. The word for “evil” may refer either to an evil person or to an evil thing. Here the former seems indicated. It includes evil done to a person and evil done by a person. The Christian will not meet violence with violence. He will “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21) and “heap coals of fire” upon the head of one who wrongs him (Prov. 25:21, 22).

Cheek. As in all the other illustrations listed in vs. 21–47, Jesus is more concerned with the spirit that prompts the act rather than with the act itself. The Christian will not fight for what he considers to be his rights. He will submit to injury rather than seek opportunity to inflict it. Jesus Himself fully observed the spirit of this command, though He did not literally invite additional injury (John 18:22, 23; cf. Isa. 50:6; 53:7). Nor did Paul (Acts 22:25; 23:3; Acts 25:9, 10). On the cross Christ manifested the spirit of which He here spoke when He called upon the Father to forgive those who tormented Him (Luke 23:34).

40. *Sue thee at the law.* That is, “hale you into court.” The Greek makes it clear that the trial had not yet begun; legal action was simply contemplated.

Coat. Gr. *chitōn*, the shirtlike undergarment worn next to the body.

Let him have. The Christian will quietly, meekly submit to wrong.

Cloke. Gr. *himation*, here, the “mantle,” or outer garment, which was commonly used as a covering at night, in contrast with the *chitōn*. The poor would sometimes have little or nothing besides the “mantle” to offer as security for a loan. The law of Moses, however, prohibited a creditor from retaining this garment overnight as a pledge (Ex. 22:26, 27). In view of the fact that the cloak was considered more essential than the “coat,” or undergarment, to yield it without resistance would demonstrate a higher degree of concession, particularly in view of the fact that the law gave a man certain rights with respect to it.

41. *Compel.* Gr. *aggareuō*, meaning “to press into service.” The related noun, *aggaros*, is a Persian loan word meaning “mounted courier.” Among the Persians the word was used with reference to royal couriers of the imperial postal system, which the Persians developed to an amazing degree of efficiency (see on Esther 3:13). In Roman times *aggareuō* and *aggaros* referred to compulsory service in the transport of military equipment. Epictetus (iv. 1. 79) advises with respect to such service: “If there is a requisition and a soldier seizes it [your ass], let it go. Do not resist or complain, otherwise you will be first beaten, and lose the ass after all.” To resist was to invite cruelty. In Matt. 27:32 and Mark 15:21 *aggareuō* is used of compelling Simon to carry the cross of Christ.

Jesus referred to such instances as that of a Jewish civilian’s being impressed by a Roman soldier to carry his baggage for the distance of 1 mi., as provided by the law (cf. Luke 3:14). The Christian would give double the service required by law, and that cheerfully. Capernaum was a Roman garrison town, and as Jesus spoke, those who listened saw a company of Roman soldiers passing along a nearby road (MB 70). The

Jews hoped and believed that the Messiah would humble the pride of Rome; here, Jesus counseled submission to Roman authority.

42. Turn not thou away. That is, do not refuse him. Citizens of the kingdom of heaven will have, and act upon, generous impulses (see on Luke 6:30).

43. Ye have heard. See on v. 21.

It hath been said. See on v. 21.

Love. Gr. *agapaō*, whose wealth of meaning the English word “love” inadequately reflects. Our word “love” means so many different things, and conveys so many diverse ideas, that the true meaning of *agapē* is obscured by this translation. The Greeks had three words to convey the ideas we seek to express by our one word “love”: *agapan*, *philein*, and *eran*.

Philein in general describes affectionate, sentimental love based on the emotions and feelings. Insofar as it is based on the feelings it is subject to change as the feelings change. *Eran* denotes passionate, sensual “love,” love that operates essentially on the physical plane. Certain forms of infatuation may be classed under this variety of “love.” *Eran* is not used in the NT. In the NT *agapan*, when contrasted with *philein*, describes love from the standpoint of respect and esteem. It adds principle to feeling in such a way that principle controls the feelings. It brings into play the higher powers of the mind and intelligence. Whereas *philein* tends to make us “love” only those who “love” us, *agapan* extends love even to those who do not love us. *Agapan* is selfless, whereas *eran* is purely selfish, and even *philein* may, at times, be marred by selfishness.

The noun form, *agapē*, is confined almost exclusively to the Bible. The *agapē* of the NT is love in its highest and truest form, the love than which there is no greater—love that impels a man to sacrifice himself for others (John 15:13). It implies reverence for God and respect for one’s fellow men. It is a divine principle of thought and action that modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennoble the affections. See on Luke 6:30.

Thy neighbour. To the Jews a “neighbor” was a fellow Israelite, either by birth or by conversion to Judaism. Even the halfbreed Samaritans were excluded, and considered strangers. In the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37) Jesus swept away this narrow concept by proclaiming the brotherhood, or neighborhood, of all men. Christian love seeks the good of all men, whatever their race or creed. “Neighbor” literally means a “near-dweller.”

Hate thine enemy. This is not a part of the quotation from Lev. 19:18, but doubtless a popular maxim. Hatred or contempt for others is the natural product of pride in self. Thinking themselves, as sons of Abraham (John 8:33; see on Matt. 3:9), superior to other men (cf. Luke 18:11), the Jews looked with contempt on all Gentiles. It was as if Jesus said, “The law says to love your neighbor; I say, love even your enemies” (see Matt. 5:44). He then goes on to explain why we should love our enemies—because God does so (vs. 45–48) and because we are sons of God (Matt. 5:45; 1 John 3:1, 2).

44. But I say. See on v. 22.

Love your enemies. Compare Rom. 12:20. The word for “love,” *agapan*, denotes the love of respect in contrast with *philein*, which describes the love of emotion (filial love), such as exists between members of the family (see on Matt. 5:43). The command would be impossible if it enjoined men to *philein* their enemies, for they could not feel toward their enemies the same emotional warmth of affection that they feel toward the immediate members of their families, nor is that expected. *Philein* is spontaneous, emotional, and is nowhere commanded in the NT. *Agapan*, on the other hand, can be and is commanded, for it is under the control of the will. To *agapan* our bitterest enemies is to treat them with respect and courtesy and to regard them as God regards them.

Bless. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for omitting the second and third clauses of this declaration, as well as the words “despitefully use you.” According to these ancient witnesses Christ simply said, “Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you.” However, compare Luke 6:27, 28.

45. Children of your Father. Literally, “sons of your Father.” They resemble their Father in character (MB 75; see on vs. 43, 48). The test of love for God is love for our fellow men (1 John 4:20).

Which is in heaven. The expression “my [or “your”] Father which is in heaven” is characteristic of Matthew.

On the evil. By this obvious illustration from the natural world Jesus discredits the popular Jewish fallacy that God bestows His blessings on saints and withholds them from sinners (see on John 9:2). The Jews attributed to God the same spirit of hatred for sinners and non-Jews that they themselves felt. But whether it be the blessings of nature or of salvation, “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34, 35).

46. Which love you. See on v. 43.

What reward have ye? That is, “What particular credit is that to you? What is there special about that?” See on Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:32–35.

Publicans. See p. 66.

47. Salute your brethren. The universal greeting of the Orient, *shalom*, or *salaam*, “peace,” includes the express wish that the one to whom it is spoken may enjoy every spiritual and material blessing. See on v. 9.

The publicans. There is nothing worthy of honorable mention in doing what everyone else does. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading “Gentiles” instead of “publicans” (cf. ch. 6:7).

48. Be ye therefore. With these words Christ introduces the conclusion to be drawn from His six illustrations of the higher, spiritual application of the law of the kingdom of heaven given in vs. 21–47, though v. 48 is perhaps more closely related to the line of thought in vs. 43–47. In all of these illustrations Christ has shown that, in the kingdom He came to establish, it is the inner attitudes and motives that determine perfection of character, and not the outward acts alone. Man may look on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

Perfect. From the Gr. *teleios*, literally, “one who has reached the goal,” or “complete,” from *telos*, “end,” “fulfillment,” “completion,” “limit.” In Greek literature

teleioi is used of flawless sacrificial victims, of full-grown or mature animals, of full-grown or mature adult human beings, of trained and fully qualified professional men. Paul speaks of “them that are *perfect*” (1 Cor. 2:6) and of “as many as be *perfect*” (Phil. 3:15). At the same time he realizes that there are new heights to gain and that he himself has not reached the ultimate perfection. *Teleioi* is also used in the NT to denote physically and intellectually “mature” men (1 Cor. 14:20, “men”; Heb. 5:14, them that are “of full age”). For *tam*, the Hebrew equivalent, see on Job 1:1; Prov. 11:3, 5.

Jesus does not here deal with absolute sinlessness in this life (see SC 62; EGW RH March 18, 1890). Sanctification is a progressive work.

The Jews were toiling wearily to become righteous by their own efforts, to earn salvation by works. But in their scrupulous legalism they paid so much attention to the minute details of the letter of the law that they lost sight completely of its spirit (cf. ch. 23:23). In the Sermon on the Mount Christ sought to turn their attention from the husks to the wheat. They had made the law an end in itself, something to be kept for its own sake, and had forgotten that its purpose was to lift their gaze to the high ideals of supreme love toward God and self-sacrificing love toward one’s fellow men (ch. 22:34–40). The rabbis taught that righteousness consists in having an excess of good deeds over evil deeds credited to one’s account in heaven.

It is important to note the relationship between vs. 48 and 45 (ch. 5), for to be “children of your Father which is in heaven” (v. 45) is equivalent to being “perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (v. 48).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 DA 298; MB 4
- 1, 2 MB 45
- 1–12Ed 79; 7T 269
- 1–48DA 298–312; 5T 253
- 2, 3 MB 6
- 3 COL 152; DA 299; WM 176
- 3–52T 631
- 4 DA 300; MB 9; 5T 475
- 5 DA 301; MB 13; 2T 164; 3T 334; 7T 26; WM 153
- 6 EW 108; FE 240; GW 255; MB 18, 85, 113; PK 371; SC 80, 95; SL 10, 49; TM 120, 199; 2T 266; 4T 449, 460; 5T 17; 6T 65; 7T 213; WM 176
- 6–9DA 302
- 7 MB 21; WM 15
- 8 CT 103, 429; DA 302; FE 385, 415; GW 53; MB 24; MYP 191; PP 87; 1T 136; 8T 331
- 9 MB 27; PP 667; 2T 164, 437; 5T 176
- 10 MB 29
- 10–12DA 305; 8T 127
- 11 MB 31; ML 69
- 11, 12 AA 176
- 12 MB 33, 34
- 13 CH 560, 592; DA 439; Ev 697; FE 468; MB 35, 53; ML 166; MYP 318; PK 231; TM 373; 2T 636; 3T 559; 5T 130, 256, 389; 6T 258

13, 14 DA 306; ML 166; MYP 349, 364; RC 52; Te 165; TM 422; 1T 303, 345, 425; 2T 394, 548; 3T 248; 4T 118, 319; 5T 238, 280, 361; 7T 114
 13–152T 633
 13–16CH 337; 2T 443; 9T 28
 14 AA 12; AH 36, 39, 96, 536; CD 76; CG 110; CH 84, 445; COL 417; CS 38, 125; CSW 34; CT 531; Ev 382, 403; LS 295; MB 38, 42; MH 36; ML 8, 102, 220, 304; PK 718; TM 443; 1T 422, 458; 2T 123, 579, 631; 3T 161, 376, 404, 433; 4T 356, 535; 5T 113, 456, 520, 531, 554, 568, 579, 731; 6T 158, 188, 436; 7T 24; 8T 46, 141, 173; 9T 19; WM 36, 260
 14, 15 6T 145
 14–16PP 369; 3T 40; 5T 681; 6T 33; 8T 52
 15 CD 416; MM 302; 2T 669; 3T 385; 4T 52, 391; 5T 404; 6T 37, 196; 7T 36, 161; 9T 75, 158
 15, 16 CT 398; MB 39; 5T 381
 16 AH 37, 252; CH 35, 242, 437, 592; COL 417; CS 346; CT 398, 531; Ev 202, 467; FE 203, 482; GW 195, 373, 394; MH 36; ML 220; MM 219; PK 718; SC 82; Te 247; TM 17, 296; 1T 193, 416, 422, 458, 485, 694; 2T 159, 161, 225, 239, 247, 389, 465; 3T 53, 56, 200, 376, 436; 4T 16, 59, 400; 5T 75, 306, 381, 460; 6T 121; 7T 92, 143; 8T 26, 46, 56, 245; 9T 70, 100, 148
 17 DA 307; EW 215; GC 262; MB 45, 48; 2T 201; 8T 312
 17, 18 COL 314; GC 466; PP 365
 17–19GC 447; PK 183
 18 AA 505; DA 283, 307, 762; GC 434; MB 49; PP 469
 19 DA 308; MB 51; 4T 248; 5T 434, 627
 19, 20 7T 114
 20 DA 309; MB 53; 3T 193
 22 MB 55
 22–24DA 310
 23, 24 MB 58; MH 486; 5T 646, 649; 8T 84; 9T 192
 26 4T 476
 28 MB 59; PP 308
 29, 30 MYP 56; 3T 550; 5T 222, 340
 30 MB 60
 32 AH 340, 344, 345, 346; MB 63
 34 ML 282
 34–36MB 66
 34–371T 201
 37 Ed 236; MB 67
 39 MB 69, 73
 40, 41 MB 71
 40–42MB 72
 42 MH 188
 43–45MB 73
 44 DA 265; FE 177; MM 253; 4T 134
 44, 45 DA 311; MH 423; MM 256; 8T 286
 45 AA 359; COL 202; DA 649; MB 74; PK 231; TM 280; 6T 284; 9T 50; WM 15

47 COL 272

48 CT 257, 365; CS 24; DA 311; LS 342; MB 76; ML 15, 38, 271; MM 112, 200, 254;
MYP 73, 144; PP 574; 2T 445, 549; 4T 332, 455, 520, 591; 5T 557; 8T 64, 86

CHAPTER 6

1 *Christ continueth his sermon in the mount, speaking of alms, 5 prayer, 14 forgiving our brethren, 16 fasting, 19 where our treasure is to be laid up, 24 of serving God, and mammon: 25 exhorteth not to be careful for worldly things: 33 but to seek God's kingdom.*

1. Take heed. From a discussion of true righteousness (ch. 5) Christ now turns to the practical application of righteousness to the duties of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven (ch. 6; see DA 312). Christians are to avoid making a show of their acts of worship and benevolence. In three examples—acts of charity (vs. 2–4), prayer (vs. 5–8), and fasting (vs. 16–18)—Jesus contrasts the old practices of Judaism with the exalted ideals of the kingdom of heaven (see on Matt. 5:22; Mark 2:21, 22).

Alms. Gr. *eleēmosunē*, “almsgiving.” Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading *dikaiosunē*, “righteousness,” or “piety.” Either meaning fits the context. If the reading “righteousness” is adopted, then the three specific illustrations of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting are intended to be examples of the principle stated in v. 1.

The three illustrations given probably represent the three most commonly observed forms of Pharisaic “righteousness.” It should be observed that Christ in no way objects to religious acts; He is concerned only that they be prompted by pure motives and be performed without ostentation.

Before men. That is, paraded before them with the objective of attracting their attention and admiration (see on v. 2).

To be seen. Gr. *theaomai*, “to gaze upon,” “to see.” The English words “theater” and “theatrical” are from this root. Pious acts performed “before men, to be seen of them,” were designed to earn the adulation of men.

Of your Father. Literally, “from the side of your Father.”

2. Sound a trumpet. Whether the illustration of almsgivers having a trumpet sounded to herald their gifts is to be understood literally or as a graphic figure of speech similar to our colloquial, “Don’t blow your own horn,” is not certain. There is no actual instance in Jewish writings of this practice, though it is attested in other ancient lands of the Orient. The expression “as the hypocrites do” may at first glance seem to suggest that Christ was stating a literal fact; however, the “hypocrites” may also have been blowing only metaphorical trumpets. Be this as it may, Christ is rebuking the evil of giving great publicity to deeds of charity.

Hypocrites. Gr. *hupokritai*, from a verb meaning “to pretend,” “to feign.” The Jews provided for the poor by an assessment upon the members of the community based upon ability to pay. The funds thus acquired were augmented by voluntary gifts. In addition, appeals for contributions were from time to time made at public religious gatherings in the synagogues, or at open-air meetings generally conducted in the streets. On these occasions men were tempted to pledge large sums in order to win the praise of those assembled. There was also a practice of permitting the one who contributed an unusually large gift to sit in a place of honor by the side of the rabbis. Love of praise was thus all too frequently the motive in these gifts. It was also the case that many pledged large sums

but later failed to make good their promises. Jesus' reference to hypocrisy doubtless included this form of pretense.

The streets. See on v. 5.

Have glory of men. Or, "be praised by men" (RSV).

Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Have their reward. The Greek brings out the idea that they received payment of their wages in full. The word here translated "have" occurs frequently on receipts in ancient Greek papyri with the meaning, "paid in full" or "received payment of." The hypocrites, Jesus says, have received all the payment they will ever get. They practiced charity strictly as a business transaction by means of which they hoped to purchase public admiration; the relief of distress was no concern of theirs. The reward they desired is the one they will receive, but that is all.

3. When thou doest alms. The word "thou" is singular. Jesus addressed each member in His audience personally. Concerning the responsibility of the rich toward the "poor" as set forth in the law of Moses see on Lev. 25:25, 35; Deut. 15:7, 11.

Thy left hand. It is said that among the Arabs the right and the left hand are figurative of close friends. There is no need, Jesus says, for closest friends to know about one's pious deeds. In this graphic figure of speech Christ uses the hyperbole of emphasis. He does not mean that almsgiving is always to remain a complete secret (MB 80). Paul commended the generosity of the Christians of Macedonia (Phil. 4:16) and wrote to the Corinthians that their "zeal" had "provoked very many" to be active for God (2 Cor. 9:2). What Jesus does mean is that Christians are not to perform acts of charity in order to secure the praise and honor of men.

4. In secret. The Mishnah (*Shekalim* 5. 6, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 21) refers to what it calls a "chamber of secret gifts" within the Temple area where the devout might deposit their gifts in secret and where the worthy poor might also come in secret for help in meeting needs for which they were otherwise unable to provide.

Seeth in secret. That is, God sees the secret motives of the heart that prompt action, and it is for these motives rather than for the deeds themselves that men will "have praise of God" on the day of judgment (1 Cor. 4:5; cf. Rom. 2:16).

Openly. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of this word. In the last day "every man's work shall be made manifest" (1 Cor. 3:13; cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 4:5). It is when Christ appears that He will reward every man according to his works (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12). Christians "are not to think of reward, but of service" (MB 81).

5. Prayest. See on vs. 3, 6, 7, 9.

The hypocrites. See on v. 2.

Standing. Reference here is to the stated hours of prayer, morning and evening (see on Luke 1:9). The Temple and synagogues were, of course, the usual places of prayer. Those who were unable to pray at these appointed places could pray in the field, in the home, or upon their bed. Later tradition designated certain prayers to be uttered while one was standing, others, while one was sitting, walking, riding an ass, sitting or lying upon a bed (Talmud *Berakoth* 30a, Soncino ed., pp. 183, 184; Midrash on Ps. 4, sec. 9 [23b], cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 399).

Corners of the streets. These were the places where business was commonly transacted. If the stipulated hours of prayer found the Pharisees on these street corners,

they would strike an attitude of prayer and in a loud voice rehearse the formal phrases they commonly used in prayer. Many doubtless made it convenient to be abroad during these hours.

May be seen of men. See on vs. 1, 2.

Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Have their reward. See on v. 2. The Greek is identical.

6. But thou. See Isa. 26:20 (cf. 2 Kings 4:33). The word translated “thou” is in the emphatic position, and is in the singular.

Prayest. The verb is in the singular. Jesus addresses each member of His audience personally.

Thy Father. See on v. 9.

In secret. The expression probably means, “Who hears what is said in secret,” as the context implies. See on v. 4.

Seeth in secret. What is concealed from the eyes of man is manifest to God. He sees what is done in secret (see on v. 4).

Openly. See on v. 4.

7. When ye pray. Or, “in praying.” What follows is a continuation of the subject, not the introduction of a new one.

Use ... vain repetitions. Gr. *battologeō*, a word occurring only here in the NT, for which the following meanings have been suggested: “to speak stammeringly,” “to say the same thing over and over again,” “to babble,” “to rattle off,” “to speak without giving thought to what is spoken.” Jesus did not proscribe all repetition, for He Himself used repetitions (ch. 26:44).

As the heathen do. Compare 1 Kings 18:26; Acts 19:34. Tibetans believe their prayer wheels repeat the same prayer countless thousands of times without thought or effort on the part of the worshiper.

Much speaking. See the foregoing.

8. Your Father knoweth. Important textual evidence (cf. p. 146) may be cited for inserting the word “God” before “your.” Prayer does not provide God with information of what He would otherwise be unaware, nor is it intended as a means of persuading Him to do what He would otherwise be unwilling to do. Prayer links us with the Omniscient One, and conditions our wills to cooperate effectively with His will.

9. After this manner. That is, after this pattern—not necessarily after these identical words—a pattern in content but not necessarily in form. The context indicates that this prayer is set forth as a model in contrast with the “vain repetitions” and “much speaking” of heathen prayers, characteristics that had been adopted by the Pharisees (see on v. 7). Citizens of Christ’s kingdom were told, “Be not ye therefore like unto them,” but “after this manner therefore pray ye” (vs. 8, 9).

It is interesting to note that the various thoughts expressed in the Lord’s Prayer, and often the words themselves in which the thoughts are expressed, may be found in either the OT or in Jewish ritual prayers known as *Ha-Kaddish*. Inasmuch as the thoughts expressed in the Lord’s Prayer were already current in Jewish prayers in the time of Christ, we may explain the parallel on the basis that everything good in Judaism, including the sentiments expressed in its prayers, originally came from Christ (see PP 366, 367; DA 52). All that He had given His people was good, and He acknowledged it (ch. 5:17, 18); but around these revelations of divine truth had sprung up a dense growth

of human tradition and formal worship that well-nigh obscured that which was essential to salvation (see on ch. 5:17, 19, 22). This was strikingly true of the prayers the rabbis intoned and taught the people to repeat.

Prayer had become lengthy and repetitious, and its sincerity of thought and expression obscured by an impersonal literary form, beautiful in phraseology but too often lacking in sincerity of spirit (see on vs. 7, 8). In the Lord's Prayer Jesus rescued from the mass of literary verbiage that which was essential and restored it to a simple and compact form whose meaning could be comprehended by the most simple soul. Thus, while reflecting to a certain extent the prayers of Judaism, the form of the Lord's Prayer is nevertheless an inspired and original prayer in its own right. Its originality inheres in its selection of petitions and in its arrangement. Its universal acceptance reflects the fact that it expresses more perfectly than any other prayer the fundamental needs of the human heart.

Pray ye. The word "ye" is emphatic in the Greek. It should be remembered that Jesus was addressing Himself particularly to the Twelve, the new charter members of the kingdom of heaven (see on ch. 5:1, 2). Here, the word "ye" stands in contrast with the "hypocrites" of ch. 6:2 and the "heathen" of v. 7.

Our Father. First in every prayer should be a recognition of our sonship to the heavenly Father. We may be unworthy to address Him as "Father," but whenever we do so in sincerity He receives us with rejoicing (see Luke 15:21–24) and acknowledges us as His sons indeed. The fact that He is *our* Father binds us together as Christians in the great, universal fellowship of faith with all men who in sincerity and truth recognize the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Which art in heaven. In spite of the close, personal relationship between their "Father" in heaven and themselves, His earthborn sons will nevertheless always be aware of His infinite majesty and greatness (see Isa. 57:15) and of their own utter insignificance (see Matt. 6:5). The consciousness that "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth" (Eccl. 5:2) brings to the contrite heart the spirit of reverence and humility that is the first condition of salvation.

Hallowed. Gr. *hagiazō*, "to regard [or "treat"] as holy," related to the adjective *hagios*, "holy." The name of God is honored in two ways: (1) by divine acts that lead men to acknowledge and reverence Jehovah as God (see Ex. 15:14, 15; Joshua 2:9–11; 5:1; Ps. 145:4, 6, 12), and (2) by men honoring Him as God and according Him the worship and obedience that are His due (see Isa. 58:13; Matt. 7:21–23; Acts 10:35; etc.).

Be thy name. In modern usage a name is little more than a tag by which a person may be identified. In Bible times, however, a person's name was more intimately associated with him as an individual. Often it "stood for traits of character that the parent desired to see developed in the child" (PK 481). God's name stands for His character (see Ex. 34:5–7). The significance the Jews attached to the divine name is reflected in the reverence with which they uttered it, or, more commonly, left it unarticulated or used a circumlocution for it (see Vol. I, pp. 170–173). The name of God is holy, or "hallowed," because God Himself self is holy. We hallow His name by acknowledging His holiness of character and by permitting Him to reproduce that character in us.

The tense of the Greek word shows that the request is anticipatory, looking forward to the time when God's holy name will be universally hallowed (cf. on v. 10).

10. *Thy kingdom come.* As to the nature of the “kingdom of heaven” and its central position in the teaching of Jesus see on ch. 4:17. As to the “kingdom of heaven” in the Sermon on the Mount see on ch. 5:2, 3. Christ here speaks, not so much of the kingdom of grace, as of the kingdom of His glory (MB 108), for which the kingdom of grace prepares the way and in which it culminates (see ch. 25:31). Such an interpretation is supported by the tense of the Greek verb. See on ch. 6:13.

Throughout the ages the promise that the kingdoms of this world would eventually become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 11:15) has spurred the citizens of the kingdom of grace to holy living (1 John 3:2, 3) and to self-sacrifice in the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom (see Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:6–8). In the minds and hearts of true Christians in all ages “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13) has ever been uppermost and has inspired them to holier living.

Thy will be done. Christ now turns to the will of God, particularly as it affects this earth. When human hearts yield to the jurisdiction of the kingdom of divine grace, the will of God for them is accomplished. The tense of the Greek verb shows that this petition is also anticipatory. The request is for an end to the reign of sin and for the arrival of that moment when the will of God will be as universally accomplished upon this earth as it is throughout the other dominions of God’s creation.

11. *Give us.* In the first part of the Lord’s Prayer (vs. 9, 10) attention is directed to the Fatherhood, character, kingdom, and will of God. In the second part of the prayer (vs. 11–13) petition is made for the temporal and spiritual needs of man.

It was the “common people” who heard Christ gladly (Mark 12:37). For the most part these were humble fishermen, farmers, and workmen. Such was the company that now listened to Him on the hillside overlooking the Plain of Gennesaret and the Lake of Galilee (MB 39; DA 299). Employment was uncertain for many of them, living conditions were precarious, and there were perhaps few who had not known actual hunger and want at one time or another, owing to drought, oppressive taxation, and other hardships. As is usually the case, those who have but little of this world’s goods are more keenly aware of their dependence upon God for the necessities of life than are those who have enough and to spare.

Daily. Gr. *epiousios*, a word that appears in the NT only here and in Luke 11:3. Its exact meaning is uncertain. The single occurrence of the word in secular Greek literature throws little light on its meaning. Among the meanings suggested are the following: (1) necessary for existence, (2) for the present day, (3) for the coming day. The words of Matt. 6:34 tend to confirm the idea of a daily supply sufficient for life. See p. 106.

Bread. Even those who have an abundance of “bread,” and of this world’s goods, do well to remember that it is God who gives “power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:18), a lesson Jesus graphically portrayed in the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21). Everything that we have comes from God, and in our hearts there should ever be gratitude for His goodness. Our “daily bread” includes both physical and spiritual provisions.

12. *Forgive.* Gr. *aphiēmi*, a common word in the NT, frequently meaning “to send away,” or “to dismiss,” “to leave” (see Matt. 4:11; Mark 4:36; etc.). The meaning “to forgive” is probably based on the idea that the repentant petitioning soul is sent away in peace.

Debts. Gr. *opheilēma*, a common word for legal debts (cf. Rom. 4:4), but used here of moral and spiritual indebtedness. Here sin is pictured as a debt and the sinner as a debtor. The parallel passage in Luke has “sins” (ch. 11:4). See on Matt. 18:28, 30; Luke 7:41–43.

As we forgive. That is, as it is our habit to forgive. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between this and the reading “as we have forgiven,” implying that we dare not ask for forgiveness unless and until we have forgiven our fellow men. See on chs. 5:24; 18:23–35.

Our debtors. That is, those who have wronged us.

13. Temptation. Gr. *peirasmos*, “temptation,” also “trial,” or “test,” as in 1 Peter 4:12. The verb form, *peirazō*, is translated “prove” (John 6:6), “assayed” (Acts 16:7), “examine” (2 Cor. 13:5), and “try,” or “tried” (Heb. 11:17; Rev. 2:2, 10; Rev. 3:10). Even when the English word “temptation” is used to render *peirasmos* it is sometimes clear from the context that it means “test,” or “trial” (Acts 20:19; James 1:2; cf. 1 Peter 4:12). The Scriptures make it clear that God “tests,” or “proves,” men (see Gen. 22:1; Ex. 20:20; etc.) but never tempts them to sin (James 1:13).

The petition should perhaps be understood as a request, “Do not permit us to enter into temptation” (see 1 Cor. 10:13; see on Ps. 141:4). This part of the Lord’s Prayer is sometimes understood as a plea to God to remove all temptation from us. But God’s promise is not that we shall be protected from temptation, but that we shall be protected from falling (John 17:15). Too often we willfully place ourselves in the way of temptation (see on Prov. 7:9). Truly to pray “lead us not into temptation” is to renounce the ways of our own choosing and to submit to the ways of God’s choosing.

Evil. Gr. *ponēros*. In the form here used, *ponēros* may refer to either an evil thing or an evil person (see on ch. 5:39). It is not clear which is intended here. Some prefer “evil one,” that is, the devil, whereas others think that evil as a principle is intended. The conjunction “but” may seem to make “evil” parallel to “temptation” in the preceding clause; if so, “evil” probably refers to moral wrong.

Thine is the kingdom. This clause introduces the doxology to the Lord’s Prayer. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of this doxology. It is not in Luke’s version of the prayer (Luke 11:4). However, the sentiment it expresses is certainly scriptural, and closely parallels 1 Chron. 29:11–13. A shorter doxology occurs in 2 Tim. 4:18.

The “kingdom,” “power,” and “glory” here ascribed to the Father certainly include the present kingdom of divine grace in the hearts of men, but look forward primarily to the glorious kingdom to be ushered in with the return of Christ to this earth to reign in power and glory (see on v. 10).

Amen. See on ch. 5:18.

14. If ye forgive. Compare Matt. 18:23–35; Mark 11:25, 26. See on Matt. 6:12.

Trespasses. Gr. *paraptōmata*, from a verb meaning “to fall to one side.” Note that the word “debts” of v. 12 is from a different Greek word. The word *paraptōmata* implies deviation from truth or uprightness. In the NT it seems to denote a conscious violation of right, one that, therefore, involves guilt.

Your heavenly Father. See on v. 9.

15. If ye forgive not. He who is unwilling to forgive others does not deserve to be forgiven. Furthermore, to extend forgiveness to him would be to condone his own unforgiving spirit. To expect of others what one is unwilling to do himself is the very essence of selfishness and sin. God's unwillingness to forgive one who harbors an unforgiving spirit is based on the need of the unforgiving person to overcome a basic character defect. God could not forgive such a person and at the same time be true to His own righteous character. Only when we are right with our fellow men can we be right with God (see 1 John 4:20; see on Matt. 7:12).

Their trespasses. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between retaining and omitting this phrase.

16. Moreover. Verses 16–18 record the third in the series of religious duties here considered (see on v. 1).

Fast. For fasting among the Jews see on Mark 2:18, 20. The reference is to voluntary, private fasting. To afflict the body for the sin of the soul is actually to dodge the issue and to miss the true nature of repentance, for sin is a disease of the soul rather than of the body (MB 87).

The hypocrites. See on v. 2.

Sad countenance. Jesus does not necessarily forbid a downcast look if it is genuine; He refers rather to the feigned appearance of the “hypocrites.”

Disfigure. Gr. *aphanizō*, “to make unseen,” or “to make unrecognizable.” Jesus here refers to the concealment, or hiding, of one's true feelings by a simulated gloomy appearance—as an actor hides his own face under a mask—in a pretense of superior piety. When fasting, the “hypocrites” made a practice of going about unwashed, unshaven, and with unkempt hair and beard.

In the Greek there is an interesting play on words, “disfigure” and “appear” both being from *phainō*. Though it is not possible to reproduce in English the full force of this play on words, the following free translation approximates the substance of Jesus' statement: “they make their [true] faces [their real feelings] disappear in order that they [themselves] may appear,” etc.

Appear unto men. They sought to secure the attention of their fellow men, and with it a reputation for superior piety.

Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Their reward. See on vs. 1, 2.

17. But thou. The Sermon on the Mount contrasts the philosophies of God and man. The teachings of Jesus—“but I say unto you” (ch. 5:22; etc.)—stand in opposition to those of the rabbis, and the lives of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven—“but thou” (ch. 6:6; etc.)—in contrast with those of the “hypocrites.”

When thou fastest. Jesus does not here commend fasting, nor does He condemn it. Whether a man fasts is a matter of concern to him alone. In fact, the very essence of fasting is the consciousness of personal need for doing so. The point in Jesus' teaching is that fasting is to be a personal experience entered into because of that sense of need, and not as a pious formality or to earn a reputation for superior piety. There is no virtue in fasting simply because a man is commanded to do so.

Anoint thine head. Oil was a symbol of joy (Ps. 45:7; 104:15). The anointing of the head with oil was figurative of blessings received (chs. 23:5; 92:10). Citizens of the

kingdom of heaven may fast, but when they do so they are to dress and appear as usual, because fasting is personal, and loses its meaning if done to “appear unto men to fast.”

Wash thy face. In contrast with the “hypocrites” when fasting (see on v. 16).

18. Appear not. There is nothing gloomy about the Christian religion, and the Christian who is gloomy in either word or appearance misrepresents the character of God (MB 88). It is a joyous privilege to be the sons of God (1 John 3:1, 2), and a gloomy countenance gives us the appearance of being orphans rather than sons.

But unto thy Father. Fasting is purely a matter between a man and his God, not between a man and his fellow men.

Which is in secret. See on v. 6.

Reward thee openly. See on v. 4.

19. Lay not up. Literally, “do not have the habit of laying up,” or “stop laying up.” The accumulation of worldly goods is generally motivated by a desire for security, and reflects fear and uncertainty for the future. Jesus points out to those who would be citizens of His kingdom that the possession of material wealth is a source of anxiety rather than a means of escape from it. The Christian will not be anxious concerning the material necessities of life because of his confidence that God knows his needs and will provide for them (vs. 31–34). As Paul later pointed out, this does not mean that the Christian will be indolent in providing for his own needs and for those of his family (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8). Matt. 6:19–21 appears to have been in poetic form, and may have been a proverb. See on Prov. 10:22.

Treasures. Gr. *thēsauros* (see on ch. 2:11). Christ here refers to wealth in the broad sense of all material possessions. The love of money was the ruling passion of thousands in the time of Christ, as it is of millions today. In the Greek there is an interesting play on words.

Moth and rust. Symbols of various kinds of damage. Rust, Gr. *brōsis*, from *bibrōskō*, “to eat,” is literally something that eats, gnaws, or corrodes. Every material possession is affected in one way or another by loss, decay, depreciation, or deterioration.

Corrupt. Gr. *aphanizō* (see on v. 16). *Aphanizō* might here better be rendered “consume.”

Break through. Or, “dig through,” that is, through mud walls or walls of dried brick.

20. But lay up. See on Matt. 6:19; cf. Luke 12:33. In the Sermon on the Mount there is no injunction against the laying up of treasure provided it is laid up in the right place. Christ would have citizens of the kingdom of heaven make a sound investment of the time and strength their heavenly Father has seen fit to allot them in this life. All that a man owns in this life is merely lent to him by God; only the “treasure” he succeeds in laying up in heaven can truly be called his own.

Treasures in heaven. Such treasure is permanent, unaffected by the enemies of earthly treasure and the ravages of time. Investments in heavenly treasure appreciate with time, whereas those in earthly treasure inevitably depreciate in value.

21. Your heart be. Treasure is that on which a man sets his heart, regardless of intrinsic value. A child’s “treasures” may have little intrinsic worth, but they often mean as much to him as a king’s ransom. A man’s real interests lie where his “treasures” are.

22. Light. Gr. *luchnos*, “lamp,” not *phōs*, “light.” *Luchnos* refers to the source of light or to the medium through which it shines, not to the light itself (see on ch. 5:15). Verses

22 and 23 provide an illustration of the principle stated in vs. 19–21. Excessive concern for the accumulation of worldly wealth is evidence of defective spiritual eyesight, of darkness in the soul (see v. 34). The “light” of the body is that insight that places a true relative value on the things of time and of eternity.

The eye. That is, the eye of the soul that gives a man heavenly vision, and that enables him to behold that which is invisible to the natural eyesight (see Rom. 1:20; cf. Heb. 11:27). Such eyesight is a guide to the soul in the same way that physical eyesight is a guide to the body.

Single. Gr. *haplous*, “simple” (as distinct from compound), “natural,” “sincere,” “absolutely true,” “without folds,” like an unfolded piece of cloth. In the present passage *haplous* stands in contrast with *poneros*, “evil” (see on v. 23). Its meaning here is closely parallel with the word “perfect” in ch. 5:48 (see comments there). The translation “sound” (RSV), meaning “well,” or “in a healthy condition,” is appropriate to the context. A Christian whose spiritual “eye” is “single,” or “sound,” is one whose insight and judgment make him a man of unaffected simplicity, artless, plain, and pure. He sees the things of time and eternity in true perspective.

Singleness of eyesight results in singleness of purpose, in wholehearted devotion to the kingdom of heaven and to the practice of its eternal principles (Phil. 3:8, 13, 14; MB 91). To be effective, vision must be focused and concentrated. In the same way, the man who desires true light in his soul must have his spiritual eyesight in sharp focus. Otherwise his vision will be blurred and his estimation of truth and duty will be faulty (see on Rev. 3:18).

23. But if. Compare Luke 11:34, 35.

Evil. Gr. *poneros*, here meaning “in poor condition,” “sick.” A man with an “evil” eye, says Robertson, is a man who keeps one “eye on the hoarded treasures of earth and roll[s] the other proudly up to heaven.” Spiritually walleyed, he sees double, with the result that he is double-minded (see on v. 24) and thinks it possible to enjoy all that earth has to offer and then to enter upon the eternal joys of heaven. Love of self has warped his vision to the extent that, like Eve, he sees things that are not so (see Gen. 3:6).

How great. Darkness of soul dwarfs the whole character and personality.

24. No man. Or, “no one.” Compare Luke 16:13.

Serve two masters. That is, two whose characters and interests are different (see next page under “The other”). It is no more possible to “serve two masters” than it is to focus the sight intently upon two things at one time or to concentrate the thought upon more than one idea at a given moment. To attempt to serve God with a divided heart is to be unstable in all one’s ways (see James 1:8). The Christian religion cannot accept the role of being one influence among many. Its influence, if present at all in the life, must necessarily be supreme and must control all other influences, bringing the life into harmony with its principles.

The other. Gr. *ho heteros*, that is, another of different kind or quality. When another of the same kind is intended the Greek word *allos* is used (see ch. 5:39). Although it might conceivably be possible to “serve two masters” whose character and interests are the same, it is certainly not possible to do so when their character and interests are in conflict.

Hold to the one. That is, be devoted to one of the two masters.

Ye cannot. There is no neutral position. He who is not wholly on God's side is effectively, and for all practical purposes, on the devil's side. Darkness and light cannot occupy the same space at the same moment of time. It is impossible to serve both God and mammon because their demands are irreconcilable. Those who serve mammon are its slaves, and do its bidding in spite of themselves (Rom. 6:16).

Mammon. Transliterated from the Aramaic *mamon* or *mamona*, meaning "wealth" of every kind. It is not a proper name unless wealth be personified.

25. Take no thought. Gr. *merimnaō*, "to care for," "to be anxious about," "to think earnestly upon." In Old English "to take thought" meant "to worry," or "to be anxious." Compare the uses of *merimnaō* in 1 Cor. 7:32; 12:25. Compare Luke 12:22–31. See on Ps. 55:22.

Jesus is not here recommending asceticism, nor does He place a premium on poverty. He does not affirm that a poor man or a careless man is more acceptable to God than a man of diligence and means. Jesus Himself counseled prudence in the management of personal and business affairs (see Luke 14:28–32). What He does condemn is the habit of worrying about the material things of life, especially about those that are over and above the necessities of life. He condemns the desire that leads to extravagance in any direction. The Christian will have a discriminating sense of the relative value of things, and his concern will be in proportion to that value. He will realize that wealth is not an end in itself, but a means to more important ends, and his supreme objective in life will not be to amass wealth.

Life. Gr. *psuchē*, here designating physical life. For a discussion of other meanings of *psuchē* see on ch. 10:28.

Meat. Gr. *trophē*, "food," "nourishment." All kinds of food are included in this term. It may include the flesh of animals taken as food, but is not restricted to that.

The important thing, Jesus says, that which should receive the greater attention, is the life itself. Food, important as it is, is not an end in itself, but rather a means to the end of supporting life. The man whose primary objective is to secure food and clothing has missed the most important thing in life. We should eat to live, not live to eat (cf. on Mark 2:27).

26. Behold. By three examples from nature Jesus illustrates the truth that God, the Author of life, provides those things that are necessary to maintain life, and that man, therefore, need not be unduly anxious about securing them. These three illustrations are the wild birds (v. 26), human growth (v. 27), and wildflowers (v. 28).

The fowls. Wild birds owe nothing to human care. It is God who gives them existence and who provides for them. At the same time He requires that they exercise the ability with which He has endowed them, of foraging for their food. Perhaps few men work as hard and as incessantly for a living as does the sparrow, particularly when it has a nest full of young to provide for. Similarly, God expects man to accept the responsibility of working for the necessities of life. But, says Jesus, it was not God's purpose that man should consider such work the aim and end of life.

They sow not. The Creator has ordained natural laws that operate to produce food (Job 38:41; Ps. 145:15, 16; 147:9). The food is there, but the birds must go and get it.

Feedeth them. The One who provides for these creatures of the wild is the One who can be counted on to provide us with the necessities of life. God has promised these to us if we are willing to work for them. The desire for a superabundance of material things is implanted by the evil one, and inevitably leads men to attempt to amass more than their share of the good things of life. It is this perverted desire that fosters selfishness and leads to crime, violence, and war.

Better than they. If God provides so bountifully for the lesser creatures of His hand, will He not have even greater concern for the happiness and well-being of man?

27. Which of you? This is the second illustration of the principle stated in v. 25 (see on v. 26). Compare Luke 12:25.

Thought. That is, anxious thought (see on v. 25).

Stature. Gr. *hēlikia*, which may indicate either “age” or “stature.” *Hēlikia* is translated “age” in John 9:23; Heb. 11:11; etc., and “stature” in Luke 19:3; etc. Whether Christ spoke of an increase in height or in length of life is not certain.

28. Why take ye thought? Compare Luke 12:26, 27. Christ here points to the third illustration of the care of the Father for the creatures of His hand.

Lilies. Gr. *krina*. The exact identification is uncertain. Perhaps Jesus used *krina* as a general term for “wildflowers.” It has been suggested that He referred to the varicolored anemone, a common, colorful, and conspicuous wildflower of Palestine.

29. I say unto you. See on ch. 5:22. Compare Luke 12:27.

All his glory. The splendor of Solomon’s court was proverbial (1 Kings 10:1–13, 21; see Mishnah *Baba Mezia* 7. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 476).

Was not arrayed. Literally, “did not clothe himself.”

30. Wherefore. Christ now summarizes the principle implicit in the illustrations of vs. 26–28. Verses 30–34 repeat and emphasize the teaching stated in v. 25.

The grass. Probably associated with the wildflowers of v. 28, and therefore in a sense a continuation of the illustration of the “lilies.”

Oven. Twigs and grass were a common fuel in ancient ovens.

Much more. He who has given life will certainly bestow the lesser gifts of food and clothing. He will not stand idly by in capricious unconcern for the preservation of the life He has given. It is only reasonable to think that He is concerned.

Little faith. See on ch. 8:26.

31. Take no thought. See on v. 25. Life is more important than food, but the kingdom of God is more important than either. Man should concern himself only with that which is most essential.

32. The Gentiles seek. The pursuit of material things is not appropriate for citizens of the heavenly kingdom. It is not fitting that a son of God should turn from things of eternal value to seek for things no better than “the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven” (v. 30). See on Isa. 55:1, 2; John 6:27.

Knoweth. This is the second reason for not devoting one’s life to the pursuit of material possessions—God knows what we need and He will provide for us.

33. Seek ye first. Compare Luke 12:31. The great purpose in man’s existence is that he “should seek the Lord, if haply” he “might feel after him, and find him” (Acts 17:27). Most men are engrossed in laboring “for the meat which perisheth” (John 6:27), for the water for which, when he drinks, he will thirst again (John 4:13). Most men “spend

money for that which is not bread” and “labour for that which satisfieth not” (Isa. 55:2). Too often we are prone to make “all these [material] things” the main object of our search in life, in the vain hope that God will be indulgent with us, and, at the close of life’s journey, add to our brief span of threescore and ten years the eternal kingdom. Christ would have us make first things first, and assures us that things of lesser importance and value will be supplied to each according to his need.

The kingdom of God. See on chs. 3:2; 5:13; 6:10.

Added unto you. There is no such thing as security, apart from God and citizenship in His kingdom. The best cure for worry is trust in God. If we do our part faithfully, if we make the kingdom of heaven first in our thoughts and lives, God will take care of us on our walk through life. He will graciously “anoint” our heads with oil (see on v. 17), and our cup of experience will overflow with good things (Ps. 23:6).

34. *Take therefore no thought.* See on v. 25. Christians can be free from anxiety in the midst of the most distressing circumstances, fully assured that He who does everything well (cf. Mark 7:37) will make all things “work together for good” (Rom. 8:28). God knows all about tomorrow; we know not “what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). And He who knows all about tomorrow bids us to trust in His continued watchcare and to “take ... no [anxious] thought” concerning its problems and perplexities. When tomorrow comes, its anticipated troubles often prove to have been wholly imaginary. Too many people permit themselves to be haunted by the ghost of tomorrow before tomorrow ever comes.

Christians should ever remember that God does not bestow help for tomorrow’s burdens until tomorrow comes; and it is their privilege to learn each passing day the truth of Christ’s words to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:9; cf. ch. 4:16).

Sufficient unto the day. “Why worry about tomorrow?” Christ inquires. “Tomorrow will take care of itself when it comes.” Each day brings its own measure of toil and care, and wise is the man who learns not to try to bear tomorrow’s burdens today.

The evil thereof. Or, “the day’s own trouble” (RSV). See Prov. 27:1.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 MB 79

1, 2 1T 193; 5T 133

1–4MH 32

1–6DA 312; SL 8

3 1T 192

3, 4 MB 80

4 MB 81, 85

5 GW 175; MB 83

5–92T 581

6 GW 254; MB 84, 88; SC 98; 2T 189; 5T 163

6–8MYP 247

7 MB 86

9 FE 309; GC 652; GW 210; MB 74, 102, 104, 106, 133; ML 289; PK 69; 5T 740

9–136T 357

10 CT 58, 229, 533; Ev 383; FE 210; GW 454; MB 107, 109; MM 23; 5T 613; 6T 438; 8T 35, 42, 251

11 COL 81; CS 164; MB 110; 6T 283

- 12 COL 247, 251; MB 113; SC 97; 3T 95; 5T 170
 13 CG 328; GC 530; MB 116, 120; PK 69; Te 192; 7T 239
 14, 15 MB 113; 3T 95; 5T 170
 15 COL 251
 16 MB 87
 17–19MB 88
 19 CS 142, 161; 2T 192, 575; 3T 250, 397, 549; 4T 53; 5T 464
 19, 20 CS 35, 158, 209, 287; 1T 118, 169, 538, 539; 3T 208; 4T 44, 476; 5T 262
 19–21CS 117, 137; 1T 151, 477, 494; 2T 241, 244, 678; 3T 478; 5T 258, 733
 19–241T 349
 20 CS 49, 232, 342; EW 49, 57, 67; GW 222; MB 89; 1T 142, 166, 170, 175, 191, 198, 226, 324; 2T 279, 653, 674; 3T 120, 249; 4T 49, 79, 119, 473; 5T 465; 9T 115
 20, 21 LS 364; 1T 115; 2T 197; 3T 130, 546
 21 CS 217, 343; MB 88; 1T 638, 698; 2T 59, 183, 663; 3T 546; 4T 104
 21, 22 EW 112
 22 AH 55, 308, 317, 464; CH 285; CS 129, 136, 147, 342; CW 80; Ev 654, 658; FE 340, 456; ML 95, 219; MM 141, 205; MYP 26, 45; 2T 397, 419, 444; 3T 391, 523; 4T 213, 221, 397, 561; 5T 110, 124, 499; 7T 239; 8T 124, 141; 9T 150
 22, 23 FE 302; MB 91; TM 273
 22–24DA 312
 23 1T 333, 350; 2T 123; 5T 634
 24 CS 214, 217; Ev 620; FE 181, 501, 502; MB 93; MM 115; MYP 114; PK 59; PP 167, 496; SL 92; TM 271, 398; 1T 404, 531, 539; 2T 128, 138, 150, 237, 263, 442; 3T 385, 478, 547; 4T 47, 82, 124, 251, 350; 5T 77, 83, 199, 280, 340, 481; 7T 71; 8T 203
 24, 25 4T 628
 25 2T 460
 25, 26 MB 95
 25–34DA 313; 2T 496
 26 CG 58; Ed 117; MB 96; SC 86, 123
 26–30FE 159; 4T 254
 28 MB 96; SC 124
 28, 29 CG 55, 413, 415; 3T 375; 4T 628
 28–30COL 51; CT 179; Ev 149; FE 319; TM 191
 28–33COL 19; MH 289
 30 COL 81; MB 96; SC 124; Te 41; 1T 19, 173
 31 CH 24; EW 58; 1T 500; 3T 140, 164; 4T 640, 642; 6T 407
 31–33Ed 138; FE 414
 33 AA 467; CS 22, 218, 225, 302; CSW 19, 66; CT 64; DA 121, 130, 330; FE 470, 484; MB 98; MM 50; MYP 314; 1T 500, 502; 2T 266, 399, 659; 3T 144, 397; 4T 425, 541, 610; 7T 164; 9T 54
 34 CS 159, 227; DA 313; MB 100; MH 481; PP 294; 1T 697; 2T 641; 5T 200

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 5:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

CHAPTER 7

1 *Christ ending his sermon in the mount, reproveth rash judgment, 6 forbiddeth to cast holy things to dogs, 7 exhorteth to prayer, 13 to enter in at the strait gate, 15 to beware of false prophets, 21 not to be hearers, but doers of the word: 24 like houses builded on a rock, 26 and not on the sand.*

1. Judge not. Jesus here refers particularly to judging another's motives, not to judging the right or wrong of his acts. God alone is competent to judge men's motives, because of the fact that He alone is able to read men's innermost thoughts (see Heb. 4:12; DA 314). Looking thus on men's hearts, God loves the sinner the while He hates the sin. Able to discern only the "outward appearance" (1 Sam. 16:7) and not the heart, men inevitably make mistakes. Jesus does not here refer to that fine sense of discrimination by which the Christian is to distinguish between right and wrong (Rev. 3:18; cf. 5T 233), but rather to the habit of censorious, sharp, and usually unjust criticism.

2. With what judgment. Compare Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38. The measure we give will be the measure we receive, for injustice provokes injustice. More than that, the injustice of one man toward his fellow men provokes divine judgment, as Jesus taught in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23–35). We may condemn the offense, but, like God, we must ever be ready to forgive the offender. We can extend mercy to the offender without in any way condoning the evil he may have done.

3. Why beholdest thou? Compare Luke 6:41. Our proverb, "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones," has a similar import. There is also an Arabic proverb that runs, "How seest thou the splinter in thy brother's eye, and seest not the cross-beam in thine eye?"

Mote. Gr. *karphe*, a mere "chip," or "splinter," of dried wood, chaff, etc. In the eye this would be a most irritating particle, however small its size. The "mote" represents, of course, the lesser fault. The censorious man always readily detects any fault, however small, in another man.

Beam. Gr. *dokos*, a "log," or "plank," a piece of timber used in the construction of a house.

4. How wilt thou say? Compare Luke 6:42.

Let me pull. This offer is not prompted so much by a desire to be helpful as to call attention to the fact that the mote is there and to the presumed wisdom and skill of the person making the offer.

A beam. Completely forgetful of the times that he himself has erred, and of his own weaknesses, the hypocrite becomes impatient with his erring brother. How often so-called Christians express profound indignation at the course others have taken, or are presumed to have taken, only to have later events reveal that they themselves are guilty of the very sins of which they accuse others. This was true of the Pharisees who brought to Jesus the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3–11; DA 461), and also of Simon when he judged Mary (Luke 7:36–39; DA 566). The Christian who discovers his brother in a fault will "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," considering that he himself may have been tempted and may have fallen on that very point, or may do so in the future (Gal. 6:1).

5. Thou hypocrite. The critical, censorious person is always a hypocrite, and his criticisms are aimed, in part, at drawing a cloak over his own hypocrisy. See on ch. 6:2.

See clearly. It is only when a man is ready and willing to suffer himself, if need be, in order to help his erring brother, that he can “see clearly” enough to be of any help to him (see MB 128). To help others see and remove defects in their characters and lives is the most delicate of operations in the field of human relations, and requires the clearest and most discriminating eyesight on the part of the person who proposes to conduct the operation.

6. Give not. From minor or imaginary wrongs in the life and character of others Christ turns to the Christian’s attitude toward those who are clearly and completely in the wrong and have no desire to escape from sin.

That which is holy. Probably a reference to offerings or sacrifices brought to the Temple and consecrated to sacred use. The Mishnah says, “We are not allowed to redeem dedicated [animals] in order to give them to the dogs to eat” (*Temurah* 6. 5, Soncino ed., p. 224; cf. Talmud *Behoroth* 15a, Soncino ed., p. 105). The gospel worker is not to waste time upon those who “make the gospel only a matter of contention and ridicule” (see MB 129; 3T 450).

Dogs. Throughout the Orient even today dogs are the scavengers of town and city, and are, for the most part, half-wild creatures. For the Jews the dog was also a ceremonially unclean animal, and since it had but little domestic value, was looked upon as utterly despicable (see on Job 30:1).

Pearls. Gr. *margaritae*, from which comes the English name Margaret. Jesus here possibly thinks of the small seed pearls, similar in size and color to grain, and which might at first be mistaken by the swine as feed.

7. Ask. Having set forth the lofty ideals of the kingdom of heaven (chs. 5:21 to 7:6), Jesus now turns for the remainder of His discourse to the means by which citizens of His kingdom can make these noble graces part of their lives (ch. 7:7–12). He leads His hearers to the dividing of the ways and calls their attention to the fact that citizenship in His kingdom involves great personal sacrifice (Matt. 7:13, 14; cf. Luke 14:27–33), and should not be assumed thoughtlessly. He warns against the philosophy and counsel of their pretended religious leaders, the wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15–20), and concludes with a most earnest appeal to live according to the principles of the kingdom (vs. 21–27).

Recognizing the impossibility for sinners, of themselves, to order their lives in harmony with the principles of the divine law, Christ points His listeners to the Source of power for Christian living. All that citizens of the kingdom need is theirs for the asking. What they cannot do in their own strength can be accomplished when human effort is united with divine power. Those who ask will not be disappointed (vs. 9–11). God is not sparing with the gifts of heaven; He does not deal with men in the way they deal with one another (vs. 1–6), but is gracious and merciful.

9. What man? Not a father in the audience would for a moment be so heartless and cruel. And if, even in their human imperfection, they would not consider such a course of action, how much less likely was it that their Father in heaven would do so.

11. How much more? In His teaching Christ often made use of the device of appealing from the lesser to the greater; in this instance, from the love of human parents to the infinitely greater love of the heavenly Parent (see ch. 6:30). Jesus takes human nature at its best, and then points men to the incomparably greater character of God.

Give good things. Children generally have no inhibitions when it comes to asking for things. We need have no hesitancy in coming to the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift” (James 1:17).

12. Therefore. See on Matt. 7:7; cf. Luke 6:31. The way in which the Christian treats his fellow men is the acid test of the genuineness of his religion (1 John 4:20; cf. Matt. 25:31–46).

The golden rule summarizes the obligations of the second table of the Decalogue, and is another statement of the great principle of loving our neighbor (see Matt. 19:16–19; 22:39, 40; cf. 1 John 4:21). Only those who make the golden rule their law of life and practice can expect admission to the kingdom of glory. Our attitude toward our fellow men is an infallible index of our attitude toward God (see 1 John 3:14–16).

Profound thinkers of other times and other cultures have discovered and stated the sublime truth expressed in the golden rule, generally, however, in a negative form. For example, to Hillel, most revered rabbi of the generation before Jesus, these words are credited: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof” (Talmud *Shabbath* 31a, Soncino ed., p. 140). The golden rule also appears in the Apocryphal book of Tobit (ch. 4:15): “Do that to no man which thou hatest,” and in the *Letter of Aristeas* (ed. and tr. by Moses Hadas, p. 181): “Just as you do not wish evils to befall you, but to participate in all that is good, so you should deal with those subject to you and with offenders.”

It is worthy of note that Jesus transformed a negative precept into a positive one. Herein lies the essential difference between Christianity and all false religious systems, and between true Christianity and that which consists in the form of religion but denies the vital power of the gospel. The golden rule takes supreme selfishness, what we would like others to do for us, and transforms it into supreme selflessness, what we are to do for others. This is the glory of Christianity. This is the life of Christ lived out in those who follow Him and bear His name (see on ch. 5:48).

This is the law. Christ emphatically denies that the principle set forth in the golden rule is something new; it is the very essence of the law, as given through Moses (the Torah), and what the prophets wrote; in other words, of the entire OT (see on Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:44). He who assigns the law of love to the NT alone, and relegates the OT to the oblivion of a worn-out religious system, makes himself a critic of the Master, who specifically declared that He came with no thought of changing the great principles set forth in “the law, or the prophets” (see on Matt. 5:17, 18; Luke 24:27, 44). The entire Sermon on the Mount, from Matt. 5:20 to 7:11, is illustrative of this great truth. Having stated that He did *not* come to abolish the teachings of Moses and the prophets, Christ set forth in detail His attitude toward the law by magnifying it and making it honorable (see Isa. 42:21).

13. Enter ye in. In vs. 13 and 14 Jesus formally invites His audience to accept His principles as the working policy of their lives, and points out to them the way to begin, and where to begin. He is the “door” (John 10:7, 9) and the “way” (John 14:6). He who would enter into the kingdom of heaven, who would “have life” and “have it more abundantly,” must needs enter by Him; there is no other way (John 10:7–10). Compare Luke 13:24.

Strait. Gr. *stenos*, “narrow.” “Strait” must not be confused with “straight.” The gate stands at the beginning of the way, not at the end. It is narrow, and through it may pass

only that which is essential to the journey along the way. Anciently the gates of cities were closed at sunset, and since the cities were often situated atop hills or precipitous rocks, the path that led upward to the gates was often narrow. He who would enter before the closing of the gate must “strive” by persevering effort up the pathway that leads home, to be in time “to enter in” (see Luke 13:24).

Broad is the way. The concept of the “two ways” appears often (see Deut. 11:26; 30:15; Jer. 21:8; cf. Ps. 1).

14. Because. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the reading “how.”

Strait is the gate. Compare ch. 19:24. The narrowness of the gate calls for self-denial on the part of the one entering it.

Narrow. From the Gr. *thlibō*, “to compress,” “to squeeze,” hence a way that is compressed, or narrowed, as in a defile between high rocks, in comparison to the “broad,” or easy, way.

Few there be. For the simple reason that they do not want to find it, for whosoever will may enter in (see Rev. 22:17).

15. False prophets. Compare Matt. 24:5, 11, 24; Mark 13:22. A true prophet is one who speaks for God. Accordingly, a false prophet is one who pretends to be speaking for God when in reality he speaks only the perverted thoughts of his own perverse heart (cf. Isa. 30:10; Jer. 14:13–15; 23:16, 17, 21, 25, 30–32, 38; 29:8, 9; Eze. 13:2, 3, 10, 11). Compare Jeremiah’s experiences with the false prophets of his day (Jer. 27–29).

The false prophets are those who profess that it is possible for men to enter in by the broad gate and the broad way. They are the “thieves,” whose only purpose is to steal, to kill, and to destroy (John 10:7–10). For apostolic warnings against false prophets see Acts 20:28–31; 2 Thess. 2:3, 7; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 2:18, 19.

In sheep’s clothing. The likeness of the “wolves” to the “sheep” was only external. There had been no change of heart, but only of appearance, the purpose being, of course, to deceive the sheep and lull them into a false sense of security in order to devour them with greater ease. God’s people are often pictured as sheep, and God as their Shepherd (Ps. 23:1, 2; 78:52; 80:1; 100:3; Isa. 40:11; Isa. 53:6; Eze. 34:10–19; John 10:1–16; etc.).

Ravening. Gr. *harpax*, “rapacious.” These “wolves” are not only wicked at heart, but opposed to truth and to those who adhere to it. It is their purpose to bring harm to the sheep in order to bring benefit to themselves. Greedy for gain and for power, they are more dangerous than the “dogs” or the “swine” of v. 6. See on Micah 3:5–11.

Wolves. Compare Zeph. 3:3; Matt. 10:16; John 10:12.

16. Shall know. Gr. *epiginoskō*, “to know fully.” The metaphor changes; the “sheep” are not entirely unprotected—it is within their power to detect the “wolves” by their bearing and by the way they act. The appealing claims these false prophets set forth are no proof of their true character. Their fair words and exalted profession are no valid test of what they really are, nor can their miracles (v. 22) be depended on. The words “you will know them” may be taken as a promise that the “sheep” who know their Shepherd’s voice (John 10:4) will not be deceived by the fair words of the “wolves” (see 5T 233). Those who truly love the Lord and are fully surrendered to His will need have no fear of being led astray if they obey the voice of God speaking to their souls day by day through His Word and through the counsels He has given (GC 598; 8T 298). In the great hour of

testing that lies ahead, only those who know the truth and love it will be secure against the deceptions of Satan (Hosea 4:6; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; 6T 401). Compare Matt. 12:33–35; Luke 6:43–45.

Gather grapes of thorns. Compare James 3:11, 12.

17. So every good tree. Compare ch. 12: 33, 34.

Good fruit. That is, fruit that has a good appearance, a good flavor, and that tastes good. It is attractive in every way. The “fruit of the Spirit” is given in Gal. 5:22, 23.

Corrupt. Gr. *sapros*, “rotten,” “decaying.” The same word is translated “bad” in ch. 13:48.

Evil fruit. The works of the flesh are listed in Gal. 5:19–21. Compare the “wild grapes” of Isaiah’s parable of the Lord’s vineyard (Isa. 5:1–7), and the figs, so bad that they could not be eaten, of Jer. 24:2, 8.

18. A good tree. Compare Luke 6:43. A person whose character is sound will automatically display that character in his words and deeds.

19. Hewn down. John the Baptist had spoken of “the axe” being “laid unto the root of the trees” (see on ch. 3:10). In a later parable Christ again used the figure of cutting down a worthless tree (Luke 13:6–9).

Cast into the fire. See on ch. 3:10. In the fires of the last day the evil fruit, or “works,” shall be “burned up” (2 Peter 3:10–12).

20. Wherefore. Or, “thus.”

By their fruits. See on v. 16. The statement with which the metaphor of the fruit tree and its fruit was introduced is here repeated at its close, for emphasis.

21. Not every one. The words “not” and “but” highlight the strong contrast between the mere talker and the actual doer of God’s will. Mere profession is worthless. He who pretends to know God and yet disobeys His commandments “is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4), irrespective of any appearance to the contrary.

Lord, Lord. To address Christ as “Lord” is to profess the belief that He is indeed the Messiah, and implies that the speaker has assumed the role of disciple.

He that doeth. That is, he who performs the will of God when he learns of it. Faith in God must accompany the doing, or the doing is only a form. It is true that “faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17), but it is equally true that works unaccompanied by a sincere and living faith are also “dead” (Heb. 11:6). Those who do not know the will of God are not held accountable for it (Luke 12:47, 48), but those who have heard God’s voice speaking to their hearts and yet persist in ways of their own choosing “have no cloke for their sin” (John 15:22) and are in danger of presumption.

22. Many will say. Here for the first time Jesus indirectly alludes to the fact that He will appear on “that day” as judge of all men (cf. ch. 26:64). Those who thus address Christ as Lord on the great final day of judgment do so as professed Christians. They have pretended in this life to be His followers, but have been weighed and found wanting.

That day. The great final day of judgment (cf. ch. 25:32, 33, 41). “That day,” or “day of the Lord,” is often mentioned by the OT prophets (see Isa. 2:11, 17, Joel 2:1; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:15; cf. Mal. 3:17; 4:1; Luke 10:12; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8).

Prophesied in thy name. The form of the question in Greek implies that those speaking expect a positive answer. They are saying, “Surely we have prophesied in thy name, have we not?” They would hardly claim before the great Judge of the universe to have done so if the claim was not, apparently, substantiated by the facts. This is the

measure of their self-conceit and self-deception. It is as if they protest to the Judge that His decision is unfair, and that He cannot rightfully treat them as renegades. They have been preaching in His name, have they not? But they have forgotten that ostensible worship of God based on human tradition is vain.

Cast out devils. Presumably the most difficult of all miracles (see on Mark 1:23), and thus typical of all others that might be mentioned. When the Seventy returned from their first evangelistic expedition, it was the fact that “even the devils” were subject to them that seemed most significant to them (Luke 10:17). See Additional Note on Mark 1.

Many wonderful works. Perhaps including even actual miracles (cf. GC 553, 588), performed as evidence purporting to demonstrate the presence of God with them and His approval of their teachings (see Rev. 13:13, 14; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10). It is evident from the Scriptures that the performance of miracles is not of itself conclusive evidence that divine power has been in operation. The greatest miracle of time and eternity is a life transformed according to the divine likeness (see DA 406, 407). Those who profess to be prophets are to be tested by their lives (see on Matt. 7:16), and not by their professed miracles. See pp. 208, 209.

23. Profess. Gr. *homologeō*, here meaning “to declare frankly.”

I never knew you. Or, according to the form of the Greek verb, “I never recognized [or, “became acquainted with”] you.” This is evidence that their teachings and miracles had not been spoken and performed in harmony with the will of God, or by His power.

Depart from me. Compare ch. 25:41. Sin results in a final and complete separation from God.

Iniquity. Gr. *anomia*, “lawlessness,” or “lack of conformity with law.” The workers of iniquity are “lawless” because they have refused to conform their lives to the perfect pattern set forth in the law of the kingdom of heaven—and “sin is the transgression of the law [*anomia*]” (1 John 3:4). On the Mount of Olives Christ said that in the last days “iniquity,” *anomia*, would abound (Matt. 24:12), and a few decades later Paul observed that the “mystery of iniquity [*anomia*]” was already at work (2 Thess. 2:7).

24. Therefore. The conclusion and appeal of the Sermon on the Mount is presented in the form of a twofold parable. Compare Luke 6:47–49.

Heareth. Christ doubtless refers here to more than merely listening. Those who hear these sayings apparently grasp their meaning, at least to the extent that they have sufficient light to act if they choose to do so, and thus are responsible before God (see on v. 21).

Doeth them. See on v. 21; cf. ch. 5:19. It is a dangerous thing to hear a divine command if what is heard is not translated into action, for hearing inevitably brings with it responsibility for corresponding action. The “sons of God” are those who *follow* the leading of His Spirit (Rom. 8:14). Obedience transforms the words of Christ into personal character. See on John 5:24.

I will liken him. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading, “He will be likened.”

His house. That is, the “house” of character.

Upon a rock. The Lord Jesus Christ is the “rock” on which the individual Christian and the Christian church as a community of character builders are to be built (see on ch.

16:18). According to Luke 6:48 the builder “dugged deep” in order to have a firm foundation. To build firmly requires much time and effort; it is far simpler to build a house without going to the trouble of providing a solid foundation.

25. *The rain descended.* Note the abrupt style, the short statements that describe the storm—a vivid literary device.

Winds. The “winds” of temptation and trial (DA 314), perhaps particularly the winds of false teaching that tend to remove a person from the firm foundation of faith (Eph. 4:14).

It fell not. Happy the man who, wrestling “against the rulers of the darkness of this world,” is “able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:12, 13). Happy the man who, when the storms of life are over, finds that, by the grace of Christ, his character has withstood “all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:16). His soul is anchored to the great Christian hope (Heb. 6:19; Titus 2:13; cf. Heb. 10:35), and he cannot fall.

Founded upon a rock. That is, upon the “sayings” of Christ, here specifically those of the Sermon on the Mount (v. 24). The words of Christ never pass away (ch. 24:35), but stand forever (Isa. 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25). There is salvation in no other but Him (Acts 4:12).

26. *Doeth them not.* The parable is now repeated in negative form for emphasis—repetition being a common feature of the teachings of Jesus. The difference in the two instances is in the foundation only; all else is presumably the same. It is evident that the man here represented knew better (see on v. 24).

A foolish man. “Foolish” because he did less than he knew should be done. Compare the man without a wedding garment (ch. 22:11–13) and the five foolish virgins (ch. 25:2, 3).

Upon the sand. He who turns a deaf ear to the gospel builds on the shifting sand of self, upon his own efforts (MB 152), and upon human theories and inventions (DA 314).

27. *The rain descended.* The dry sand, that looked so safe and inviting in fair weather, becomes a raging torrent with the heavy rains.

It fell. See on v. 25.

Great was the fall. Compare the fall of those who have made lies their refuge (see Isa. 28:16–18), and of those who have built the wall of character with untempered mortar (cf. Eze. 13:10–16).

28. *It came to pass.* For reactions to the teaching of Jesus similar to that recorded here see Mark 1:22; Luke 4:31, 32.

These sayings. Those recorded in chs. 5–7.

Doctrine. Gr. *didachē*, “teaching” (see on Mark 1:21, 22). The people were amazed; His teaching was so different from that of the scribes in the synagogues.

29. *Having authority.* Not dogmatically, but on His own authority rather than by quoting earlier expositors of the law, as the rabbis did in their teaching. Note the frequent use in the Gospels of the expression, “Verily I say unto you” (see on ch. 5:18), and its counterpart, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (ch. 11:15).

The scribes. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading “their scribes,” meaning the ones to whom these very people had listened (cf. “their” in Luke 5:30). The scribes’ teaching was dogmatic, and based on the traditions of the elders. There was life-giving power in the method of Christ’s presentation, as well as in the truths He set forth, in

contrast with the dead formalism of the teaching of the scribes. Textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 146) for adding, “and the Pharisees.”

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 7

In the writings of the rabbinical scholars are to be found numerous parallels to the religious and moral teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. The question is: To what extent was the one dependent on the other? Modern Jewish scholars contend that, for the most part, Jesus was dependent on the Jewish tradition of the schools of His day. T. Tal (*Een Blik in Talmoed en Evangelie*, Amsterdam, 1881) declared that the moral teachings set forth in the NT appear without exception in the Talmud, and, furthermore, that the Talmud was the source from which the Gospels borrowed their moral teachings. A more recent Jewish scholar sets forth the claim that “throughout the Gospels there is not one item of ethical teaching which can not be paralleled either in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature of the period near to the time of Jesus” (Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* [tr. by Herbert Danby], p. 384). He states further that “Jesus scarcely introduced any ethical teaching which was fundamentally foreign to Judaism. So extraordinary is the similarity that it might almost seem as though the Gospels were composed simply and solely out of matter contained in the *Talmud* and *Midrash*” (*ibid.*, pp. 388, 389). Many Christian commentators, though not going to the extremes of the Jewish scholars noted above, still quote numerous parallels in rabbinical literature, creating the impression that Jesus actually taught little but that with which the Jewish mind was already familiar. See pp. 96-100.

That striking parallels exist, no one can deny. But that Jesus drew from rabbinical literature for His moral teachings does not necessarily follow. Perhaps the most extensive comparison ever made between the New Testament and Jewish literature is that by Strack and Billerbeck, in *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, a monumental work of 4,102 pages. Inasmuch as the authors are, doubtless, the leading authorities on the subject, it is of interest to note their observations and conclusions. These are contained in an epilogue to the comments on the Sermon on the Mount (vol. 1, pp. 470-474). They note that with one exception (the saying of Hillel, see on Matt. 7:12) the parallels to the Sermon on the Mount, insofar as they are credited to rabbis, by name, all belong to rabbinical teachers that lived *after* the time of Jesus. Against this it is sometimes argued that many sayings, although bearing names of later authors, are of earlier origin, thus making it possible for them to have served as a source for Jesus. However, Strack and Billerbeck maintain the well-established rule that a saying that is handed down under a certain author’s name actually belongs to the scholar whose name it bears, unless it can be proved from competent sources that the saying existed earlier.

When this rule is applied to the sayings in the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes immediately evident that the vast majority of them must be attributed to Jesus inasmuch as He antedates the scholars to whom they are assigned in rabbinical literature. It is not denied that some of these sayings may have been older, but the burden of proof rests with the objector to supply evidence in every instance that the saying was actually older.

Let us examine for a moment the other side of the question. To what extent may Jesus have been the source for some of the sayings in rabbinical literature? Strack and Billerbeck note evidence that the older tannaitic scholars who lived around the year A.D. 100 were familiar with some of the sayings of Jesus. For example, the statement of Matt. 5:17 comes up in a discussion between Gamaliel II (c. A.D. 90) and a Christian (Talmud

Shabbath 116a, 116b, Soncino ed., p. 571). We cannot estimate the influence Jesus had on the development of Jewish thought, especially during those early years when the synagogue and the church were rather closely related. The following is an appraisal of the situation: "It has even been suggested, though it is never likely to be proved, that the criticisms made by Jesus may, at a later time when their origin was forgotten, have played some part in the development of the Jewish code as it took shape in the Mishnah and the Talmud" (H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson, and C. J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*, p. 304).

When it is remembered that there are, proportionately, few rabbinical sayings extant that have not originated in a Scripture text or at least lean on one, it is not surprising that parallels can be found between these sayings and those of Jesus, who gave the OT Scriptures. To the extent that pious men through the ages permitted themselves to come under the influence of the Spirit that inspired these writings, to that extent their sayings have reflected the light of Heaven. In fact, this observation explains why philosophers outside the pale of revealed religion, such as Confucius and Plato, have frequently set forth lofty ideals. Jesus is the "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9; cf. DA 465).

Though parallels between the sayings of Jesus and those of Jewish scholars are demonstrable, there are at the same time significant differences, as Strack and Billerbeck point out. No later Jewish scholar has left behind such a multitude of religious and moral sayings as has Jesus. No later Jewish scholar has been able to put forth his sayings in the brief and authoritative manner that we admire so much in the teachings of Jesus. Above all, no later Jewish scholar followed the same objectives as did Jesus, and in this lies the chief difference, despite all similarities. Jesus struck directly at the Pharisaical doctrine of salvation by works, and taught boldly the inadequacy of legalistic righteousness. At the same time He showed His people a new way that leads to a higher righteousness. Rabbinical literature gives overwhelming evidence that the religion of the Jews, as expounded by the rabbis, was one of self-redemption. The religion of Christianity, on the other hand, is not locked up in a particular collection of ethical truths and teachings, but alone in Jesus, His person and His work.

The spiritual significance of the teachings of Jesus is not to be measured simply by their great moral principles. Many of these had already been set forth in the OT, or in the sayings of men who were, in varying degree, illuminated by the light of Heaven. But Christ spoke as never man spoke, and with an authority that commanded attention. That which sharply distinguishes our Lord is the fact that He is divine—other teachers were human. He came not only to tell men how they should live but to impart to them power to live such a life. He not only came to show men that sin is evil and righteousness is the true goal of life, but came to blot out past sins and to impart to men righteousness from heaven above. This, human teachers could not do. At best they could point men to a better way. But Jesus *was* "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). By the Father, He was "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Jesus is the "true Light" (John 1:9). He is the source of all light that is light, not the reflector of other men's light (see on John 1:9; 5:35). All that is good and ennobling originated with Him and leads to Him.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 DA 314; MB 123; 7T 279
1, 2 Ev 639; MH 485; TM 273
1-43T 93
1-58T 85
1-29TM 125
2 COL 251; CS 47; GC 29; MB 136; PP 625; 2T 136, 256; 4T 139; 5T 53, 247, 278, 608
3 MB 125; 5T 92
4 3T 465; 4T 62
5 MB 126
6 MB 129; 3T 426
6-12EW 24
7 FE 300, 399; GC 528; GW 258; MM 13; SC 95, 96; TM 323, 379, 485; 3T 415; 6T 95;
8T 23; 9T 279
7, 8 CT 242; MB 130
7-11 MYP 123
9 Ev 200
9-11 AH 299; MB 132; 5T 201
11 SL 84; 1T 121; 5T 157
12 AH 423; DA 640; Ed 136; LS 303; MB 134; MH 105; ML 165, 200; PK 652; 2T 136;
4T 310, 350, 359, 487, 490; 5T 179, 338; 8T 134; WM 202
13 3T 199, 438; 4T 218, 364; 5T 172, 437
13, 14 CT 366; FE 200; GW 160; MM 62; 1T 127; 2T 479, 592; 8T 65
14 AA 565; GW 135; MB 138; ML 69; LS 190; 2T 688; 4T 364, 503, 589; 5T 435; 9T 23
15, 16 Ev 597; MB 145; 4T 376
15-20Ev 589; 4T 230, 232; 5T 668, 671
16 CT 189, 536; GC 465, 520; LS 45; 1T 412, 482; 5T 129, 394; 8T 326
16-181T 454
17 DA 314; SL 58; 2T 328; 4T 311; 5T 98
18 Ev 308; 4T 347; 5T 98
20 AA 523; CT 329; Ev 287; FE 89; GC 397; LS 325; TM 33, 466; 1T 193, 289; 2T 88,
442, 598, 656, 663; 3T 249; 4T 230, 239, 311; 5T 98, 342
20-231T 416
21 COL 272; PP 207; 1T 482
21-274T 613
22 COL 412
22, 23 MB 145; 5T 73
23 AA 423; CS 128; 4T 514, 517; 5T 398; 7T 71; 9T 252
24 GW 103; 4T 656; 5T 129
24, 25 DA 314; FE 289; 3T 414; 4T 117; 8T 173
24-27CT 61; TM 126; 8T 297
25 MB 147; 6T 146
26 ML 73, 85; 3T 475; 5T 129; 6T 16, 143
28 FE 238
28, 29 MB 47; 7T 269
29 CH 318; CSW 109; CT 240; DA 253; Ev 55, 56; FE 236, 406, 407; 5T 254; 8T 201;
WM 287

CHAPTER 8

2 *Christ cleanseth the leper, 5 healeth the centurion's servant, 14 Peter's mother in law, 16 and many other diseased: 18 sheweth how he is to be followed: 23 stilleth the tempest on the sea, 28 driveth the devils out of two men possessed, 31 and suffereth them to go into the swine.*

1. Great multitudes. Verse 1 concludes the narrative of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew mentions the great throngs that accompanied Jesus both before the Sermon on the Mount (ch. 4:24, 25) and after (ch. 8:1). For the chronological setting in which another synoptic writer mentions the great throngs at this period of Christ's ministry see on Mark 1:45.

2. A leper. [*A Leper, Matt. 8:2–4=Mark 1:40–45=Luke 5:12–16.* Major comment: Mark.] According to Mark (ch. 1:40–45) and Luke (ch. 5:12–16) this incident occurred prior to the giving of the Sermon on the Mount. It seems evident that Matthew follows a topical, in preference to a strictly chronological, arrangement of the events of Jesus' life (see p. 274). Apparently the incident recorded in Matt. 8:5–13 followed almost immediately after the Sermon on the Mount (see on Luke 7:1), perhaps on the same day.

Worshipped. Gr. *proskuneō*, “to do homage [either by kneeling or by prostrating oneself].” *Proskuneō* does not necessarily imply recognition of divinity (see on Esther 3:2).

5. Entered into Capernaum. [*The Centurion's Servant, Matt. 8:5–13=Luke 7:1–10.* Major comment: Luke.]

6. Grievously tormented. See on ch. 4:24.

10. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

11. Many shall come. Luke omits from his account the statement of Christ concerning the ingathering of the Gentiles (Matt. 8:11, 12), but has a similar statement elsewhere (see Luke 13:28, 29). The ingathering of the Gentile nations was a common theme of the OT prophets (see Vol. IV, pp. 25–38).

Sit down. Gr. *anaklinō*, “to recline.” For comments on eating customs see on Mark 2:15. The figure of a banquet is often used by Bible writers as a symbol of the joys of the Messianic kingdom (see Isa. 25:6; Luke 13:29; 14:15; Rev. 19:9).

12. Children of the kingdom. See on ch. 3:9. The expression “sons of the kingdom” was a common Hebrew idiom descriptive of the rightful heirs of the kingdom.

Outer darkness. A symbol representing the final annihilation of the obdurately impenitent.

Weeping and gnashing. Matthew records several other instances when Jesus used this expression to describe the remorse of the lost as they contemplate their sad fate in contrast with the joy that might have been theirs (see chs. 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). The same expression appears often in contemporary Jewish literature in descriptions of Gehenna (see on ch. 5:22).

13. The selfsame hour. Immediate healing is frequently mentioned (see chs. 9:22; 15:28; 17:18). Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for adding, “and when the centurion returned to his house in that hour he found the servant well.”

14. Peter's house. [*Peter's Mother-in-law, Matt. 8:14–17=Mark 1:29–34=Luke 4:38–41.* Major comment: Mark.]

16. With his word. Or, “by a word.”

17. Might be fulfilled. See on ch. 1:22.

Took. It seems that Matthew here paraphrases, or gives a free translation of, Isa. 53:4. The passage in Isaiah refers primarily to the “infirmities” of sin, as the context makes evident (see on ch. 53:4). Matthew interprets it in a more literal sense. Christ in His humanity (see John 1:14; Phil. 2:6–8; etc.) was fully able to feel and express human sympathy, and really felt with us and for us.

Bare. Gr. *bastazō*, “to take up,” “to carry away.” The same word is used in ch. 3:11 of taking off sandals (see on ch. 3:11).

18. Now when. [*The Storm on the Lake*, Matt. 8:18, 23–27=Mark 4:35–41=Luke 8:22–25. Major comment: Matthew. See the Closing Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] All three Synoptic Gospels record the stilling of the storm on the lake, the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs, the healing of the invalid woman, and the raising of Jairus’ daughter more or less as a group of miracles, in the order given. As usual, the account in Mark contains many graphic details not mentioned by either Matthew or Luke. The first of these miracles occurred the night following Christ’s Sermon by the Sea, in which He spoke the parables recorded in Matt. 13. Thus, in point of time, the stilling of the tempest recorded in ch. 8 follows the parables recorded in ch. 13. Mark and Luke, who follow a more nearly chronological order, have the miracles following the Sermon by the Sea. It was probably in the early autumn of A.D. 29 (see on Luke 7:11), during the course of the second missionary tour through Galilee, that the incident here recorded took place. Now, weary and exhausted by many days of strenuous public ministry, Jesus sought brief respite from the throngs that pressed about Him, by crossing the lake.

Great multitudes. Multitudes of people were now following Jesus wherever He went (see Matt. 4:25; Mark 3:7; 4:1), to the extent that He often had little or no time to eat (see Mark 3:20; DA 333). As Jesus, overcome with weariness and hunger, set out to cross the lake He soon fell asleep (DA 334). Ministry to the physical and spiritual needs of the people meant, even for Him, the expenditure of vital force that must be restored through rest and food. It was for this reason that the Saviour sought a few hours of release from His incessant labors.

Other side. That is, the region of Decapolis, opposite Galilee (see p. 46), to the southeast of the Lake of Galilee, was rather sparsely populated. That region was largely heathen; there is no record of the scribes and Pharisees ever having followed Jesus there.

19. A certain scribe. [*The Privations of Discipleship*, Matt. 8:19–22. See Middle Galilean Ministry.] In spite of the great apparent similarity of this passage to one in Luke (see Luke 9:57–62), it is practically certain that two separate and distinct occasions are referred to. Although Matthew does not follow a strictly chronological sequence, he has inserted this account of two men who volunteered to become disciples of Jesus *within* his account of the crossing of the lake (vs. 18, 23–27). It seems that the only reasonable conclusion is that the two volunteers approached Jesus at the close of the Sermon by the Sea (see on v. 18), as He prepared to cross to the other side of the lake.

The similar account in Luke appears in the record of Jesus’ final departure from Galilee for Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51, 57). It immediately precedes the account of the sending out of the Seventy to the cities and towns of Samaria and Peraea (see chs. 9:62; 10:1) and seems, therefore, to be closely associated with these events. It was in the late autumn of A.D. 30 that Jesus left Galilee for Jerusalem and Peraea (see on ch. 9:51). It should be noted, furthermore, that Jesus replied to Judas in words similar to those

recorded in Matt. 8:19, 20, when he volunteered for discipleship during the summer of A.D. 29, several weeks prior to the Sermon by the Sea (see DA 293; 2SP 305, 306; see on Matt. 5:1). It may have been customary with Jesus to warn every volunteer disciple, as well as those whom He summoned personally, of the privations and sacrifices that accompanied discipleship, and that upon various occasions He used words similar to those recorded here.

Many attempts have been made to identify the “scribe” who now came to Jesus, but at best these are no more than useless guesses. Concerning the status of a scribe during the time of Jesus see on Mark 1:22. Being a man of culture, education, and station in life, a scribe would seemingly find the privations of the life of a disciple harder to endure than would fishermen, for example. See on Mark 2:10.

Master. Gr. *didaskalos*, “teacher” (see on ch. 12:38).

I will follow thee. This scribe was a volunteer, one who, in these words, applied for acceptance as a full-time disciple. Similarly, when Jesus said, “Follow me,” He extended an invitation to full-time discipleship (see on Matt. 4:19; Mark 2:14). Possibly the scribe had been a part-time follower, and had seen and heard enough to create in his heart a longing to be with the Master constantly and to learn of Him. It seems, however, that he was probably a temperamental individual, given to acting on impulse more than from principle, and that he had not fully counted the cost of discipleship (see Luke 14:25–33).

Whithersoever thou goest. Compare also the words of Ruth to Naomi (Ruth 1:16) and of Peter to Christ (Luke 22:33). In the case of the scribe, however, his words probably meant no more than the intention to become a permanent disciple. He lacked the fidelity of Ruth and reflected the fickleness of Peter (see on Mark 3:16). Discipleship calls for steadiness of purpose and patience in the face of difficulty and disappointment (see on Luke 9:62).

20. Holes. Or, “dens.”

Nests. Gr. *kataskēnōseis*, literally, “pitched tents,” hence, “homes” in the sense of “resting places,” or “places of tarrying.” The picture is of a temporary shelter or place of abode.

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10; see Additional Note on John 1.

Lay his head. In order to accomplish the mission for which He had come to earth, the days of Christ’s ministry were spent, for the most part, in moving about from place to place, not aimlessly (see on Luke 2:49), but with no fixed place of abode. One accustomed to the comforts of home, as this scribe probably was, would very likely find an itinerant life difficult and disagreeable. Gospel witnesses must ever be willing to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (see 2 Tim. 2:3).

21. Another. Perhaps this man had been a casual, part-time disciple, and now proposed that he be accepted as a permanent, full-time disciple. In contrast with the would-be disciple of vs. 19, 20, who tended to be temperamental and to act hastily from impulse, this man—judging from Christ’s response to him—apparently was of precisely the opposite disposition, slow, lethargic, and inclined to procrastinate.

Bury my father. In all probability the father was currently enjoying good health, and the time of his death was indefinitely in the future. If the man’s father was not dead, but very much alive, Christ’s words must be taken figuratively, not literally. Probably this would-be follower’s request was either an excuse for not following Christ at all or an attempt to postpone the time when it would be necessary to forsake all in order to follow

Him (cf. Luke 5:11, 28). If the father were already dead, it is extremely unlikely that Christ would have ordered the neglect of what, in Oriental lands even today, is considered one of the most sacred duties devolving upon a son. Furthermore, in a warm climate the burial of the dead is performed without delay, and if, indeed, this man's father had died, it is most improbable that he himself would have been listening to Jesus. Obviously, both the man and Jesus *anticipate* the father's death at some future time.

This man was overcautious as the first man was overenthusiastic. He said to Christ, as it were, "I would like to follow you, but I cannot do so while my father lives." In reply, Christ said to him, so to speak, "I fully recognize your obligation to your parents; nevertheless, your obligation to the kingdom of heaven takes precedence even over that." The claims of the gospel transcend those of family ties—not that the latter are relaxed in the least, but rather that they are not to be made an excuse for failing to heed Christ's call to service (see on Mark 7:11, 12; Luke 14:26).

22 Follow me. See on Mark 2:14.

Let the dead. This statement appears on the surface to be rather harsh, but such is not the case when it is understood in the setting of the time when it was made. As pointed out (see on v. 21), these words are in part figurative, in view of the fact that the father was very likely still living and the time of his death was indefinitely in the future. What Christ probably means is, "Let the spiritually dead bury those who are literally dead."

In the case of this man there was danger that procrastination would rob him of his good intentions, and it would be well for him to make the break with his old associations now while right impulses were strongest. The Christian, particularly the one who would be of service in the cause of Christ, must act promptly when God impresses his heart to do so (see Acts 8:26, 27). Discerning the man's character, Christ presented for his consideration a picture of the fundamental change that must come about in his life if he would make a success of discipleship. He would have to make first things first and relegate non-essentials to a place of secondary importance. Christ's response to his request was designed to stimulate him to action (see Luke 9:60).

For Christ to have reversed the counsel given each of these two would-be followers would have been most inappropriate, for it would have encouraged the scribe to follow his natural inclination by leaping into action without due consideration of what was involved, and the second man, to delay action in response to his own inclination.

23. When. The narrative, begun in v. 18, and interrupted by the incidents recorded in vs. 19–22, is now resumed (see on v. 18).

Entered into a ship. According to the account in Mark, Christ was already in the little fishing boat, and simply remained there without going ashore to dismiss the people (ch. 4:1, 36). However, since Matthew has separated from its context the story of the storm on the lake (see on ch. 8:18), apparently he deems it necessary, in this connection also, to record Jesus' entering into the boat (see ch. 13:2). It was probably almost dusk when the disciples shoved the boat away from the shore (see DA 334). This vessel was doubtless the "small ship" placed at Jesus' disposal (see on Mark 3:9). There were several other fishing boats that left shore at the same time to cross the lake with Jesus (see Mark 4:36).

24. Behold. See on ch. 3:16.

Tempest. Gr. *seismos*, "a shaking," "a commotion," "a tempest," or "an earthquake."

Our English word seismograph is derived in part from this root. Here *seismos* denotes the turbulence of the sea, and the terrific force of the furious gusts of wind as they struck the

boat. The Lake of Galilee is noted for sudden storms of great intensity. In this instance the winds came sweeping wildly down upon the waters of the lake from the mountain gorges along the eastern shore (DA 334). However, the evening had been calm, and the disciples had probably not anticipated stormy weather.

Covered. Literally, “being covered,” or “being hidden.” The boat was now filling up with such rapidity that the disciples lost hope of bailing the water out before it became completely swamped. Several of the disciples were expert fishermen who had spent much of their lives on the Lake of Galilee, and who knew how to handle a boat in a storm. But all their experience and skill failed them on this occasion.

He was asleep. This is the only recorded instance of Jesus’ sleeping. Overcome with utter weariness and hunger at the close of a strenuous day (see DA 333, 334), He no doubt fell asleep quickly (see on Matt. 8:18; Mark 4:38).

25. Awoke him. The disciples called to Jesus twice in the darkness, only to have their voices drowned out by the noise of the storm. Then a sudden flash of lightning disclosed to them the fact that Jesus was still asleep (DA 334), whereupon “they came to him, and awoke him” (Luke 8:24). Astonished that He could sleep through the fury of the gale, and amazed at His apparent unconcern in the midst of their frantic efforts to save the ship and their very lives, they addressed Him somewhat reprovingly, “Carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38).

Save us: we perish. That is, “save us at once; we are about to perish.” This may well be the cry of one who is pressed hard by the tempests of temptation. A few months later Peter was to utter the panicstricken cry, “Lord, save me” (ch. 14:30), apparently forgetful of how Christ had saved all of them upon this earlier occasion.

26. Ye of little faith. Though the disciples had seen many wonderful evidences of divine power, it seems that prior to this time Jesus had displayed no control over the forces of nature, and it might not have occurred to them that He could do so.

A great calm. The storm subsided as suddenly as it had risen. No doubt the silence of nature was as startling and impressive as the unexpected fury of wind and wave had been.

27. Even the winds. That is, in addition to all manner of sicknesses, and even death itself, Christ had power over wind and sea *also*. It seems that the disciples “marvelled” that the forces of nature also submitted to the will of Jesus. They were eye-witnesses to what had happened (see Luke 1:2; 1 John 1:1, 2), and never thought for a moment of denying the evidence of their senses. Christ commanded; the elements obeyed. Today, men who consider themselves wise affirm that it was a mere coincidence, that the storm was bound to subside anyway, and that Jesus spoke just as the wind had spent its fury. We would simply ask them to duplicate the “mere coincidence,” not omitting any detail recorded in the Bible story!

Every time Christ performed a miracle His reputation was at stake. Suppose He had failed even once, as the disciples did upon at least one occasion (see ch. 17:16–20), what would the men of His day have thought or men today think?

As Christ stilled the winds and the waves of Galilee, so He is able to still the storms of life that so often burst unexpectedly and with violence over the human soul. Too often the reason we do not experience His power in our lives is that we are “fearful” and have but “little faith.”

28. When he was come. [*The Demoniacs of Gadara, Matt. 8:28 to 9:1=Mark 5:1–20=Luke 8:26–39. Major comment: Mark.*]

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2, 3 DA 263, 266; MH 67, 69, 70
3 DA 776
4 DA 264
5–13 DA 315, 318; 4T 233
6, 8 DA 315
8, 9 MH 63
10 DA 64
11 DA 622; GC 427
11, 12 COL 219; DA 318
13 DA 316; MH 65
14–16 DA 259
15 MH 29
17 MH 17, 124
19, 20 DA 293, 383
20 MH 19; MM 19; MYP 300; PK 73; TM 178; 1T 137; 3T 107, 402, 457; 4T 83, 621
22 Ev 655
23–34 DA 333–341
25 DA 336
25, 26 DA 335
27 4T 288
28 DA 337; MH 95
29 MH 96
30–32 MH 97, 98
30–33 DA 338

CHAPTER 9

2 *Christ curing one sick of the palsy, 9 calleth Matthew from the receipt of custom, 10 eateth with publicans and sinners, 14 defendeth his disciples for not fasting, 20 cureth the bloody issue, 23 raiseth from death Jairus' daughter, 27 giveth sight to two blind men, 32 healeth a dumb man possessed of a devil, 36 and hath compassion of the multitude.*

1. He entered into a ship. Matt. 9:1 is the concluding statement of the narrative of the two demoniacs of Gadara (Matt. 8:28 to 9:1; see on Mark 5:21). The chapter division here should come between vs. 1 and 2 of Matt. 9.

His own city. That is, Capernaum (see on Mark 1:29).

2. Sick of the palsy. [*The Paralytic Lowered Through the Roof, Matt. 9:2–8=Mark 2:1–12=Luke 5:17–26.* Major comment: Mark.]

9. Matthew. [*Call of Levi Matthew, Matt. 9:9=Mark 2:13, 14=Luke 5:27, 28.* Major comment: Mark.]

10. Jesus sat at meat. [*Matthew's Feast, Matt. 9:10–13=Mark 2:15–17=Luke 5:29–32.* Major comment: Mark.]

13. Go ye and learn. The scribes and Pharisees would not have their Scripture rolls with them, and would have to return either to the synagogue or to their homes in order to study the topic Christ suggested to them.

I will have mercy. Or, “I desire mercy” (see Hosea 6:6). As used here, “mercy” may be said to stand for character, that is, for the traits of character that God would have His people reflect (see on Matt. 19:19; 22:39). Similarly “sacrifice” stands for the forms of

religion, which have an unfortunate tendency to eclipse practical religion (see 2 Tim. 3:5). In this sense “mercy” represents righteousness by faith as “sacrifice” does righteousness by works. The forms of religion without the vital spirit of religion, Christ says, are worthless. See on Mark 7:7–9, 13; John 4:23, 24.

God did not ordain the Jewish ceremonial system because, in itself, it represented His ideal of religious life. In themselves, the ancient sacrifices had no value (see Heb. 9:9; 10:1–11). The Lord is not pleased with externals alone (see Micah 6:7). What God requires of man is “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (see Micah 6:8). “To obey” has always been “better than sacrifice” (see 1 Sam. 5:22; see on Matt. 7:21–27; Mark 7:7–9).

14. The disciples of John. [*The Question About Fasting, Matt. 9:14–17=Mark 2:18–22=Luke 5:33–39.* Major comment: Mark.]

18. While he spake these things. [*Jairus’ Daughter and the Invalid Woman, Matt. 9:18–26=Mark 5:21–43=Luke 8:40–56.* Major comment: Mark.] Matthew states that it was during the discussion recorded in vs. 14–17 that Jairus (see Mark 5:22) came to Christ. Couple with this the statement in DA 342 that Jairus found Christ at the home of Matthew, and it becomes clear that there is a close chronological relationship between the feast in Matthew’s home, the protest of the Pharisees about Christ’s eating with “publicans and sinners,” the question about fasting, and the raising of Jairus’ daughter.

Even now dead. From the narrative as given in Mark (see ch. 5:23, 35) and Luke (see ch. 8:42, 49) it is clear that the girl was not actually dead when Jairus made his request, but was, as we would say, “all but dead.” Matthew’s statement is not to be considered in disagreement with those of Mark and Luke; rather, according to Matthew, the father speaks of death as being certain unless Christ intervenes. Whether the father knew of the raising of the son of the widow at Nain, which had taken place shortly before this (see on Luke 7:11), it is not possible to say. Most likely he had heard the report.

27. Two blind men. [*Two Blind Men, Matt. 9:27–31.* Comment: Matthew. Cf. Mark 8:22–26; 10:46–52. See *Closing Galilean Ministry*; on miracles pp. 208–213.] This miracle probably occurred in Capernaum during the autumn of A.D. 29. The healing at Bethsaida (see Mark 8:22–26) occurred about one year later, and that of Bartimaeus at Jericho (see Mark 10:46–52) more than a year and a half later. From ancient times blindness, very often caused by trachoma, has been common in Bible lands.

Son of David. Their use of this term indicates that the blind men recognized Jesus as the Messiah (see on ch. 1:1).

28. Come into the house. Though not so designated here, this may well have been the house of Peter. Use of the definite article implies that it was some certain house, probably that in which Jesus Himself resided while in Capernaum (see on Mark 1:29). Why Jesus did not heal the blind men in the street, is not mentioned.

Believe ye? Without the exercise of faith on their part Christ would not be able to exercise His power in their behalf. Man’s faith must rise to meet and to unite with the power of God in order that blessings, whether physical or spiritual, may be imparted and received (see Heb. 11:6).

29. Then touched. For the meaning and purpose of the healing touch see on Mark 1:31.

30. *Straightly charged.* That is, Jesus commanded them sternly. Here, this no doubt refers to the stern expression on Jesus' face and in His voice. As to Christ's purpose in thus forbidding publicity for certain miracles see on Mark 1:43.

31. *Spread abroad.* Compare the neglect of the leper to heed the injunction against publicity (see on Mark 1:45).

32. *As they went out.* [*A Dumb Demoniac, Matt. 9:32–34.* Comment: Matthew. See Closing Galilean Ministry; on miracles pp. 208–213.] The word "they" evidently refers to the two blind men who had just been healed, possibly in the home of Peter (see on v. 28), and who were leaving the house at the very time this demoniac came to Jesus.

They brought. When a man lacks the ability or the faith to come to Jesus for the healing of either body or soul, he is fortunate to have someone interested enough in him to bring him (cf. Mark 2:2, 3).

A dumb man. Gr. *kōphos*, "blunted," or "dull" (see on Luke 1:22). Used as a noun *kōphos* could mean either "a dumb [man]" or "a deaf [man]," depending on the context.

A devil. Rather, "a demon." For a discussion of demon possession in Bible times see on Mark 1:23.

33. *The dumb spake.* This was tangible evidence of healing. This is the last recorded miracle for several months, the next being that of feeding the 5,000 the following spring. Whether Jesus went into retirement for the winter after the second tour of Galilee is not stated. Popular excitement occasioned by the many miracles of Jesus tended to obscure the Saviour's main objective in performing them—the advancement of the kingdom of heaven in the hearts and lives of men.

34. *The Pharisees said.* See on ch. 12:24. Probably becoming desperate to silence Christ or to turn the people against Him, the Pharisees sought to have it believed that His miracle-working power constituted evidence that Christ was in league with Satan. The fact that Matthew here records no answer on the part of Jesus suggests the possibility that the Pharisees did not advance this claim in His presence, but rather circulated it among the people.

35. *Jesus went.* [*Second Galilean Tour, Matt. 9:35=Luke 8:1–3.* Major comment: Luke.] Because ch. 9:36 opens the section dealing with Christ's instruction to the Twelve preparatory to the Third Galilean Tour, and that the section closes with a statement of Christ's activity during the time the Twelve made their itinerary of the towns and villages of Galilee (ch. 11:1), ch. 9:35 probably stands as a summary statement for the Second Galilean Tour. Matthew records a similar summary statement for the First Galilean Tour (see on ch. 4:23).

All the cities and villages. Evidently a typical Hebraistic hyperbole. In view of the fact that there were some 200 villages in Galilee (see on Luke 8:1), it would have been difficult if not impossible for Jesus to visit every one of them during His brief Galilean ministry of little more than one year.

Teaching. For the synagogue teaching of Jesus see on Mark 1:39; Luke 4:15, 16.

Synagogues. See pp. 56-58.

The gospel of the kingdom. See on Mark 1:1.

Every sickness. See on ch. 4:23. The disciples were likewise given this power when Christ sent them out to preach (ch. 10:1).

Among the people. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the omission of these words here, but attests their inclusion in ch. 4:23.

36. When he saw the multitudes. [*Third Galilean Tour, Matt. 9:36 to 11:1=Mark 6:7–13=Luke 9:1–6.* Major comment: Matthew. See Closing Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] Thus Matthew begins his account of the Third Galilean Tour, which was conducted during the winter of A.D. 29–30 (see DA 359, 364; see on Mark 1:39). Little is said of events on the tour itself, almost all of the narrative being devoted to Christ's instruction to the Twelve preparatory to sending them out. No particular incident is recorded so far as the disciples themselves are concerned, and the only experience recorded of Christ is His second visit to Nazareth (Matt. 13:54–58). For the relationship of the third tour to the two preceding tours see on Mark 1:39.

On the third tour the Twelve were to go out two by two and apply the principles they had observed in the ministry of Jesus. While the Twelve were thus engaged Jesus Himself went out, accompanied by many other disciples (see Luke 10:1; cf. DA 488). Reference to the “multitudes” points to another reason for the sending forth of the Twelve—the demands upon Christ during the second tour made it apparent that the “labourers” were too “few” (see Matt. 9:37). The third tour marked an important extension of Christ's ministry (see DA 395).

Fainted. Literally, “were exhausted.” Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 146) the reading “distressed,” or “troubled.”

Scattered abroad. Gr. *rhīptō*, “to cast down,” “to hurl,” or “to lay prostrate.” Apparently the people as a whole were so thoroughly downcast and dejected that they no longer were putting forth any effort to improve their religious condition. Things looked hopeless to them. The word *rhīptō* thus does not refer so much to the scattering of the “sheep” as it does to their “prostrate” or “helpless” condition.

Having no shepherd. See Num. 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Eze. 34:5. The undershepherds of Christ's day had proved to be no more than hirelings (see John 10:12, 13), and when the Good Shepherd Himself came, He found His sheep scattered.

37. Then saith he. What Christ here (vs. 37, 38) says to the Twelve is almost word for word what He later said to the Seventy under similar circumstances (Luke 10:2). See on Mark 2:10.

Harvest. The harvest was often used as a symbol of the last great judgment (see chs. 3:10, 12; 13:30, 39). More than a year earlier Jesus had used the figure of the harvest in connection with His ministry for the Samaritans of Sychar (see John 4:35–38).

Labourers are few. When there are but few laborers to reap an abundant harvest much good grain will inevitably be lost. Thus far there had been but one gospel harvest crew in the field gathering in the grain for the kingdom of heaven, and it was now apparent that unless broader plans were laid, most of the grain, even in the small region of Galilee, could never be gathered in.

38. Pray ye therefore. Their prayer to the Lord of the harvest does not imply that He was unconcerned or unaware of the need of more laborers. The Twelve were to make this need the object of prayer in order that thus the Lord of the harvest might have an opportunity to bring to their own hearts conviction of their personal responsibility to meet that need.

For the most part prayer is designed, not to inform God of what He would otherwise not know or to prevail upon Him to do what He would otherwise not do, but to condition our own hearts and minds to cooperate with Him. No doubt Christ led the disciples in a season of prayer, in which this urgent need, now felt keenly by all members of the little

group, was made foremost. They were to pray, and then go forth in faith to cooperate with God in answering their own prayers (see on ch. 10:10).

Send forth. Here is expressed the urgency with which it was anticipated the “Lord of the harvest” would send forth laborers found willing to go.

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- 1 DA 252; PK 73; 9T 121
- 1–8DA 267–271
- 2 DA 640; MH 122; ML 7, 154; MM 147, 197; TM 352; 3T 168
- 2–5MH 76
- 2–68T 202
- 3 TM 71
- 3–6DA 269
- 6 DA 821; MH 77; SC 50
- 9 COL 47; DA 273; FE 359; GW 113
- 9–12Ev 58
- 10 FE 482; MH 26, 197; 6T 173
- 11 7T 18; WM 287
- 11–13DA 275
- 12 GC 264; FE 135; MM 146; 3T 39; 7T 200; 8T 124
- 13 FE 398; MM 50, 183, 251; 5T 629; 7T 18; WM 36, 193
- 14 DA 276
- 18, 19 DA 342; ML 229
- 18–26DA 342–348
- 20–22DA 343
- 21 MH 59
- 21, 22 ML 13
- 24 DA 343
- 25 ML 230
- 29 7T 274
- 34 CH 526; DA 321
- 35 Ev 46
- 36 MB 111
- 36–386T 254
- 37 ML 133
- 38 DA 361; GW 243; 6T 420; 9T 199

CHAPTER 10

- 1 *Christ sendeth out his twelve apostles, enabling them with power to do miracles, 5 giveth them their charge, teacheth them, 16 comforteth them against persecutions: 40 and promiseth a blessing to those that receive them.*

1. Called unto him. The account of the sending forth of the Twelve begins with ch. 9:36 (see comment there). The instruction here given consists essentially of two parts, counsel that applied particularly to the immediate missionary journey (ch. 10:5–15), and counsel of a more general nature applicable to all who go forth in the service of Christ and His kingdom (vs. 16–42; see DA 352). See on ch. 24:3.

His twelve disciples. This is Matthew’s first mention of the Twelve, either by name or as a group. It is clear from the expression, “his twelve disciples,” that Matthew

recognizes that the Twelve already existed as an officially recognized group before the time came for the Third Galilean Tour. It should be noted that Matthew does not say that the Twelve were appointed as apostles at this time, but simply that Jesus called them “unto him” in anticipation of sending them forth to preach and to heal.

Power. Gr. *exousia*, literally, “authority” (see on Luke 1:35). The Twelve received authority both to perform miracles, as stated here, and also to “preach” the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 10:7). Previously, it would seem, the disciples had simply assisted Jesus and had neither performed miracles nor taught publicly (see DA 349).

Sickness. See on ch. 4:23.

2. The names. For the individual names of the Twelve see on Mark 3:16–19.

Apostles. Literally, “ones sent forth.” For the appointment of the Twelve as “apostles” see on Mark 3:13–19.

3. Lebbaeus. Important textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 146) for the readings “Thaddaeus,” “Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus,” or “Thaddaeus called Lebbaeus” (see on Mark 3:18).

4. The Canaanite. The term here means “the Zealot,” and has no reference to the land of Canaan (see on Mark 3:18).

5. These twelve. The Twelve, who thus far had assisted Jesus (see DA 349) in His ministry, were now to be sent forth to labor alone. They had been officially appointed as disciples during the summer of A.D. 29 (see on ch. 5:1), probably not more than six months previously (see on ch. 9:36). Peter, Andrew, James, and John had been called to full-time discipleship, probably in the late spring of A.D. 29 (see on Luke 5:1). Three of these—all except James—as well as Philip and Bartholomew, had been part-time disciples since the late autumn of A.D. 27 (see on John 1:35–45). All the Twelve had been with Jesus on His Second Galilean Tour, probably during the late summer or early autumn of A.D. 29 (see on Matt. 9:35; Luke 8:1), and had thus had opportunity to observe Christ’s methods, to listen to His teaching, and to profit by instructions He had given privately to His disciples from time to time. Now that the Twelve were sent out by themselves they went two by two (see Mark 6:7; see on ch. 3:14), brother with brother and friend with friend (DA 350).

Way of the Gentiles. Or, “the road of the Gentiles,” meaning any road that led to an essentially Gentile community. For instance, the Twelve would visit none of the cities of the Decapolis, which was largely Gentile in population. The basis for this restriction was probably that so long as there was opportunity to labor for the Jews, Jesus would do nothing that would unnecessarily prejudice them against Him. Furthermore, the disciples themselves were unprepared to labor for their Gentile neighbors, and the prejudice they shared with all Jews against the Gentiles would no doubt have effectively thwarted efforts they might have—unwillingly—put forth. The injunction against working among non-Jews was not placed upon the Seventy when they were sent out nearly a year later; in fact, they began their labors among the Samaritans (see DA 488). By that time the situation had changed; Jesus Himself, having been rejected by the people of Galilee, worked on behalf of both Samaritans and Gentiles, and instructed the disciples to do so also (see Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

City of the Samaritans. Concerning the Samaritans see pp. 18, 45. At Jacob’s Well Jesus had taken the initiative in extending to the Samaritans of Sychar an invitation to

believe in Him as the Messiah (see John 4:4–42). However, there is no record of any further ministry by Jesus for Samaritans up to this time.

A final restriction as to territory permitted the Twelve to visit only those towns and villages where Christ Himself had already been (DA 351).

6. Lost sheep. In the OT Israel is often spoken of under the figure of sheep, and their leaders as shepherds (see Eze. 34:2–16; etc.). In Jer. 50:6 God speaks of His people as being “lost sheep.” Isaiah speaks of those who have wandered into sin as being “like sheep” that “have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). Jesus represented Himself as a Shepherd, and those who hear His voice, as the sheep of His fold (see John 10:1–16).

“It was necessary that the word of God should first” be spoken to the Jews, and it was only when they rejected it that Christ and the apostles turned to the Gentiles (see Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28). This fundamental fact Christ brought before the Jewish leaders, during the course of His last day of teaching in the Temple, in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (see Matt. 21:41, 43).

7. Preach. Gr. *kērussō*, “to herald,” “to proclaim” (see DA 352).

Kingdom of heaven. See on ch. 4:17.

8. Heal the sick. Christ enumerates the various types of miracles the disciples had so often seen Him perform. All that He had done, they were to do. Demons and even death itself were to be subject to them.

Freely ye have received. Simon Magus sought to buy divine power (Acts 8:18–24), but learned that the gifts of God cannot be purchased with money. The water of life may be taken freely by all who desire to do so (see Rev. 22:17). The disciples were not to make a profit from preaching the gospel, yet at the same time they were to remember that “the workman is worthy of his meat” (see on Matt. 10:10).

9. Provide. Gr. *ктаομαι*, “to procure [for oneself],” or “to acquire [for oneself].” They were to set forth in faith, confident that their needs would be provided for. Their preparations would thus be simple, and there would be nothing to divert them from their assigned task. On their journey they might accept hospitality as it was offered to them (see vs. 10–13), but were not to expect or to accept gifts in excess of their immediate needs. In other words, they were not to make a profit from their ministry.

Brass. Rather, a “bronze” or “copper” (see on Ex. 25:3).

Purses. From the Gr. *ζώνη*, “belt,” or “girdle,” used to bind the “cloak” (Gr. *himation*), or outer garment, about the body (see on ch. 5:40). In the *ζώνη*, money was commonly carried by ancient peoples.

10. Scrip. Gr. *πήρα*, “a leather sack,” or “a wallet”; often used by travelers for carrying provisions or clothing.

Coats. Gr. *chitōnes*, the “tunics,” or inner garments; coats only in the sense of being undercoats (see on ch. 5:40). The disciples were to take only the clothing they wore. They were to be dressed like the common peasants among whom they were to labor, and be one with them. Their labors would thus be more effective.

Shoes. Literally, “sandals.” According to Mark 6:9 the disciples were to wear sandals on this journey, and it would therefore seem that Matthew means they were not to carry along an extra pair with them (see Luke 10:4).

Staves. In the parallel passage in Mark (ch. 6:8) they were instructed to take nothing “save a staff only.” Perhaps Matthew intends to emphasize that they were not to “provide” anything extra for the journey (see on v. 9), and means here that the disciple who did not have a staff already was not to consider it necessary to procure one.

Workman. Or, “laborer.” The disciples themselves were the “labourers” whom they were to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth into the harvest field (see ch. 9:38).

Meat. Gr. *trophē*, “nourishment,” or “food” (see on ch. 3:4). In his account of the instructions to the Seventy (Luke 10:7) Luke uses *misthos*, “wages.” Compare Paul’s position on the gospel laborer (1 Tim. 5:18).

11. Who in it is worthy. That is, one who is esteemed and respected by his fellow townsmen. To abide with “worthy” men would have several advantages. First, and before all else, it would elicit confidence on the part of others in the town.

There abide. The instructions to the Seventy specifically forbade them to go “from house to house” (Luke 10:7), that is, to accept entertainment at various homes during their stay in a town or village (see DA 351), as this would interfere with their labors. To move “from house to house” might also be taken by people as implying that the first hosts did not take kindly to the men and their message and no longer desired to have anything to do with them. Conversely, to “abide” in one place would imply stability and character.

12. When ye come. Literally, “as ye are entering.” The salutation was to be simultaneous with the entering. Although this instruction applied in a special way to the house in which the disciples would find lodging, it included all homes visited during the course of their labors. The disciples were to work from home to home, and not, at this time, to attempt public ministry in the synagogues.

Salute it. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the alternate reading “saying, Peace be to this house.”

13. If the house. That is, if the home manifests its hospitality by its readiness to receive you.

Let your peace. In other words, the benediction uttered upon crossing the threshold (see on v. 12) was to be confirmed by the presence of the disciples in the home and the welcome they received there. Otherwise, the home would in no way benefit by the words already spoken.

14. Shake off the dust. Where the disciples encountered an unfriendly reception they were to waste no time, but hasten on to find those who would receive them gladly. This act upon departure from a home or a town was intended to be, not an act of rudeness, but of solemn protest. By shaking the dust from their feet the disciples were simply saying to the people, “You must simply accept responsibility for your decision.”

15. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

More tolerable. Sodom and Gomorrah had not enjoyed the opportunity of Christ’s personal ministry, as had Galilee and Judea. Men are accountable before God for all the light of truth that has come to them, for on this basis all are to be judged (see Ps. 87:4, 6; James 4:17; see on John 15:22, 24).

Sodom. For the sin and punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah see on Gen. 18:17–23; 19:1–27. Sodom and her fate became a type of apostasy and divine judgment (see Isa. 1:9; Eze. 16:48–50). Christ so presented it upon various occasions (see Matt. 11:23, 24;

Luke 10:12; 17:29, 30), and it so appears elsewhere in the NT (see Rom. 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7; Rev. 11:8).

Day of judgment. See on ch. 3:12.

16. Behold. Having concluded His exhortation of the Twelve with respect to points particularly applicable to the mission that lay immediately before them (vs. 5–15), Jesus now turns to problems of a more general nature, and gives instruction applicable to Christian workers to the close of time (vs. 16–42; see DA 352).

As sheep. See on v. 6. Workers for Christ are to exhibit certain traits that are characteristic of sheep, particularly that of gentleness in their dealings with others. Compare the expression “harmless as doves.”

Wise as serpents. Gospel workers must be alert, quick to act when opportunity offers, aware of the dangers and difficulties that may be involved in a proposed course of action. They are to be prudent in their conduct and in dealing with difficult situations. They are to see through the devices of evil men, without practicing those devices themselves. However, there are certain traits characteristic of the serpent which they are not to imitate, any more than they are to imitate all the characteristics of the sheep. While they exercise the alertness of the serpent, they are not to imitate his wiliness.

Harmless. Gr. *akeraios*, “unmixed,” and thus “innocent,” or “simple.” While wary as a serpent, the Christian worker is to be as free from guile or craft as a dove.

17. Beware. Gr. *prosechō*, “to take heed.” Christ now sets forth a concrete example of the wariness that should characterize the Christian worker in his labor; he is to “beware of men,” that is, of men who are not guided in their thinking by the Holy Spirit, for such are in greater or less degree responsive to the promptings of Satan.

Councils. That is, the local courts of justice or the little sanhedrins, thought to have consisted of 23 members (see on ch. 5:22). Such local courts were to be found in various Jewish communities except Jerusalem, where the Great Sanhedrin met.

Scourge you. The deacon, or *chazzan*, was usually the one who administered a flogging (see p. 56). The law of Moses provided for flogging (Deut. 25:1–3). Forty stripes was the maximum penalty. It was customary to administer no more than 39 strokes—withholding the last implied mercy. Paul received such treatment five times (2 Cor. 11:24).

18. Governors and kings. During the early years of Christianity such governors as Pilate, Felix, Festus, and Gallio examined Christian workers accused of being anarchists and troublemakers. Herod Antipas, Herod Agrippa I, Nero, and Domitian were some of the kings and emperors before whom Christians were compelled to appear.

For my sake. The promise of v. 19 applies only when Christians are accused because of their faith and missionary activities, not when they have been engaged in improper activities (see 1 Peter 2:19, 20).

Against them. Rather, “to them,” in the sense of “before them.” Many “governors and kings,” as well as lesser officials, would have no opportunity to hear the truth except when forced by their official position to listen to, and to observe the effect of, the principles of truth upon the lives of those brought before them.

19. Take ... thought. Gr. *merimnaō* “to be anxious,” “to care for,” or “to be troubled [with cares]” (see on Luke 10:41). Christ does not here condone careless unconcern on the part of Christian believers in regard to the study of Scripture, for the Christian is to be

“ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh” a reason for his faith (1 Peter 3:15). We are to serve God faithfully day by day, taking no anxious “thought for the morrow” (Matt. 6:34). We are to trust in God for grace to meet problems as they arise, yet at the same time we are to give most earnest heed to the study of God’s revealed will in order to be prepared for any and every situation that comes.

20. *Not ye that speak.* Christian workers must never forget that they speak as representatives, or ambassadors, of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:19, 20), and are never to set forth their own theories under the guise of truth. Should they presume to do so, they may rightly be classified as false prophets (see on Matt. 7:15).

In you. That is, through you, or by means of you.

21. *The brother.* Literally, “a brother,” or simply “brother.” So far as possible the Christian is to “live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18), and to make a sincere and persevering effort not only to live at peace with members of the family but if possible to win them for Christ (see 1 Cor. 7:13–16).

22. *Hated of all men.* Those whose lives testify to the power of Christ and the truth of the gospel are often hated, but they must beware lest they repay hatred in kind. All who live godly lives may expect persecution (see John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12), the reason being that those whose works are evil resent the condemnation of their ways implicit in the godly lives of Christ’s representatives (see 1 John 3:12). Those whose lives are deliberately out of harmony with principles they know to be right generally avoid associating with those of upright character.

For my name’s sake. See on v. 18.

Endureth to the end. Obviously, the one who falls out of a race before reaching the goal can never expect to receive the prize. To enter the race and to remain in it are both essential to winning the race. It is not sufficient to begin in the Christian way, we must remain in it “until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). We must “stedfastly set” our faces to the completion of the course marked out for us by God, even as did Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (see Luke 9:51; Heb. 12:2).

23. *Persecute you.* See on ch. 5:10–12.

Flee ye. Under certain circumstances flight reflects cowardice; at other times it reveals prudence (cf. on v. 16). The determining factor is the net result for the kingdom of heaven, not personal convenience or what people will think. When labor proves futile in one place, ambassadors of the kingdom may well hasten on to the next place, in the hope of there finding someone willing to listen.

There is no virtue in suffering persecution for its own sake, as if it were a means of earning merit in the books of heaven. In His own ministry Christ repeatedly demonstrated the principle He here recommended to the Twelve, and thereby provided illustrations of circumstances under which we may apply it. When rejected by the Sanhedrin after healing the paralytic at Bethesda He retired to Galilee (see on ch. 4:12), and upon later occasions He similarly moved from Nazareth to Capernaum (see on Luke 4:30, 31), from Galilee to Phoenicia (see on Matt. 15:21), from Magdala to Caesarea Philippi (ch. 16:1–13), and from Judea to Ephraim (John 11:53, 54). When the Christians of Jerusalem were persecuted, following the stoning of Stephen, they scattered in all directions—“preaching the word” (see Acts 8:1–4).

Cities of Israel. As applied in the time of Christ, the term Israel does not seem to have been used in either a geographical or a political sense, but rather with reference to the people of Israel (see Matt. 8:10; Luke 2:34; John 3:10; Acts 2:22; etc.).

Son of man be come. Possibly Jesus is here speaking in general terms to all Christians, indicating that there will be places in which to labor and people ready to receive the message until the “gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world” (see ch. 24:14; 6T 478).

24. The disciple. This saying of Christ may well have been a proverb current at that time. It occurs in other languages besides Aramaic.

Master. Gr. *didaskalos*, “teacher.” The same Greek word is used in the opening statement in v. 25.

25. Master of the house. Gr. *oikodespotēs*, or “lord of the house” (see on Luke 2:29). That is, Christ—continuing the thought of Matt. 10:24.

Beelzebub. Whether this word is to be identified with “Baalzebub,” the fly god of Ekron (see on 2 Kings 1:2), or whether it should be “Beelzebul,” in Aramaic, “lord of the dwelling,” is uncertain. Important textual evidence (cf. p. 146) may be cited for the reading “Beelzebul” (see on Matt. 12:24).

27. In darkness. Meaning, probably, in the comparative obscurity of the small circle of disciples.

Speak ye in light. Probably indicating the wide circulation the disciples were to give the lessons of truth they had learned in private.

In the ear. Parallel in thought to “darkness” in the first part of the verse.

Upon the housetops. A figure for the wide circulation they were to give the gospel, parallel to “speak ye in light.” They were not to purchase peace through silence and compromise.

28. Kill. Those who “kill the body” are, of course, the persecutors mentioned in vs. 18–25, 36. Only God is “able to destroy both soul and body.” Concerning persecution see on ch. 5:10–12.

Soul. Gr. *psuchē*, “breath,” “life,” or “soul.” *Psuchē* (plural, *psuchai*) is translated 40 times in the NT as “life” or “lives,” clearly with the meaning commonly attributed to the word “life” (see chs. 2:20; 6:25; 16:25; etc.). It is rendered 58 times as “soul” or “souls” (see chs. 10:28; 11:29; 12:18; etc.). In some of these instances it means simply “people” (see Acts 7:14; 27:37; 1 Peter 3:20; etc.). In other instances it is translated as, or equivalent to, some personal pronoun (see Matt. 12:18; 2 Cor. 12:15; see on Ps. 16:10). At times it refers to the emotions (see Mark 14:34; Luke 2:35; etc.), to the natural appetites (see Rev. 18:14), to the mind (see Acts 14:2; Phil. 1:27), or to the heart (see Eph. 6:6). There is nothing in the word *psuchē* itself that even remotely implies a conscious entity that is able to survive the death of the body and hence be immortal. In no instance of its use in the Bible does *psuchē* refer to a conscious entity able to exist apart from the body. The Bible knows nothing of a living, conscious soul that, supposedly, survives the body. For the Heb. *nephesh*, the Hebrew equivalent of the Gr. *puschē*, see on 1 Kings 17:21; Ps. 16:10. All that is said of one word applies to the other.

Hell. Gr. *geenna* (see on ch. 5:22).

29. Sparrows. Gr. *strouthia*, meaning any small birds, though especially used of sparrows. Small, wild birds are commonly sold in Oriental markets today.

Farthing. Gr. *assarion*, a diminutive derived from the Latin *as*, 1/16 of a denarius, that is, 1/16 of one day's wage of an ordinary laborer (see p. 49).

Fall on the ground. In the parallel passage in Luke it is stated that "not one of them is forgotten before God" (ch. 12:6).

Without your Father. That is, without God's taking notice of it. If He takes notice of the injury or death of a sparrow, how much more must the injury or death of His own sons and daughters mean to Him!

30. The very hairs. No one has ever taken so great an interest in himself as to count the number of hairs in his own head. The Creator knows us far more intimately than we know ourselves.

32. Confess me. Literally, "confess *in* me," because of a sense of oneness with Christ. It is when we abide in Him and He abides in us that our confession of faith in Him will "bear much fruit" (see John 15:1–8). For this intimate fellowship Christ prayed before entering the Garden of Gethsemane (see John 17:23). Those who bear witness for Christ among men are the ones for whom He can bear witness before the Father. Jesus is now our Witness, our Ambassador before the Father, as we are to be His witnesses and ambassadors before men.

34. Think not. Jesus here dispels the mistaken opinion that some of the disciples apparently had, that the message they were to bear would result in nothing but harmony. They were not to be surprised, in their house-to-house work (see on vs. 11–13), if differences arose as a result of their ministry.

To send peace. Christ is the Prince of Peace. He it was who brought the peace of heaven to earth and imparted it to men (see on John 14:27). However, when a man makes peace with God (see Rom. 5:1) he is frequently counted by the world as an enemy (see 1 John 3:12, 13). Christ came to set sinners at peace with God, but in so doing He also inevitably set them at variance with all who refuse the offer of peace (see on Matt. 10:22). The Christian must never seek, or be content with, the peace that comes through compromise with evil. For the true Christian it is not a matter of peace at any price.

35. Daughter in law. Gr. *numphē*, "a young wife," "a bride," or "a daughter-in-law." Even today it is the common custom in Oriental lands for a young married couple to reside indefinitely in the home of the groom's parents, where the bride is supposed to be in subjection to the groom's mother. Thus, in ancient times as today, the relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law easily gave rise to difficulty, and where one believed in Christ and the other was opposed to such belief, real trouble might be expected.

36. A man's foes. When a man accepts Christ his closest friends often turn out to be his most bitter and relentless enemies. This is often true, not only in heathen lands, but also in Christian lands and among professed Christians who practice a form of religion but know little if anything of its power to transform the life (see 2 Tim. 3:5).

37. Loveth father or mother. Jesus sanctioned the binding claims of the fifth commandment and rebuked any attempt to escape the obligations of children toward their parents (see on Matt. 5:17–19; Mark 9–13). Nevertheless, love for one's parents must never stand in the way of obedience to God in every particular, should the two be in

conflict. Love to God and service for Him are to be the supreme rule of life, “the first and great commandment” (see on Matt. 22:36, 37); but “the second” table of the Decalogue, which contains the fifth commandment, is “like” the first in nature and importance (see on ch. 22:39).

Not worthy of me. That is, not worthy to be called a Christian. No human obligation is a valid excuse for not taking up the cross of loyalty, obedience, and service (v. 38) to Christ.

38. Taketh not his cross. Among the Romans, death by crucifixion was reserved for slaves and for those convicted of the most heinous crimes. Thus it may be said that those sentenced thus to die were loathed, hated, and execrated by society. One condemned to crucifixion usually bore his cross to the place of execution. To take up the cross of Christ and follow after Him means to endure without complaint or regret the frown of friends and relatives and to bear the reproach of men with patience and humility. It is to endure the “sword” of persecution (see vs. 34–37) at the hands of the very ones from whom “peace” might be expected. This principle Christ reiterated upon various occasions (see Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27). But one who is called upon to take up his cross in order to follow Christ has the supreme privilege of fellowship with Him in His sufferings. No greater honor can come to any man (DA 224, 225).

Followeth after me. That is, in the pathway of discipleship and of suffering.

39. He that findeth. That is, he who sets out to secure and to enjoy those things that, from a human point of view, are essential to happiness and contentment. The prodigal son thought by leaving home to “find” real life (see Luke 15:12, 13), but when through bitter experience and solemn reflection he came to view the things of life in their true perspective, he arose and returned to his father (Luke 15:17–20). Those who think to “find” life by living for the things this world has to offer are laboring “for the meat which perisheth” (see on John 6:27). The principle here recorded was repeated by Christ on more than one occasion (Matt. 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; Luke 17:33; John 12:25).

Life. Gr. *psuchē* (see on v. 28).

Lose it. One who reaches forth the hand to grasp the baubles of life usually finds that they vanish like bubbles in the hand of a child.

He that loseth. That is, he who is willing to forgo the pleasure and rewards this world has to offer, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). Such a one has a true sense of values. Like Paul, he is willing to lose everything this life has to offer in exchange for the supreme advantage of knowing Jesus Christ and sharing with Him in His sufferings (see Phil. 3:8, 10).

For my sake. See on v. 18.

Shall find it. Only when a grain of wheat is buried in the ground and dies can it give birth to new life (see on John 12:24, 25). Only when self is buried in the furrow of the world’s need does man discover the true purpose of his existence.

40. Receiveth you. Christians are ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever they say and do is taken by the people of this earth as being representative of the ideals of the kingdom of heaven, and the way the world treats them—because they are ambassadors for Christ—is looked upon by Christ as if that treatment were accorded to Him personally.

41. Receiveth a prophet. That is, receives a prophet into his home and treats him as a prophet.

In the name of a prophet. That is, because he is a prophet, or is recognized as a prophet. The widow of Zarephath undoubtedly received Elijah as a prophet, because he was a prophet; otherwise she would likely have refused to extend to him the hospitality he requested of her (see 1 Kings 17:9–16). The same was true of the Shunammite woman, who received Elisha into her home (2 Kings 4:8–10).

A prophet's reward. Probably meaning a reward worthy to be bestowed by a prophet or upon one. The widow of Zarephath received an ample supply of food in the midst of a drought, and her son was restored to life (see 1 Kings 17:16, 23). Similarly, the Shunammite woman received a bountiful reward, having been granted a son by God, and having received him back alive when he died (see 2 Kings 4:16, 17, 34–37).

42. Give to drink. Perhaps used as an illustration of the least conceivable service that might be rendered to another. It was a minor service, to be sure, but often a most important and necessary one in Bible lands where water was always scarce.

These little ones. Not necessarily little in age, but possibly in importance also.

In the name. What is meant by doing something “in the name of” someone is defined in Mark 9:41, where to give a cup of water in the name of Christ is explained as being done “because ye belong to Christ.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 CH 531

1–42DA 349–358

2–4Ed 85

5, 6 GC 327

5–8CH 531

6 DA 351; 2T 75

7, 8 CH 33, 497, 541; COL 254; CT 465; DA 350; MH 139; 4T 225; 8T 165

8 COL 245, 386; CS 287; DA 504; Ed 80; EW 227; FE 457; MM 334; MYP 226; PP 528; TM 104; 3T 408, 546; 5T 731; 6T 292; 7T 125; 9T 49; WM 117

11–143T 450

11–154T 234

13 DA 351

14, 15 DA 352; 2T 488

15 3T 380; 4T 191

16 AA 21; CH 541; DA 353; Ev 227, 564; 9T 215, 235, 239; WM 278

16–19FE 538

17 4T 234

17, 18 5T 463

17–19DA 354

18 FE 217

18, 19 GC 155; 6T 128

18–20GC 112

19 CSW 40; TM 386

20 SC 63

22 4T 124; 9T 235

22, 23 CH 527

23 DA 355, 541; GC 196, 231; GW 410; MM 303; 6T 478; 9T 230, 236
 24 DA 355
 25 2T 203
 25–402T 496
 26 PP 721
 27 DA 355
 28 AA 86, 576; GC 155
 28, 29 DA 356
 29 ML 292; Te 41; 2T 72; 4T 288
 29, 30 CD 159; FE 147; 1T 550; 4T 522
 30 LS 230; 1T 173; 4T 289
 31 CH 424; 4T 327; 8T 273
 31–34DA 357
 32 DA 707; ML 322; 1T 303; 4T 555
 32, 33 GC 483
 33 GC 156; IT 304, 408; 3T 332
 34 AA 84; GC 46, 126; 4T 261
 37 COL 223; CS 53; 3T 45
 37, 38 DA 357
 38 1T 513
 40 DA 357
 40–42PK 132; 6T 347
 42 DA 358; ML 11; 5T 229; 6T 103; 7T 50
 6

CHAPTER 11

2 *John sendeth his disciples to Christ.* 7 *Christ's testimony concerning John.* 18 *The opinion of the people, both concerning John and Christ.* 20 *Christ upbraideth the unthankfulness and unrepentance of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum:* 25 *and praising his Father's wisdom in revealing the gospel to the simple,* 28 *he calleth to him all such as feel the burden of their sins.*

1. An end of commanding. That is, when Jesus finished the instructions to the Twelve, recorded in ch. 10. It should be noted that ch. 11:1 belongs to the narrative of chs. 9:36 to 10:42, and not to that of ch. 11 (see on ch. 9:36).

He departed thence. Having sent forth the Twelve (see on ch. 10:5), Jesus, accompanied by other disciples, set out for another region of Galilee not covered by the Twelve (see DA 360, 488; see on Matt. 9:36; Luke 10:1). It was probably during the course of the third tour that John the Baptist was beheaded, for it was about this time that news of his martyrdom reached Christ (DA 360) and that the disciples of John united their endeavors with those of Christ and His disciples (DA 361).

2. When John had heard. [*The Inquiry by John's Disciples, Matt. 11:2–6=Luke 7:18–23. Comment: Luke.*]

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 7:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

7. As they departed. [*Jesus' Eulogy of John, Matt. 11:7–30=Luke 7:24–35.* Major comment: Matthew.] Literally, “as they were departing,” implying that the discourse concerning John began almost the moment the messengers turned to leave. Apparently these words of commendation were not for the ears of John, nor for his disciples, because what Christ was about to say would have lessened the force of the personal message He had given to John's two disciples to carry back to their master (see on Luke 7:23).

Concerning John. The eulogy of John, recorded in vs. 7–19, has sometimes been referred to as his funeral oration. John was beheaded about six months after this, not long before the Passover of A.D. 30 (see on Luke 3:19, 20).

To see. Gr. *theaomai*, “to view attentively,” or “to contemplate.” Many, possibly all, of the men in this audience had listened to John preach. Christ asks them to analyze their own reaction to that “burning and ... shining light” (John 5:35), that they may the better appreciate John's message in relation to the message Jesus Himself now bore. Concerning John's ministry in the wilderness see on Matt. 3:1 and Luke 3:2.

A reed. Reeds grew in abundance in the Jordan valley, where much of John's brief ministry was spent, and the figure used here would vividly recall to the minds of those who now listened to Jesus the scene of the Baptist's preaching. The Saviour's question might be stated, “Did you go out that far just to see the reeds blowing in the wind?” Certainly John could not be likened to the reeds, for he was not of a wavering and vacillating character.

8. Soft raiment. The wilderness would be a most unlikely place to find a man thus clothed. The motive of the throngs who went out to John was not one of seeing the latest styles and finest textured clothing, nor yet the hope that he might provide such clothing for those who became his followers. The hope of material gain did not influence men to respond to the magnetic power of the desert prophet.

9. A prophet. Gr. *prophētēs*, from *pro*, “before,” either of place or of time, and *phēmi*, “to speak.” The prophet was thus essentially a spokesman for God, an interpreter of the divine purposes for man. For a discussion of the Hebrew equivalent of *phrophētēs* see on Gen. 20:7. The prophet was a *for*-teller, in that he spoke for God, He was a *forth*-teller, in that he directed his messages to men. He was a *fore*-teller, in so far as he predicted future events. The modern concept that a prophet is essentially one who predicts the future obscures the fact that some of the greatest prophets of all time had little or nothing to say about future events. A prophet is simply a man bearing a message from God.

More than a prophet. John was the personal forerunner of the Messiah (see on ch. 3:3). He was the one to whom was given the most important task of all time, that of introducing the Messiah to the world. In John were combined all the great qualities of a true prophet.

10. This is he. Christ confirms the fact that John the Baptist was the one to whom the prophecy of Mal. 3:1 (and thus also of Isa. 40:3–5 and Mal. 4:5, 6) looked forward.

It is written. What follows seems to be a free translation of Mal. 3:1.

11. Born of women. Apparently a Hebrew idiom meaning “all human beings.”

Not risen a greater. See on Luke 1:15. In character, conviction, and faithfulness no prophet had excelled John the Baptist. Furthermore, no prophet had had a greater privilege than that of being the personal herald of the Messiah at His first coming (see DA 100). Very likely any of the prophets of OT times would have gladly sacrificed every

privilege that might conceivably have been theirs for the supreme privilege of introducing Christ to the world. Like Abraham, they had all looked forward to the day when Christ would come, and were glad even to see it by faith (see on John 8:56).

Least. That is, in comparison with others “in the kingdom.” The “kingdom” here referred to is, of course, the kingdom of divine grace in the hearts of men proclaimed by both John and Christ, and which Christ had brought to this earth in person.

Greater than he. Not greater than John in moral worth, courage, character, or achievement, but in the privilege of being associated with Christ Himself in person. In a sense, John was only at the door of the kingdom, looking in, while the humblest follower of Jesus was in the very presence of the King Himself.

12. Days of John. That is, the time during which the Baptist proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom, probably from the spring of A.D. 27 to the spring of A.D. 29 (see on ch. 3:1; see The Ministry of Our Lord).

Until now. That is, from the time of John’s imprisonment in the spring of A.D. 29 to the autumn of the same year (see on Luke 7:18). For the chronological relationship of Matthew’s feast (see on Matt. 9:18), the question about fasting (Mark 2:18–22), and the visit of John’s disciples to Jesus with the question that prompted Christ’s discussion concerning John recorded in Matt. 11:7–30, see DA 275–277.

The kingdom of heaven. This was the theme of John’s preaching as it was later of Jesus and His disciples on the Third Galilean Tour (see chs. 3:2; 4:23; 10:7). For this and the significance of the expression “the kingdom of heaven” see on ch. 3:2.

Suffereth violence. Gr. *biazō*, “to use force,” or “to apply force.” Opinions differ as to the precise meaning of the statement. Some hold that it means that crowds were zealous to follow Jesus; others, that the kingdom of divine grace (see on ch. 3:2) experienced violence in the sense that a great many of those who thronged about John and Jesus did so with little or no real understanding of the true nature of the kingdom (see on Mark 1:38). At the close of the Third Galilean Tour, a short time before the Passover of A.D. 30 (DA 364) and when Christ was at the very crest of a wave of popularity, there was an attempt to force Him to accept the crown of a temporal kingdom (see John 6:15; DA 378). Those who listened to John and to Jesus had more than enough zeal, but their zeal was “not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). Under any circumstances, the true kingdom was misunderstood and its purposes hindered by those who posed as its friends.

13. The prophets and the law. The usual order is, “the law and the prophets” (Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Acts 24:14; etc.), a common Jewish term for the OT (see on Luke 24:44).

Prophesied until John. The meaning here is not readily apparent. Perhaps the context is the best guide to interpreting this verse. Christ has just acclaimed John as the greatest of all the prophets (see on v. 11). He was greatest in the sense that it was his privilege to announce the coming of Him to whom all the prophets had borne witness (see Luke 24:27; John 5:39, 46). In this sense the OT prophets all looked forward to the time of John and spoke of the Messiah who was then to appear (1 Peter 1:10, 11). Thus it could be said that the prophetic office of OT times reached a climax in John. Furthermore, the words of Matt. 11:14, that John was the one “which was for to come,” may well be considered explanatory of v. 13.

14. Receive it. That is, accept the explanation given concerning John’s true identity in relation to OT prophecy.

This is Elias. John was not Elijah brought down from heaven (see John 1:21), but he came, rather, “in the spirit and power” of Elijah (see on Luke 1:17), with a task similar to that of Elijah—to call men to repentance (see on Matt. 3:2).

15. He that hath ears. A solemn exhortation often used by Christ to emphasize an important truth just stated (see Matt. 13:9, 43; Luke 14:35; etc.; cf. Rev. 2:7, 11). In a general sense all men have “ears” and should give heed, but Christ probably refers primarily to spiritual attentiveness by which those whose hearts are sincere may perceive His true meaning and be enlightened thereby (cf. Isa. 3:9, 10).

16. Whereunto shall I liken? A common Jewish formula for introducing a parable. In vs. 7–15 Jesus directed the thinking of the people to the nature and purpose of John’s mission; now (vs. 16–24) He turns to the reception accorded His own mission by the people of Israel, in comparison with the reception accorded John and his work.

This generation. Luke says, “the men of this generation” (Luke 7:31). Christ refers, of course, to the people of Israel living at the time He spoke, particularly to all who had heard John and later Jesus Himself announce the Messianic kingdom, and had witnessed the “mighty works” (Matt. 11:21, 23) that accompanied its proclamation. “This generation” had been accorded privileges far greater than those of any generation of OT times. But despite these unprecedented opportunities very few had “ears to hear” (see on v. 15), to perceive the true significance of the mission of John the Baptist and that of Jesus. For their part, the scribes and Pharisees openly rejected Christ and proclaimed Him an impostor (see DA 213), though they still hesitated to take the same attitude toward John the Baptist, openly at least (see ch. 21:23–27). The common people “counted John, that he was a prophet indeed” (Mark 11:32); later they heard Christ gladly (see Mark 12:37), and eventually many of them concluded that He too must be a prophet (see Matt. 16:13, 14). Christ’s remarks here and in succeeding verses are, accordingly, applicable to the Jewish leaders in particular, and in a more general sense to Israel as a whole.

John the Baptist is the bridge between the OT and the NT (see DA 220). The OT closed with a prophecy that he would come (see on Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6), and the NT opens with a record of a fulfillment of that prophecy (see Matt. 3:1–3; Mark 1:1–3). The prophetic messages of the OT prophets all focus on the coming of the Messiah and on the preparation of a people ready to meet Him (see Matt. 11:13, 14). With John, the old reached its climax and gave way to the new. The same generation that heard John also witnessed the coming of Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom; furthermore, it was this same generation that eventually witnessed the complete fulfillment of all that the OT prophets had predicted concerning Jerusalem and the Jewish nation (see on chs. 23:36; 24:15–20, 34).

Children. Literally, “little children.” The scene here described is familiar to any Oriental town or village, where the street serves as a playground as well as a thoroughfare and market place.

Markets. Gr. *agorai*, “assemblies,” or “places of public assembly,” and hence gathering places for trade and talk. Originally the “market place” had nothing to do with buying and selling, but eventually, when buildings were provided for the transaction of civic affairs, it became primarily a place of trade. In cities there would be a large public square, while in the villages the “market place” would be simply the village street.

17. We have piped. Apparently the figure is here used of groups of children at play. One group evidently desired to imitate some joyous festal occasion, such as a wedding.

Ye have not danced. In a perverse mood, the other children refused to play, and made no response to the proposal of the first group.

Have mourned. Gr. *thrēneō*, “to lament,” or “to bewail.” Carrying on the figure of children at play (v. 16), Matthew makes the first group of children say, as it were, “Very well, if that is the way you feel, let’s play funeral.” In the Orient loud and demonstrative wailing is almost always associated with funerals. Generally, there are paid mourners at the home when death comes, and later in the funeral procession (see Matt. 9:23; see on Mark 5:38 cf. Jer. 9:17).

Ye have not lamented. Literally, “Ye have not beaten your breasts in grief.” Apparently this second suggestion of the children also did not please their playmates, for the latter seem determined not to be pleased. The problem was not whether they felt like mourning or like dancing; they simply did not want to do what the others suggested. The application of the figure here used is obvious. The children who would not be pleased by anything represented the scribes and the Pharisees, who criticized both John and Jesus (see on vs. 18, 19).

18. Neither eating. As a Nazirite (see on ch. 3:4), John refrained from the feasting and drinking in which others freely engaged, and probably expected his disciples to emulate his example. Luke has, “neither eating bread nor drinking wine” (Luke 7:33). The abstemious and somewhat austere personal life of John had little appeal for the people as a whole. Many apparently dismissed him as a fanatic and made this their excuse for not seeking repentance and not being baptized at his had. What really displeased great numbers of people was the Baptist’s rebuke of their licentious excesses, a rebuke implicit in his exemplary life and probably explicit in his teaching. To this class of people the religion and way of life for which John stood seemed mournful. They tired of being reminded continually that they stood in need of repentance. To them, John’s call was a call to mourning, and they did not feel like responding (see on Matt. 11:17).

He hath a devil. That is, demon possessed, or simply, insane (see on Mark 1:23). This was the same charge brought by the religious leaders against Christ (see on Matt. 9:34). In both cases it was merely an excuse for not accepting a message that called for repentance and a new way of life.

19. Son of man. See on Mark 2:10.

Eating and drinking. See Isa. 22:13; Matt. 24:38.

Gluttonous, and a winebibber. The charge was, of course, exaggerated and twisted so as to imply something far different from what the facts would justify. His friendliness toward men who were reputed to be gluttons and drunkards His critics took as an excuse for charging Christ with being like them. The attempt of the Jews to force ritual fasting on Jesus was a complete failure (see Mark 2:15–17). These critics apparently wanted to fast when they pleased and to feast when they pleased; they would have none of the abstemious life of John or of the normal association of Jesus with men who needed the help He could bring.

A friend. This was the crux of the issue. Jesus befriended the very men whom they despised and ostracized.

Publicans. See p. 66; see on Luke 3:12. Christ’s critics impugned His motives. Whereas He sought the company of “publicans and sinners” in order to persuade them to become like Him, the critics charged that He did so in order that He might become more like them.

Children. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between this and the reading “works.” But the meaning is the same—wisdom is to be judged by its results. Thus, patently, to criticize John for one thing and Jesus for the opposite thing (vs. 18, 19) showed complete lack of wisdom. Both had been guided by divine wisdom, and this was evident in the results of their labors. In response to John’s labors, many repented (see Matt. 21:31, 32; Mark 11:32; Luke 7:29), and in response to Jesus’ ministry, multitudes heard Him gladly (see Mark 12:37).

20. His mighty works. See p. 208.

They repented not. A strange contrast to the way the people of Nineveh responded to the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:5). How often it is true that those who have the most light prove to be the least responsive, whereas those who have it in limited measure often seem to treasure it.

21. Woe. Gr. *ouai*, usually translated “woe” as here, but sometimes rendered “alas” (Rev. 18:10, 16, 19). The word envisions impending grief, calamity, or doom.

Chorazin. Mentioned only here and in the parallel passage, Luke 10:13. It is not included in Josephus’ list of Galilean cities and towns. Probably near Capernaum and the Lake of Galilee, Chorazin is usually identified with *Khirbet Kerâzeh*, about 2 mi. north of Tell Hûm (see on Matt. 4:13).

Bethsaida. From the Aramaic *Beth sayeda*’, “house [or place] of fishing [or hunting].” Bethsaida was at the northern end of the Lake Galilee, a little to the east of the place where the Jordan River enters the lake. Philip the Tetrarch (see on Luke 3:1) rebuilt the city and named it Bethsaida Julia, in honor of Julia, daughter of the emperor Augustus (Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 2. 1). The only recorded miracle in this vicinity is that of restoring sight to a blind man (see Mark 8:22–26).

The mighty works. Aside from the miracle recorded in Mark 8:22–26, no miracles are recorded for either Chorazin or Bethsaida. But of course only a few of all Christ’s miracles are recorded in the Gospel accounts (see John 20:30; 21:25).

Tyre and Sidon. See Vol. II, pp. 67–69. A few months later Jesus was to pay a brief visit to the borders of Tyre and Sidon (see ch. 15:21–29).

Sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was commonly worn by suppliants and mourners, and as symbol of repentance (see on Esther 4:1).

22. More tolerable. See on ch. 10:15. God will measure men’s lives by the opportunities that have been improved or neglected. Responsibility will be meted out in direct proportion to the way in which men have made use of the light God has given them.

Day of judgment. See on ch. 3:12.

23. Thou, Capernaum. See on Matt. 4:13; Mark 2:1. The language here used of Capernaum is very similar to that used of Lucifer in Isa. 14:13, 15.

Exalted unto heaven. This clause may be translated alternatively as a question, “Will you be exalted unto heaven?” Capernaum seems to have been proud of its position and power as the chief Jewish city of Galilee (see on ch. 4:13).

Hell. Gr. *hadēs*, from two Greek words, *a*, “not,” and *idein*, “to see,” and thus, literally, “unseen,” meaning the “unseen [world],” the realm, or abode, of the dead; hence, “death,” or “grave.” In Jewish usage *she’ol* is the temporary abode of all the dead,

both righteous and wicked. For the word *she'ol* see on 2 Sam. 12:23; Prov. 15:11. For “the gates of death” see on Ps. 9:13. The NT usage of *hadēs* is the same as that of the OT *she'ol*. It is important to distinguish between the “hell” of *hadēs* and that of Gehenna, Gr. *geenan*, the “hell” of fire (see on Matt. 5:22). In the LXX *hadēs* is the usual translation for the Heb. *she'ol*, “grave,” as in Hosea 13:14, where *she'ol*, “grave,” stands poetically parallel to *maweth*, “death.” Here both “grave” and “death” are personified. The word *hadēs* appears on many ancient tombstones in Asia Minor, of the “grave of” such and such a person.

Compare the expression, “brought down to hell,” with Isa. 14:15.

The mighty works. See v. 20; see p. 208.

Sodom. See on ch. 10:15.

Would have remained. Compare Jer. 17:25, 27, with regard to Jerusalem.

24. More tolerable. See on ch. 10:15.

25. At that time. Whether this is intended to indicate that vs. 25–30 were spoken by Jesus upon the same occasion as vs. 7–24, that is, after the departure of the two disciples sent by John (v. 7), or whether “at that time” is only a general literary expression loosely connecting these remarks with those that precede (vs. 7–24), is not certain. A parallel passage in Luke (ch. 10:21, 22) is specifically located as following the return of the Seventy (vs. 17, 21), which probably took place in the late autumn of A.D. 30. This was approximately a year later than the context in Matthew suggests. Christ may, of course, have spoken similarly upon both occasions.

In Matthew, the visit of John’s disciples (vs. 2–6), Jesus’ eulogy of John (vs. 7–15), His woes on those who had rejected His message (vs. 16–24), and His commendation of those who accepted it (vs. 25–30), appear to be one sequence of instruction, closely related in point of time to the sending forth of the Twelve (chs. 9:36 to 11:1).

According to DA 342 the feast at Matthew’s home came on the day Jesus healed Jairus’ daughter, at the close of the Second Galilean Tour (see on Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:21). But it was following Matthew’s feast that the disciples came to Jesus with the question on fasting (see Matt. 9:14–17; DA 275). And it was after the question on fasting that two of John’s disciples came with the question about the Messiahship of Jesus (DA 276). Furthermore, it was immediately following the departure of the two disciples that Jesus gave His eulogy of John (DA 218). From this it would appear that ch. 11:2–19 is to be assigned to one occasion as a definitely related sequence, both in line of thought and in point of time, between the close of the Second Galilean Tour, probably in the autumn of A.D. 29 (see on Luke 8:1), and the death of John the Baptist early the following spring, before the Passover of A.D. 30 (see on Luke 3:19, 20). This sequence obviously cannot be assigned to the time of the sending forth of the Seventy, which probably took place more than half a year after the death of more than a year after the death of John, nor can it be assigned to the earlier part of the second tour, as might be concluded from Luke 7:17–19, for the reasons here set forth.

For the purposes of this commentary the discourse of Matt. 11:7–30 is considered as a unit, and is assigned to the winter of A.D. 29–30. It was repeated, in part, during the Peraean ministry a year later (see DA 488; Additional Notes on Chapter 3, Note 2).

I thank thee. This statement reflects the idea of praise gladly given in acknowledgment of the wisdom of God in doing what the verse states. The circumstances were outwardly most discouraging (vs. 20–24), for the leaders of Israel and of many of the great cities refused to accept the gospel message. Jesus, nevertheless, found cause for rejoicing in the fact that so many of the common people “heard him gladly” (see Mark 12:37).

Father. See on ch. 6:9.

Thou hast hid. Here God is represented as hiding truth from some persons and revealing it to others. However, it is clear that “the wise and prudent”—the leaders of Israel—had had fully as much, if not greater, opportunity to understand Jesus than any of their countrymen. In fact, Jesus devoted the early part of His ministry to the region of Judea, which gave the Jewish leaders an opportunity to evaluate the evidence that He was the Messiah of prophecy (see on ch. 4:12). Furthermore, being learned in the Scriptures, they, more than the semiliterate common people, should have understood the intent of prophecy and recognized its fulfillment in the person and mission of Jesus (see on ch. 2:4–6). However, the leaders of Israel chose to reject the light Heaven so graciously gave them (see Hosea 4:6; DA 30). There was no partiality on God’s part.

These things. This may be a reference to Christ’s “mighty works” (vs. 21, 23), which were designed to provide convincing evidence of the validity of His message (see John 5:36; 10:38; 14:11; DA 406, 407). The significance of “these things” was hidden from those who chose not to see them. God never forces truth upon those who prefer not to accept it (see on Matt. 7:6).

Babes. Gr. *nēpios*, “infant,” has an extended meaning of “childish,” “simple,” “unskilled,” possibly from Gr. *nēpeleō*, “to be without power,” “be impotent, weak.” The term applies equally to a child or any person who lacks skill or understanding. In the LXX *nēpios* is sometimes used to translate the Heb. *pethi* (see on Ps. 19:7; 119:130). The learned rabbis looked upon the illiterate fishermen and farmers, the ‘*amme ha’areṣ*, or “people of the land,” as being mere “babes” in the law. Christ says in effect, “Call the common people ‘babes’ if you will, but the fact remains that they have demonstrated a higher degree of discernment when it comes to recognizing in Me the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.” Those who made no pretense of learning showed greater wisdom than the professed wise men of the nation. Possibly foremost among the “babes” to whom Christ here refers were the disciples.

27. *Delivered.* Gr. *paradidōmi*, literally, “to hand over [to another].” Christ here refers to His divine commission to be the representative of the Father for the salvation of this world, as the remainder of the verse makes clear. Since the fall of man “all the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ” (PP 366). “All things” pertaining to the salvation of this world have been entrusted to Him. Christ was “sent” by the Father and “came” to this earth to accomplish His divine will for fallen humanity (see John 4:34). Having successfully accomplished His mission, Christ received “all power” (Matt. 28:18) to “save” to the “uttermost” all who came to Him in faith (see Heb. 7:25).

My Father. See on ch. 6:9.

Knoweth. The Greek implies certain or full knowledge or recognition. It is impossible for any human mind to comprehend fully the infinite wisdom and love of God manifest in His gift of Jesus.

Neither knoweth any man. Satan had led men to picture God as a stern and exacting taskmaster, though in reality He is a God of love (1 John 4:8), “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9; cf. Eze. 18:23, 32; 33:11). Christ came to reveal the Father. To know the Father is to love and serve Him.

Save the Son. This statement implies that even the angels do not fully appreciate the goodness of the divine character, though in the outworking of the plan of salvation they, together with all created beings, may come to understand Him better. Only Jesus can reveal the Father because only Jesus knows Him intimately.

The Son will reveal. See on v. 25.

28. Come unto me. In effect, Christ says: “Do not expect to find the way of life, the way to true wisdom and ‘rest,’ by going to the so-called ‘wise’ and ‘prudent’ [v. 25]. They are no better than ‘blind leaders of the blind’ [see ch. 15:14].” “Instead, come to Me.” Christ alone knows the Father; therefore Christ alone can reveal the Father (see on ch. 6:9). In these gracious words Christ extended to the multitude (DA 328) an invitation to become His disciples. The invitation to discipleship includes taking the “yoke” of Jesus (ch. 11:29).

Ye that labour. It is not of physical labor that Christ here speaks. He speaks rather of “labour” of soul and mind, which truly causes one to be burdened with care. This invitation would come with special force to the listening multitude, for the religion of Israel had degenerated into a meaningless round of “labour” in an attempt to find salvation by works.

Heavy laden. All mankind bear many heavy burdens, the heaviest of which is sin. However, in addition to the usual “burdens” borne in common by all humanity, the scribes and Pharisees had bound many other “heavy burdens” on the backs of the Jewish people, burdens “grievous to be borne” (ch. 23:4). The people were “heavy laden” with so many rabbinical requirements that an entire lifetime was ordinarily too short to learn them all. Instead of giving “rest” of soul to those who already bore a heavy burden of sin (DA 328), these rabbinical requirements served only to crush out of the people any spark of life and hope that might remain. The people who sought to be conscientious groaned beneath the burden, while many—the “publicans and sinners”—gave up hope completely. The latter were outside the pale of religious respectability, and no longer made a profession of religion. These unfortunate and discouraging results were the very ills Jesus came to alleviate.

Rest. Gr. *anapausis*, “intermission,” “cessation,” “rest,” “respite,” “recreation.”

Anapausis is the word commonly used in the LXX to refer to the “rest” of the Sabbath.

Anapausis refers to a temporary cessation of labor, not to permanent inactivity. Those who come to Christ do not cease to work, but instead of laboring “for the meat which perisheth,” and becoming utterly weary in the attempt, they labour “for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (see on John 6:27). Those who think they earn salvation by going about with heavy burdens “grievous to be borne” are mournfully ignorant of the fact that Christ’s “yoke is easy” and His “burden is light” (Matt. 11:30).

29. Take my yoke. That is, submit to the discipline and training of My way of life. Originally an instrument of service designed to make cooperative effort possible, the “yoke” became, from ancient times, a sign of submission, especially to a conqueror. A victorious general mounted a yoke on two spears and made the defeated army march under it in token of submission. To “pass under the yoke” was a common expression designating submission and servitude (cf. Jer. 27:1–11, 17; Jer. 28:1–14).

The purpose of a yoke was not to make the burdens of draft animals heavier, but lighter; not harder, but easier to bear. Thus the true meaning of the word “yoke” becomes clear. By “my yoke” Christ meant His way of life. The “yoke” of Christ is none other than the divine will as summed up in the law of God and magnified in the Sermon on the Mount (see Isa. 42:21; DA 329; see on Matt. 5:17–22). The figure Christ here uses was not unfamiliar to His hearers, hearer, for the rabbis also referred to the Torah (see on Deut. 31:9) as a “yoke,” not in the sense of its being a burden, but rather a discipline, a way of life to which men were to submit (Mishnah *Aboth* 3. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 29, 30; *Berakoth* 2. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 75).

Meek. Gr. *praüs*, “gentle,” or “mild.” Tame animals were said to be *praüs*; they were submissive and harmless. One who is “meek” intends nothing but good toward others (see on ch. 5:5).

Lowly. Or, “humble.” A person humble in his own estimation assigns himself a low position in comparison with others; he esteems others better than himself. Being “gentle” and “humble,” Christ is a sympathetic teacher, and those who learn of Him will also be “gentle” and “humble.” So-called Christians who have not learned to be “gentle” and “humble” have not learned in the school of Christ (see Phil. 2:2–8).

Find rest. See on v. 28. Those who find the rest of which Jesus speaks will walk in “the old paths” and conform their lives to “the good way” of God’s own choosing (see Jer. 6:16).

Souls. Gr. *psuchai*, sing. *psuchē* (see on ch. 10:28).

30. Easy. Gr. *chrēstos*, “fit for use,” “good,” “kindly,” or “pleasant”; not “easy” in the sense of being not difficult. No one English word is a good equivalent for *chrēstos*.

My burden is light. He who truly loves Christ will delight to do His will (see on Ps. 40:8). Those who take the “yoke” of submission to the Master, who “come” to “learn” in His school, will find the “rest” of soul He has promised. The heavy burden of legal righteousness, of trying to gain salvation by means of merit supposedly earned by one’s own works rather than secured through the merit of Christ, and the still heavier burden of sin itself, will all be rolled away.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–11 DA 214–220

3 DA 216; MH 34

4–6 MH 35

5 Ev 565; GC 20; 8T 20

7 ML 73, 329; 3T 197, 225; 4T 556

7, 8 DA 218

9–11 DA 219

11 Ed 158; EW 155; FE 310; MH 379; ML 329; 4T 109; 5T 224

- 12 LS 298
 14 DA 135
 19 DA 276; WM 287
 20–24FE 258
 20–309T 265
 21 5T 529
 21–239T 266
 23, 24 3T 200; 5T 624
 25 Ev 333; MB 27; 4T 585; 5T 388
 25, 26 CSW 78
 27 MH 419; SC 11; 5T 737; 8T 265
 28 AH 205; CM 40, 47; DA 289; Ed 80; GC 20, 75, 568; GW 419; MB 8; MH 115, 247, 512; ML 155; MM 17, 51, 52; MYP 98; SC 26, 71; TM 334, 516; 2T 49, 118; 7T 69, 244, 269, 297; 9T 31
 28, 29 AH 380; CT 31; DA 328; FE 183, 184; MM 47; PP 294, 687; TM 330, 486, 501; 2T 567; 3T 477; 4T 101; 5T 17; 6T 99, 160
 28–30CH 319, 370; COL 230; CT 369; FE 387, 480; MM 20, 117; SC 47; TM 253, 347, 493; 2T 81, 640; 3T 335; 4T 105, 558; 5T 410, 648, 725; 6T 247, 318, 471; 8T 124, 129, 300; 9T 124; WM 54
 29 AH 118; CH 590; CSW 112, 168; CT 31, 210, 282; CW 80; DA 330; FE 152, 169, 191, 223, 267, 278, 441; MB 14, 16; MH 71, 150, 442; SC 71; Te 120; TM 223, 456; 2T 188, 222, 316 438, 562; 3T 384, 448, 457; 4T 224, 226, 376, 486, 527; 5T 238, 485, 487; 6T 99, 165, 443; 7T 272; 8T 195, 307; 9T 147, 190
 29, 30 CT 211; DA 330; Ev 58, 117; FE 340, 463; GC 489; MB 101; MYP 138; SL 82; TM 127, 192, 264; 4T 241; 5T 648
 30 FE 283; LS 292; MH 481; TM 345; IT 161

CHAPTER 12

1 *Christ reproveth the blindness of the Pharisees concerning the breach of the sabbath, 3 by scriptures, 9 by reason, 13 and by a miracle. 22 He healeth the man possessed that was blind and dumb. 31 Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. 36 Account shall be made of idle words. 39 He rebuketh the unfaithful, who seek after a sign: 49 and sheweth who is his brother, sister, and mother.*

1. At that time. [*Plucking Grain on the Sabbath*, Matt. 12:1–8=Mark 2:23–28=Luke 6:1–5. Major comment: Mark. See Early Galilean Ministry] As used by Matthew, this expression does not necessarily imply any particular chronological relationship between what precedes and what follows. It is, rather, a general statement. This is evident from its use in ch. 14:1. The Sermon by the Sea, recorded in ch. 13, was delivered during the autumn of A.D. 29 (see on ch. 13:2), about six months prior to the death of John the Baptist, which is mentioned in ch. 14:2.

Through the corn. Literally, “through the grainfields.”

Ears of corn. That is, of grain of any kind, perhaps of wheat, or even of barley. It is interesting to note that all accusations brought against the disciples of Christ, as recorded in the book of Matthew, were related to food in one way or another (see chs. 9:14; 15:2; etc.).

6. One greater. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 146) the reading “[something] greater,” a neuter, rather than “[someone] greater,” masculine. In the latter case reference would, of course, be to Christ.

“[Something] greater” would refer to the spirit of true worship (see John 4:23, 24) in contrast with the materials out of which the Temple had been built and with the forms of worship conducted there. If the Temple itself were exempt from the Sabbath restrictions against labor, how could the Master of the Temple, whose “house” it was, and who was therefore “greater than the temple,” be cited for Sabbathkeeping? To the Jews the Temple was more sacred than any other object on earth; yet here Christ affirms that He is greater than even the Temple—a bold claim indeed. He is “greater than the temple”—He is “Lord even of the sabbath day,” the most sacred of religious institutions (Matt. 12:8). Christ points out that both the Temple and the Sabbath were ordained to the service of man, not to lord it over him. Man was not made in order that there might be someone to worship in the Temple and to observe the Sabbath; rather, these were to serve man (see on Mark 2:27).

7. Mercy, and not sacrifice. See on ch. 9:13.

Condemned the guiltless. The reference here is to the disciples. All too frequently ignorance of the true import of Scripture—in other words, false concepts of truth—and false pride, coupled with jealousy of those who know and obey the truth, lead to criticism and persecution (see on ch. 5:10–12).

9. When he was departed. [*The Man With a Withered Hand*, Matt. 12:9–14=Mark 3:1–6=Luke 6:6–11. Major comment: Mark and Luke.] Probably soon, but not necessarily immediately, after (see on v. 1). It could not have been the same Sabbath (see on Luke 6:6).

15. When Jesus knew it. [*Jesus’ Popularity*, Matt. 12:15–21=Mark 3:7–12. Major comment: Mark.] That is, when Jesus became aware of the conspiracy between the Pharisees and the Herodians after the healing of the man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (see Matt. 12:14; see on Mark 3:6). His increase of popularity had a proportionately opposite effect of raising a tide of opposition against Him (see on Matt. 4:24).

He withdrew. Probably not till after the Sabbath day, as a long Sabbath journey would unnecessarily have prejudiced the Jewish leaders against Him. In regard to “a sabbath day’s journey” see p. 50.

17. Spoken by Esaias. This seems to be a free translation, or paraphrase, of Isa. 42:1–4, although it might possibly be a quotation from a Greek version that has since been lost. The first three verses of the quotation follow fairly closely the Hebrew of Isa. 42:1–3, and Matt. 12:21 follows almost exactly the LXX of the final clause of Isa. 42:4, omitting the first two clauses of the verse. See on Isa. 42:1–4.

18. My servant. That is, Christ, the “Messiah” (see on Isa. 42:1).

Shew judgment. Or, “proclaim justice” (RSV).

20. A bruised reed. Or, “a crushed reed.” Jesus considered neither the bruised reed nor the smoking flax useless; there was a possibility of improvement in both cases.

Shall he not break. So long as there was the least hope of restoration Jesus would labor diligently to “revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15).

Smoking flax. The Gr. *linon*, “flax”; hence also anything made of flax. Here, the “flax” is probably a lampwick, pictured as flickering and ready to go out. But the owner of the lamp desires its light, and spares no effort to keep it burning.

Judgment. Or, “justice.”

22. Then. [*A Blind and Dumb Demoniac; The Unpardonable Sin*, Matt. 12:22–45=Mark 3:20–30=Luke 11:14–32. Major comment: Matthew. See Middle Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] The remainder of this chapter (vs. 22–50) is one of the more difficult passages to locate in the sequence of events in Christ’s ministry. There seem to be good reasons to believe that vs. 22–50 are a record of a single incident and the subsequent controversy that grew out of it: (1) There is apparently little time lapse between the healing of the blind and dumb demoniac and the charge brought by the Pharisees (see v. 24). (2) The demand for a sign was repeated at least twice during Christ’s ministry, and the incident noted here seems to be the first (the second on record occurred at Magdala, as stated in chs. 15:39 to 16:5, probably during the summer of A.D. 30). It should be noted that this request (ch. 12:38) for a sign came in response to Christ’s denial of casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub. (3) The discussion concerning the “unclean spirit” and the “seven other spirits” in vs. 43–45 no doubt followed the teachings of vs. 22–42 without any appreciable interruption, as appears from DA 323. (4) The visit of Christ’s mother and brethren, mentioned in vs. 46–50 came “while he yet talked” (v. 46; cf. DA 325).

According to ch. 13:1 it was the same day on which the instruction of ch. 12:22–50 was given that Christ spoke the parables of the Sermon by the Sea, recorded in ch. 13. For evidence of the close chronological relationship between chs. 12:22–50 and 13:1–58 see on ch. 13:1. This would place the discussion of ch. 12:22–50 in the autumn of A.D. 29 (see on Matt. 13:1; Mark 3:13).

One possessed. There were at least two instances in which Christ healed a blind and dumb demoniac (see DA 321; ch. 9:32–35). For a study of demon possession, see Additional Note on Mark 1.

23. Were amazed. See on Mark 2:12.

Son of David. See on ch. 1:1. The form of the question in Greek implies that a negative answer is expected (see on Luke 6:39). The people exclaim, as it were. “This cannot be the Son of David [the Messiah], can it?” They may have realized that the Messiah of prophecy was to do the wonderful deeds that Christ performed, but they found it difficult to see in Jesus, apparently a common man among men, the Messiah of prophecy (cf. DA 197, 385). The fact that many people heard Christ gladly (see Mark 12:37), recognized Him as a great teacher (see John 3:2), and even a prophet (see Matt. 21:11), does not mean they necessarily accepted Him as the Messiah. His many mighty works ignited the flame of hope in their hearts that He might be the Messiah (see on Luke 24:21; cf. DA 406), but their preconceived idea of what the Messiah was to be like (see on Matt. 4:17; Luke 4:19; cf. DA 30) almost immediately quenched the feeble flame.

24. The Pharisees heard it. Apparently the flickering hope of the people that Jesus might prove to be the Messiah of prophecy (see v. 23) angered the Pharisees. Mark speaks of these Pharisees as “the scribes which came down from Jerusalem” (Mark 3:22), probably spies sent out by the Sanhedrin to observe and report on Christ (see on Mark 2:6). These wary foes of Jesus could not deny that a genuine miracle had been performed, for the healed man “spoke and saw” (Matt. 12:22). The greater the evidence of the

divinity of Jesus, the greater became their anger and hatred, which led eventually to the commission of the unpardonable sin by some of Jesus' enemies (see on vs. 31, 32).

This fellow. Gr. *houtos*, "this [one]." These Pharisees showed their contempt by refusing to take the name of Jesus on their lips and disdainfully referred to Him as "this [one]" (see on Luke 14:30; Luke 15:2).

Beelzebub. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between the readings "Beezebul" and "Beelzebub." The KJV reading "Beelzebub" was adopted by Jerome for the Latin Vulgate, and, apparently, from there was taken over by the KJV translators. The meaning of the name is debatable. Perhaps the name Beelzebub is from the Hebrew *ba'al zebul*, possibly meaning "lord of the great house [or temple]," or "lord of the heavenly house." Several Ras Shamrah tablets from about 1400 B.C. speak of "Zebul, prince of the earth." Beelzebub may thus mean "Baal is prince." It has been suggested that the Jews may have changed the name from Beelzebub to Beelzebub, "lord of flies," out of contempt for this pagan deity, the patron god of Ekron (see on 2 Kings 1:2).

In the healing of the blind and dumb demoniac it was evident that more than human power was present. The spies refused to concede that Jesus was divine and possessed power to effect the miracle; He must, therefore, be in league with the devil.

25. Knew their thoughts. See on Mark 2:8.

Every kingdom. A nation in which there is civil war obviously weakens its standing and power with respect to other nations.

House. Perhaps referring to a political territory as the "house" of the one who rules over it, though the principle stated would be equally true of a "house" in the sense of a family dwelling.

26. Cast out Satan. Satan was engaged in mortal combat with Christ (see Rev. 12:7–9; cf. Matt. 4:1–11; John 12:31; John 16:11; etc.). The devil could hardly be foolish enough to work at cross-purposes with himself, sustaining the claims of his archenemy, Christ, by cooperating with Him in the expulsion of demons he himself had inflicted upon men. On the basis of such a policy "his kingdom" was certain to fall. Herewith Jesus reduced the argument of the Pharisees to absurdity, and His reasoning was so clear and simple that all could see it.

27. By whom do your children? Having shown the absurdity of the argument set forth by the Pharisees, Christ now confronts them with a dilemma. Obviously, some Pharisees did claim to be able to exorcise evil spirits, or Jesus would not have presented this as a fact. Josephus relates that such attempts were at least made, and gives an example (*Antiquities* viii. 2. 5 [45–49]). The word "children" refers, not to natural offspring of the men to whom Christ spoke, but to their adherents. Thus in OT times students in the schools of the prophets were commonly called "sons of the prophets" (see on 2 Kings 6:1).

23. But if. Having shown the absurdity of the claim made by the Pharisees (vs. 25, 26) and having confronted them with a dilemma to which they could give no answer (v. 27), Christ leads on to the inevitable alternative that what they have attributed to Satan is in reality none other than the power of God (see on v. 24). Luke speaks of this power as the "finger of God" (Luke 11:20; cf. Ex. 8:19). During His ministry on earth Christ's miracles were accomplished by the power of God through the ministry of angels (DA 143). His miracles attested His Messiahship (see DA 406), and if the Messiah were here (see Matt. 12:23), it must be that His "kingdom" could not be far away.

Is come. Literally, “has come.”

29. How can one enter? In the parable Christ now sets forth He reinforces the truth stated in v. 28 that the “kingdom of God” is come and that the kingdom of Satan is being invaded. Christ is the “one” who enters Satan’s “house” or “kingdom” (see on v. 25). A man does not enter his own house and “spoil” his own “goods”; Satan does not “cast out” Satan (see v. 26). Therefore someone entering the “house” of Beelzebul (see on v. 24), to “spoil his goods,” must of necessity be his enemy.

A strong man’s. Literally, “the strong man’s,” in other words, Satan’s.

Spoil his goods. Satan claimed this world as his, that it had been “delivered” to him (see Luke 4:6). In that sense, this world was his “house,” and the human beings in it constituted his “goods.” Christ came to release Satan’s captives, first from the prison house of sin (see on Luke 4:18) and then from the prison house of death (see Rev. 1:18). By casting out demons Christ was robbing Satan of his victims, that is, spoiling his “goods.”

Bind the strong man. He who would bind a “strong man” must of necessity be stronger than the “strong man” (see Luke 11:22). God alone is stronger than Satan; therefore, in the face of evidence that Jesus is releasing the captives of Satan, it must be that the power of God is operating through Jesus. The mighty deeds of Christ testify, not to an alliance with Satan, but to warfare against him (see DA 406).

30. Not with me. In the great conflict for the soul of man, there is no middle ground; neutrality is impossible (see DA 324). Every man is either a patriot or a traitor. He who is not wholly on the side of Christ is wholly on the side of the enemy, that is, the weight of his influence is in that direction. To be almost, but not wholly, with Christ is to be, not almost, but wholly against Him. What Christ here affirms is not to be construed as contradicting the statement of Mark 9:40, “He that is not against us is on our part,” which means simply that those who advance the cause of Christ cannot be considered as being “against” Him.

31. All manner of sin. Even “blasphemy” can be forgiven—with one exception.

Blasphemy. In the particular situation Christ here refers to, a group of Pharisees had attributed the power of the Holy Spirit (see on v. 28) to the devil (v. 24) in the full knowledge that their charge was false (see DA 322). It was this deliberate rejection of light that was leading them, step by step, toward “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.” It is important to note that the statement made by the Pharisees came as the climax of a protracted process of rejecting increasingly clear evidence of divinity of Jesus (see DA 213, 538), a process that had begun with the birth of Jesus (see DA 63) but which became more intense as His ministry progressed. The clearer the evidence, the stronger their opposition to Him (cf. Hosea 4:6). As time went on and each encounter with Jesus served only to reveal their hypocrisy, they became more and more bitter and outspoken. Now they came out openly, declaring Christ to be demon possessed and working in collaboration with Satan, as one of his accomplices (cf. 5T 634). Henceforth they were under the control of the very power they had accused Christ of being subject to (DA 323).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or the unpardonable sin, consists of progressive resistance to truth that culminates in a final and irrevocable decision against it, deliberately made in the full knowledge that by so doing one is choosing to pursue his own course of action in opposition to the divine will. The conscience is seared by continued resistance to the impressions of the Holy Spirit, and one may hardly be aware

that he has made the fateful decision. There may, indeed, be nothing more than continuing failure to reach a decision to act in harmony with God's will (see DA 324). A person troubled with a haunting fear that he has committed the "unpardonable sin," thereby has conclusive evidence that he has not committed it.

The most miserable person in the world is one whose conscience troubles him for doing wrong when he knows that he should do right. A miserable Christian experience is usually the result of not living up to the light one has. A person whose conscience troubles him may solve the problem and remove the tension in one of two ways: He may yield to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit by making wrongs right with God and man, or he may sear his conscience and eliminate its painful promptings by silencing the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 4:30). The person who takes the latter course cannot repent, because his conscience has been forever made insensitive, and he does not want to repent. He has deliberately placed his soul beyond the reach of divine grace. His persistent perversion of the power of choice results in the loss of the power to discern between good and evil. Evil finally appears to be good, and good appears to be evil (see Micah 3:2; see on Isa. 5:20). Such is the deceptiveness of sin.

Conscience has been aptly called the eye of God in the soul of man. It is a divinely implanted monitor that prompts men ever to live in obedience to the light that has been revealed to them. To tamper with it in the least is to risk the peril of eternal loss. Deliberate and persistent disobedience to God finally becomes a habit that cannot be broken (see DA 324). Compare the process commonly spoken of as "hardening the heart" (see on Ex. 4:21).

Not be forgiven. Not because God is unwilling to forgive, but because the one who has committed this sin has no desire to be forgiven. Such a desire is vitally necessary to forgiveness. Such a one has severed his line of communication with heaven in order that he may no longer be troubled with the warning calls of the Holy Spirit.

32. *Son of man.* See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Forgiven him. Compare the prayer Christ made for forgiveness for the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross (see Luke 23:34). Many of the priests and leaders of the people, together with thousands of others, eventually "believed on him," and after Pentecost took their stand with the disciples (see John 12:42; Acts 6:7). They could be forgiven because they had not previously discerned fully the divine character of Jesus (DA 322). Their failure to recognize Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy, because of their misunderstanding of OT prophecy (DA 30), did not render these persons insensitive to truth, and when they did see the truth as it is in Christ Jesus they boldly took their stand for it.

Not be forgiven. See on v. 31.

This world. Literally, "this age" (see on ch. 13:39).

The world to come. That is, the coming "age," or the future life. There is to be no second probation.

33. *Either.* The Pharisees were inconsistent. They had attributed deliverance from demon possession—certainly something "good"—to the demons themselves (see v. 24). If the results are good, the cause must also be good.

The tree. As the context makes evident, Jesus here refers to Himself. The healing of the demon-possessed deaf-mute (v. 22) was the "fruit," and none who witnessed the miracle could deny that the "fruit" was "good." The Pharisees, however, attributed this

good “fruit” to a corrupt “tree,” to “Beelzebub the prince of devils” (v. 24). But Jesus declared that only a good character can produce “good things,” even as an evil character produces “evil things” (v. 35). A “good tree” is always to be known by its “good fruit,” and a “corrupt tree” by its “evil fruit” (see on ch. 7:16–20). Thus the Pharisees were altogether illogical in attributing admittedly good “fruit” to a “corrupt tree.” The OT often compares a person, or a people, to a tree (see on Judges 9:8–10; Ps. 1:3; Isa. 56:3; Dan. 4:10).

At a later time Jesus compared Himself to a “vine,” His disciples to “the branches,” and those won to the kingdom to “fruit” (see John 15:5–8). For other instances of the use of the same object to represent different things and to teach different truths, see on Matt. 13:33.

34. Generation of vipers. Or, “offspring of vipers” (see on ch. 3:7).

How can ye? The “fruit” (v. 33), or the “offspring” (v. 34), of the Pharisees was not “good.” The “things” they had spoken—their “fruit”—was “evil,” and this in turn pointed to an evil source. They acted like “vipers,” and it must therefore be that they were the offspring of “vipers” (see on John 8:44).

Abundance of the heart. A man’s words are to a greater or lesser extent a reflection of the thoughts that fill his mind; it cannot be otherwise. The blasphemous words of the Pharisees (v. 24) were not accidental, but represented what was in their hearts. A man’s words betray his thoughts.

35. A good man. A literal application of the principle stated in v. 33 under the figure of a tree.

Treasure. Gr. *thēsauros*, “a casket [for jewels],” “a treasury,” “a storehouse” (see on ch. 2:11). Here the mind is referred to as a storehouse where the accumulated knowledge and experience and the cultivated attitudes and emotions are kept and drawn upon to meet the problems of life.

Of the heart. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 146) the omission of these words.

Bringeth forth. Literally, “throws out,” or “casts out.”

36. Idle. Literally, “not working,” “unprofitable,” “useless,” and thus, as here, “pernicious.” In charging Christ with casting out demons by the prince of demons (v. 24) the Pharisees had made a statement they knew was not true.

Give account. Man is responsible for the way in which he uses the power of choice.

Day of judgment. See on ch. 3:12.

37. Justified. That is, “declared righteous,” or “rendered righteous.” This can be true only when one’s words have been in accord with one’s knowledge of truth. Otherwise a man will prove to be a hypocrite, and as such is “condemned.”

38. Then. For the relationship of vs. 38–42 to the preceding section of ch. 12 see on v. 22.

Certain of the scribes. Almost the entire chapter is concerned with instances of Pharisaic opposition to Christ (see vs. 2, 14, 24, 38). Only vs. 46–50 deal with another subject. Concerning the scribes see p. 55; see on Mark 1:22.

Pharisees. See pp. 51, 52.

Master. Gr. *didaskalos*, “Teacher.” In addressing Jesus as “Teacher” the scribes and Pharisees were not in any sense admitting Him to be one. It was a simple fact that He was teaching, and *didaskalos* was the popular form of addressing anyone who taught.

We would see a sign. The request for a sign recorded in ch. 16:1–5 probably occurred during the summer of A.D. 30, about nine months or so after the incident recorded here. In view of the remarkable miracle performed just before this (ch. 12:22, 23; DA 321), the demand for a “sign” (see p. 208; see on Luke 2:12) was nothing short of an insult. It implied that what had occurred was not a miracle, and subtly insinuated that Christ had as yet given no evidence to attest His supernatural claims. What kind of “sign” did they want or expect? Possibly they wished to see some portent in the sky (see Joel 2:30; cf. Rev. 13:13), or a “sign” such as those by which Moses attested his mission before Pharaoh (see Ex. 7:9–13; etc.). Such a sign might have been considered by them a convincing display of supernatural power. During Christ’s trial before the Sanhedrin the Jewish leaders again demanded a miracle (DA 704, 705). Herod made a similar demand, and promised to release Jesus should He perform such a “sign” (DA 729).

The insincerity of all these demands is apparent from the fact that none of those who made them responded favorably to the miracles Christ did perform. Each evidence of divinity only made them the more determined to silence Him, until finally the raising of Lazarus from the dead served to make them redouble their efforts to put Him out of the way.

39. *Evil and adulterous.* They were “adulterous” in the sense that they had broken the tie that bound them to God as His chosen people. In the OT, apostasy was commonly spoken of as adultery (see on Ps. 73:27).

Generation. See on chs. 11:16; 23:36.

No sign. A hardened and apostate people had no right to demand a sign, and had it been given they would not have accepted it. There was nothing to be gained by casting “pearls before swine” (see on ch. 7:6). In “Moses and the prophets” (see Luke 16:31) there was sufficient light to guide men into the way of salvation, and accordingly the basic reason why the scribes and Pharisees refused to accept Christ was that they had not really accepted the OT Scriptures that testified of Him (see John 5:45–47).

Jonas. That is, Jonah. In what sense was the prophet Jonah a “sign”? The answer lies in those aspects of Jonah’s ministry on which Christ now comments. The first of these “sign” elements in the experience of Jonah was his encounter with the monster of the deep (v. 40); the second, his successful preaching to the people of Nineveh (v. 41).

40. *For as Jonas.* Christ’s resurrection was the supreme miracle of His mission to earth, and to that great future event Christ now directs His critics.

Three days. See pp. 248–251.

Whale’s. Gr. *kētos*, meaning any sea monster or fish of great size, not necessarily a “whale” (see on Jonah 1:17; 2:1). The constellation Cetus represents a sea monster, its name being simply an English transliteration of the Gr. *kētos*.

Heart of the earth. Christ here no doubt refers to the time He spent in Joseph’s tomb, from late Friday afternoon to early Sunday morning.

41. *Men of Nineveh.* The “sign of the prophet Jonas” (v. 39) consisted not only in his miraculous escape from the “whale’s belly,” but also in his successful ministry for the people of Nineveh, capital of ancient Assyria (see DA 406).

Rise in judgment. That is, come forward as witnesses on the final day of judgment. It has been suggested that the Aramaic expression Christ here used originally meant “to accuse.”

This generation. See on chs. 11:16; 23:36; 24:34.

They repented. Whether Jonah told the men of Nineveh about his experience with the sea monster we cannot say; the Scriptures are silent on this. The important point is that the Ninevites “repented” in spite of the fact that Jonah worked no miracles for them. They accepted his message on his own authority, because it carried conviction to their hearts (see Jonah 3:5–10). The same should have been true in the case of the scribes and Pharisees, for the message Christ bore certainly carried with it convincing evidence of His authority (see on Mark 1:22, 27). But in addition to the words He spoke He wrought many wonderful works, and these constituted an additional testimony that His words were true (see John 5:36). Yet in spite of all this evidence the scribes and Pharisees still obdurately refused to believe the evidence afforded them.

A greater than Jonas. That is, Christ Himself (see on v. 6).

42. Queen of the south. The queen of Sheba, who visited the court of Solomon (see on 1 Kings 10:1, 3, 9).

The wisdom of Solomon. See on 1 Kings 3:12. Divine wisdom, speaking through Solomon, convinced the queen of Sheba that God was with him. And, like Jonah (see on v. 41), Solomon worked no miracle; his words were sufficient. If the words of Jonah and Solomon bore convincing evidence that God spoke through them, Jesus implied that His own words should likewise prove sufficient.

A greater than Solomon. See on vs. 6, 42.

43. Unclean spirit. [*Seven Unclean Spirits, Matt. 12:43–45.* See on parables pp. 203–207.] Synonymous with “demon.” The comments Christ here makes (vs. 43–45) may be taken as a continuation of His discussion of the unpardonable sin (vs. 31–37). Christ had been interrupted (see vs. 38–42) in His line of thought by this demand for a sign, and He now resumes where He left off, after having replied to that demand. The counsel given here (vs. 43–45) is particularly applicable to those who have listened to the gospel message gladly, but have not yielded to the Holy Spirit (DA 323). These had not yet committed the unpardonable sin, and Jesus warns them not to. For a discussion of demon possession see Additional Note on Mark 1.

In the case of disease a relapse often results in a condition far more serious than that occasioned by the original illness. Physical strength, already greatly diminished, is often powerless before the renewed onslaught of disease. A relapse is often due to the patient’s failure to realize his physical weakness, and to a fatal sense of over-confidence in himself. When recuperating from the sickness of sin we should trust wholly in the merits and power of Christ.

Dry places. Desert regions, where the spirit would find no human beings—no “house” (v. 44)—and would, accordingly, be restless because it was homeless.

44. I will return. The “unclean spirit” implies that his absence was only temporary. Christ is probably thinking of the man out of whom He had cast a demon but a short time previously (see on v. 22). The man was very likely in the audience, and this may have been intended as a warning to him in particular as well as to the audience in general. Certainly it was a warning to the Pharisees (see vs. 31–37).

Empty, swept, and garnished. The condition of the “house,” or person, restored to the state existing before the demon originally took up residence there. The Christian religion does not consist primarily in refraining from evil, but rather in applying the mind and the life intelligently and diligently to that which is good. Christianity is not a negative religion consisting of various prohibitions, but a positive, constructive force for good. It

is not enough that demons, whether literal or figurative, be cast out of the heart and mind; the Spirit of God must come into the life and be placed in control of the thought and conduct (see 2 Chron. 6:16; Eph. 2:22). It is not enough to hate the evil; we must ardently love and cherish that which is good (see Amos 5:15; 2 Thess. 2:10; see on Matt. 6:24).

The hapless person represented by the “house” failed to take a positive stand for God. His intentions were good. He did not anticipate the return of the evil spirit, and therefore failed to yield the “house” to Christ’s control. Submission to Christ might prevent him from using the “house” as he chose, and he therefore decided, for the time being at least, to live his life as he wanted to. Had he surrendered to Christ, a new power would have been in control (see Rom. 6:16), and the unclean spirit could never have gained an entrance. Our only safety is in wholehearted surrender to Christ, in order that He may enter in and live out His perfect life within us (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 3:20). This parable is a solemn warning against mere negative improvement; it is not enough to shun the evil, we must actively “seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1, 2).

45. *Seven other spirits.* Seven, the symbolic number designating completeness, indicates complete demon possession.

Last state. Too often those who have been healed of the disease of sin suffer a relapse, as it were, and thereby become weaker spiritually than they were at first. Not realizing how careful they must be to avoid temptation and to surround themselves with influences for good, they expose themselves unnecessarily to the allurements of the world—often with fatal results (see DA 256). Thus it was with Saul, who, though at one time under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Sam. 10:9–13), did not submit himself fully and completely to God, and as a result was exposed to the control of an evil spirit (see 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9) that finally drove him to suicide. Thus it was also with Judas, who at first was susceptible to the softening influence of Christ, but who did not submit his life exclusively to that influence (DA 294, 717). See on Matt. 13:7.

This wicked generation. See v. 39; see on chs. 11:16; 23:36. The leaders of Israel were in the process of rejecting the light that had come to them.

46. *While he yet talked.* [*Visit of Christ’s Mother and Brothers, Matt. 12:46–50=Mark 3:31–35=Luke 8:19–21.* Major comment: Matthew. See Middle Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord]. For the relationship of this section (vs. 46–50) to the preceding section of the chapter see on v. 22. For an additional incident in the narrative see Luke 11:27, 28.

His mother. Though undoubtedly concerned about Jesus, Mary had faith in Him, a faith not shared by His brothers (see John 7:5). It was their idea, not hers, to restrain Christ from further activity on behalf of the people (see DA 321). They hoped He would yield to Mary’s persuasive appeal; they hardly believed He would listen to their own appeal (cf. DA 87).

His brethren. The gospel writers make it evident that these were sons of Joseph by a former marriage. The fact that Jesus committed His mother to the care of John (see John 19:26, 27) implies that Jesus’ “brethren” (and sisters) were not actually Mary’s own children. That these brothers were older than Jesus is shown by their attitude and relationship to Him. They tried to restrain Him (see on Mark 3:21), they spoke taunting words to Him (see John 7:3, 4), and otherwise interfered with His conduct (cf. Mark 3:31), as only brothers who were older would dare do in those days. To one familiar with

life in Bible lands, this argument in itself appears conclusive. This conclusion, which is based on the Gospel record, is also specifically supported by the observations made in DA 86, 87, 90, 321.

Though these “brethren” did not at this time believe in Jesus (John 7:3–5), they later accepted Him and were numbered among His followers (see on Acts 1:14). At this time Jesus’ brothers were dismayed by reports they had heard concerning His work, particularly how Jesus scarcely had time to eat and sleep. They felt that He was not prudent in His activities (DA 321), and sought to persuade Him to conform to their ideas of how He should conduct Himself (DA 326). No doubt they were also concerned because of the increasingly strained relations between Him and the Jewish leaders.

Stood without. Whether this means “without,” that is, on the outside of the throng surrounding Jesus, or “without” the house mentioned a little later in the narrative (see on ch. 13:1), is not clear.

47. Then one said. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between retaining and omitting this verse, though all manuscripts contain the parallel statements in Mark 3:32 and Luke 8:20. The context favors retaining it.

48. Who is my mother? See on John 2:4. It is clear that Jesus was personally devoted to His mother (see John 19:26, 27). His view of the duty of children to their parents is also clearly set forth in His teachings (see Mark 7:9–13). Accordingly, His meaning here is that even those closest and dearest to Him had no right to interfere with His work or to direct how it should be carried out (cf. Matt. 16:23). See on Luke 2:49.

49. His disciples. Including not only the Twelve but many others as well (see on Mark 3:13; Luke 10:1). The Twelve were, however, in a special sense “members of the family of Jesus” (DA 349), and Jesus was head of the family (see 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23).

50. Will of my Father. See on Matt. 7:21; cf. Luke 8:21.

My brother. Jesus here makes a personal application by the use of nouns in the singular. All who acknowledge God as their Father are members of “the whole family in heaven and earth” (Eph. 3:15). The ties that bind Christians to their heavenly Father and to one another are stronger and truer even than blood ties, and more enduring. Here is a clear denial that Christians should give special attention to Mary (see on Luke 11:28).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 DA 284

1–13 DA 284–289

5–7 DA 285

6 FE 399

10–12 DA 286

12 CH 368; DA 287; ML 231

18–21 TM 127

21 DA 489

22 GC 515

22–29 TM 78

22–50 DA 321–327

29 FE 299; 6T 407

30 AH 95; CH 35; ChS 108; COL 340; FE 194, 254, 292; TM 91, 126; IT 126, 139, 336
453, 485; 2T 47, 103, 176, 213, 263; 3T 243, 328, 529; 4T 17, 641; 5T 130, 394, 424; 8T
45

31 5T 634
 31, 32 DA 322, 324
 31–37TM 71, 78
 32 PP 405
 33 IT 228
 34 DA 323; MB 127; 1T 159, 408; 2T 248, 302, 460, 562, 703; 4T 48; 5T 146, 287
 34, 35 TM 84
 34–372T 95
 35 GW 288
 35–371T 499
 36 EW 112; FE 458; 4T 588; 3T 189
 36, 37 DA 323; GC 481
 37 ML 335; MYP 367; 2T 315; 5T 287
 40, 41 DA 406; PK 270, 274
 43–45DA 323
 45 DA 324
 46–50DA 325
 48–50CH 527
 7

CHAPTER 13

3 *The parable of the sower and the seed* 18 *the exposition of it.* 24 *The parable of the tares,* 31 *of the mustard seed,* 33 *of the leaven,* 44 *of the hidden treasure,* 45 *of the pearl,* 47 *of the dragnet cast into the sea: 53 and how Christ is contemned of his own countrymen.*

1. The same day. [*Sermon by the Sea*, Matt. 13:1–53=Mark 4:1–34=Luke 8:4–18. Major comment: Matthew. See Middle Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord; on parables pp. 203–207.] That is, the same day on which the incidents recorded in ch. 12:22–50 occurred (see on ch. 12:22). The events recorded in ch. 8:18–27 took place at the close of this same day (see Mark 4:35; see on Matt. 8:18). Though there is no proof that this day saw Jesus any busier than countless others, the rather complete record of it has earned for it the designation “the busy day.” It represented one of those common situations in which Jesus scarcely found time to eat or to snatch even a few moments of rest (see DA 333).

Out of the house. This implies that the incidents recorded in ch. 12:22–50, which occurred earlier the same day, had taken place in some dwelling—perhaps that of Peter in Capernaum (see on Mark 1:29)—near the northern limits of the Plain of Gennesaret, or possibly in some home at Magdala near its southern limits (see DA 405).

Sat. The usual position taken by the rabbis as they taught (see p. 58; see on Luke 4:20).

By the sea side. Probably somewhere along the shore of the Lake of Galilee between Capernaum and Magdala, where the Plain of Gennesaret meets the lake (see COL 34).

2. Great multitudes. Concerning the great crowds that pressed about Jesus throughout the period of the Second Galilean Tour, during the autumn of A.D. 29, see on chs. 8:1, 18;

⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 11:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

12:15. Upon this occasion they thronged Jesus so that they all but crowded Him into the water.

A ship. Rather, “a boat.” It seems (see COL 34) that when Jesus left “the house” (v. 1) He went to the shore expecting to enter the boat and proceed directly across the lake. But the urgent appeals of those who were sick and the need of the people for the words of truth detained Him (see COL 33–34; cf. ch. 9:36).

Shore. Gr. *aigialos*, “a beach,” or “a shore.”

3. Spake many things. Heretofore Christ had occasionally made use of brief illustrations that might be called parables (see ch. 7:24–27; etc.); now for the first time (DA 333; COL 20) He made parables a principal vehicle for conveying truth. The Sermon on the Mount had probably been given no more than a few weeks earlier (see on ch. 5:1). It was now probably the autumn of A.D. 29, and across the Plain of Gennesaret, the most productive region of all Galilee (see on Luke 5:1), farmers could be seen sowing their winter grain (COL 34; see Vol. II, p. 108). For a summary of the events of this busy day see on Matt. 12:22; 13:1.

At least ten parables were given upon this occasion. To the eight recorded in Matthew, Mark adds those of the Lamp (ch. 4:21–23) and the Seed Growing Secretly (vs. 26–29). Taken as a whole, the parables as recorded by Matthew present a composite picture of the essential facts concerning the kingdom of heaven.

A sower. [*The Sower, the Seed, and the Soils*, Matt. 13:3–9, 18–23=Mark 4:3–20=Luke 8:5–15. Major comment: Matthew. See on parables pp. 203–207.] As Christ spoke (COL 34) farmers could be seen scattering seed into the rich soil of the Plain of Gennesaret as it sweeps up from the blue waters of Galilee to the foothills. Though this parable is known as the Sower, it could more appropriately be called the Soils, or the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils. Its characteristic feature is neither the sower nor the seed, both of which appear also in the parable of the Tares (vs. 24–30), but rather the four kinds of soil on which the seed fell when it was sown. The parable emphasizes the reception accorded the seed by each of the four kinds of soil, together with the effect this reception had upon the growth of the seed (see COL 43). The skill of the sower and the quality of the seed are the same in relation to each of the four kinds of soil. See on v. 8.

The particular truth represented by the seed in this parable is the nature of Christ’s mission to earth as the Messiah. In greater or lesser degree the true nature of Christ’s kingdom was a “mystery” (see v. 11), because pride had obscured men’s understanding of the OT Scriptures. The Jewish people expected the Messiah to come as a mighty conqueror, to sit upon the throne of David, and to subdue all nations to the Jews (see DA 30; see on Luke 4:19). But in the parable of the Sower, Jesus sets forth the true nature of His mission, the fact that He came, not to subdue the heathen to Israel, but to subdue the hearts of “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). This same truth He had already set forth more formally in the Sermon on the Mount (see on ch. 5:2).

Went forth. In Oriental lands, anciently, as they do today in some localities, farmers dwelt together in villages for protection against roving bands of robbers. In the morning, at daybreak, they “went forth” from their villages to the surrounding fields, and at twilight they returned home again. In the same way Christ, the Sower of truth, came “forth” from the Father in heaven to this world—the “field” (see v. 38)—in order that He might “bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37; cf. ch. 10:10).

4. The way side. Not on the road from the village out to the fields, but on a path along the edge of the field, or on a path running through the field to fields farther on. Because of the hard surface of the path the seed lies exposed and has no opportunity even to germinate. The wayside hearers are those superficial hearers upon whom the truths of the gospel have no effect. As expressed by a Chinese proverb, what they hear enters the “east ear” only to leave immediately by the “west ear.” They do not realize their personal need of the gospel. They are inattentive, they do not understand (v. 19). Seemingly the truth makes no sense to them.

Fowls. That is, the wild birds ever present at plowing time and sowing time. According to Matthew, the birds represent “the wicked one” (v. 19); according to Mark, Satan (ch. 4:15); and according to Luke, the devil (ch. 8:12).

5. Stony places. Apparently this does not refer to ground covered by loose stones, but rather to rocky ledges near the surface, covered with a thin layer of soil. Except in a few favored spots, rocky ledges such as these served effectively to limit the value of the hill country of Palestine as a region for farming.

The gospel seed that falls into the hearts of stony-ground hearers finds enough soil to germinate, but the soil is shallow and the effect of the gospel is at best superficial. The gospel appeals to their emotions, and they are quick to react to it, but the impression made by it passes with the fickle tide of emotion. The rock of selfishness (see COL 46) prevents the gospel from effecting a reform in the life. Any effort to serve Christ is so hindered by the fundamental purpose in life to serve self (see COL 50) that the gospel has little or no influence. Stony-ground hearers habitually follow their inclinations. Any convictions that such people may have are based on inclination rather than on principle. It is evident that the truth has a measure of appeal to them; they admit that it is good; but they love themselves. Quickly accepting what seems good at the moment, they fail to count the cost of discipleship; they do not apply the principles of the gospel to their lives and give it an opportunity to reform their patterns of thought and action. They are unwilling to face the fact that their habits must be changed.

Not much earth. The ledge of rock lying just beneath the surface of the soil absorbed heat and drove moisture from the soil above it.

Forthwith. That is, “immediately.” The additional heat in the soil reflected upward by the rock caused rapid germination. However, there was “no deepness of earth” to store moisture and supply it to the roots as they reached out for it.

6. They withered away. Germination was rapid, but so was withering. The only hope of stony-ground hearers is to be born again (COL 48). The superficial influence of the gospel upon them does not bring about confession and the forsaking of sin (see on v. 5). They do not experience justification. Their reaction to the gospel does not result in conversion.

7. Thorns. Gr. *akantha*, “thorn,” or, “brier”; *akantha* is also used in referring to any prickly plant, such as the “thistle.” Luke defines the “thorns” of the Christian life as the “cares and riches and pleasures of this life” (see Luke 8:14; cf. Matt. 13:22).

In thorny ground the tender plants did not wither as rapidly as they did in the stony ground. Similarly, the experience of thorny-ground Christians progresses further than that of the stony-ground hearers. They make what appears to be a real start, and apparently they experience justification and the new birth. But they soon become “weary in well doing” (Gal. 6:9) and do not “go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1). Absorbed by the

pleasures of this world and in the pursuit of its attractions, they neglect to weed out from the life those tendencies and traits of character that respond to temptation. They are like the person who had been freed from demon possession only to be repossessed by seven evil spirits (see on Matt. 12:43–45). Many of the things that attract the thorny-ground hearers and absorb their attention may not, in and of themselves, be harmful. But such persons become so absorbed in this world that they have no time to prepare for the next.

Thorns sprung up. The thorns made it impossible for the wheat to mature (see Luke 8:14). In the same way secular interests prevent the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) from reaching maturity. Religion is relegated to the subordinate position of being only one interest among many. For lack of cultivation it withers and eventually dies. That which the thorny-ground hearers lack is a moral transformation (COL 50). To them, justification is the sum and substance of religion, and they fail to realize that the Christian life consists essentially in the process known as sanctification—the process by which evil traits and tendencies are replaced by the perfect life-pattern of Jesus Christ (see on Gal. 2:20).

8. *Good ground.* This does not mean that the heart of man is naturally “good” before the seeds of divine truth have made it so, for “it is God which worketh in you both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). In man there naturally “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). The “ground” is “good” simply because it yields to the plowshare of truth, because it responds to the softening influence of the Holy Spirit.

Brought forth fruit. See on ch. 7:16–20. This refers to the fruit of character (see on Gal. 5:22, 23). The fruit of the Spirit manifested in the outward life is evidence of a healthy Christian experience. In the hearts of the wayside hearers the truth found no response. With the stony-ground hearers truth produced nothing more than a momentary impulse. With the thorny-ground hearers it was a response that began well but withered in the face of difficulty and opposition. But in the hearts of the good-ground hearers the response is permanent and effective. The result is a life transformed according to the pattern of the perfect life of Jesus Christ. The successful Christian is not a creature of circumstances; he perseveres to the end (see Matt. 24:13).

An hundredfold. This would be a truly remarkable yield (see on Gen. 26:12). The average yield of wheat in the United States is 17.1 bu. per acre, a yield of approximately 15 fold. Mark reverses the order of yield from the lesser to the greater, and Luke omits mention of the lesser yields.

9. *Ears to hear.* For comment see on chs. 11:15; 13:13–18.

10. *Disciples came.* It seems that Matthew, in harmony with his usual practice, here associates Christ’s private explanation to the disciples, almost certainly given at a later time, with the parable itself, in order to preserve a topical order. Mark specifically mentions that the explanation was given when “he was alone” with the Twelve and some of the other disciples (see ch. 4:10).

In parables. See on v. 3.

11. *It is given.* The fallow soil of the disciples’ hearts had been broken up by the plowshare of the Holy Spirit (see on Hosea 10:12), and the disciples received the seed of truth with joy. Only those who “will do his will” can expect to “know of the doctrine” (John 7:17). The perception of truth depends not so much on keenness of intellect as upon sincerity of desire.

Mysteries. That is, things that are hidden from those who are not sincerely interested in knowing the truth. They are not mysteries in the sense that they cannot be understood or that they are deliberately withheld from some and bestowed upon others. The gospel is “foolishness” to some (see 1 Cor. 1:23) because “the natural man,” unconditioned by the influence of the Holy Spirit, has no capacity for receiving “the things of the Spirit of God” (see 1 Cor. 2:14). The reason he cannot know them is simply that “they are spiritually discerned,” and he lacks the discernment, or insight, necessary to grasp their meaning. Spiritual perception comes only by the operation of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:13; cf. Matt. 16:17).

Not given. See on v. 12. According to Mark the “mystery” of the kingdom is not for “them that are without” (see ch. 4:11), that is, for those outside the circle of followers. There is no purpose in revealing truth to those who would rather not have it (see on Matt. 7:6). It is only those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” who may expect to be “filled” (see on ch. 5:6).

12. Whosoever hath. That is, whoever sincerely desires truth (see on Matt. 13:11; cf. Mark 4:24). The ground must be ready for the seed to a certain extent before it can receive the seed with profit. Those who have made practical use of the truth revealed to them will be given more truth. Those who are spiritually receptive will get infinitely more good from any presentation of truth than the keenest minds that are lacking in spiritual receptiveness. The wonderful gifts of Heaven are for those who eagerly desire them (see DA 827).

Even that he hath. That is, “even that which he seemeth to have” (Luke 8:18). He who neglects to improve what little capacity he may have for the perception of truth will lose even that little capacity.

13. Therefore speak I. See on v. 3. Christ’s purpose was not to conceal truth from those whose spiritual perceptions were dull (see COL 105), but rather to penetrate their dullness of mind and heart, in the hope of creating a capacity to receive more truth (see Luke 8:16). Christ came to this world to “bear witness unto the truth,” not to obscure it (John 18:37). The reason why some failed to produce fruit is found, not in the Sower or the seed, but in the soil (see on Matt. 13:3).

They seeing see not. See on v. 15. Though these persons seem to see, and think that they see, they really do not see at all. Because they say, “We see,” whereas in reality they are blind, their “sin remaineth” (John 9:41). They are willfully blind (see on Hosea 4:6). Their perception, like that of the wayside hearers, is superficial (see on Matt. 13:4, 5). The natural sight is not accompanied by a corresponding spiritual insight.

Neither do they. The Pharisees perceived the meaning of Christ’s parables, but pretended not to understand (see COL 35). They denied the plainest words of Christ because they did not wish to receive them, and therefore their guilt was greater than that of the others. They deliberately blinded the eyes of their souls and locked themselves in darkness (see on ch. 12:31).

14. Fulfilled. Literally, “filled up,” as a cup is filled up.

The prophecy of Esaias. This quotation from Isa. 6:9, 10, as given in the Greek (Matt. 13:14, 15), is identical with the Greek of the LXX. See on Isa. 6:9, 10.

15. People’s heart. That is, their mind.

Waxed gross. Concerning hardening of the heart see on Ex. 4:21.

Their ears are dull of hearing. Literally, “They heard heavily with the[ir] ears.” They were drowsy, and it seemed impossible to arouse them.

Lest at any time. As in Isaiah 6:10, these words are spoken in irony. It was not God’s will that any should be in this condition or that any should fail to understand and be converted. The condition of the Jewish leaders was the natural result of their own conduct and way of life. As pointed out in the parable, it was also the work of Satan (see on Matt. 13:4). The people of whom Isaiah spoke were wayside hearers. Actually, it is Satan who has “blinded the minds of them which believe not” (see 2 Cor. 4:4). It is not the light of Heaven that blinds men’s eyes, but darkness (see 1 John 2:11). Continued darkness often disqualifies the eyes from functioning properly in the presence of light; in fact, eyes accustomed to darkness tend to avoid light.

16. Blessed. Or, “happy” (see on ch. 5:3). Conversely, those who have eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear, are unhappy. True happiness comes only when the eyes of the soul “see” the light of truth. Those who lack spiritual insight can never be truly happy.

17. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Desired to see. That is, to see the Messiah and His kingdom. This was the ardent hope of all the saints of old (see 1 Peter 1:10, 11), who “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them” (Heb. 11:13).

18. Hear ye therefore. For major comment on vs. 18–23 see on vs. 3–9. The explanation of the parable of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils, here given by Christ (vs. 18–23), probably at a later time (see on v. 10), should be taken as a pattern of the principles that underlie all parable interpretation (see p. 204).

20. Anon. Gr. *euthus*, “forthwith,” “at once,” “immediately.”

21. Tribulation. Or, “distress.”

By and by. Gr. *euthus*, the same word translated “anon” (v. 20), “straightway” (Matt. 3:16; John 13:32), “immediately” (Mark 1:12, 28; John 21:3), and “forthwith” (John 19:34; see on Matt. 13:20).

Offended. Gr. *skandalizō*, “to cause to stumble” (see on ch. 5:29).

23. Understandeth. Mark has “receive” (ch. 4:20), and Luke, “keep” (ch. 8:15).

24. Another parable. [*The Tares, Matt. 13:24–30.* On parables see pp. 203–207.] The parable of the Tares appears only in Matthew. It points out that not all of those who profess to accept the principles of the kingdom of heaven are what they may at first appear to be. Judas was one of these fair-weather Christians. Those who become disciples of Christ must not be surprised to find in the “kingdom of heaven”—the kingdom of divine grace here on earth (see on chs. 3:2; 4:17)—some whose lives have not been transformed by the gospel. Christ would have men know that such persons are not of His planting, that their lives are not the product of the gospel seed. Their presence in the church is due to the fact that “an enemy” has “planted” them there, with the twofold purpose of endangering the “wheat” (see on ch. 13:29) and dishonoring and ruining the owner of the “field.”

Put he forth unto them. Literally, “he set before them.”

Kingdom of heaven. See on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3.

Sowed good seed. As in the previous parable, Jesus Himself is the sower of divine truth. The seed He came to sow is “good seed.” He must not be blamed for the fact that

later on tares were discovered growing in the field. Whereas the previous parable dealt primarily with the reception of the seed of truth, this deals with its development. It is cheering to remember that the presence of tares among the wheat did not cause any of the wheat to be changed into tares.

In his field. This “field” is the “world” (see v. 38). It is true that in the world today there are both “tares” and “wheat,” both bad people and good people. But that is to be expected. Here Christ refers particularly to His church, God’s own special “field” (see COL 70). It should be noted that this parable represents “the kingdom of heaven,” that is, the present kingdom of divine grace, the church of God on earth.

25. *While men slept.* The enemy cannot be seen by mortal eyes. Men see only the results of his work, even as they see only the results of the work of the Holy Spirit (see on John 3:8).

His enemy. That is, “the devil” (v. 39), who is Satan, our “adversary” (see on Zech. 3:1). Everything good in the world is of God, and everything evil is, in the last analysis, the product of evil seed sown in the hearts of men by the devil.

Sowed. Literally, “sowed upon”; that is, resowed the field, sowing tares over the previous sowing of wheat or grain. In parts of the Orient even today revenge is taken in precisely the manner described in this parable.

Tares. Gr. *zizania*, probably the *Lolium temulentum*, or bearded darnel. This common Palestinian plant grows about 2 ft. tall. In its earlier stages it is indistinguishable from wheat. Only when the plant matures and the seeds of the darnel turn black is it easy to tell the difference. These seeds are poisonous, and if eaten, produce violent nausea, diarrhea, convulsions, and sometimes death. The “tares” are explained as being the “children of the wicked one” (v. 38), because they resemble him in character. This graphic parable lends itself almost perfectly to the spiritual truth illustrated by it.

26. *Brought forth fruit.* See on v. 25. Compare ch. 7:20, “by their fruits ye shall know them.”

27. *The servants.* Christ did not give any explanation as to whom the servants in the parable represent, probably a good indication that their identity is of no importance so far as the truth the parable represents is concerned. Their presence is merely incidental to the narrative (see p. 204).

Householder. Gr. *oikodespotēs*, that is, the “lord of the house” (see on Luke 2:29). The one who sowed the good seed is said to be “the Son of man” (Matt. 13:37). This identification ties the parable of the Tares very closely to that of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils (see on v. 3).

Whence then? See on v. 25.

28. *An enemy.* See on v. 25.

29. *Lest while ye gather.* The character of the two was not yet mature, and it would be disastrous to attempt what the servants proposed. Quite evidently it was not yet possible to “gather up the tares” without disturbing the wheat and preventing some of it from coming to maturity. Similarly, Christ permitted Judas to become a disciple because otherwise the other disciples, not recognizing his true character, would have questioned the wisdom of their Master (see DA 294; see on v. 24). Until the very close of His ministry Christ never openly rebuked Judas, because the disciples, who looked upon him with favor and admiration, would have been inclined to sympathize with him (see DA 563). Furthermore, he would have considered such a rebuke as justifying revenge.

30. *Grow together.* See on v. 24. Both classes are to be together in the church to the very end of time. Apparently Christ saw no danger to the wheat by permitting this situation to continue. Human wisdom would perhaps have excluded Judas from the inner circle of Christ's disciples, the Twelve, for fear that his influence would prevent the others from measuring up to Christ's goal for them. But nothing in the Gospel record implies that his influence over them was more than temporary; in no instance was it decisive. Judas chose to be numbered with the Twelve, and Jesus accorded him the same privileges and opportunities for the development of character that He provided for the others.

The work of gathering out the tares and burning them is to be accomplished by the angels in the time of "harvest" at "the end of the world" (see vs. 39–42), not by the "servants" prior to that time (vs. 28–30). Down through the centuries, and even today, many zealous, professed Christians have thought it their duty to gather and burn, or otherwise persecute, those whom they considered to be heretics. But Christ has never committed such a task to His earthly representatives. This is not to say that the church should take no action with regard to those whose lives or teachings already reveal the fruitage of evil. But the nature of such action is clearly set forth in the Scriptures (see on Matt. 18:15–20; cf. Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10, 11), and no man has the right to exceed the limits prescribed or to attempt to carry out now what God has said He will do at the end of time.

Harvest. "The harvest is the end of the world" (v. 39). It begins at the close of probationary time (see COL 72; see on ch. 3:12).

Reapers. That is, the angels (see v. 39). It is significant that the servants (v. 27) are not represented as the reapers.

First the tares. It might be expected that the wheat would be gathered before the tares were burned. Possibly Christ's reason for mentioning the burning of the tares first is that at the end of the world the wicked receive their reward before the earth is created anew and made the home of the saints (see 2 Peter 3:7–13; Rev. 20:9, 10, 14, 15; 21:1).

Bind them in bundles. As noted, the work of harvest begins at the close of probationary time (COL 72). When probation closes, the wrath of God is poured out upon the unrepentant of earth (see Rev. 15:1), and the seven last plagues that then fall complete the process of binding the tares into bundles ready to be burned.

Burn them. Every seed produces a harvest after its kind. There is nothing to do with the tares but burn them, lest the seeds of evil sprout again and plunge the world once more into distress and conflict. It is important to note that Christ pointed forward to no time when the tares would all become wheat. He speaks of no second probation for them.

31. *Another parable.* [*The Mustard Seed, Matt. 13:31, 32=Mark 4:30–32.* Major comment: Matthew. On parables see pp. 203–207.] The parable of the Mustard Seed as given in Luke is essentially identical with the similar ones recorded in Matthew (ch. 13:31, 32) and Mark (ch. 4:30–32), though more brief, and appears as part of the Peraean ministry about a year later, at which time Christ repeated much of His former teachings (DA 488).

Kingdom of heaven. For comment see on Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3; Luke 4:19.

Mustard seed. This probably refers to the *Sinapis nigra*, or black mustard, which grows wild in abundance in Palestine but is also often cultivated for its seeds, which are

used as a condiment. In Jewish literature the mustard seed is frequently referred to proverbially to denote minuteness.

Took, and sowed. The mustard of the parable was not wild. It did not grow by accident.

His field. Though Satan, the enemy, claimed this world as his, it was nevertheless God's "field." This was particularly true of the church, possibly also here especially referred to as "his field" (see COL 70).

32. Least of all seeds. Mustard seed was smaller than any other then sowed by Palestinian farmers, far smaller than either wheat or barley seed, for example. But the bush itself, when grown, was larger than any other cultivated plant. The Jewish leaders looked with contempt upon the motley throng now intently listening to Jesus, particularly the few unlearned peasants and fishermen who, as His disciples, sat next to Him. They concluded that Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah and that the "kingdom" He proclaimed, composed of this insignificant group of followers, would never amount to anything. Jesus could have chosen no better representation of the way His "kingdom" appeared to the minds of unregenerate men than the illustration of the insignificant mustard seed.

Becometh a tree. Not in nature but in size. The *Sinapis nigra*, or black mustard, of Palestine (see on v. 31) commonly reaches a height of from 6 to 12 ft., with branches an inch or more thick. Here the figure of a "tree" represents the triumph of the gospel message throughout the world. The kingdom and its subjects might appear insignificant now, but, says Christ, this will not always be the case.

33. Kingdom of heaven. [*The Leaven*, Matt. 13:33=Luke 13:20, 21. Comment: Matthew. On parables see pp. 203-207.] See on chs. 3:2; 4:17. In this parable the kingdom of heaven is represented by the leaven. As the parable of the Mustard Seed represents the extensive growth of the kingdom, that is, in numbers, so the parable of the Leaven represents the intensive, qualitative growth of the individual members of the kingdom. From the human viewpoint the illiterate peasants and fishermen, who at this time constituted practically the only followers of the humble Galilean, might appear most unpromising. But the critical onlooker reckoned without the transforming and elevating power of the gospel.

Leaven. As leaven permeates every part of the dough in which it is placed, so the teachings of Christ would penetrate the lives of those who received them and were willing to be transformed thereby.

In OT times leaven was symbolic of evil. Prior to the Passover service every trace of leaven had to be removed from the homes of the people as being symbolic of sin (see on Lev. 23:6). Christ Himself referred to leaven in this sense, speaking of "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6, 12; cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-8). But leaven cannot symbolize sin in the parable spoken upon this occasion, for eventually the "whole [lump of dough] was leavened," and Christ could certainly not mean that His kingdom was to become completely permeated with evil. The "bread" would be ruined. Furthermore, it is fallacious reasoning to think that the same symbol must always refer to the same thing. For instance, both Satan (1 Peter 5:8) and Christ (Rev. 5:5) are referred to under the figure of a lion. See on Matt. 12:33.

A woman. No meaning should be attached to her identity, so far as the parable is concerned. Her presence is incidental, being included only to complete the picture (see p. 204).

Measures. From the Gr. *saton*, a measure of dry capacity equal to approximately 1 1/2 U.S. qt. (see p. 50). Accordingly, three “measures” would be about 34 1/2 qt., enough meal to bake a very large amount of bread. The amount is only incidental.

34. All these things. That is, the truths of the kingdom, particularly those now set forth in parables (see on vs. 10–16, 36).

35. Might be fulfilled. See on ch. 1:22.

I will open my mouth. This quotation is from Ps. 78:2.

Kept secret. Paul speaks of “the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,” being “made manifest” by “the preaching of Jesus” (Rom. 16:25, 26). Elsewhere, he defines this “mystery” as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26, 27). It was “kept secret,” not because God was either unwilling or unprepared to reveal it, but because man was not ready to receive it.

Foundation. Gr. *katabolē*, “a throwing down,” or “a laying down.”

36. Then. As with the parable of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils, Matthew records Jesus’ own interpretation of the parable of the Tares, making it clear that the explanation was given at a later time than the parable and thus not in the presence of the multitude (see on v. 10). Jesus did not interrupt His Sermon by the Seaside to return home and explain the parables to His disciples.

Sent the multitude away. Or, “left the multitude.”

The house. Perhaps the house of Peter in Capernaum (see on Mark 1:29).

Declare. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading “explain.”

37. He answered. For comment on the explanation of the parable of the Tares see on vs. 24–30.

The Son of man. See on Mark 2:10.

38. The wicked one. About a year later Christ openly accused the Jewish leaders of being children of their “father the devil” (see John 8:41, 44).

39. World. Gr. *aiōn*, “age.” The different shades of meaning inherent in the word *aiōn* are apparent from the many ways it is translated in the NT: “world” (Matt. 12:32; 13:22; 24:3; 28:20; Mark 4:19; etc.), “age” (Eph. 2:7; Col. 1:26), “eternal” (Eph. 3:11; 1 Tim. 1:17), “ever” (Matt. 21:19; Luke 1:55; etc.), and, when used with a negative, “never” (Mark 3:29; John 4:14; etc.). For the related adjective form, *aiōnios*, “eternal,” “everlasting,” see on Matt. 25:41; cf. Mark 9:43.

Aiōn considers “world” from the viewpoint of *time*, whereas the Gr. *kosmos*, translated “world” in the NT (see chs. 4:8; 5:14; 13:35, 38; etc.), with but one exception (2 Peter 3:3), considers it from the viewpoint of *space*. The Scriptures usually speak of the end of the *aiōn* (see Matt. 13:39; 24:3; 28:20; etc.), rather than the end of the *kosmos*. For a discussion of the word *kosmos* see on ch. 4:8. Another Greek word commonly translated “earth,” or “world,” is *oikoumenē*, which refers specifically to the “inhabited world,” that is, the world from the viewpoint of its suitability as a home for the human race (see Matt. 24:14; Luke 2:1; 4:5; etc.).

Reapers are the angels. See Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

41. Offend. Literally, “cause to stumble” (see on ch. 5:29).

42. A furnace of fire. Compare v. 50. An expression referring to the fires of the last day, otherwise spoken of as the fires of Gehenna (see on ch. 5:22).

Wailing and gnashing. A graphic description of the remorse of the wicked when they awaken to the fact that their evil ways have earned the reward of eternal annihilation.

43. Shine forth. Gr. *eklampō*, “to shine forth,” implying the idea of light bursting forth with sudden brilliance, as of the sun coming out from behind a dark cloud. A vivid contrast is apparent between the utter gloom that surrounds the wicked and the joy that marks the saved.

Ears to hear. See on ch. 11:15.

44. Kingdom of heaven. [*Hidden Treasure*, Matt. 13:44. On parables see pp. 203-207.] See on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3.

Treasure hid. This parable, recorded by Matthew only, illustrates the value of salvation as represented by the gospel message, together with the effort that must be put forth on the part of the individual to secure it. In this case the “field” represents the Scriptures. Because of the frequent political turmoil and economic uncertainty of ancient times it was common for a man to keep his valuables buried in the earth, where they often remained after his death. Those into whose hands the land passed would not know of the buried treasure, and probably would have no more claim on it than the next person. In this case it is clear that the owner of the land knew nothing about the buried treasure, or he would have reclaimed it before selling the property. According to Mosaic law, he who found what another had lost was to restore it (see on Lev. 6:3, 4). But in this instance, apparently, the original owner was long since dead, and the treasure could not be restored to him. Thus the finder had as much right to it as anyone, and title to the treasure legally went along with title to the land. See on (Matt. 6:19, 20).

He hideth. The finder replaced the treasure where it had been hidden, to protect it, and in order that his procedure in securing it might be according to due process of law. It should be noted that Christ does not necessarily commend the action of the man who found the treasure, nor does He condemn the man. If there be any question as to the propriety of the man’s course of action, it should be remembered that for the purposes of the parable the man’s character has nothing to do with the main point that Christ is seeking to present—the value of heavenly treasure and the effort needed to secure it (see p. 204).

45. Kingdom of heaven. [*The Pearl of Great Price*, Matt. 13:45, 46. On parables see pp. 203-207.] See on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3.

A merchant. Gr. *emporos*, “a wholesale dealer,” one who travels around and buys, in contrast with a *kapēlos*, “a retailer,” or “a petty tradesman.” Whereas the parable of the Hidden Treasure illustrates the experience of those who find truth without having been intent on searching for it, the parable of the Priceless Pearl represents those who have earnestly desired truth (COL 116). The “merchant man” was a dealer in pearls; this was his business. As he went about his business he aspired to trade in only the best. Thinking men and women often go for years doing their best with the light they have, dimly aware that there is some grand purpose in life which they have not yet discovered. With ardent

longing in their hearts they go in quest of the answer to existence—and eventually they find it.

Seeking goodly pearls. The “merchant man” represents primarily men in search of a Saviour, though, in addition, he properly represents Christ in search of men. Nothing is of greater value, or should be sought more diligently, than Christ Himself. On the other hand, nothing is of greater value in the sight of Heaven than the affection and devotion of created beings throughout the universe. Even when man had fallen into sin he was of so great value in the sight of Heaven that God gave His own Son to seek for him and to restore him to divine favor, and along with this gift made available the boundless resources of Omnipotence.

46. Of great price. That is, because of its transcendent value. In harmony with the primary meaning of this parable, the “pearl of great price” is none other than Jesus Christ, “the chiefest among ten thousand” (S. of Sol. 5:10). With the pearl, it was size, shapeliness, and luster that made it of value. With Jesus, it is perfection of character and the fullness of divine love. The dealer in pearls must have found supreme satisfaction in the possession of that priceless pearl. It was his own. He who finds in Christ the answer to all the longings of his heart, who finds in Him the way of life more perfectly, who finds in Him the goal of life, has found life’s greatest treasure.

Sold all. Although salvation cannot be purchased, nevertheless it costs all that a man has. Like Paul he who truly “finds” Christ will “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,” and be willing to suffer “the loss of all things” in order to “win Christ” (Phil. 3:8). To know Christ is to fill a void in the life that nothing else can supply. To know Him is life eternal (John 17:3).

Bought it. At the price of self, at the price of pride and ambition, at the price of evil habits. Peace with God costs all that a man has, but it is worth infinitely more. Man purchases salvation at the cost of things that, of themselves, have no permanent value anyway, and thus loses nothing worth while in the transaction.

47. Kingdom of heaven. [*The Dragnet*, Matt. 13:47–50. On parables see pp. 203–207.] See on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3.

A net. Gr. *sagēnē*, “a dragnet,” in contrast with the *amphiblēstron*, “a casting net” (see ch. 4:18). The English word “seine” is derived from the Gr. *sagēnē*, through the Latin *sagena*. The *sagēnē* was a long, weighted net, the ends of which were carried outward and then brought together in the shape of a large circle. The dragnet represents the gospel, that is, the efforts put forth by fishers of men (see on Luke 5:10) to win others to Christ.

Sea. The only place where such a net would be of use would be in a rather large body of water. The figure is incidental to the meaning of the parable as a whole (see p. 204).

Every kind. All kinds of people are gathered in by the gospel net—men and women of different motives, attitudes, personalities. Jesus was no “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34), but received all who came to Him. He associated with publicans and sinners, the better to win them for His kingdom (see on Mark 2:16, 17). He was willing to be known as “a friend of publicans and sinners” (see on Matt. 11:19) if thereby they might come to appreciate His heavenly friendship.

48. Drew to shore. See on v. 47.

Gathered the good. The sorting process took place after the net had enclosed all the fish that could be caught in it. God measures character in terms of whether a man has lived in harmony with all the light that has shone upon his pathway, whether, to the best of his knowledge and ability, he has cooperated with heavenly agencies in perfecting a character patterned after the perfect example of Jesus (see on Eccl. 12:13, 14; Micah 6:8; Matt. 7:21–27).

Bad. Gr. *sapros*, applied to fish, “rotten,” or “putrid”; hence, “unfit for use.” The parable of the Dragnet emphasizes the eventual separation between “good” and “bad” on the basis of character.

49. End of the world. Literally, “end of the age” (see on v. 39).

The angels. See v. 41.

Sever the wicked. See on v. 48; cf. ch. 25:32, 33.

50. Furnace of fire. See on v. 42.

Wailing and gnashing. See on v. 42.

51. All these things. That is, the truths represented by the parables spoken upon this particular occasion (cf. v. 34).

Yea, Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the omission of the word “Lord.”

52. Every scribe. [*Things New and Old*, Matt. 13:52. On parables see pp. 203–207.] The “scribes” were not secretaries, but the official teachers of the law (see p. 55). Here Christ does not refer to the professional scribes, or teachers, of His day, but to the disciples in their role of teachers or “apostles” (see on Mark 3:14). “Every scribe” here means every man or woman who takes part in opening the treasures of God’s Word to others. Christ here deals, not with the ability of the Twelve to understand “all these things” (Matt. 13:51), but with their ability to pass them on to others.

Which is instructed. Literally, “which has been made a disciple,” in the sense of having received a thorough training in the things a disciple should know and understand. The professional scribes of Christ’s day knew the letter of the law of Moses, but they knew nothing of its spirit. This distinction Christ set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, particularly in ch. 5:17–48 (see on ch. 5:17, 20, 21). Christianity is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20), which includes all that was revealed to the prophets of old and all that Christ revealed personally to His disciples (see Heb. 1:1, 2).

Kingdom of heaven. See on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2.

An householder. Gr. *oikodespotēs*, that is, “lord of the house” (see on Luke 2:29). Here the disciples are referred to as possessors of the “treasures” of the gospel. They have been entrusted with these things, and God expects them to bring forth what is needed when it is needed. In a special sense every Christian teacher is the “householder” of the parable (see COL 131).

His treasure. That is, his treasure chest, or his storeroom (see on ch. 2:11).

New and old. By the “old,” Christ refers to all the will of God as revealed “in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1; see on Deut. 31:9; Prov. 3:1). By the “new,” He refers to His own teachings (see Heb. 1:2; see on Mark 2:22; 7:1–13).

It is important to note that neither upon this occasion nor at any other time did Jesus depreciate the value of the OT Scriptures or even suggest that in the future they were to have less force (see on Matt. 5:17, 18; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39). The OT is not invalidated by the NT, but amplified and given new life. Both were inspired by Christ

and both are full of truth for the sincere seeker. The OT reveals the Christ who was to come; the NT reveals the Christ who had come. The OT and the NT are not mutually exclusive and opposed to each other, as the archenemy of both has persuaded some Christians to believe; they are complementary.

53. *Jesus had finished.* Thus concludes the account of the Sermon by the Sea (see on v. 1).

He departed thence. See on ch. 8:18.

54. *His own country.* [*Second Rejection at Nazareth*, Matt. 13:54–58=Mark 6:1–6.

Comment: Mark.]

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–9COL 33–43

3–53T 111

3–8COL 34; 7T 36

7 AH 202; PK 410; 1T 194; 3T 112

12 CT 399; 4T 458

13–15COL 20

14 5T 84

14, 15 FE 259

15 5T 63, 694

15, 16 COL 59

17 6T 20

18–23CG 56; COL 44–61

19 COL 44

20, 21 COL 46, 411

21 2T 277, 444

22 AH 202; CH 465; COL 50; PK 410; 1T 477; 2T 126, 166, 192, 657; 3T 113; 4T 41, 51

23 COL 58; 1T 106

24–26COL 70

24–30COL 70–75; TM 45; 3T 113

25 AH 319, 402; CT 30, 47, 121, 136, 189; FE 90, 184; 5T 493; 6T 164; 8T 228

27, 28 TM 266

28 CG 47; Ed 101

28, 29 TM 61

29 COL 71

29, 30 MH 493; TM 234

30 Ev 26, 620; EW 88, 118; FE 295; GC 321, 631; PP 541; RC 53; 5T 100, 333, 384; 6T 242; 7T 84; 8T 72

31 TM 154

31, 32 COL 76

33 AH 33; COL 95; DA 333; Ev 374, 473; 1T 133; 8T 148

34, 35 COL 17

37 COL 35

37, 38 COL 70; FE 177, 209, 401

37–43COL 70–75

38 CSW 78; GW 27; 3T 406; 4T 381; 7T 34; 8T 56, 135

41 EW 110

41–43COL 75
 43 CT 344; 9T 285, 287
 44 COL 103; 5T 262, 704
 44–46CS 243
 45, 46 COL 115–121; 7T 226; 8T 20; 9T 38
 46 MM 332; 4T 625
 47 CT 253; TM 61; 7T 267
 47, 48 8T 72
 47–49DA 333
 47–50COL 122
 51, 52 COL 124; CT 184, 554
 52 Ev 171; FE 97; GW 239; MH 121; ML 360; PP 594; TM 149; 1T 194; 5T 251; 7T 73
 54 DA 241
 55 DA 236; 3T 566
 58 CT 374

CHAPTER 14

1 *Herod's opinion of Christ.* 3 *Wherefore John Baptist was beheaded.* 13 *Jesus departeth into a desert place:* 15 *where he feedeth five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes:* 22 *he walketh on the sea to his disciples:* 34 *and landing at Gennesaret, healeth the sick by the touch of the hem of his garment.*

1. Herod the tetrarch. [*Martyrdom of John the Baptist*, Matt. 14:1, 2, 6–12=Mark 6:14–29=Luke 9:7–9. Major comment: Mark. See *The Hasmonaeans and the Herods, The Reigns of the Herods, Palestine Under the Herodians* .]

2. Servants. Usually used of menial servants, but here of Herod's courtiers.

3. Laid hold on John. [*John Imprisoned*, Matt. 14:3–5=Luke 3:19, 20. Comment: Luke.]

13. Heard of it. [*Feeding the Five Thousand*, Matt. 14:13–21=Mark 6:30–44=Luke 9:10–17=John 6:1–14. Major comment: Mark and John.] Matthew refers to the death of John the Baptist, the account of which appears in vs. 1–12. It would seem that Jesus received the news of John's death at the close of the Third Galilean Tour, upon His return to the city of Capernaum. Matthew refers to this as one of the reasons that prompted Jesus to retire to the other side of the lake (see on Mark 6:30).

14. Went forth. Probably from the boat in which they had crossed the lake.

15. When it was evening. That is, when it was late afternoon (see on Mark 6:35).

20. The fragments. That is, "the pieces left over" (see on Mark 6:43).

21. Women and children. Matthew means that they were not counted, not that they did not eat.

22. Straightway. [*Jesus Walks on the Lake*, Matt. 14:22–36=Mark 6:45–56=John 6:15–24. Major comment: Matthew and John. See *Closing Galilean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord; on miracles pp. 208–213*.] Gr. *eutheōs*, "immediately." This incident occurred on the same day as the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, as the various gospel writers make plain. These events probably took place toward the end of March or early in April, A.D. 30.

Constrained. Gr. *anagkazō*, "to compel," or "to constrain" (see on Luke 14:23). This was the first time Jesus had found it necessary to speak to His disciples with such

authority and force (DA 378). The words *eutheōs*, “immediately,” and *anagkazō*, “to compel,” imply both haste and urgency on the part of Jesus, and hesitation and reluctance on the part of the disciples.

The reason for this reluctance is made clear in John 6:15 (see DA 377, 378; see on Mark 6:42). Convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or Deliverer of Israel, the multitude were bent on crowning Him king on the spot. Perceiving the sentiment of the multitude, the disciples took the initiative and were on the point of proclaiming Him king of Israel. Judas was the first one of the Twelve to sense the significance of the popular sentiment, and it was he who initiated the project to make Christ king (DA 718). So rash a course of action would have prematurely brought Christ’s earthly mission to a close. Prompt and decisive action on the part of Jesus was necessary in order to quell the popular sentiment of the people and to control His own disciples.

Go before him. The group Jesus directed to precede Him to the other side of the lake included His disciples and certain others (see DA 382).

The other side. Jesus, His disciples, and the great throng of people were now on the northeastern shore of the Lake of Galilee, a short distance east of the city of Bethsaida Julias (see on ch. 11:21). “The other side” would be the vicinity from which they had come that morning. Accordingly the disciples set out for Capernaum (see John 6:17). It is not entirely clear why Mark states that they were going “unto Bethsaida” (ch. 6:45) unless he means that they were to set out in that direction on their way to Capernaum. They were but a short distance east of Bethsaida and would of necessity pass directly by it on their return voyage to Capernaum. There is no evidence whatever of another “Bethsaida” on the western shore of the lake, as some commentators formerly thought. Actually, the wind (see Matt. 14:24) drove them *from* their intended destination (DA 380, 381) rather than toward it.

23. Into a mountain. That is, into the hills above the lake. On the northeastern shore of Galilee the hills rise rapidly.

To pray. See on Mark 1:35; 3:13. Here in the hills Jesus spent several hours (see DA 379), never, however, losing sight of the disciples upon the lake (see DA 381). Upon this occasion His prayer was twofold in purpose, first, for Himself, that He might know how to make the true purpose of His mission clear to men, and second, for His disciples in their hour of disappointment and testing (see on Matt. 14:24).

Evening. This was the so-called “second evening,” from about sunset till dark (see on Mark 6:34), in contrast with the so-called “first evening,” from the decline of the sun, about the middle of the afternoon, till sunset. It was almost dark when the disciples finally set out on the lake (see DA 380).

He was there alone. Not merely in a physical sense. Jesus was “alone” also in the sense that not even His disciples understood Him. In the silence of the hills, and under the starry vault of heaven, Jesus held communion with His Father (see on Mark 1:35).

24. The midst of the sea. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading “many furlongs distant from the land.” The disciples had rowed between 25 and 30 furlongs (John 6:19), or about 3 mi., when Jesus overtook them. Ordinarily they could have covered this distance in an hour or so, but as it was they had taken approximately eight hours (see on Matt. 14:25). This is evidence of the strong head wind they encountered while crossing the lake. The direct distance to Capernaum was about 3 1/2 mi., but the wind drove them farther south than they had intended, with the result they came to land

somewhere along the shore to the south of Capernaum, by the Plain of Gennesaret (see Matt. 14:34; see on Luke 5:1), a distance about twice as far as the direct course to Capernaum.

Tossed. Literally, “distressed,” or “tormented.” Mark says that they were “toiling in rowing.” In Mark 6:48 “toiling” is from the same Greek word here translated “tossed.” The strong head wind of the storm evidently made it impracticable to use the sail, and they probably thought it easier to use oars than to tack in the wind.

Wind was contrary. Had the disciples set out to cross the lake when Jesus directed them to go, they might have avoided the storm. But their perversity of heart led them to delay their departure until it was almost dark (see DA 379, 380). Now, some eight hours later (see on v. 25), they were struggling for their lives. Judas had been chiefly responsible for promoting the project to make Christ king by force, and no doubt felt most keenly Christ’s peremptory command to the disciples to embark to the other side before their Master (see v. 22; DA 718). Subsequently, Judas seems to have been primarily responsible for confusing the thinking of his fellow disciples and stirring the discontent that filled their hearts (see DA 719, 380). As the disciples, in obedience to Christ, set out to cross the lake, feelings of humiliation, disappointment, resentment, and impatience rankled in their hearts. Hesitation on the beach may be said to have given birth to unbelief. The wind was contrary, and so were their hearts; but in the providence of God the stormy sea became the means of quieting the tempest in their souls. It is often thus when we find ourselves adrift on a dark and stormy sea of troubles.

25. Fourth watch. From ancient times the Jews had divided the night into three watches (see on Lam. 2:19), but since the ascendancy of the Romans over them, they had adopted the Roman system of four watches.

Jesus went unto them. According to Mark He meant to pass them by, or at least intended that the disciples should think He intended to do so (see Mark 6:48; DA 381). In a similar way at Emmaus “he made as though he would have gone further” (Luke 24:28). Throughout the night He had not lost sight of them, and it was only when they gave themselves up for lost and prayed for help—with the tempest in their souls subdued—that Jesus “went unto them.”

26. Disciples saw him. “They all saw him” (Mark 6:50). It was no hallucination on the part of one or two of them.

Troubled. Literally, “terrified.” Probably belief in ghosts and phantoms was widespread (see Josephus *War* i. 30. 7 [599]). Apparently popular superstition had not been erased completely from the minds of the disciples.

A spirit. Gr. *phantasma*, “a phantom,” “an apparition,” or “an appearance.” A *phantasma* was the appearance of something that could not be accounted for on the basis of natural phenomena.

For fear. At first the disciples cried out in fear, but almost immediately recognized that the supposed “phantom” was Jesus, and again cried out, this time for help. It was not until they appealed for help that Jesus spoke to them (see Mark 6:48, 49).

28. Peter answered. Only Matthew records the embarrassing and almost fatal experience of Peter upon this occasion. Peter had been in charge of the fishing business in which at least four of the disciples were engaged before they became disciples (see on Mark 3:16), and it was therefore probably natural to him and to the others that he should be spokesman for the entire group. His natural mood of leadership, now as upon so many

other occasions, led to overconfidence and to an impulsive and injudicious course of action (see Matt. 16:21–23; 17:4; 26:33–35, 69–75; John 18:10, 11; 20:2–6; Gal. 2:11–14; for a character sketch of Peter see on Mark 3:16).

If it be thou. Peter had no doubt in his mind, for otherwise he would hardly have stepped out of the boat onto the wind-tossed waves.

Bid me come. Peter was ready to do the bidding of Jesus, but would not proceed until he had the assurance that Jesus approved.

29. *He said, Come.* Very likely Christ had not intended to have Peter walk on the water. But if his imperfect faith inspired such a course of action, Jesus was ready to accept it in that spirit (see on ch. 12:20).

He walked on the water. Peter stepped out of that boat in faith. It was faith that now sustained him on the waters of Galilee and gave him buoyancy. But faith was active only so long as he kept his gaze fixed on Jesus.

30. *Saw the wind.* Apparently Peter had forgotten, for the moment, the wind and the waves. As his feet became accustomed to walking on the surface of the water he evidently thought of his companions in the boat, and wondered what they thought of his new-found skill. Turning his glance momentarily back to the boat, he lost sight of Jesus. At that moment he was in the trough between two waves, and when he returned his gaze again to where Jesus had been he could no longer see Him (see DA 381). All he could see was the turbulent water and the wind. In that brief instant self-satisfaction had diluted faith with pride, so to speak, and faith lost its sustaining power.

He was afraid. We need never fear so long as we keep our eyes upon Jesus and trust in His grace and power, but when we turn our gaze upon self and upon others we have good reason to be afraid.

Beginning to sink. A fisherman all his life, Peter knew how to swim (see John 21:7). But a sea like this, in which a boat was not safe, was even less safe for a swimmer.

Save me. The form of the verb used in the Greek implies the urgency of Peter's appeal.

31. *Immediately.* There is no delay on God's part to respond to the sincere prayer for deliverance from the waves of temptation that ever and anon sweep over the soul.

Thou of little faith. In love Jesus first saved Peter, and then rebuked his lack of trust. He did not censure Peter for essaying to walk on the waves, but for letting go of faith. In part, Peter understood and appreciated the lesson Jesus designed he should learn from this experience, but had he learned it fully he would not, a year later, have failed when the great test confronted him (ch. 26:69–75; cf. DA 382).

Doubt. Gr. *distazo*, “to hesitate,” “to be in doubt,” or “to waver.” A person hesitates when he is in doubt as to which of two directions, or courses of action, he should take. “No man can serve two masters” (see on ch. 6:24) or feel comfortable even attempting to do so.

32. *When they were come.* Hand in hand with Jesus, Peter returned to his companions in the boat, silent and subdued (see DA 381).

The wind ceased. Literally, “the wind grew weary” (see ch. 8:26). The tempest had accomplished its purpose (see on ch. 14:24); thoughts of impatience and resentment toward Jesus had been driven from the hearts of the disciples.

33. *Came and worshipped him.* See on chs. 2:11; 8:2. This is the first, though by no means the last, occasion (see Matt. 20:20; 28:9; Luke 24:52) on which the disciples

worshipped Christ. The wise men had done so (see Matt. 2:11), as had also various persons for whom Jesus performed miracles of healing (see chs. 8:2; 15:25; etc.). But in this case the disciples confessed for the first time the divine sonship of Jesus, and accorded Him the worship that men give to God. Furthermore, Jesus accepted their worship. Perhaps this confession of faith was all the more meaningful in view of the doubts and fears of the disciples during the preceding evening (see on ch. 14:24).

Son of God. See on Luke 1:35.

34. *Gennesaret.* Evidently the region, or plain, of Gennesaret is here intended rather than some town by that name. Concerning the Plain of Gennesaret see on Luke 5:1. In ancient times the city of Chinnereth was situated along the shore of this plain, and some have held that the name Gennesaret came originally from Chinnereth. So far as is known, the city of Chinnereth, whose ruins are known today as *Tell el 'Oreimeh*, had ceased to exist by the time of Christ.

35. *Had knowledge of him.* That is, when they realized that this was Jesus, back among them again.

Diseased. See on Mark 1:34.

36. *Touch the hem.* See on Mark 5:27, 28. For the chronological setting of Matt. 14:35, 36 see on ch. 15:1.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1, 2 DA 223
- 1–11 DA 214–225; EW 154
- 2 DA 729; EW 173
- 3, 4 DA 214
- 6 CT 340; Te 50
- 6, 7 DA 221
- 7, 8 Te 51
- 10 AA 143
- 10, 11 DA 222
- 13–21 DA 364–371
- 14 CH 34
- 15 ML 223
- 5–20 T 114
- 15–21 ChS 153; COL 140; DA 809; Ed 107; Ev 524; MM 344; 2T 580; 6T 263, 465
- 16 DA 365; MH 45, 49; 6T 345
- 19 Ed 286
- 19, 20 DA 365; MH 46, 200; 7T 61
- 20 CD 271; ML 223
- 22–23 DA 377–382
- 23 DA 379
- 25–31 DA 381
- 27 Ev 18; FE 465; 4T 288, 530
- 29, 30 2T 273
- 30 DA 673
- 31 ML 12; 4T 558

CHAPTER 15

3 *Christ reproveth the scribes and Pharisees for transgressing God's commandments through their own traditions: 11 teacheth how that which goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man.*²¹ *He healeth the daughter of the woman of Canaan, 30 and other great multitudes: 32 and with seven loaves and a few little fishes feedeth four thousand men, beside women and children.*

1. Then came. [*Contention About Tradition and Ceremonial Defilement*, Matt. 15:1–20=Mark 7:1–23. Major comment: Mark.] For comment on Matthew's use of the word "then" see on ch. 4:1.

6. And honour not. The first sentence of v. 15:6 as it appears in the KJV actually continues and completes the thought of v. 5. Verse 6 would better begin with the words, "Thus have ye made."

Commandment. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading "word."

13. Every plant. Here meaning every tradition, every "commandment of men" (see on Mark 7:3, 13, 15).

14. Ditch. Preferably, "pit," or "hole."

21. Jesus went thence. [*Withdrawal to Phoenicia*, Matt. 15:21–28=Mark 7:24–30. Major comment: Matthew. See Retirement from Public Ministry; The Duration of Christ's Ministry, the Opening of the Galilean Ministry, The Ministry of Our Lord; on miracles pp. 208–213.] The following incident probably occurred in the late spring of A.D. 30, possibly about the month of May. With the feeding of the 5,000 and the Sermon on the Bread of Life in the synagogue at Capernaum (see on John 6:1, 25), the Galilean ministry reached its climax. The tide of popularity began to turn against Jesus as it had the year before in Judea (see DA 393), and the majority of those who had considered themselves His followers rejected Him (see on John 6:60–66). This had been but a few days before the Passover of that year, which Jesus did not attend (see on Mark 7:1).

The Third Galilean Tour had greatly alarmed the Jewish leaders (see DA 395; see on Mark 6:14). After the Passover a delegation from Jerusalem confronted Jesus with the charge that He was breaking down the religious requirements (see Mark 7:1–23). But He silenced them by revealing their hypocrisy, and they went away in great anger and rage (see DA 398). Their attitude and threats made clear that His life was in danger (DA 398, 401). So in harmony with the counsel He had previously given the disciples He retired from Galilee for a time (see on Matt. 10:14, 23), as He had from Judea the year before when rejected by the leaders there (see on ch. 4:12).

This retirement northward marks the opening of a new period in Christ's ministry, and the close of His ministry in Galilee, to which He had devoted approximately one year, from about the Passover of A.D. 29 to that of A.D. 30. It was now less than one year before His death.

Although the immediate circumstance that prompted Jesus' withdrawal to the region of Phoenicia was the encounter with the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, the journey had positive objectives also. Jesus had a definite purpose not only in leaving Galilee but also in going to the general region of Phoenicia. Now that He had been rejected by the Jews both in Judea and in Galilee, Jesus sought an opportunity to instruct His disciples in laboring for non-Jews. The heathen needed the gospel, and He now began a series of lessons designed to lead the disciples to realize the needs of the heathen and the fact that they too were prospective candidates for the kingdom of heaven. The withdrawal to Phoenicia provided an excellent opportunity for such instruction (see DA

400). Jesus performed but one miracle during the course of this visit to Phoenicia. This visit, however, was clearly not a missionary journey in the sense that the three tours of Galilee were, for upon arrival Jesus went into seclusion, and planned to keep His presence there a secret (see Mark 7:24).

Coasts. Gr. *merē*, “district,” “division,” or “region.” Jesus withdrew to the hills of the border country between Galilee and Phoenicia (see DA 399), whence He could see the cities of Tyre and Sidon, 23 mi. (c. 37 km.) apart, in the coastal plain below. The area belonged to the Roman province of Syria (see Vol. II, p. 69).

Tyre and Sidon. See Vol. I, p. 128; Vol. II, pp. 67, 68; see on Gen. 10:15. For centuries before the coming of the Romans the Phoenicians had been the commercial leaders of the world.

22. A woman of Canaan. The Phoenicians were of the old Canaanite race; in fact, they called themselves Canaanites (see on Gen. 10:6, 18). It was the Greeks who called them Phoenicians, apparently after the name of a purple dye (Gr. *phoinix*) that the former purchased from the latter during the early days of Phoenician trade in the Aegean region (see Vol. II, p. 68). The Canaanites were of Hamitic ancestry, but early during their residence in the land of Palestine they adopted the Semitic language and absorbed so much Semitic culture that it was long thought they were of Semitic origin. The Jews were Semitic, and there were great similarities in language and general cultural characteristics between the Hebrew and Canaanite peoples.

This was the fourth occasion recorded in the Gospels on which Jesus had ministered to non-Jews. The first was at Sychar in Samaria (John 4:5–42), the second at Capernaum (Luke 7:1–10), and the third, in the vicinity of Gergesa (Mark 5:1–20). The Samaritans were, of course, partly Jewish, and though Jesus’ ministry for them would not be looked upon with favor, it would not bring upon Him the censure that work for outright heathen would. The centurion was friendly to the Jews and believed that they held the true religion. The miracle Christ performed for him was in accordance with the request of the Jewish leaders themselves. The healing of the demoniacs of Gergesa could not be construed by the Jews as an intentional contact on the part of Christ with the heathen. Rather, they might consider it an emergency thrust upon Christ, in which, in a sense, He drove out the demons in self-defense. Furthermore, He refused to permit the demon-freed men to associate with Him as disciples. Even now, with the woman of Phoenicia, Jesus was not openly working for the people of the district (see Mark 7:24). She came to Him and thrust her request upon Him.

Christ’s dealings with the non-Jews of Palestine were incidental to His ministry for “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). If His labors for the chosen people were to meet with any measure of success, it was necessary that He should, outwardly at least, comply with custom to the extent that the Jewish leaders should have no occasion to accuse Him of breaking down the barriers they had erected against the Gentiles, wrong as those barriers were in many respects (see Vol. IV, pp. 28–33). Otherwise, He would have destroyed His influence with the very people for whom He had come to labor. Today, Christian workers are to consider all men their equals before God, and to remember that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

Coasts. Gr. *horia*, “borders,” here a region enclosed by borders (see on v. 21). Jesus was *in* the region of Tyre and Sidon, the woman was *of* the region of Tyre and Sidon, and

the incident here recorded occurred *within* that same region. When the woman found Jesus she “fell at his feet” (Mark 7:25), prostrating herself before Him in the usual Oriental posture assumed by one presenting a petition to a superior (see on Matt. 4:9; 8:2).

Have mercy. Gr. *eleeō*, (see on ch. 5:7).

Son of David. See on ch. 1:1. That a heathen woman should address Jesus by this title, which implied recognition of Him as the Messiah, is surprising. There were many Jews living in Phoenicia, and among them the news of the wonderful deeds of Jesus had long since been in circulation (see Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17). It was apparently through these Jews residing in Phoenicia that the woman had heard about Jesus (see DA 400).

Grievously vexed with a devil. Literally, “badly demonized,” or, more freely, “severely possessed by a demon” (see Additional Note on Mark 1).

23. Not a word. Christ’s purpose was to teach the disciples a lesson in working for non-Jews, and this He did by acting out the contrast between the usual Jewish attitude and His own (see on v. 21). The typical Jewish rabbi would have done precisely what the disciples proposed, sent her away without even making a direct reply to her request. The favor with which Jesus Himself looked upon Gentiles, as eligible to the privileges of the kingdom of heaven, is clear from what He had said about them (see Luke 4:26, 27), together with what He had done for them upon previous occasions. Jesus in no way shared the narrow exclusiveness the Jews felt toward Gentiles (see on Matt. 15:22, 26).

His disciples came. They did not appreciate the publicity occasioned by the impassioned appeals of this Gentile woman, whom they looked upon as no more worthy than a dog (see on ch. 10:5). Not only was she a stranger; she was a woman. Not only that, she was a foreigner. There was as yet no place in their concept of the gospel commission for strange foreign women.

24. I am not sent. See on v. 21. That is, Jesus was sent primarily to the Jews, though when occasion offered He did not deny the Gentiles the blessings He accorded His own people (see Vol. IV, pp. 26-30). It was not until many years after Christ had ascended to heaven that Jewish Christians fully grasped the fact that God considered all men everywhere eligible to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven (see Acts 9:9–18, 32–35; 10:1–48; 15:1–29; Rom. 1:16; 9:24; etc.).

Lost sheep. See on ch. 10:6.

25. Worshipped. Literally, “prostrated herself” (see on ch. 8:2). This typical Oriental posture of supplication might be taken before objects of worship, or even before men, especially before superiors whose favor was sought (see on Esther 3:2). This woman’s use of the Messianic title “son of David” (see on Matt. 1:1; 15:22) implies that she had at least a vague realization of who Jesus really was. Whether she used the term simply because her Jewish neighbors had used it in discussing the wonderful deeds of Christ, or whether it expressed a measure of belief on her part that Jesus was the Messiah, is not clear.

26. It is not meet. That is, it is not fitting or proper or good. Here Christ expresses the characteristic Jewish attitude that the Gentiles were unworthy of the blessings of heaven.

Bread. That is, the “bread” of salvation (see John 6:32) that God had entrusted to the Jews, His “children,” for distribution among the Gentiles, but which the Jews were selfishly hoarding to themselves (see COL 291–293).

Dogs. Gr. *kunaria*, “little dogs,” here used as a reference to the Gentiles (see on ch. 7:6). The Jews felt the blessings of salvation would be wasted if given to the Gentiles, who, according to the opinion of the Jews, lacked the capacity to appreciate these blessings or to benefit by them. Christ’s assumed attitude of disdain for the woman might conceivably have discouraged her, but undoubtedly He had confidence that her faith would not fail (see 1 Cor. 10:13). She seemed sure that Christ *could* grant her heart’s desire if only He *would* (see on Mark 1:40). Pride and prejudice meant nothing to her, and she would not let these deter her. Her faith and perseverance are truly commendable.

27. Truth, Lord. Or, “Yes, Lord.” Back of Jesus’ simulated indifference to her earnest appeal (see on vs. 15:23, 26) she apparently detected the tender compassion that flowed in never-failing currents from His great heart of love. The very fact that He deigned to discuss the matter with her at all—instead of abruptly dismissing her, as the rabbis would have done—evidently gave her courage to believe that He would accede to her appeal. His voice carried no trace of impatience, and His countenance revealed only the serene dignity and infinite tenderness that ever marked His visage.

Crumbs. Gr. *psichia*, a diminutive form meaning “little morsels,” or “crumbs.” Even “little dogs” (see on v. 26) have a right to the “little morsels” their masters toss to them. This remarkable woman is ready to accept any necessary level of humanity Christ may assign her, without so much as arguing the point, if He will only comply with her request. Compare the persistence of the leper in the face of major obstacles (see on Mark 1:40–45).

28. Great is thy faith. She has met the test; her faith stands firm. She is certain that it is within the power of Christ to bestow the gift of health to her daughter. Compare Christ’s commendation of the centurion (see on Luke 7:9).

That very hour. Like the nobleman’s son (see John 4:43–54) and the centurion’s servant (see Luke 7:1–10), the daughter of the Canaanite woman was healed at a distance, not in Christ’s immediate presence, and as in each of the other cases, healing was immediate, complete.

29. Jesus departed from thence. [*A Deaf mute Healed; Other Miracles in Decapolis*, Matt. 15:29–31=Mark 7:31–37. Major comment: Mark.]

30. Cast them down. Not in a rough manner, but apparently as a gesture of finality. They consigned the sick and suffering to His mercy.

32. Called his disciples. [*Feeding the Four Thousand*, Matt. 15:32–39=Mark 8:1–10. Major comment: Matthew. See Retirement from Public Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord; on miracles pp. 208–213.] For events immediately preceding this see on v. 15:21. For the vicinity of this miracle, and for a previous miracle in the same locality and the relationship between the two incidents, see on Mark 5:1, 18–20. For a comparison of the two incidents see Additional Note at end of chapter. The time was probably early summer, A.D. 30, perhaps late June or early July.

Have compassion. The Saviour is ever touched by human suffering and woe (Heb. 4:15).

Multitude. Mostly if not exclusively Gentiles (DA 405). Originally prejudiced against Jesus, they now seem not only friendly but intensely interested in what He has to say.

Three days. According to Oriental reckoning this would be one full day, and any parts of the day preceding and of the day following (see pp. 248–250). The people had brought food for at least one, if not two, days, for Jesus felt no concern until the third day.

I will not. Literally, “I am not willing.”

Lest they faint. They were hungry, and Jesus was concerned about their physical well-being, as He had been about their spiritual welfare.

33. His disciples say. Compare on Mark 6:35–37.

34. How many loaves? For comment on the parallel question at the time of the feeding of the 5,000, and for the “loaves,” see on Mark 6:38.

A few little fishes. There were not many, and, in the eyes of the disciples, they were so small as to be hardly worth noticing.

35. Ground. On the significant fact that no grass is mentioned, as in the narrative of the feeding of the 5,000, see Additional Note at end of chapter.

36. Gave thanks. See on Mark 6:41.

37. They did all eat. See on Mark 6:42.

Broken meat. The word “meat” is supplied. For the word translated “broken” see on Mark 6:43.

Baskets. Gr. *spurides*, large baskets made of grass rope or of wickerwork (see on Mark 6:43).

38. Four thousand men. At the feeding of the 5,000 there were altogether more than 10,000 persons present, including women and children (see DA 809). If the proportion was about the same now, there would have been more than 8,000 persons, including men, women, and children.

39. Magdala. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading Magadan. Mark has Dalmanutha (ch. 8:10). It may be there were several variant names. Most modern authorities favor the spelling Magdala, and tentatively identify it with *Mejdel*, on the western shore, between Capernaum and Tiberias. The ruins of *Mejdel* lie near the southern boundary of the Plain of Gennesaret.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 15

Critics have often charged that the feeding of the 4,000 is not a separate event from the feeding of the 5,000. They point to the many similar details and, particularly, to the attitude of the disciples when Christ proposed feeding so large a throng in a sparsely settled region. However, numerous other details indicate two similar incidents, as the gospel writers affirm, rather than two versions of one original incident, as the critics claim.

Points of similarity may be listed as follows: (1) the region where the miracle occurred, the eastern or northeastern shore of Galilee; (2) a large throng of people gathered on a hillside in the open country to listen to Jesus; (3) the lack of food and Jesus’ sympathy for them in view of that situation; (4) Jesus counseling with His disciples, implying that they should take the initiative in providing food; (5) the incredulous reply of the disciples and Jesus’ inquiry as to the supplies available; (6) the crowd seated on the ground; (7) the blessing, breaking, and distribution of the loaves and the fishes; (8) the quantity of food left over; (9) dismissal of the multitude; (10) return to the western shore of the lake.

Points of dissimilarity are these: (1) the one, arrival by sea; the other, by land, as the context implies; (2) the one, near Bethsaida Julias; the other, probably farther south, near Gergesa; (3) the one, Jews on the way to attend the Passover (DA 364); the other, Gentiles living in the region (DA 404); (4) the one, teaching of one day’s duration; the

other, teaching of three day's duration; (5) circumstances that led Jesus to the region: the one, to be alone with His disciples; the other, Jesus already in the region and healing people; (6) time: the one, immediately following the Third Galilean Tour; the other, following a trip into Phoenicia; (7) the one, the crowd had assembled on the spur of the moment and had not brought provisions; the other, the crowd apparently had provisions for a day or two, and had therefore assembled according to a prearranged plan; (8) the one, 5,000; the other, 4,000; (9) the one, the disciples introduce the problem and propose sending the crowds home; the other, Jesus introduces the problem, implying that it is the duty of the disciples to do something about it; (10) the one, the grass was green; the other, no mention of grass; (11) the one, orderly seating arrangement described; the other, no mention how the people sat; (12) kind of baskets used to gather the surplus: the one *kophinoi*; the other, *spurides*; (13) the quantity gathered: the one, 12 *kophinoi*; the other, 7 *spurides*; (14) the one, Jesus sends the disciples on ahead across the lake and retires to the hills to pray; the other, He accompanies them; (15) destination: the one, Capernaum or Gennesaret; the other, Magdala; (16) the one, followed by a storm on the lake; the other, no mention of a stormy crossing; (17) the one, the incentive that brought the multitude together was that some had seen Jesus depart; the other, some were from a great distance and would not have known about the gathering or been able to reach it, except by previous plan.

The incidental nature of several of the points of difference precludes a common origin for the two narratives or any intention on the part of the gospel writers to make two stories from one original. It should be noted also that the points of similarity are for the most part general in nature, whereas the points of dissimilarity are largely concerned with specific details. Also, the points of difference are more in number than the points of similarity. A few of the more significant points of difference are particularly worthy of note:

1. At the feeding of the 5,000 there was much green grass (Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:39; John 6:10), whereas with the 4,000 neither gospel writer mentions grass. The first miracle occurred a few days before the Passover, and thus probably the latter part of March or the early part of April, A.D. 30 (see on Mark 6:30). In Palestine the last appreciable rains fall in March, and, generally speaking, the grass withers with the coming of the dry season a few weeks later (see Vol. II, p. 110). Both Matthew and Mark also record incidents that, taken in their context, require the lapse of at least several weeks' time between the two miracles (see on Mark 7:1; Matt. 15:21). The grass would be brown and dry by the time of the second miracle. These two unrelated and incidental points in the two narratives tend to confirm each other, whereas, had the reverse been true—had green grass been mentioned in the second instance but not in the first—there would seem to be a discrepancy.

2. The baskets on the first occasion were *kophinoi*, small hand baskets, and those of the second occasion, *spurides*, large, hamperlike baskets (see on Mark 6:43). With the 5,000 the disciples carried *kophinoi*, or small hand baskets such as Jews used on short journeys, and the first occasion involved a journey of less than 10 mi. (16 km.) in less than 24 hours. The second occasion was preceded by a journey of 50 to 75 mi. (80 to 120 km.) through predominantly Gentile territory, which took several weeks. On such a

journey through Gentile territory, where Jews would avoid purchasing food from Gentiles, the disciples would carry the larger *spurides* (see on Mark 6:43). Had the large baskets been used with the 5,000, on a very short journey, and the smaller baskets on a longer journey, there would seem to be a discrepancy. The fact that Jesus later referred to both occasion and differentiated between the *kophinoi* and the *spurides* again testifies to the distinction between the two miracles (Matt. 16:9, 10; Mark 8:19, 20). Some have proposed that the difference between the two kinds of baskets was one of kind rather than size. However this may be, the gospel writers consistently maintain the distinction.

3. The fact that the crowd remained with Jesus for three days on the second occasion, and apparently did not run out of food till the third day, raises the strong presumption that they came prepared to remain for at least one or two days. They knew, in other words, that they would find Jesus, and apparently expected to spend some time with Him. The additional fact that some of them came from a great distance (Mark 8:3) points to a planned gathering, which the first was not. But the Gospel narrative unintentionally provides a completely satisfactory explanation of how the people happened to assemble as they did, though this is not given in connection with the story itself. The two cured demoniacs had told their story throughout Decapolis (Mark 5:20; Luke 8:39). They had been earnest and zealous in their work, and throughout the region there was a great desire to see Jesus (see Luke 8:40; DA 404). When He returned, many months later, the two cured demoniacs, and no doubt others, joined in spreading the news, and, possibly with Jesus' prior consent, summoned the people from far and near.

The major reason critics deny two separate miracles is the fact that the disciples were as unprepared for this manifestation of Christ's power as upon the former occasion (Matt. 15:33; cf. Mark 6:35–37). Further, there had been, at most, not more than three months, possibly four, since the former miracle, and it seems difficult to believe that the disciples would have been as slow-witted as they appear to have been upon this occasion. However, the former throng was composed exclusively of Jews, who were presumably eligible for "bread from heaven," whereas this time the crowd was made up exclusively of Gentiles (see DA 404, 405). Had Jesus Himself not recently affirmed that "it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Matt. 15:26)? To be sure, this statement did not apply literally any more than it did figuratively, but in their dullness of mind (cf. ch. 16:6–11) the disciples evidently took it literally. Not 24 hours later Jesus again chided them for being so slow to grasp the meaning of His words (vs. 15:9–12). To the disciples the amazing and unexpected thing was not that Jesus *could* supply the bread, but rather that He *would* do so for Gentiles.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–39DA 395–405

2–4DA 396

6 COL 276

7–9DA 397

8 1T 188

8, 9 PK 50; 6T 249

9 COL 276; DA 398; Ev 214, 589, 590; FE 438, 448; PP 166; TM 229; 5T 81; 8T 120

11 DA 397

12, 13 DA 398

14 EW 68; TM 394; 3T 467, 554; 6T 166
18 TM 409
19 DA 172
22 DA 399, 608; 7T 190
23, 24 DA 400
24 DA 402
25–28DA 401
29–32DA 404
31 PK 69
33–39DA 405

CHAPTER 16

1 *The Pharisees require a sign. 6 Jesus warneth his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. 13 The people's opinion of Christ, 16 and Peter's confession of him. 21 Jesus foresheweth his death, 23 reproving Peter for dissuading him from it: 24 and admonisheth those that will follow him, to bear the cross.*

1. Pharisees. [*The Demand for a Sign, Matt. 16:1–12=Mark 8:11–12.* Major comment: Matthew. See Retirement from Public Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] There were at least two occasions on which Jesus discussed the demand for “a sign from heaven.” The first was in connection with the Sermon by the Sea, probably in the autumn of A.D. 29 (see on ch. 12:22, 38, 39). That of ch. 16:1–4 occurred about nine months or so later, probably in the early summer of A.D. 30. For incidents immediately preceding this, the second occasion on which a sign was demanded, see on ch. 15:21, 32.

With the Sadducees. Now, for the first time, the Sadducees united with the Pharisees in an attempt to silence Jesus. A few weeks previous to this Jesus had departed from Galilee to avoid these carping critics (see on ch. 15:21). Now, almost the moment He again sets foot on Galilean soil, they renew their attack upon Him.

Tempting. Gr. *peirazō* (see on ch. 4:1). Having earlier confronted Jesus with this very question, they no doubt surmised what His answer was likely to be (see on ch. 12:38). He would refuse, and this refusal they probably intended to present to the people as evidence that His claims to Messiahship were false. They were putting Jesus to the test, even as Satan had done in the wilderness (see on ch. 4:7), not with a sincere desire to see something that would convince them, but rather with the hope that He would fail to do so, and thus give them an opportunity to denounce Him and deny His claims. Obviously, Jesus had power to work such miracles, but He consistently declined to do so (see on chs. 4:3–11; 7:6). He could, but refused, because it would be inconsistent with principle to do so (see DA 366).

Sign. See p. 208.

From heaven. See on ch. 12:38, 39. By this time Jesus had performed all kinds of miracles, including demonstrations of power over disease, demons, death, and the forces of nature. Every miracle had been His answer to genuine need (DA 366). The fact that every miracle resulted in blessing to humanity was, in fact, the best possible evidence of the divine power by which all His miracles were accomplished. But the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted “a sign from heaven,” and denied that the many miracles Jesus had wrought were satisfactory evidence of the divine origin of His mission. Apparently they sought a sign entirely removed from the realm of human control, such as thunder out of season (see on 1 Sam. 12:17), or fire from heaven (see on 2 Kings 1:10), or the sun

standing still (see on Joshua 10:12), and were ready to affirm that unless Jesus did so He was not even as great as the ancient prophets, such as Samuel or Elijah. Though they knew of the angel's announcement to the shepherds of Bethlehem (Luke 2:8–14), of the star that brought the wise men to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1–6), and of the descending dove and the voice from heaven (ch. 3:16, 17)—all of them miracles that could be classed as “signs from heaven”—they refused to acknowledge these direct evidences that Jesus was the Son of God (see on ch. 13:13–16). They were without knowledge because they chose to reject light (see on Hosea 4:6).

2. When it is evening. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of the remainder of v. 2, beginning with these words, and all of v. 3. Luke 12:54–56 is similar in thought though somewhat different in form. The illustration is clearly one such as Christ often used, and, here in Matthew, fully appropriate to the context.

Fair weather. Jesus refers to the weather of Palestine. Wind and clouds from the Mediterranean to the west commonly brought rain, whereas wind from the Arabian Desert to the southeast meant hot, dry weather.

3. Foul weather to day. Literally, “today, a storm.”

Lowring. Gr. *stugnazō*, “to appear gloomy,” or “to look sad” (see Mark 10:22). Here *stugnazō* means “overcast,” or perhaps “threatening.”

O ye hypocrites. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the omission of these words. There is, of course, no doubt that these Pharisees and Sadducees were hypocrites (see ch. 23:13–29; etc.; cf. DA 409).

Discern. Gr. *diakrinō*, “to discriminate,” “to separate,” or “to make a distinction.”

Signs of the times. See v. 2; p. 208. The very attitude of the Pharisees and Sadducees was in itself a “sign” of the “times,” a token of the “foul weather” in the Jewish climate of opinion concerning the Messiah.

4. Wicked and adulterous. “Wicked” in the sense that it lacked moral and spiritual perception; “adulterous” in the sense that it was disloyal to God (see on ch. 12:39).

No sign. Jesus' critics were in need of spiritual regeneration within, not of some outward token (see DA 406). The very words Christ spoke were in themselves an impressive “sign,” would they but give heed.

The prophet Jonas. Christ here points, first to the converting power of the preaching of Jonah as a “sign” to the people of Nineveh, even as His own preaching was a sign to the people of His day (see DA 406), and second, to the time element—three days and three nights—in the experience of Jonah (see pp. 248–250).

He left them. See on chs. 10:14, 23; 15:21. Jesus refused to argue further with these hypocrites. It was useless to do so, for nothing was to be gained, either by way of convincing them or of enlightening the bystanders. Further discussion could serve only to confuse the people and to confirm the Pharisees and the Sadducees in their course of deliberate disbelief and deception.

5. Other side. Their destination was Bethsaida Julias (see on Matt. 11:21; Mark 6:31; 8:22), about 8 mi. (c. 13 km.) from Magdala. The account in Mark (ch. 8:13–22) may, at first glance, seem to imply that the conversation between Jesus and the disciples occurred in the boat on the way across the lake. But Matthew plainly states that it was after they had reached “the other side” (see DA 407).

Forgotten. That is, in their hasty departure from Magdala, occasioned by the controversy with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Bethsaida Julias itself was in Gentile territory, and a Jew would ordinarily carry provisions in order to avoid purchasing food from non-Jews (see Additional Note on Chapter 15).

6. Leaven of the Pharisees. See on ch. 13:33. Here “leaven” refers specifically to the “doctrine” of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (see ch. 16:12), that is, to their principles and teachings. As leaven permeates a lump of dough, so the principles a man accepts permeate his life. The comparison is apt indeed, whether the principles be good or evil. The spirit, teachings, and character of the religious leaders, revealed in their hypocrisy, pride, ostentation, and formalism, would inevitably affect the lives of those who esteemed them and complied with their instructions. In this particular instance Jesus referred to the spirit of the Pharisees and Sadducees (cf. Mark 8:15) that led them to ask for a sign. Later Jesus compared their hypocrisy to leaven (see Luke 12:1; cf. Matt. 23:2, 3).

7. Reasoned. Or, “deliberated,” among themselves.

No bread. See on v. 6. That is, no adequate supply. The disciples did have one small loaf, but no more (see Mark 8:14). They misconstrued Jesus’ warning against the “leaven” of the Pharisees to mean that they should avoid purchasing bread from a baker who chanced to be a Pharisee or a Sadducee (see DA 408). How slow the disciples were to reason from cause to effect and to grasp the spiritual truths Christ sought to impart to them! (See Additional Note on Chapter 15.)

8. Jesus perceived. He knew what the disciples were thinking even if He did not hear what they were saying (see on Mark 2:8).

Ye of little faith. See on Matt. 8:26; cf. Matt. 6:30; Heb. 11:6. Faith is necessary to the perception of spiritual truth. Part of the disciples’ difficulty was that they did not perceive the true character of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (see DA 398, 408). They were still taking these religious leaders for what they pretended to be rather than for what they really were, blind to the hypocrisy that lurked behind a mask of simulated piety.

9. Do ye not yet understand? Jesus was disappointed at their slowness to perceive spiritual truth (see on Mark 6:37). Only a few hours before, He had provided food for 4,000 men, and a few weeks earlier, for 5,000. Why should they think that He was concerned because of a lack of literal bread?

Five thousand. See on Mark 6:30–44.

10. Four thousand. See on ch. 15:32–39.

13. Jesus came. [*Withdrawal to Caesarea Philippi: The Great Confession, Matt. 16:13–28=Mark 8:27 to 9:1=Luke 9:18–27.* Major comment: Matthew. See Retirement from Public Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] The withdrawal to Caesarea Philippi probably occurred during the mid-summer of A.D. 30, during the half year of retirement from public ministry which Jesus devoted primarily to instructing His disciples. This phase of Christ’s ministry continued from His rejection at Capernaum, about the time of the Passover (see on John 6:66) in the spring, to the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall (see on John 7:2). To avoid conflict with the Jewish leaders and the spies assigned to follow Him (see on Mark 7:1), Jesus had already spent several weeks beyond the borders of Galilee, in Phoenicia and Decapolis (see on Matt. 15:21, 22; Mark 7:31). But immediately upon His return to Galilee the spies commissioned by the Sanhedrin again challenged Him (see on Matt. 16:1), and He left Galilee for Bethsaida Julias, in the

territory of Herod Philip (see p. 65; see on Mark 8:22; see Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus). The spies did not follow.

Coasts. See on ch. 15:21.

Caesarea Philippi. Leaving Bethsaida Julias, Jesus and His disciples journeyed about another 25 mi. (40 km.) northward to the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, the chief city of Ituraea, which was under the administration of Philip, a brother of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (see p. 65; see Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus). Caesarea Philippi, originally known as Paneas, has been identified with the modern village of *Bâniyâs*. Paneas was named after Pan, the Greek god of flocks, pastures, forests, and wildlife, and patron god of shepherds and hunters. From a grotto, formerly dedicated to Pan, in a lofty cliff in the vicinity of Paneas (Caesarea Philippi), springs forth a perennial stream, the *Bâniyâs*, one of the chief sources of the Jordan River. Philip rebuilt and beautified the city of Paneas and named it Caesarea Philippi, after himself and Tiberius Caesar (Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 2. 1; *War* ii. 9. 1 [168]).

Asked. Or, “began to question,” implying protracted discussion. Christ’s retirement to this Gentile region was partly to escape from the spies, who gave Him no respite so long as He remained in Galilee, and also to have opportunity to instruct His disciples and prepare them for the hour of crisis that would soon bring His brief ministry to a close (DA 411). The following discussion evidently took place during the course of the travels of Jesus and His disciples (see Mark 8:27), at the close of one of His seasons of prayer (see Luke 9:18). These incidental details of the narrative suggest the possibility that Jesus and the disciples had spent the night in the open, somewhere in the foothills of Mt. Hermon, and that He had either devoted the night to prayer or had risen early and gone apart from the disciples for a season of prayer in some quiet, secluded place. He was about to begin instruction with respect to the closing scenes of His earthly ministry. Accordingly He sought guidance in opening to them these unwelcome thoughts, and prayed that they might be prepared to receive what He had to impart (see DA 411).

Whom do men say? Jesus opened the discussion of His coming passion by directing the thoughts of His disciples to Himself as the Messiah, a subject He seems never to have approached directly before. It was essential that they recognize Him as the Messiah before they could in any way appreciate the meaning of His vicarious sacrifice on Calvary. If He were recognized only as a “teacher come from God” (see on John 3:2), or as one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead (see on Matt. 16:14), His death could have no more significance than that of any other great and good man. It would be exemplary rather than vicarious. It would have no atoning power. He who would find salvation in the cross of Calvary must first recognize that the One who hung upon the cross was none other than the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the Messiah, the Christ. It is only on the basis of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth that the cross can be understood and appreciated in its true perspective. Jesus, of course, knew well what the people thought of Him. He knew also of their mistaken concept of the nature of the kingdom He had come to establish (see on Luke 4:19). His reason for asking the disciples this question was to appear their minds for the next question—what they themselves had come to think of Him (Matt. 16:15). The faith of the disciples was all the more remarkable in contrast with the unbelief or the half belief of the rest of their fellow countrymen. To be sure they had been closely associated with the Master for some time.

Son of man. See on Mark 2:10.

14. *Some say.* The disciples mention four opinions they had heard expressed concerning Jesus. But the difficulty with all these opinions was that although they recognized Jesus as being a great *man*, they all fell short of recognizing Him as *God*. Thus it had been with Nicodemus (see on John 3:2). For an earlier statement of public reaction to the person of Jesus see on Mark 6:14–16.

Thou art John. A tribute indeed to John and to the impression his brief ministry had made upon the thinking of the people, even, in fact, upon the dull conscience of Herod Antipas (see on Matt 3:1; Mark 6:14–16). The various opinions men held of Jesus were a sad admission that in spite of all the evidence provided by Heaven, “his own” had failed to recognize Him for what He was in truth, the Messiah of OT prophecy (see John 1:11; Luke 24:25–27).

Elias. See on John 1:19–25.

One of the prophets. See on Deut. 18:15.

15. *Whom say ye?* The emphasis of the Greek construction is, “But *you*, who do you say that I am?” For a somewhat similar conversation between Jesus and His disciples see John 6:66–69. Constant companions of Jesus now for more than a year, and some of them for more than two years, the disciples had had opportunities to observe the many evidences of the divinity of Jesus (see on John 1:1–3) far exceeding those of other men. Now Jesus gave them an opportunity to testify to their faith. Though their understanding of Him was even yet far from perfect, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael had apparently believed from the very beginning that Jesus was the Messiah (see John 1:40–49; DA 141). After the storm on the lake all the disciples had worshiped Him (see on Matt. 14:33), and after the crisis in Galilee they had professed faith in Him as the Son of God (John 6:68, 69).

16. *Peter answered.* That is, not on his own behalf alone (DA 412, 415), but as spokesman for the Twelve, as upon previous occasions (see John 6:69; see on Matt. 14:28; Mark 3:16).

Thou art the Christ. For the significance of the title Christ see on ch. 1:1. Though many had already rejected the idea that Christ could possibly be the Messiah of prophecy (see on ch. 16:13, 14), the disciples were still loyal to Him as such, even though they understood but imperfectly all that was involved in it. Later, of course, they did understand (cf. Luke 24:25–34). Except as they grasped this fundamental truth by faith and held firmly to it, they too would fail utterly to grasp the truth that the Messiah must suffer. As it was, when His hour of extremity came, “all the disciples forsook him, and fled” (Matt. 26:56). Even so, Jesus was basing the future hopes of the church on this little band of witnesses, and unless they believed Him to be the Christ, what hope was there that other men would ever believe this sublime truth? See on John 1:11, 12.

The fiction that Jesus was merely a great and good man, perhaps the best man who ever lived, but nothing more, is as absurd as it is incredible. He claimed to be the very Son of God, and expected His followers to concur in this belief. Either He was or He was not. And if He was not, He perpetrated the greatest hoax and fraud of history. One who would make such a claim and encourage others to consider Him the Saviour of the world, when He was not, could hardly be worthy of admiration, to say nothing of worship. Jesus of Nazareth was either the Christ, the Son of the living God, or He was the most colossal impostor of all time.

Son of the living God. See on Luke 1:35. Although Jesus accepted this title, He seems to have used it of Himself only infrequently. Jesus commonly referred to Himself as the Son of man (see on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10), which was the very title He had used in addressing the question to them upon this occasion (Matt. 16:13). “Who is the Son of man?” Jesus asks; “The Son of the living God,” the disciples answer (see on John 1:1–3, 14; Additional Note on John 1).

17. Blessed. See on ch. 5:3. Jesus solemnly accepts Peter’s confession of faith. Inasmuch as Peter was spokesman for all the disciples (see on v. 16), the blessing now addressed to him belongs to them also, to the extent that their faith measured up to his.

Simon Bar-jona. That is, “Simon, son of Jonah [or John]” (see on John 21:15; cf. on Mark 3:16). This was Peter’s full name, according to Jewish custom.

Flesh and blood. That is, human beings. This was a common Jewish idiom designating mankind in whole or in part (cf. Gal. 1:16, 17).

My Father. See John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:10. For Jesus’ use of the term “Father” to refer to God see on Matt. 6:9.

18. I say also. The father had revealed one truth (v. 17); Jesus now adds to it another.

Thou art Peter. Addressing Simon Bar-jona (v. 17) as Peter, Jesus used the name He had given Peter upon first meeting him (see John 1:40–42; see on Matt. 4:18).

Upon this rock. These words have been variously interpreted: (1) that Peter is “this rock,” (2) that Peter’s faith in Jesus as the Christ is “this rock,” (3) that Christ Himself is “this rock.” Persuasive reasons have been set forth in favor of each of the three explanations. The best way to determine what Christ meant by these cryptic words is to inquire of the Scriptures themselves what this figure of speech meant to Jewish listeners, particularly to those who heard Jesus use it upon this occasion (see MB 1). The testimony of the writings of the disciples themselves is obviously superior to what men have since thought Jesus meant. Fortunately, some of those who were eyewitnesses upon this occasion (see 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1–3) have left a record that is clear and unequivocal.

For this part, Peter, to whom the words were addressed, emphatically disclaims, by his teachings, that the “rock” of which Jesus spoke referred to him (see Acts 4:8–12; 1 Peter 2:4–8). Matthew records the fact that Jesus again used the same figure of speech, under circumstances that clearly call for the term to be understood of Himself (see on Matt. 21:42; cf. Luke 20:17, 18). From very early times the figure of a rock was used by the Hebrew people as a specific term for God (see on Deut. 32:4; Ps. 18:2; etc.). The prophet Isaiah speaks of Christ as “a great rock in a weary land” (see on ch. 32:2), and as “a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (see on ch. 28:16). Paul affirms that Christ was the “Rock” that went with His people in ancient times (see 1 Cor. 10:4; cf. Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 22:32; Ps. 18:31). In a secondary sense the truths Jesus spoke are also a “rock” on which men may build safely and securely (see on Matt. 7:24, 25), for He Himself is the living “Word” “made flesh” (see John 1:1, 14; cf. Mark 8:38; John 3:34; 6:63, 68; 17:8).

Jesus Christ is the “rock of our salvation” (Ps. 95:1; cf. Deut. 32:4, 15, 18; DA 413). He alone is the foundation of the church, for “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11), “neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12). Closely associated with Jesus Christ as “the chief corner stone” in the foundation of the church are “the apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20). In the same sense that Christ is *the Rock*, “a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God,” all who believe

in Him, “as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:4, 5), “fitly framed together ... an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21). But Jesus is ever and only *the* “Rock” on which the entire structure rests, for without Him there would be no church at all. Faith in Him as *the* Son of God makes it possible for us also to become sons of God (see John 1:12; 1 John 3:1, 2). The realization that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, as Peter emphatically affirmed upon this occasion (see Matt. 16:16), is the key to the door of salvation (see DA 412, 413). But it is incidental, not fundamental, that Peter was the first to recognize and declare his faith, which, upon this occasion, he did as spokesman for all the disciples (see on v. 16).

Augustine (c. A.D. 400), the greatest of Catholic theologians of the early Christian centuries, leaves it for his readers to decide whether Christ here designated Himself or Peter as “the rock” (*Retractiones* i. 21. 1). Chrysostom, the “golden-tongued” preacher, another Father of the early centuries, says that Jesus promised to lay the foundation of the church upon Peter’s confession [not on Peter], but elsewhere calls Christ Himself truly our foundation (*Commentary on Galatians*, ch. 1:1–3; *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, No. xviii, ch. 6:21). Eusebius, the early church historian, quotes Clement of Alexandria as declaring that Peter and James and John did not strive for supremacy in the church at Jerusalem, but chose James the Just as leader (*Church History* ii. 1). Other early Fathers of the church, such as Hilary of Arles, taught the same.

It was only when scriptural support was sought in behalf of the claims of the bishop of Rome to the primacy of the church (see Vol. IV, p. 836) that the words of Christ upon this occasion were taken from their original context and interpreted to mean that Peter was “this rock.” Leo I was the first Roman pontiff to claim (about A.D. 445) that his authority came from Christ through Peter. Of him, Kenneth Scott Latourette, a leading church historian, says: “He insisted that by Christ’s decree Peter was the rock, the foundation, the door-keeper of the kingdom of heaven, set to bind and loose, whose judgments retained their validity in heaven, and that through the Pope, as his successor, Peter continued to perform the assignment which had been entrusted to him” (*A History of Christianity* [1953], p. 186). Strange indeed it is, that if this is really what Christ meant, neither Peter nor any other of the disciples, nor other Christians for four centuries thereafter, discovered the fact! How extraordinary that no Roman bishop discovered this meaning in Christ’s words until a fifth-century bishop considered it necessary to find some Biblical support for papal primacy. The significance attributed to Christ’s words, by which they are made to confer primacy upon the so-called successors of Peter, the bishops of Rome, is completely at variance with all the teachings Christ gave to His followers (see ch. 23:8, 10).

Perhaps the best evidence that Christ did not appoint Peter as the “rock” on which He would build His church is the fact that none of those who heard Christ upon this occasion—not even Peter—so construed His words, either during the time that Christ was on earth or later. Had Christ made Peter chief among the disciples, they would not thereafter have been involved in repeated arguments about which of them “should be accounted the greatest” (Luke 22:24; see Matt. 18:1; Mark 9:33–35; etc.; DA 817; see on Matt. 16:19).

The name Peter is derived from the Gr. *petros*, a “stone,” generally a small slab of stone. The word “rock” is the Gr. *petra*, the large mass of rock itself, a “ledge” or “shelf

of rock,” a “rocky peak.” A *petra* is a large, fixed, immovable “rock,” whereas a *petros* is a small “stone.” To what extent Christ may have had this distinction in mind, however, or may have explained it as He spoke, is a matter that cannot be determined from these words themselves, because Christ certainly spoke Aramaic—the common language of Palestine at that time. The Gr. *petros* undoubtedly represents the word *kepha*’ (cephas) in Aramaic (see on ch. 4:18). And, very likely, *petra* also represents the Aramaic word *kepha*’ though there is a possibility that Christ used some other synonym or expression in Aramaic, which would agree with the distinction between *petros* and *petra* that is made by the gospel writers in Greek. It seems probable that Christ must have intended to make such a distinction, however, or Matthew, writing in Greek and guided by the Holy Spirit, would not have made one.

Obviously a *petros*, or small stone, would make an impossible foundation for any edifice, and Jesus here affirms that nothing less than a *petra*, or “rock,” could suffice. This fact is made even more sure by the words of Christ in ch. 7:24: “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them” is like “a wise man, which built his house upon a rock [Gr. *petra*].” Any edifice built upon Peter, *petros*, a weak, erring human being, as the Gospel record makes plain, has a foundation little better than shifting sand (see on ch. 7:27).

Church. Gr. *ekklēsia*. See on ch. 18:17.

Gates. In ancient cities the gate was the meeting place of the city fathers and the key place in the defense of the city against an attacking army (see on Gen. 19:1; Joshua 8:29). Hence to capture the gate would make possible the capturing of the entire city.

Christ’s triumph over death and the grave is the central truth of Christianity. It was not possible for Satan to hold Christ with the cords of death (see Acts 2:24), nor will it be possible for him to hold any of those who believe in Christ (see John 3:16; Rom. 6:23). Figuratively speaking, Satan holds the “gates of hell,” but Christ, by His death, entered Satan’s stronghold and bound the adversary (see on Matt. 12:29). Upon this sublime fact rests the Christian’s hope of deliverance from the wiles of Satan in this life, from his power over the grave, and from his presence in the life to come. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). Death and the grave will eventually be “cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14).

To make Christ’s words mean that the “gates of hell” are not to prevail against Peter is to deny Christ’s own explanation in Matt. 16:21 (to which vs. 13–20 are introductory), and to make Peter’s reaction meaningless (see vs. 22, 23).

Hell. See on ch. 11:23.

Not prevail. Figuratively, the “gates of hell” prevailed against Peter when he thrice denied his Lord (see DA 413), and literally at his death (see John 21:18, 19).

The full significance of what Christ meant when He said that “the gates of hell” would “not prevail” can best be understood in terms of the fact that immediately He proceeded to speak about how He would “be killed, and be raised again the third day” (see on Matt. 12:40; cf. DA 418). Christ triumphed gloriously over all of Satan’s power, and by that triumph, He provided assurance that His church on earth would also triumph.

19. The keys. The “keys” to the kingdom of heaven are the words of Christ (see DA 413; cf. John 1:12; 17:3). It is important to note that Christ Himself speaks of the “key” here referred to as “the key of knowledge” of how to enter the kingdom (see Luke 11:52). The words of Jesus are “spirit” and “life” to all who receive them (see John 6:63). It is the words of Christ that bring eternal life (see John 6:68). The word of God is the key to the new-birth experience (1 Peter 1:23).

As the words spoken by Jesus convinced the disciples of His divinity, so their repeating of His words to other men, as His ambassadors, was to “reconcile” them to God (see 2 Cor. 5:18–20). The saving power of the gospel is the only thing that admits men and women into the kingdom of heaven. Christ simply bestowed upon Peter and all the other disciples (see on Matt. 18:18; John 20:23) the authority and power to bring men into the kingdom. It was Peter’s perception of the truth that Jesus is indeed the Christ that placed the “keys” of the kingdom in his possession and let him into the kingdom, and the same may be said of all Christ’s followers to the very close of time. The argument that Christ bestowed upon Peter a degree of authority greater than, or different from, that which He gave to the other disciples, is without scriptural basis (see on Matt. 16:18). As a matter of fact, among the apostles it was James and not Peter who exercised administrative functions over the early church in Jerusalem (see Acts 15:13, 19; cf. chs. 1:13; 12:17; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9, 12). Upon at least one occasion Paul “withstood” Peter “to the face” for a wrong course of action (see Gal. 2:11–14), which he certainly would not have done had he known anything about Peter’s enjoying the rights and prerogatives that some now claim for him upon the basis of Matt. 16:18, 19.

Kingdom of heaven. As frequently used throughout the ministry of Christ, the “kingdom of heaven” here refers to the kingdom of divine grace in the hearts of those who become its citizens, here and now (see on chs. 4:17; 5:2). No one can ever hope to enter the future kingdom of glory (see on ch. 25:31, 34) who has not first entered the present kingdom of His grace.

Bind. The entire statement reads literally, “Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” The meaning evidently is this, that the church on earth will require only what heaven requires and will prohibit only what heaven prohibits. This seems to be the clear teaching of the Scriptures (see on Matt. 7:21–27; Mark 7:6–13). As the apostles went forth to proclaim the gospel, according to the commission entrusted to them (see Matt. 28:19, 20), they were to teach converts “to observe all things whatsoever” Christ had commanded—no more and no less.

To extend the meaning of “bind” and “loose” to the authority to dictate what members of the church may believe and what they may do, in matters of faith and practice, is to read into these words of Christ more than He meant by them, and more than the disciples understood by them. Such a claim God does not sanction. Christ’s representatives on earth have the right and the responsibility to “bind” whatever has been “bound in heaven” and to “loose” whatever has been “loosed in heaven,” that is, to require or to prohibit whatever Inspiration clearly reveals. But to go beyond this is to substitute human authority for the authority of Christ (see on Mark 7:7–9), a tendency that Heaven will not tolerate in those who have been appointed to the oversight of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

20. *Tell no man.* Until the very close of His ministry—until the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in fact—Jesus avoided public discussion of His Messiahship. He never claimed publicly to be the Messiah. Apparently to avoid publicity as the Messiah (see on Mark 1:24, 25), Christ repeatedly enjoined the evil spirits not to address Him as “the Holy One of God” (see Mark 1:24, 25, 34; 3:11, 12; Luke 4:34, 35, 41). The Twelve, on their tour through Galilee, were not to discuss the question of whether Jesus was the Messiah (see DA 350), because the popular misconceptions entertained concerning Messiah (DA 30, 414, 415; see on Luke 4:19) would tend to thwart the proclamation and reception of the gospel. Men would have construed such a proclamation in a political sense, as they did at the time of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (see on Matt. 21:1, 5; John 6:15).

21. *From that time forth.* The conversation of vs. 13–20 was a fitting introduction to the subject Jesus now introduced for the first time—His imminent sufferings, death, and resurrection (see on v. 13). Whether the instruction and conversation of vs. 21–28 took place immediately after the preceding section, or very shortly after, is not known. Another slight interval of time may have intervened between vs. 23 and 24 (see Mark 8:34; DA 416). Be that as it may, it is clear that all the conversation and discussion recorded in vs. 14–28 took place in the region of Caesarea Philippi (see on v. 13; cf. DA 411, 418). It was now probably in the latter part of the summer, A.D. 30 (see on v. 13).

Prior to this occasion Jesus had not discussed His Messiahship even with the Twelve (see on vs. 13, 16), nor had He mentioned to them the fact that, as the Messiah, He must die for the sins of the world. He had, it is true, alluded to His death in an enigmatic statement at the time of the First Cleansing of the Temple, more than two years earlier (see on John 2:19), and to Nicodemus He had plainly, though privately, set forth both the fact and the nature of His death (see John 3:14). From this time forth, however, Jesus repeatedly discussed the matter with His disciples, in an endeavor, no doubt, to wean their minds away from the false, popular concepts the Jews then entertained concerning the Messiah and His kingdom (see on Luke 4:19). Their reluctance upon this occasion to accept and entertain the idea that the Messiah must suffer and die (see Matt. 16:22) emphasizes the difficulty Christ had in disabusing their minds of this misconception. Again (ch. 17:22, 23) and again (ch. 20:17–19) He discussed the matter with them. But their disappointment, when the time finally arrived, showed that it was only with partial success that Jesus pressed upon them the instruction He now had to impart to them.

He must. Literally, “it is necessary for him” (see on Luke 2:49), that is, in the sense that it was necessary for Him to do so in order to fulfill the plan for His life while on earth (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:12; etc.). There was no way in which He could accomplish His mission but by the way of the cross.

Jerusalem. Whither, a few months later—perhaps three or four—He “stedfastly set his face to go” (see on Luke 9:51).

Suffer many things. As had been prophesied (see Ps. 22:1, 7, 8, 15–18; Isa. 53:3–10; etc.). Jesus’ sufferings have meaning for us in terms of His being the Son of God, the Messiah of OT prophecy, and the Redeemer of mankind. Because He was the Messiah, He *must* suffer.

The elders. The use of a single definite article in the Greek indicates that the three classes of leaders—elders, chief priests, and scribes—are here treated as a single group and not as three separate groups. Probably, therefore, this was the Sanhedrin, which is

known to have been composed of these three groups. For comment on the “chief priests” see on ch. 2:4. For comment on the “scribes” see on Mark 1:22. The Sanhedrin was the supreme legislative and judicial body of Israel, consisting of 71 members (see p. 67).

Be killed. Again and again Jesus plainly set forth the facts, both of the crucifixion and of the resurrection. Nevertheless, the disciples failed to comprehend Christ’s meaning (Mark 9:10, 32), blindly choosing to believe what they wanted to believe and passing by what they found displeasing to their preconceived opinions (see DA 30).

The third day. See pp. 248-250.

22. Peter took him. Literally, “Peter took him to himself,” implying that he took Jesus off to one side to talk to Him.

Began to rebuke him. Peter “began,” but Jesus stopped him before he could finish. Later, Peter’s boldness was again in evidence when he took the sword in an attempt to defend Jesus (see John 18:10; cf. Matt. 26:33–35).

Be it far from thee. A common Jewish idiom translated into Greek and meaning “God be merciful to thee.” Peter could not understand how the Messiah would suffer; the idea of a “Messiah” and a “suffering Servant” seemed irreconcilable in his mind (cf. Isa. 52:13 to 53:1). By his protest Peter revealed his own selfishness. He wanted to follow Jesus, but did not relish the idea of being associated with a program destined to lead to suffering and death (see DA 415, 416; see on Matt. 16:24, 25).

This shall not be. In the Greek there is a double negative, an emphatic way of saying, “In no case shall this be.”

23. He turned. It seems that Christ turned away from Peter toward the other disciples (see Mark 8:33), though His words were addressed to Peter as He did so.

Get thee behind me. The sentiment expressed by Peter was that of the tempter, and Christ’s reply was directed to the unseen foe who had prompted it. These were the very words with which Christ had repulsed the tempter in the wilderness (see Luke 4:8), and are expressive of the most severe rebuke ever spoken by Jesus. The command means, literally, “Get away from me!” or more freely, “Go away!” or “Get out of my sight!” Peter had permitted “the gates of hell,” as it were, to prevail upon him to be the mouthpiece of the prince of evil (see on Matt. 16:18). However, Christ’s words were addressed, not so much to the disciple, as to the one who had prompted his words.

Offence. Gr. *skandalon*, properly, the trigger of the trap on which bait is placed, and metaphorically, “a hindrance.” Here the Lord refers to Peter as a hindrance to Him on His way to the cross (see on v. 21).

Savourest. Gr. *phroneō*, “to have understanding,” “to feel,” or “to think.” The English verb, “to savor,” has the archaic meaning, “to understand,” or “to perceive.” Moments before, Peter had expressed a divine truth concerning Jesus, which had been revealed to him by the Father (v. 17); now he spoke what had been suggested to him by the enemy of all good. How soon Peter had changed sides in the great controversy!

24. If any man. Jesus now addressed all the disciples (see Luke 9:23), and Mark (ch. 8:34) adds that there were some others besides His disciples present—perhaps some Jews of the region who had come to believe on Him, and who had heard of all His wonderful works in Galilee. For comment on the thought expressed in Matt. 16:24, 25 see on ch. 10:38, 39.

Deny himself. That is, “renounce himself,” submit his will to Christ, henceforth to live for Christ rather than for himself.

Take up his cross. That is, assume the responsibilities that accompany discipleship, even though by doing so he be called upon to pay the supreme price. The cross was not a Jewish, but a Roman, instrument for executing criminals (see on ch. 10:38). However, during these decades the cross was well known in Palestine.

A criminal condemned to die by crucifixion literally did “take up his cross,” or at least the crossbar to it, which he carried to the scene of execution, and it is probably this to which Christ here alludes. In the context in which Christ here mentions cross bearing, it seems that He refers, not so much to the minor difficulties and obstacles to be encountered by disciples, but rather to the need of being ready to face death itself (see ch. 16:21, 22). Peter had just attempted to persuade Jesus to abandon the divine plan that called Him to take up His cross. Jesus replies that this is impossible, for such is not the will of the Father, and that, furthermore, if Peter is to continue as a disciple he must be willing to pay the same price, as, indeed, he eventually did (see on John 21:18, 19). Elsewhere Christ presented the additional thought that disciples must take up their crosses “daily” (see Luke 9:23), in consecration to the life of service to which they are called. If men hated Jesus, they might also be expected to hate His representatives, the disciples (see John 15:18; 16:33; see on Matt. 10:22).

Follow me. The would-be disciple must first renounce himself, his own plans, his own desires; then he must be willing to bear any cross that duty calls him to “take up;” finally, he must “follow” in the footsteps of Jesus (see 1 Peter 2:21). To “follow” Jesus is to pattern our lives after His life, and to serve God and our fellow men, as He did (see 1 John 2:6).

25. Save his life. See on ch. 10:39. To “save” one’s life is to seek first the things of the present life, forgetting “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (see ch. 6:33).

Lose his life. A man “loses” his life for the sake of Christ when he “denies,” or “renounces,” himself and takes up the cross of Christ (see on Matt. 5:11; 16:24; cf. 1 Peter 4:12, 13).

Find it. Another aspect of this great gospel paradox. For the Christian there can be no crown without a cross, though Satan in the wilderness offered Christ the crown of this world by another route than the cross (see on chs. 4:8, 9; 16:22).

26. World. Gr. *kosmos*, here designating what the world has to offer in material wealth, benefits, etc. To “gain the whole world” has ever been the ambition of the forces of evil, seen and unseen, in the present as in the past.

Soul. Gr. *psuchē* (see on ch. 10:28).

Give in exchange. Christ here uses a powerful illustration to make vivid an eternal truth. There is no adequate answer to the question proposed.

27. Son of man. Jesus’ usual title for Himself (see on Mark 2:10).

Come in the glory. Those who lose their life for Christ’s sake are assured of finding it when the Lord returns in glory at the close of the age (1 Cor. 15:51–55; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). It is then that every man may expect to receive his reward (see 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12). Christ had just been speaking of Christians losing their lives (see Matt. 16:25) for His sake. If their “reward” for the sacrifice were to be received at death, as popular theology has it, it is strange that Christ here specifically declares that this reward is not given until He Himself shall return in glory at the close of the age (see on ch. 25:31).

With his angels. Compare Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16.

According to his works. That is, according to what he has done in this life. Christ taught the same truth most emphatically in the parables of the Sheep and the Goats (ch. 25:31–46), the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), the Tares (Matt. 13:24–30), the Dragnet (ch. 13:47–50), and the Marriage Feast (ch. 22:1–14). Nothing in the teachings of Christ can be construed to mean that there will be a time when men will be given a second chance, an opportunity to escape the “reward” of their evil deeds in this present life. The Scriptures consistently present this life as the “day of salvation” (Isa. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2), the time when a man is to “work out”—by faith in Christ and under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit—his “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

28. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Till they see. It is significant that all three Synoptic Gospels record the narrative of the Transfiguration immediately following this prediction. There is no break in the narrative—no chapter or verse division in the Greek original—and furthermore all three mention the fact that the Transfiguration occurred about a week after this statement, implying that the event was the fulfillment of the prediction. The connection between the two sections of narrative seems to preclude the possibility that Jesus here referred to anything but the Transfiguration, which was a miniature demonstration of the kingdom of glory. Undoubtedly Peter so understood it (see 2 Peter 1:16–18).

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10; see Additional Note on John 1.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–28DA 405–418

1 DA 405

3 8T 28

3, 4 DA 406

5 DA 408

6 DA 407

13–16DA 411

16 DA 415

16–18DA 412

18 AA 11, 194, 198; DA 413; PK 596; RC 53; 1T 471

19 DA 413, 442; 3T 428, 450

20 DA 414

21 AA 26; EW 150, 161; SR 43, 205

21, 22 DA 415

22 AA 525; Ed 88

23 1T 152; 5T 409

23, 24 DA 416

24 AA 523, 560; AH 379, 381; CD 165; CH 223, 319; CS 44, 227, 252, 289, 302; CT 23; FE 463, 511; LS 114; MB 14; MM 132, 251; MYP 314; 1T 286; 2T 491, 651; 3T 41, 81, 388; 4T 251, 626; 5T 40, 78, 307, 515; 6T 251, 378; 7T 49, 240; 8T 45; WM 116

24–27CW 22

25 2T 304

25–28DA 417

26 COL 106; SC 126; 2T 496

27 GC 479; PP 339; 2T 41, 277, 300; 3T 525

CHAPTER 17

- 1 *The transfiguration of Christ. 14 He healeth the lunatick, 22 foretelleth his own passion, 24 and payeth tribute.*

1. After six days. [*The Transfiguration, Matt. 17:1–13=Mark 9:2–13=Luke 9:28–36.* Major comment: Matthew. See Retirement from Public Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord.] For events and circumstances leading up to the Transfiguration see on ch. 16:13. The Transfiguration probably took place in the latter part of the summer, A.D. 30. The Passover season of A.D. 30 had seen public opinion in Galilee turn against Jesus (see on ch. 15:21). Also the Sanhedrin had intensified its purpose to bring His ministry to a halt (see on Matt. 16:1; cf. Mark 7:1, 2). At Caesarea Philippi Jesus had, for the first time, spoken plainly to the disciples concerning His sufferings and death (see on Matt. 16:21). But they, like all other Jews, thought of the Messiah as a conquering king. Hence it was difficult, even for them, to grasp the idea of a Messiah who would suffer and die. Gloomy thoughts, as upon previous occasions, filled their minds, owing to their misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of Jesus' ministry.

The period of time here mentioned, "after six days," refers to the time since Peter's profession of faith in the divine Sonship of Jesus (ch. 16:16). Luke (ch. 9:28) speaks of it as being "about an eight days after," that is, about a week later. By inclusive reckoning, a week would be called "eight days" (see pp. 248-250). It is not unusual for Luke (see on ch. 3:23) to give an approximation or "about" rather than an exact statement of time.

Peter, James, and John. These three had shown better understanding than their fellow disciples of the truths Christ sought to impart. At least upon one previous occasion they had been especially selected to witness divine power at work (see Mark 5:37), and because of their deeper spiritual insight they were yet to witness His hour of agony in Gethsemane (see Mark 14:33). It was especially to prepare them for that hour of fear and disappointment that Jesus now took them alone with Him into the hills (see DA 420).

An high mountain. The site of the Transfiguration is not known. Mt. Tabor (elevation 1,929 ft., or 588 m.), about 12 mi. (19 km.) southwest of the Lake of Galilee and 5 1/2 mi. (c. 9 km.) east of Nazareth, was the traditional location. But the discovery that in the time of Christ a fortress and a small settlement crowned its summit has made it seem impossible that Jesus could there have found the solitude spoken of by Matthew and Mark (cf. DA 419).

Since Tabor is no longer seriously considered as the site of the Transfiguration, it has generally been identified with Mt. Hermon (elevation 9,166 ft., or 2,794 m.), on whose lower slopes lay the city of Caesarea Philippi, and in the vicinity of which Christ and the disciples are known to have been immediately preceding the Transfiguration (see on ch. 16:13). But there are difficulties with this identification also. In the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi and Mt. Hermon, Jesus was "out of the reach of Herod and Caiaphas" and "at a distance from the Pharisees" (see DA 418). It was a Gentile region beyond the limits of Galilee. That fact was what led Christ to withdraw there for a time (see on ch. 16:13). But

⁸Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 13:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

at the foot of the mount of Transfiguration the scribes and rabbis mingled with a throng of people, most likely Jewish, and sought to humiliate Jesus and His disciples. This would seem to indicate that the Transfiguration took place in Galilee rather than in the Gentile district of Caesarea Philippi.

Furthermore, following the visit to Caesarea Philippi, but before the Transfiguration, Jesus and the disciples are spoken of as journeying southward along the shores of the Lake of Galilee (see DA 418), at least 30 mi. (48 km.) from Mt. Hermon. During the week's interval between the Great Confession and the Transfiguration, then, Jesus had returned to Galilee. Thus it seems that neither Tabor nor Hermon was the mount of Transfiguration.

Apart. Luke adds that Jesus went there "to pray" (ch. 9:28). This was one of those special occasions when Jesus anxiously sought communion with His heavenly Father (see on Mark 1:35) in order that He might know how to accomplish His mission (see on Mark 3:13). In this instance the problem was how to help the disciples understand the true nature of His mission, and how to prepare them for His death (see on Matt. 16:13). The entire night was spent on the mountainside (see DA 426).

Jesus and His companions had kept on climbing, apparently, until it became too dark to go farther. It would seem that Jesus had already spent a considerable portion of the night in prayer by the time of the Transfiguration, for, as the hours passed slowly by, the dew of night was "heavy" upon Him. He prayed for personal strength to face the great test that lay ahead, and also for His disciples, that their faith in Him as the Son of God might be strengthened, that they might understand the necessity of His death as part of the plan of salvation, and that they might be prepared for the hour of trial (see DA 420). Accordingly, He prayed that they might behold His divine glory, which thus far, except for fleeting moments, had been hidden from their gaze (see on Luke 2:48).

2. Transfigured. Gr. *metamorphoō*, "to change into another form," or "to transform." This was one of the occasions when divinity flashed forth through Jesus' humanity, to meet the radiance of heaven (see DA 421; see on Luke 2:49). It was while Jesus was praying and the disciples were asleep that the mysterious transformation took place.

The description of the experience by the three synoptic writers precludes any suggestion that it was a subjective experience on the part of the disciples, or perhaps only of Peter. It was more than a dream or hallucination due to weariness from the day's journey and worry about Christ's prediction of His death; it was a real experience. Many years later Peter declared that he and his fellow disciples "were eyewitnesses" of the "majesty," "honour," and "glory" of Jesus, and testified to having heard the voice proclaiming Jesus' Sonship to the Father (see 2 Peter 1:16–18). Peter presents this outstanding experience as one of the great confirmations of the Christian faith. See on John 1:14.

His face. The description of Christ here recorded closely resembles that given by Daniel (see Dan. 10:5, 6) and by John (see Rev. 1:13–15). The appearance of Jesus' face became different (see Luke 9:29) under the influence of this radiant white light. It was a luminous glory that appeared to come from within. This was the glory that Jesus had in heaven before He assumed the form of humanity (see John 17:5), and is the glory with which He will return again to this earth (see Matt. 25:31; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; DA 422). A similar glory radiated from the face of Moses as he descended from the Mount of the Law (see Ex. 34:29; 2 Cor. 3:7). When Jesus returns and bestows the gift of immortality upon

His faithful ones, no doubt they also will reflect this glory (see Dan. 12:3). For other moments in the life of Christ when His divinity flashed forth see on Luke 2:48.

White as the light. Mark compares Jesus' "raiment" to snow (see Mark 9:3). The "white raiment" of the saints (see Rev. 3:4, 5, 18; etc.) will reflect the glory of Jesus' own garments of righteousness in the earth made new.

3. Moses and Elias. Evidently the disciples recognized the heavenly visitants either from their conversation or by divine illumination. Moses was the great deliverer, lawgiver, and founder of the Hebrew nation, and Elijah the one who saved it in a time of great apostasy and crisis. Here were living representatives to bear witness to the divinity of Jesus, even as "Moses and all the prophets," through their written records, had testified of Him (see on Luke 24:44).

It is important to note that regarding both Elijah (see on 2 Kings 2:11, 12) and Moses (see on Jude 9) the Scriptures record the fact that the one was translated to heaven without seeing death and the other raised from the dead. The fact that Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at this time is therefore not to be taken to prove that all the righteous dead are in heaven. These two, one raised from the dead and the other translated without seeing death, appeared with Jesus, as a type of the glorious kingdom in which the ransomed of all ages will be with Him in glory (see Matt. 25:31; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Talking with him. Luke adds that they were talking about "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31; cf. Matt. 16:21).

4. Then answered Peter. As usual Peter came forward as spokesman for the group (see on ch. 16:16, 22). Luke adds that Peter spoke without knowing what he was actually saying (see Luke 9:33). Mark says that Peter, as well as the others, was "sore afraid" (see Mark 9:6).

Lord. Gr. *Kurios*. According to Mark 9:5, Peter addressed Jesus as "Master" (Gr. *Hrabbi*), and according to Luke 9:33, as "Master" (Gr. *Epistatēs*). On the significance of such variations in the Gospel narratives see the Additional Notes on Matthew 3, Note 2.

Let us make. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the reading "I will make," though in Mark and Luke the uncontested reading is, "Let us make."

Three tabernacles. Literally, "three booths," or "three tents." Practically no rain fell during the latter part of the summer (see Vol. II p. 110; see on ch. 17:1), and the only protection needed would be that from the heavy dew of the night. Whether Peter thought of the booths as protection from the elements only, or whether the suggestion came to his mind in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles—now but a short time away—is not certain. The expectation that Elijah would come to herald the Messianic kingdom (see on v. 10) may have reminded Peter of the predicted celebration of that feast in connection with the rulership of the Messiah (see Zech. 14:16–19). Perhaps he concluded that the appearance of Moses and Elijah at this time, so close to the Feast of Tabernacles, implied that they had come to participate in the celebration.

5. A bright cloud. Reminiscent, perhaps, of the pillar of cloud in the wilderness (see on Ex. 13:21, 22), which was illuminated by the glory of God (see Num. 9:15, 16; see on Ex. 40:34). Compare the experience of Moses in the mount with God (see on Ex. 24:15–18), when he "went into the midst of the cloud" that shrouded the glory of God. This scene may have flashed into the minds of the disciples, as perhaps also the experience of Elijah upon Mt. Carmel (see on 1 Kings 18:38; Luke 2:48; John 1:14).

Overshadowed. Gr. *episkiazō*, “to cast a shadow over” (cf. Luke 1:35; Ps. 91:1).

Matthew and Mark do not make clear whether the cloud “overshadowed” Christ and the two heavenly visitors, or the disciples, or both; however, it seems apparent from Luke that primary reference is to the disciples (Luke 9:34).

A voice. The same voice heard at the time of Christ’s baptism (see ch. 3:17) and later, at the very close of His ministry (see John 12:28). Upon these three occasions the Father personally attested the divine Sonship of Jesus.

My beloved Son. Concerning Christ as the Son of God see on Luke 1:35; John 1:1–3; see Additional Note on John 1.

Well pleased. Because in His life on earth Jesus had carried out to perfection His assigned task (see John 17:4) and presented men with a perfect example of obedience to the Father’s will (see John 15:10). If we place our trust in our Saviour, it will be our privilege also to “do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22).

Hear ye him. Probably with particular reference to the instruction He was now giving concerning His imminent sufferings and death (see on ch. 16:21).

6. Fell on their face. Compare Eze. 1:28; Dan. 10:9. Such men as Ezekiel and Daniel were accorded visions; Peter, James, and John saw with their natural eyesight.

7. Touched them. The fact that the touch of Jesus came after, rather than before, the experience is indirect testimony to the fact that this was not a vision, but rather an objective experience. Furthermore, there is no instance in the Bible where three men all received the same vision simultaneously.

8. Lifted up their eyes. According to Mark, the three men “suddenly ... looked round about” (Mark 9:8).

Only. That is, “alone.”

9. Vision. Gr. *horama*, “spectacle,” literally, “that which is seen.” Compare the Hebrew words *chazon* and *mar’ah* (see on 1 Sam. 3:1).

To no man. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him because they alone, of the Twelve, were prepared to receive what He had to impart to them (see on v. 1) Had they reported what they had seen and heard, it would have excited only idle wonder and curiosity, and could have served no good purpose at that time. The fact that they were to remain silent about it until after the resurrection implies that at that time the other disciples would be ready to understand, and that their faith would be strengthened by the account of the three who witnessed the event. Furthermore, having with their own eyes beheld two men over whom death had no power, these three disciples should have been prepared to believe Christ’s words concerning His resurrection (cf. Luke 9:31), and to impart faith and courage to their fellow disciples. Also, the fact that Jesus took the same three of them alone with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane to join with Him in prayer should have brought this lesson vividly before them again.

10. Say the scribes. As the official expositors of the Scriptures, the “scribes” would be the ones expected to decide theological problems such as the one here under discussion. Concerning the scribes see p. 55.

The apparent connection between the Transfiguration and the discussion about Elias’ coming seems to be merely that Elijah was one of the two who had appeared with Christ. However, Malachi had predicted the coming of Elias as a forerunner of the Messiah (see on Mal. 4:5), and the disciples thought that Elijah had now come to announce the

Messiah, to protect Jesus, and to confirm His authority as King Messiah (see DA 422; see on John 1:21). But if Jesus was indeed the Messiah of prophecy, as the disciples fondly hoped, and believed Him to be (see on Matt. 16:16), why, then, had Elijah not appeared before this? They still misunderstood the mission of John the Baptist in spite of the fact that Jesus had already told them plainly that the life and work of John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of the coming of Elijah (see on ch. 11:14).

11. Restore all things. In the dramatic experience on Mt. Carmel, Elijah had been successful in turning the hearts of many in Israel back to the God of their fathers (see on 1 Kings 18:37–40), and thus in checking the fearful inroads of apostasy. In the same way John the Baptist proclaimed the baptism of repentance from sin and a return to the true spirit of worship (see on Mal. 3:1, 7; 4:6; Luke 1:17). John, of course, was not Elijah in person (see on John 1:21), but he went before the Messiah “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17).

12. Knew him not. That is, they did not recognize him as Elijah (see on John 1:10, 11).

Whatsoever they listed. That is, whatever they wished to do. Instead of accepting John and believing his message, the Jewish leaders had spurned him and his call to repentance (see Luke 7:30–33; see on Matt. 21:25, 32). Herod had imprisoned him (see on Luke 3:20), and about a year later executed him (see on Mark 6:14–29). It would be only a few months after the Transfiguration until the leaders of Israel would similarly do to Jesus “whatsoever they listed.”

14. When they were come. [*The Demon-possessed Boy, Matt. 17:14–21=Mark 9:14–29=Luke 9:37–43^a. Major comment: Mark.*]

15. Lunatick. See on ch. 4:24.

17. Perverse. Literally, “distorted,” or “corrupt.”

20. Unbelief. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between this reading and “little faith.” The disciples had too much faith in themselves and too little faith in God (see on ch. 8:26).

Mustard seed. See on ch. 13:31, 32. For similar illustrations given upon other occasions see Matt. 21:21; Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6. The mustard seed may be small to begin with, but hidden within it is the life principle, and, given favorable circumstances, it will grow.

Say unto this mountain. Christ here speaks figuratively of great obstacles encountered by His disciples as they carry out the gospel commission. Most assuredly Jesus never intended that His disciples should go about the country moving literal mountains. Nevertheless He promised that no difficulties, however great they may seem, can hinder the accomplishment of His divine purpose to save sinners (see Isa. 45:18; 55:8–11).

Nothing shall be impossible. “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

21. Howbeit. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) as to whether or not v. 21 was in the original text of Matthew (see on Mark 9:29).

22. While they abode. [*A Secret Journey Through Galilee, Matt. 17:22, 23=Mark 9:30–32=Luke 9:43b–45. Major comment: Mark.*] Or, “while they returned,” that is, to Capernaum. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between this and the reading “while they gathered.”

Betrayed. Or, “delivered” (see on Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16).

23. Third day. See pp. 248-250.

They were exceeding sorry. Or, “they were in great distress.” Though they now realized that their Master was talking about His death, they hoped and believed that something would arise that would make it unnecessary.

24. Come to Capernaum. [*The Temple Half Shekel*, Matt. 17:24–27. See Retirement from Public Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord; on miracles pp. 208–213.] Jesus and the disciples had evidently recently (DA 432) returned from a brief tour of Galilee (see Matt. 17:22, 23; see on Mark 9:30–32). As usual Jesus probably took up residence at the home of Peter (see on Mark 1:29; 2:1), where He abode during the remaining weeks of His stay in Galilee.

They that received tribute. Literally, “they that receive the double drachma [Gr. *didrachmon*].” These were not the publicans, or taxgatherers (see on Luke 3:12), who collected toll and tax for the civil authorities, but designated men who were appointed in each district to collect the half-shekel Temple tax required of every free male Jew 20 years of age or older, for the support of the Temple. This tax was not compulsory in the sense that the tithe was, but its payment was nevertheless considered a religious duty. For the origin of this tax and the regulations concerning it see on Ex. 30:12–16. According to the Mishnah (*Sheḳalim* 1. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 1) public notice was to be given of the tax on the first day of Adar, which fell in our February or March (see Vol. II, p. 108). On the 15th of Adar, “tables [of money changers] were set up in the provinces,” and 10 days later in the Temple (*Sheḳalim* 1. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 2). The Temple tax for the current year was therefore several months overdue.

The ancient Hebrew shekel (see Vol. I, pp. 167, 168) was no longer in general use, but rabbinical custom required that the Temple tax be paid in the unit of the half shekel. Those who “received tribute” would exchange the coin of the realm for the Temple coin, making a profit on each transaction. The Gr. *didrachama*, translated “tribute,” was the double drachma, nearly equivalent to the half shekel, and approximately twice the value of a Roman *denarius*, which was considered a day’s wage (see on ch. 20:2).

Came to Peter. Probably because Jesus was staying at Peter’s home.

Doth not your master? Whether a record was kept of those who paid the tax is not known, and whether those who now came to Peter already knew that Jesus had not paid the tax is not known. Furthermore, this was not the time of year when the tax was usually collected. It would seem that had it been known that Jesus had not paid the tax, the scribes, who during the intervening months had repeatedly heckled Jesus in public (see on Matt. 16:1; Mark 7:1–23), would have challenged Him for nonpayment of the tax long before this. Apparently the idea of challenging Jesus on this count had but recently come to their minds; it was part of a well-laid plot. In the Greek the word for “your” is in the plural. The tax collectors thus made the matter one of concern to all the disciples, not to Peter only.

25. He saith, Yes. Peter’s ready answer is considered by some to imply that Jesus had customarily paid the tax and that Peter knew of this fact. Actually, Peter may not have known whether Jesus had actually paid it. When asked whether Jesus paid the tribute, Peter immediately recognized the unusual and untimely (see on v. 24) nature of the inquiry and sensed the implied challenge to Jesus’ loyalty to the Temple, which, of

course, failure to pay the tax would seemingly indicate. Peter and his fellow disciples were apparently still fully loyal in spirit to the Jewish leaders (see DA 398), and Peter's first reaction was to avoid at all costs anything that would tend to worsen relations with them. But, as upon later occasions (see ch. 22:15–22), the scribes and Pharisees here sought to confront Jesus with a dilemma from which He could not escape. Levites, priests, and prophets were exempt (DA 433). To refuse to pay the tax would imply disloyalty to the Temple, but to pay it would imply that Jesus did not consider Himself a prophet, and thus exempt from it.

Into the house. Probably Peter's own home (see on v. 4).

Prevented. Gr. *prophthanō*, “to come before,” or “to anticipate.” The English word “prevent” used to have this meaning, but has now the added concept of preceding a person in order to place an obstacle in his way, in order to “prevent,” or “hinder,” him. A similar use of the word “prevent” occurs in 1 Thess. 4:15. In this instance “Jesus prevented” Peter by introducing the subject before he mentioned it.

Custom. Gr. *telos*, “a toll,” usually that levied on goods or possessions (see on Luke 3:12).

Strangers. That is, those not of the royal family—in other words, the subjects of the king.

26. Children free. Jesus might have claimed exemption as a teacher or rabbi. Nevertheless, Jesus set aside this valid claim (see on v. 27).

27. Notwithstanding. The collector of Temple tribute had no legal right to demand the half shekel of Jesus. Jesus paid it for reasons of expediency, not of obligation. He waived His rights in order to avoid controversy, and did that which He could not rightfully be required to do in order to be at peace with His sworn enemies. Evidently, He would not have His loyalty to the Temple challenged, however unjust the charge might be. Christ's course of action stands as a lesson to every Christian. We should endeavor to live at peace with all men, and to do more than should be required of us if need be, in order to avoid unnecessary conflict with opponents of the truth (see Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 2:12–15, 19, 20). Under no circumstances, however, will the Christian compromise principle in his endeavor to please others (see DA 356).

Offend. Gr. *skandalizō*, literally, “to entrap” (see on ch. 5:29). Concerning the Christian's duty to consider well his course of action lest he become the occasion for other's stumbling, see 1 Cor. 8:8–13.

To the sea. That is, to the Lake of Galilee, on the shore of which Capernaum was situated (see on ch. 4:13).

An hook. This is the only instance in the NT where mention is made of catching fish with a hook.

A piece of money. Gr. *statēr*, a silver coin worth four drachmas and the approximate equivalent of a shekel (see Vol. I, p. 168; Vol. V, p. 49). Despite all the foolish and fanciful efforts on the part of some to explain away the supernatural element of this incident, there can be no doubt that it was a miracle that Peter should catch that particular fish at the very time, and that it should have the right amount of money in its mouth.

For me and thee. The amount was just enough to cover the half-shekel tax for two persons. The story ends thus abruptly, assuming that Peter caught the fish and paid the tribute money to those who had come to collect it.

The miracle was well calculated to impress Peter, a fisherman by trade, who knew how unlikely it was that a fish should have money in its mouth, particularly the specific amount of money designated upon any given occasion, and knew, furthermore, how unlikely it was that he should be able to catch that particular fish at the precise moment he had been instructed to catch it (see on Luke 5:8, 9). It was not for His own benefit that Jesus performed this miracle (see on Matt. 4:3), although half of the amount paid was for Him. The miracle was designed to teach Peter a lesson, and to silence the critical tax-gatherers, who had sought to place Christ in the category of an ordinary Israelite, and thereby challenge His right to teach.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–27DA 419–434

1 DA 419

1, 2 AA 539; SL 53

1–5EW 162; PK 227

2, 3 DA 421; PP 479

3 SR 174

5 FE 405

5–8 DA 425

8 AA 64

9 DA 426

14–16DA 427

19 DA 429

20 DA 431; PK 595

20, 21 DA 430

22–24 DA 432

25, 26 DA 433

27 DA 434

CHAPTER 18

1 *Christ warneth his disciples to be humble and harmless: 7 to avoid offences, and not to despise the little ones 15 teacheth how we are to deal with our brethren, when they offend us: 21 and how oft to forgive them: 23 which he setteth forth by a parable of the king, that took account of his servants, 32 and punished him, who shewed no mercy to his fellow.*

1. At the same time. [*Humility, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness, Matt. 18:1–35= Mark 9:33–50=Luke 9:46–50. Major comment: Matthew and Mark. See Retirement from Public Ministry.*] The instruction here recorded by Matthew was given on the same day that the incident concerning the Temple tax took place (see DA 434, 435). For the circumstances of this occasion and for events immediately preceding see on ch. 17:24. The argument among the disciples that led up to the instruction here given had occurred during the recent journey through Galilee (see Mark 9:30; DA 432), and apparently came to a climax at the time the group entered Capernaum. Evidently Jesus' recent reference to going again to Jerusalem (see Matt. 16:21), from which they had been absent for nearly a year and a half (see on John 7:2), had revived in the disciples' hearts the mistaken hope (see on Matt. 16:21; Luke 4:19) that Jesus would now set up His kingdom (see on Matt. 14:22).

Apparently the entire discourse of ch. 18 was given at one time. As in the case of the Sermon on the Mount (see on ch. 5:2), each of the various gospel writers includes portions not mentioned by the others. Except for minor variations (see Mark 9:38–41, 49, 50), Mark’s account is somewhat similar to that of Matthew. Where both Matthew and Mark report the discourse, the account of Mark tends to be slightly more complete and full than that of Matthew. But Matthew has a lengthy section (see ch. 18:10–35) that neither Mark nor Luke has. Luke has a very brief account of the discourse, though elsewhere he reports a number of parallel teachings of Jesus that were given at other times. Matthew’s account is therefore the most complete. The entire discourse may well be entitled “How to Deal With Differences of Opinion and Disputes That Arise in the Church.” The great problem that made the discourse necessary was a serious clash of personalities among the Twelve, one that it was necessary to solve if the unity of the group was to be preserved. Concerning the importance of unity among believers see on John 17:11, 22, 23.

Came the disciples. On their return to Capernaum the disciples had sought to conceal their spirit of rivalry from Jesus (see DA 432). He read their thoughts, but said nothing to them at the time. Now, a little after their return, an opportunity arose for taking the matter up with them. At first sight Matthew and Mark seem to differ as to how the matter came up at this time. Matthew states that the disciples initiated the discussion, whereas Mark reports that Jesus did so (see Mark 9:33). However, the two accounts may be harmonized thus: While Peter was away fishing for the tribute money (see on Matt. 17:27), Jesus took the matter up with the 11 disciples who remained with Him, probably in Peter’s home (see on ch. 17:24), but they were reluctant to discuss it. After Peter’s return one of the Twelve ventured to ask Jesus the very question they had been discussing among themselves in secret. See DA 434, 435.

Who? Literally, “Who then?” It seems most probable that the word “then” (Gr. *ara*) connects this question with Christ’s previous question during the absence of Peter. Some six months later James and John, through their mother, appealed to Jesus for pre-eminence in His kingdom (see on ch. 20:20). Following the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and Jesus’ assertion of lordship over the Temple, the question of pre-eminence in the kingdom again arose, on the very night of Jesus’ betrayal (see on Luke 22:24). The disciples saw themselves as the highest officers of the realm. Rank in the kingdom of their imagination occupied first place in their thoughts, even to the exclusion of what Jesus told them of His sufferings and death. Preconceived opinion effectively insulated their minds against truth.

Kingdom of heaven. Concerning the true nature of Christ’s kingdom see on chs. 4:17; 5:2. Concerning the false ideas entertained by the Jews on this subject see on Luke 4:19.

2. Called a little child. The Saviour took the child “in his arms” (see Mark 9:36; DA 437).

3. Be converted. Gr. *strephō*, “to turn,” or “to turn around”; hence, in reference to one’s course of conduct, “to change one’s mind.” In Biblical usage *strephō* is equivalent to the Heb. *shub*, commonly used throughout the OT of “turning” to the Lord (see Eze. 33:11; see on Jer. 3:12; Eze. 14:6; 18:30). Their ignorance of the nature of the kingdom of God’s divine grace was the occasion for the strife among the disciples that had led to the question, “Who is the greatest?” (see Matt. 18:1; DA 435). But there was another, and

even more important cause—they were not truly “converted” (see DA 435). Unless they “turned” to follow Christ along the pathway upon which He had entered when He came to this world (see Phil. 2:6–8), their desires would become increasingly identified with those of the evil one (see John 8:44). Accordingly, Jesus now sought to inculcate in their minds an understanding of the principle of true greatness (see on Mark 9:35). Unless the disciples learned this principle they would never even enter the kingdom, to say nothing of enjoying a high position in it.

Become as little children. The spirit of rivalry cherished by the disciples had made them childish, but Jesus called upon them to become childlike. For Jesus’ personal attitude toward small children see on Mark 10:13–16.

Not enter. In the Greek there is a double negative, which emphasizes the utter impossibility. How imperfectly the disciples learned the lesson Christ sought to impart is apparent from two situations that developed some months later (see Matt. 20:20–28; Luke 22:24–30).

4. Humble himself. See on ch. 11:29. For other occasions on which Christ gave instruction on the value of humility as a trait of character see Matt. 23:8–12; Luke 14:11; 18:14.

The same is greatest. See on Mark 9:35.

5. Little child. Jesus continues the comparison between certain admirable traits that often accompany childhood and the characteristics of those who are truly “great” in the kingdom of heaven—where the only greatness is that of character. Literal children are, of course, included, but Jesus here refers primarily to those who are yet “children” in the kingdom of heaven, that is, immature Christians (see 1 Cor. 3:1, 2; Eph. 4:15; Heb. 5:13; 2 Peter 3:18; DA 440). These “little ones” are those who believe on Jesus (Matt. 18:6).

In my name. See on ch. 10:40–42. That is, “for my sake,” or “as a representative of mine.”

Receive me. Matthew’s narrative here omits one section of Jesus’ discourse. This section was spoken in response to a question by John about the attitude to take toward others not directly associated with Christ’s immediate followers (see on Mark 9:38–41).

6. Offend. Gr. *skandalizō*, literally, “to entrap” (see on ch. 5:29). Here, Jesus refers primarily to anything that would cause disunity among brethren. Paul admonishes the mature Christian not to do anything that would cause an immature Christian to stumble (1 Cor. 8:9–13).

These little ones. See on v. 5. Perhaps Jesus was thinking of certain of His own disciples who were yet “little children,” and who would be hurt by the overbearing attitude of some of the others.

A millstone. Gr. *mulos onikos*, literally, “an ass millstone,” that is, one so large that it required an ass to turn it. For the smaller, or hand-turned, millstone see on ch. 24:41.

7. Offences. That is, “things that cause a person to stumble” (see on ch. 5:29).

It must needs be. That is, “it is necessary,” or “it is unavoidable” that occasions for stumbling should come. “Offences” are not “necessary” in the purposes and plans of God, but simply impossible to avoid, men being what they are (see DA 438; cf. Luke 17:1).

Woe to that man. That is, to the man who, by precept or example, leads others to err or discourages them from following in the footsteps of Jesus.

8. Thy foot offend. On the figurative nature of this statement see on ch. 5:29, 30. From occasions of stumbling due to the words or example of others (ch. 18:5–7), Jesus now turns to evil habits and tendencies in one’s own life. “One sin cherished is sufficient to work the degradation of the character, and to mislead others” (DA 439; see on John 14:30).

Everlasting fire. See on chs. 5:22; 25:41. Compare Mark 9:43.

9. Enter into life. That is, eternal life.

Hell fire. See on ch. 5:22. Here Matthew’s narrative omits a section of Jesus’ discourse based on an illustration dealing with “fire” and “salt” (see on Mark 9:49; Matt. 5:13).

10. Little ones. For comment see on v. 5.

Their angels. Compare Ps. 103:20, 21; Heb. 1:14.

Behold the face. In Hebrew idiomatic usage, “to see one’s face” means to have access to him (see Gen. 43:3, 5; 44:23). That the angels “always” have access to the presence of the Father is assurance to the weakest Christian of the solicitous concern God feels for the welfare of even the least of His earthborn children (see on Isa. 57:15).

11. Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between retaining or omitting this verse.

To save. See on Matt. 1:21; John 3:16.

That which was lost. See on Luke 19:10.

12. Goeth. See on Luke 15:4–7. God has taken the initiative in effecting man’s salvation. Salvation consists, not in man’s search for God, but in God’s search for man. Human reasoning sees in religion nothing more than human attempts to find peace of soul and to solve the mystery of existence, to find a solution to the difficulties and uncertainties of life. It is true that deep within the human heart there is a longing for these things, but man of himself can never find God. The glory of the Christian religion is that it knows a God who cares for man so much that He left everything else in order to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Into the mountains. The picture is of a shepherd camping with his sheep in the high upland meadows in the summertime.

Is gone astray. Gr. *planaō*, “to go astray,” “to wander,” or “to lead into error.” Our word “planet” is from the related Greek word *planētēs*, meaning “a wanderer” (see Jude 13). The planets of the solar system were given this name because they appear to “wander” about, among the apparently “fixed” stars.

13. If so be. There is the chance that God’s efforts on man’s behalf will be rejected by man.

14. Not the will. God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). It is His will for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Little ones. See on vs. 5, 6.

15. Moreover. Jesus here begins a new section of instruction, but one that is closely related in thought to that which precedes it, particularly to vs. 12–14. In the parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus stresses the profound concern the Father feels for “one of these little ones” (v. 14) “which is gone astray” (see on v. 12). Now He proceeds to discuss (vs. 15–20) what attitude a Christian should take toward a fellow believer who has injured him.

Shall trespass. Gr. *hamartanō*, literally, “to miss the mark”; hence, “to err,” “to do wrong,” or “to sin.” The “brother” who “errs” is evidently the same as the “one sheep” that “went astray” (see on v. 12).

Go and tell him. See on Lev. 19:17, 18. Compare Gal. 6:1. This is more than a wise admonition; it is a command. “For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves” (DA 441).

Thee and him alone. To circulate reports concerning what “thy brother” may have done will make it more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to reach him. Here, perhaps more than in any other aspect of personal relationships, it is our privilege to apply the Golden Rule (see on ch. 7:12). The less publicity that is given to a wrong act, the better.

Gained thy brother. Someone has said that the best way to dispose of our enemies is to make friends of them. The talent of influence is a sacred trust, one for which we will inevitably be called upon to give account in the day of judgment. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (see on ch. 5:9).

16. Will not hear. That is, if he will not admit his wrongdoing, change his course of action, and make right, as far as possible, the wrongs of the past.

One or two more. The “one or two more” are, presumably, not involved personally and are therefore in a better position to express an unbiased opinion and to counsel the offending brother. In case the offending brother neglects to heed their admonition, they can bear witness to the efforts that have been put forth on his behalf and also to the facts in the case.

Two or three witnesses. See on Deut. 17:6; 19:15. According to Hebrew law no man might be punished on the testimony of a lone witness. It is well to remember, also, that there are two sides to every disagreement, and both must have a fair hearing before a decision can be reached.

17. Church. Gr. *ekklēsia*, from *ek*, “out,” and *kaleō*, “to call.” Originally *ekklēsia* referred to an assembly of citizens summoned to consider civic matters. In the LXX the Greek words *sunagōgē*, “synagogue,” and *ekklēsia* are both commonly used with reference to the “assembly,” or “congregation,” of Israel. As *sunagōgē* came to refer especially to a Jewish religious assembly, it is only to be expected that the Christians might prefer to use *ekklēsia* to denote their assemblies. In Christian usage *ekklēsia* meant either the place of worship or the body of worshipers, whether or not assembled together. Here the “church” is the local body of believers acting in their corporate capacity, not the church universal as in ch. 16:18.

As an heathen man and a publican. Or, “as the Gentile and the taxgatherer.” By refusing the counsel of the church the erring member has severed himself from its fellowship (DA 441). This does not mean that he should be despised or shunned or neglected. Efforts should now be put forth for the erring member as for any nonmember. In working for a person who has thus severed himself from the church, members should beware of associating with him in such a way as to make it appear that they share his point of view or participate with him in his evil course of action.

18. Whatsoever ye shall bind. See on ch. 16:19. Here the power of “binding” and “loosing” is committed to “the church” (see on ch. 18:17). And even here Heaven’s ratification of the decision on earth will take place only if the decision is made in

harmony with the principles of Heaven. All who deal with erring brethren should ever remember that they are dealing with the eternal destiny of souls, and that the results of their work may well be eternal (see DA 442).

19. *Again I say unto you.* Verses 19, 20 state the general principle of which v. 18 is a specific application.

If two of you. See on v. 16.

Shall agree. In His intercessory prayer on the night of His betrayal, Jesus repeatedly stressed the importance of united action on the part of church members (see John 17:11, 21–23). In this instance, that on which the “two” “agree” is, specifically, what course to pursue with regard to the erring brother (see Matt. 18:16–18).

Thing. Gr. *pragma*, “a deed,” “a matter,” or “an affair,” here implying that something must be done about it.

20. *In my name.* See on Matt. 10:18, 42; cf. 1 Cor. 5:4. According to the Mishnah (*Aboth* 3. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 27), “But [when] two sit together and there are words of Torah [spoken] between them, the Shechinah abides among them” (see on Gen. 3:24). The statement of Matt. 18:20 is, of course, true in a general sense, though in the context of the chapter (see vs. 16–19) it refers primarily to the church in its official capacity dealing with an offending member.

21. *Then came Peter.* In his assumed role as spokesman for the disciples (see on ch. 16:16) Peter often took the initiative in replying to questions, asking questions of his own or proposing a course of action (see on chs. 14:28; 16:16, 22; 17:4; etc.).

How oft? Directly or indirectly, much of ch. 18 is devoted to instruction on the Christian’s attitude toward offending brethren, particularly where the offense is personal. Peter tacitly accepts the idea of dealing patiently with his “brother,” but would like to know how long he must do so before he is free to take a more stern attitude and seek redress.

Till seven times? It has been suggested by some that the rabbis limited the times one should forgive another to three, on a false interpretation of Amos 1:3. Fully aware of the fact that Christ always interpreted the law in a broader sense than the scribes (see on Matt. 5:17, 18), Peter here seeks to anticipate the degree of patience Christ might be expected to recommend, seven being the number generally thought of as representing perfection (see COL 243). But to forgive a person “seven times,” and no more, would be a mechanical sort of forgiveness.

Forgiveness, on the part either of God or of man, is much more than a judicial act; it is a restoration of peace where there had been conflict (see Rom. 5:1). But forgiveness is even more than that—it includes the effort to restore the erring brother himself.

22. *Until seventy times seven.* The Greek is somewhat ambiguous, and may mean either “seventy times seven” or “seventy-seven times” (cf. Gen. 4:24). Of course, the number itself is not important, being only symbolic. Either number is in harmony with the truth here taught, that forgiveness is not a matter of mathematics or legal regulations, but an attitude. He who harbors within himself the idea that at some future time he will not forgive, is far from extending true forgiveness even though he may go through the form of forgiving. If the spirit of forgiveness actuates the heart, a person will be as ready to forgive a repentant soul the eighth time as the first time, or the 491st time as the eighth. True forgiveness is not limited by numbers; furthermore, it is not the act that counts, but the spirit that prompts the act. “Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit” (COL 251).

23. Therefore. [*The Unforgiving Servant, Matt. 18:23–35.* See on parables pp. 203–207.] The remainder of ch. 18 consists of a parable given to illustrate the true spirit of forgiveness.

A certain king. Inasmuch as this parable represents the Lord’s dealings with us, and the way we should deal with our fellow men, the “king” represents none other than Christ.

Take account. That is, audit their accounts with a view to settling and closing them. In the parable the “servants” are government officials.

24. One was brought. Only a high official could possibly be in debt to his lord for the immense sum owed by this servant.

Ten thousand talents. About 213,840 kg. (213.8 metric tons) of silver, enough to hire 10,000 laborers for 18 years (see p. 49).

25. He had not to pay. In ancient times, and, in fact, until fairly recently even in Western lands, a debtor could be sent to prison. In Eastern lands he and his family could be sold into slavery by a creditor. In this instance the debtor and his family were all to be sold. According to the provisions of the law of Moses a Hebrew might sell himself or be sold by a creditor, but was “sold” for a limited time only (see on Ex. 22:3; Lev. 25:39, 47). Furthermore, legal provisions protected such a person against harsh treatment (see on Ex. 21:2, 20; Deut. 15:12, 15, 16). It should be remembered that a parable is designed to teach one central truth, and that many of the details of the parable are more or less incidental, and added only for the purpose of rounding out the story (see COL 244). The part of the parable about the servant’s being sold into slavery is not to be construed as meaning that God sells anyone into slavery. For comment on the parable teaching of Jesus and the interpretation of parables see pp. 203–207.

26. Fell down. See on ch. 2:11.

Worshipped. See on chs. 8:2; 15:25.

27. Forgave him the debt. Figuratively, the “debt” represents the record of sins charged against us. Like the debtor of the parable, we are utterly incapable of paying off the debt. But when we truly repent God frees us from the debt. Compare the parable of the Two Debtors (see on Luke 7:41, 42).

28. Found one. Whether he went in search of the man or came upon him accidentally is not stated, and has no bearing on the lesson of the parable.

An hundred pence. See on v. 24. One hundred “pence,” or Roman *denarii*, would be a large debt, for one *denarius* represented an entire day’s wages for a common laborer (see on ch. 20:2). However, compared with the first debt, the second was insignificant.

Pay me. In Greek the word translated “pay” stands in the emphatic position.

29. Fell down. See v. 26; see on ch. 2:11.

30. He would not. This ruthless creditor was adamant in his demand for payment. Such heartlessness is hardly conceivable. His selfishness, which blinded him to the greatness of his own debt and prevented him from appreciating the greatness of the mercy extended to him by his own creditor, the king, led him to deal mercilessly with his fellow servant.

Into prison. See on v. 25.

31. They were very sorry. The “fellow-servants,” possibly accustomed to protecting one of their own number from detection in petty instances of profit at the expense of their lord, the king, evidently found the action of the first servant more than they could endure.

Told. That is, they explained fully and in detail the circumstances of the case.

34. His lord was wrath. Note the contrast to the compassion manifested when the offense was against himself. The king could patiently stand the greater loss—to him that was a minor matter; but injustice to one of his subjects aroused him to righteous indignation.

Tormentors. From a verb meaning “to torture” (see on Mark 5:7).

Till he should pay. See on v. 25.

35. So likewise. He who refuses to forgive others thereby casts away his own hope of pardon. Here is the great lesson of the parable—the infinite contrast between the heartlessness and cruelty of man toward his fellow men and the long-suffering and mercy of God toward us. Before we set out to accuse others, or to exact from them our “just dues,” we would do well to consider first how God has treated us under similar circumstances and how we would like others to treat us if conditions were reversed (see on ch. 6:12, 14, 15). In view of God’s infinite mercy toward us, we should likewise show mercy toward others.

From your hearts. The defect in Peter’s inquiry (see on vs. 21, 22) was that the kind of forgiveness referred to in it was not from the heart, but rather a legal, mechanical kind of “forgiveness” based on the concept of obtaining righteousness by works. How difficult it was for Peter to grasp the new concept of obedience from the heart, prompted by love for God and his fellow men! This completes Jesus’ answer to Peter’s question (v. 21), an answer that also covers indirectly the question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (v. 1). The “greatest” is simply the one who, “from the heart,” reflects on the mercy of his heavenly Father and does “likewise” toward his fellow men. This is the true measure of character in our dealings with our fellow men.

As Jesus emphatically declared in the Sermon on the Mount, that which determines the character of a deed is the motive that prompts it. Thus, ostensibly good deeds, when performed for the purpose of purchasing the esteem of men, have no value in the sight of Heaven (ch. 6:1–7). The words of forgiveness, important though they be, are not of primary importance in the sight of God. Rather, it is the attitude of the heart that imparts to the words a fullness of meaning they would otherwise lack. The pretense of forgiveness, motivated by circumstances or by ulterior objectives, may deceive the one to whom it is accorded, but not Him who looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Sincere forgiveness is an important aspect of Christian perfection (see on Matt. 5:48).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 DA 435

1–4AH 279

1–6Ev 340

1–20DA 432–442

2–4Ed 90; MH 478

3 AH 306; DA 437; Ed 114; ML 108, 332; TM 323; 3T 448, 451, 529; 4T 42, 84, 90, 91; 5T 50, 222, 654; 8T 140

3, 4 COL 125; FE 388; MM 191; 3T 307

4 4T 220; 5T 118, 130

6 CT 266; FE 280; 1T 420; 7T 119, 184

6, 7 TM 351; 8T 130

7 DA 438; 3T 452; 5T 483; 9T 242

10 AH 432; CSW 105, 157, 159; DA 440; GC 513; MH 105, 394; ML 367; 6T 348, 366;
 7T 119
 10–14TM 351; 8T 73
 11 DA 438; 2T 467
 12 AA 370; CSW 176; FE 283; GW 16; LS 187; TM 232, 324; 2T 341; 6T 22
 12, 13 5T 604; 6T 479
 12–15DA 440
 15 CT 154; Ev 637; GW 498; ML 52; 2T 52, 53; 7T 260
 15–17COL 248; TM 269; 2T 15, 54; 5T 97, 617, 646; 8T 84
 15–18AA 304; 5T 241
 16 PP 516
 16, 17 DA 441; GW 500; 7T 262
 18 GW 501; 1T 471; 3T 428, 450; 5T 107; 7T 263
 18, 19 DA 442
 19 Ev 414; TM 323; 3T 429; 4T 507; 7T 22
 19–205T 162
 20 AA 186; Ev 112; MYP 141; TM 508; 5T 608; 6T 360; 7T 190
 21–24COL 243
 21–35COL 243–251
 25–34COL 244
 32–35COL 247
 33 COL 251

CHAPTER 19

2 *Christ healeth the sick: 3 answereth the Pharisees concerning divorcement: 10 sheweth when marriage is necessary: 13 receiveth little children: 16 instructeth the young man how to attain eternal life, 20 and how to be perfect: 23 telleth his disciples how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, 27 and promiseth reward to those that forsake any thing to follow him.*

1. Finished these sayings. [*Final Departure From Galilee; Opening of the Samaritan-Peraean Ministry, Matt. 19:1, 2=Mark 10:1=Luke 9:51–56.* Major comment: Matthew. See Early Peraean Ministry; The Duration of Christ's Ministry, the Opening of the Galilean Ministry, The Ministry of Our Lord.] A formula frequently used by Matthew for marking the close of Jesus' discourses (chs. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 26:1).

He departed from Galilee. Apparently a sequel to the statement that Jesus "departed into Galilee" (see on ch. 4:12). The Synoptic Gospels have passed over in silence Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in the year A.D. 30 (see on John 7:10). Concerning this feast see on Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:2; Deut. 16:13. John provides a more or less extensive account of Jesus' experiences at Jerusalem during and immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles (chs. 7:2 to 10:21). An attempt to arrest Him on the last day of the feast had failed (John 7:32, 37, 44–53; DA 459). The following morning the unfortunate woman taken in adultery was brought to Him as He was teaching in the Temple, "early in the morning" (John 8:2; DA 460.) It seems also that the discourse on "the light of the world" occurred immediately following this event (John 8:2, 12; cf. DA 463), as also the first attempt to stone Jesus (v. 59). There was a second attempt to stone Him "a few months later," at the Feast of Dedication (DA 470; cf. John

10:22, 31, 33), and another attempt was made to arrest Him and terminate His ministry (John 10:39, 40).

After the close of the Feast of Tabernacles, probably the following Sabbath, though possibly a Sabbath shortly preceding the Feast of Dedication, Jesus healed the man born blind (John 9:1, 7, 14) and gave the discourse of John 10:1–18, on the Good Shepherd (DA 477). The fact that following the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus returned to Galilee for a time (DA 485), whereas following the Feast of Dedication He withdrew to Peraea (John 10:39, 40), together with the fact that the healing of the blind man seems to have followed closely the discourse on “the light of the world” (John 8:12–58), may imply that the healing of the blind man took place the following Sabbath (John 8:12, 59; 9:1, 5, 14).

A year and a half before this Jesus had healed the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda, was haled before the Sanhedrin, and had retired from Judea to Galilee (see on Matt. 4:12). Now He again left Jerusalem for Galilee, where He remained for a time because of the animosity of the priests and rabbis (see DA 485).

Late in the autumn Jesus again left Galilee, for the last time, and slowly made His way toward Jerusalem. His journey from Galilee to attend the Feast of Tabernacles had been made swiftly and secretly, but now He journeyed slowly and by a circuitous route (John 7:10). During this time He sent the Seventy forth (see on Luke 10:1–24), and after the close of their mission attended the Feast of Dedication. After this feast He again left the city, retired to Peraea, and entered upon His Peraean ministry (John 10:40; DA 485, 488). Depending upon whether the year A.D. 30/31 had 12 or 13 months (see pp. 255, 256), a period of approximately 16 or 20 weeks (4 or 5 months) elapsed between the Feast of Dedication and the Passover. This was the approximate duration of the Peraean ministry (cf. DA 488). For events of the Samaritan-Peraean ministry see on Luke 9:51 to 18:34.

The major chronological problem of the period of the Peraean ministry (see p. 190) lies in assigning events at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22–42) and those connected with the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–57) their proper places in relation to Luke’s account of this period of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 9:51 to 18:34). Reasons for placing the Feast of Dedication between the 10th and 11th chapters of Luke are set forth in comment on Luke 11:1. Reasons for placing the raising of Lazarus and related incidents between vs. 10 and 11 of Luke 17, are given in comment on Luke 17:1, 11 (see p. 199; cf. on John 10:40).

Coasts. See on ch. 15:22.

Beyond Jordan. This expression is commonly used to refer to regions east of the Jordan, though it sometimes refers to regions on the west side (see on ch. 4:15). Here it refers to the district of Peraea, across the Jordan from Judea. At this time Peraea and Galilee were both under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas (see on Luke 3:1).

2. Great multitudes. As at the height of the Galilean ministry (see Luke 12:1, 14; 14:25; etc.). Heretofore Jesus had not labored in Peraea. The region contained a fairly large proportion of Jews, and was at this time rather densely populated. It was proper that He should minister to the needs of the people there as well as in Judea and in Galilee.

3. The Pharisees. [*Marriage and Divorce*, Matt. 19:3–12=Mark 10:2–12. Major comment: Matthew. See on Matt. 5:27–32.] Luke 9:51 to 18:14, which is sometimes termed Luke’s “great insertion” (see on Luke 9:51), logically falls between vs. 2 and 3 of Matt. 19. Luke is the only gospel writer to cover the incidents and teachings that he

records in chs. 9 to 18, which deal largely with the Peraean ministry. At the time the incident here recorded took place, apparently but a few weeks intervened until the Passover of A.D. 31. Concerning the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees see pp. 51, 52.

Tempting him. Or, “testing Him” (see on ch. 4:1), that is, with the purpose of entrapping Him. For nearly two years now spies commissioned by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem had followed Jesus with the twofold objective of finding some accusation to bring against Him and of attempting to discredit Him in the eyes of the people (see DA 213). Upon two previous occasions since the Feast of Tabernacles (see on ch. 19:1) attempts had been made in Jerusalem to stone Jesus (see John 8:59; 10:31–33). It was commonly known that His life was in danger should He again venture into Judea (see John 11:8), for the Jewish leaders were seeking His arrest (John 11:57). Again and again since the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda (see John 5:1–9) the scribes and Pharisees had sought to entrap Jesus with questions calculated to elicit statements that might later be made the basis of charges against Him (see Mark 7:2,5; 8:11; John 8:6; etc.). See on Matt. 16:1.

Put away his wife. That is, “divorce” her. See on ch. 5:31.

For every cause. For comment see on ch. 5:31, 32.

4. *Have ye not read?* See on Mark 2:25. Again, as always, Jesus directs His hearers to the Scriptures, to the “law,” for an authoritative statement of doctrine (see on Mark 7:7–13).

He which made them. That is, man and wife, with particular reference to the first man and wife (see on Gen. 1:27). The Greek here is identical with that of a portion of the LXX of Gen. 1:27.

At the beginning. That is, at creation (see Mark 10:6). Jesus takes His inquisitors back beyond the law of Moses, which is in their minds at the moment, to the fundamental principles of marriage as instituted at creation.

5. *For this cause.* This quotation, from Gen. 2:24, is almost identical with the text of the LXX. In Genesis the words here quoted appear to be Adam’s statement at the time Eve became his wife, but Jesus specifically assigns to God the statement here cited.

Leave father and mother. During childhood and youth a person’s primary responsibility is to his father and mother. This responsibility continues throughout life (see on Mark 7:11). However, notwithstanding the importance of this obligation it is subordinate to the marriage law, and where the two may come into conflict—as the result of human weaknesses and mistakes—a man’s first responsibility is to his wife.

One flesh. The more a man and woman have in common even before marriage, the greater likelihood that they have will find the companionship marriage should bring and that the union will be a complete success. Conversely, where there are great differences in background, training, attitudes, principles, likes, and dislikes, it is far more difficult to be “one” in mind and spirit, and thus to find success in the marriage relationship.

6. *Wherefore.* Jesus here proceeds to state the conclusion to be drawn from the fundamental principle of the marriage relationship cited from Gen. 2:24.

No more twain. In the sight of God, husband and wife are one entity, and therefore should be no more divisible than one human body is.

What. That is, the new union formed at marriage (v. 5).

God hath joined. The marriage relationship was instituted by God, sanctified by God. It was an All-wise Creator who provided for the marriage relationship; it is He who made

it possible and desirable. All who enter upon the marriage relationship are therefore “joined,” according to the original plan of God, for life.

Let not man put asunder. With the single exception for which Jesus makes provision (see on v. 9), divorce cannot be honored or recognized in heaven. In the sight of God any alliance either of them may enter into with another woman or man, as the case may be, is branded by Christ as adultery.

7. Why did Moses? See Deut. 24:1–4.

Divorcement. See on Deut. 24:4; Matt. 5:31.

Put her away. See on ch. 5:31.

8. Hardness of your hearts. See on Deut. 14:26.

Suffered you. According to Christ’s statement the OT law that made provision for divorce was a concession designed to meet circumstances that were far from ideal (see on Deut. 24:4). However, Christ’s teaching here makes it clear that the provisions of Moses’ law with respect to divorce are quite invalid for Christians (see on Matt. 19:9).

From the beginning. The law of Gen. 1:27; 2:24 preceded the law of Deut. 24:1–4 and is superior to it, for in the Eden period of Genesis, God’s ideal for His human children is set forth. God has never repealed the law of marriage He enunciated in the beginning. It was not God’s plan that divorce should ever be necessary. Therefore Christians today who desire and purpose in their hearts to follow God’s plan will not, without scriptural grounds, resort to divorce as a solution to marital difficulties (see on Matt. 19:9).

9. I say unto you. See on ch. 5:22. The only change made to accommodate the original marriage law to a fallen world is that violation of the marriage contract by unchastity may constitute a lawful basis for dissolving the union. Otherwise, the union may not lawfully be broken.

Whosoever. The principle Christ is about to state is of universal application. No one who professes to be a Christian should think himself an exception to it.

Fornication. Gr. *porneia* (see on ch. 5:32). It should be noted that in the NT the term “fornication” covers all illicit relationships both before and after marriage. To the modern English reader the word “unchastity” conveys more exactly the meaning of *porneia* as it is used in the NT. Under the Mosaic law the penalty for marital unfaithfulness was death (see on Lev. 20:10), not divorce. Furthermore, under Moses’ law the death penalty was mandatory, whereas under the Christian law here set forth by Christ divorce is not mandatory, but permissible. From Jesus’ teachings here it may be inferred that the innocent party is free to choose whether the marriage relationship shall be continued. Reconciliation is ever the ideal, especially if children are involved.

Here and in Jesus’ parallel discussion in Matt. 5:32 it seems to be implied, even though not specifically stated, that the innocent party to a divorce is at liberty to marry again. This has been the understanding of the great majority of commentators through the years.

Marrieth her which is put away. Any alliance she contracts with another man violates her original marriage vow, which violation constitutes adultery. By a parity of reasoning the man marrying her becomes an adulterer also.

10. His disciples. Apparently it was after Jesus and His disciples had left the Pharisees and entered into a house that the disciples expressed themselves with regard to the matter under discussion (see Mark 10:10).

If the case. That is, if marriage binds a man so strictly as Jesus has just said. It would seem that the disciples had not clearly understood Jesus' earlier statements with respect to marriage (see Matt. 5:31, 32; Luke 16:18), and that hence they were deeply perplexed by the interpretation Jesus had just given.

Not good to marry. Evidently the disciples reasoned that human nature being what it is, and there being so many circumstances under which husband and wife find themselves incompatible, would it not be better to forgo married life altogether? No doubt the standard Jesus proclaimed seemed at first too high even to the disciples, as it does sometimes to Christians today. What the disciples forgot, and what Christians today are prone to forget, is that Christ offers another solution to marital unhappiness. According to Christ's formula, where dispositions and personalities are not congenial, the solution is to change dispositions and hearts and lives (see on Rom. 12:2), not partners in marriage. The principles upon which this transformation may be accomplished are clearly set forth in the Sermon on the Mount (see on Matt. 5:38–48; 6:14, 15). If these principles are applied to difficult marital situations, they will effect the same miracles as when applied to other social relationships. There is no marital problem that cannot be solved to the satisfaction of both husband and wife where both are willing to follow the principles Christ laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. And where one is willing to do so, even though the other may not be, it is often possible to attain a truly remarkable degree of marital peace; and many times the final result will be the winning of the unwilling one. Such a reward is more than worth the patience and self-sacrifice it takes.

11. All men cannot. The comment of the disciples (v. 10) reveals their bewilderment and leads Christ to make a further statement (v. 12).

This saying. Literally, "this word," that is, what the disciples have just said (v. 10) with respect to the previous statement of Jesus concerning fornication and divorce (v. 9).

Save they. Each man must be at liberty to determine whether the saying applies in his case. God Himself had proclaimed, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18), yet under the reign of sin, Jesus here seemingly admits that occasionally there may be certain circumstances where it is better for a man to "be alone."

12. Some eunuchs. Evidently Christ is here describing certain persons who suffered from a congenital defect, and thus one for which they were not to be considered responsible.

Made eunuchs. In the ancient Orient, chamberlains were invariably literal eunuchs. Some eunuchs apparently married (see on Gen. 37:36). Those who were eunuchs were objects of pity by the Jews (see Isa. 56:3–5). Priests thus physically mutilated could not serve in the priestly office (see Lev. 21:20). In the later history of Judah eunuchs are mentioned in connection with the court (Jer. 29:2), but whether these were Jews or foreigners is not known (see on Esther 1:10; 2:3). At least one of them, Ebed-melech, was an Ethiopian (see Jer. 38:7).

Made themselves eunuchs. Marriage is desirable. The formation of character may be far more effective and complete in close association with another human being than when a man is "alone." In the intimate, day by day relationships of home life more can be accomplished by way of softening and subduing the unlovely traits of character and strengthening the better qualities than could be possible otherwise. Those who, for one reason or another, are without the privilege of a home of their own thereby miss one of

life's best training schools for character, and cannot know the depths of life's joys, sorrows, and opportunities.

Celibacy is not the ordinary, normal state, and it is a deception of the devil that, of itself, it can lead to a superior state of holiness than would otherwise be possible. Among the Jews celibacy was frowned upon or pitied, and it was practiced only by extreme ascetic groups such as the Essenes (see p. 53). The Scripture record states specifically that Peter was married, and probably the other disciples were as well (see on Mark 1:30). Jesus never recommended celibacy, either for Christians as a whole or for Christian leaders. It is not natural, and does not contribute to the development of a symmetrical character in the way that normal married life can.

The words of our Lord, if understood literally, would run counter to the whole tenor of Scripture. The idea of bodily mutilation is abhorrent. It seems proper to see this statement as analogous to Christ's declaration in Matt. 5:30. Some commentators find a parallel in Paul's words in 1 Cor. 7:29. See also vs. 1, 2. Unquestionably Christ's statement is to be understood figuratively.

Able to receive it. See on v. 11.

13. Then. [*Blessing the Children, Matt. 19:13–15=Mark 10:13–16=Luke 18:15–17.* Major comment: Mark.] The thought sequence is here stressed rather than the immediate time sequence.

Were there brought. Jews customarily took their children, particularly at the age of one year, to be blessed by a rabbi (see DA 511):

Rebuked them. The disciples completely misunderstood Jesus. They considered this request a waste of their Master's time and an unnecessary interruption in what was, to them, the more important task of preaching the gospel to adults. They thought they were protecting Jesus from annoyance. According to Mark, Jesus was "much displeased" with the peremptory action of the disciples (see ch. 10:14).

14. Suffer little children. That is, permit or allow the little children to come. This usage of the word "suffer," though proper, is now rather infrequent. It is apparent that Jesus loved children and that they loved Him. He appreciated their unaffected love and devotion. He was interested in them and fond of them. Upon more than one occasion He referred to the characteristics and interests of childhood to illustrate spiritual truth (see chs. 11:16, 17; 18:2–4; etc.).

Forbid them not. Literally, "do not continue hindering them." Any who make it difficult for children to find the Master today are sure to encounter His utmost displeasure and to earn His severest rebuke. There is room for little children in the kingdom of divine grace. In the home, in the church, in the school, the needs and interests of children are ever to be accorded a place of major importance. All who have any contact with children, or who may have a voice in decisions that affect their interests, must beware of doing anything that might make it difficult for them to find Jesus.

Of such. See on ch. 18:3.

15. Laid his hands. See on Mark 10:16. The touch of Jesus that had so often brought healing to the sick now imparted blessing to the children. It is worthy of note that Jesus did not baptize them, but simply committed them to the love and care of the Father.

16. Behold. [*The Rich Young Ruler, Matt. 19:16–30=Mark 10:17–31=Luke 18:18–30.* Major comment: Matthew.] This incident seems to have followed closely the blessing

of the children (see vs. 13–15). The “ruler” had witnessed the blessing of the children, and this heart-warming expression of love prompted his question (see DA 518).

One came. He is usually called “the rich young ruler,” a composite name based on the three synoptic accounts of the incident. According to Matthew he is said to have been “young” (ch. 19:20), and in Luke he is spoken of as a “ruler” who was “very rich” (ch. 18:18, 23). According to his viewpoint he was conscientious and had lived an exemplary life (see on Matt. 19:19). As a “ruler” he occupied a position of responsibility and was a member of the “honored council of the Jews” (see DA 518, 520). Whether this was the local sanhedrin or council of the town in which he lived or the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem is not certain (see p. 67).

The rich young ruler seems to have accosted Jesus as He was leaving the town (see Mark 10:17). That the young man came “running” reflects youthful eagerness, and that he “kneeled” indicates sincerity (Mark 10:17). His attitude was markedly in contrast with that of the Pharisees, who had recently come “tempting” Jesus (see Matt. 19:3).

This incident and the instruction afterward given the disciples (vs. 23–30) teach first, the importance of self-renunciation as a requirement for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (see on Luke 9:61, 62; 14:26–28, 33), and second, the danger of a love for money (see on Matt. 6:19–12; Luke 12:13–21; 16:1–15).

Good Master. Literally, “good Teacher” (see on v. 17).

What good thing? This question reflects the typical Pharisaical concept of righteousness by works as a passport to “eternal life” (see on v. 17). The rich young ruler had conscientiously performed all the requirements of the law (COL 391), in a formal way at least, and no doubt all those imposed by the rabbis as well, yet was conscious of a lack in his life. He greatly admired Jesus, and seriously considered becoming one of His disciples (DA 518). For the same question propounded by “a certain lawyer” on a previous occasion see on Luke 10:25.

17. Why callest thou me good? Evidently the manner in which the young man addressed Jesus was quite unusual (cf. John 3:2). There seems to be no record in rabbinical literature that rabbis were ever addressed as “good.” On the contrary, in the Mishnah, God Himself is spoken of as “he that is good and bestows good” (*Berakoth* 9. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 327). The young man’s station in life and his office of public trust (see on Matt. 19:16) indicate that he did not call Jesus “good Master” out of ignorance or carelessness. It was obvious that he had a reason for doing so, and Jesus sought to draw out of him a public statement of that reason. Jesus’ explanation, “there is none good but one” was to help the young man to realize clearly the import of his salutation. Jesus recognized the sincerity and discernment of the young man, and thought to strengthen his faith by drawing out of him an even clearer statement of it.

None good but one. Supreme goodness is a characteristic of God alone (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 23:6; 27:13; 31:19; 52:1; Rom. 2:4; etc.). Jesus does not disavow His deity, as might at first appear, but rather clarifies and emphasizes the full significance of the young man’s statement.

Enter into life. Equivalent to the expression, “enter into the kingdom of heaven” (see ch. 5:20). In view of the fact that Jesus includes both this life and the life to come in His remarks on the rewards of discipleship (see Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30), it may be appropriate to conclude that both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory are included here.

Commandments. Gr. *entolai*, “precepts,” “orders,” “charges,” or “commands” (cf. on Ps. 19:8). The *entolai* are the specific, individual requirements, or commands, enjoined upon men by the “law,” Gr. *nomos* (cf. on Ps. 19:7; Prov. 3:1). It is the will of God that man shall reflect His character, and His character may be summed up in the one word “love” (1 John 4:7–12). To reflect the character, or “love,” of God, we will love Him supremely and our neighbor as ourselves (see on Matt. 22:37, 39). If we inquire as to how we are to express our love to God and our fellow men, God gives us the answer in the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:3–17), which Christ explained and exalted (see on Isa. 42:21) in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:17–48). All the civil laws of Moses in the OT and the instructions of Christ and the apostles in the NT clarify the divine requirements set forth in the Ten Commandments and apply them to the practical problems of daily living. The young man professed to love God, but the real test of that love, Jesus says, is to be found in the way he treats his fellow men (see 1 John 4:20). “If ye love me,” Jesus says, “keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

18. Which? In reply to this question Jesus quotes specifically several of the Ten Commandments dealing with a person’s relationships to his fellow men. No doubt in the sight of men the rich young ruler was honest, but in the sight of God, who reads the heart, he did not truly have the interests of his fellow men at heart (see on vs. 19, 20).

19. Love thy neighbour. This sums up all the “commandments” Jesus here refers to (see on ch. 22:39, 40). Though the young man did not as yet realize it, these precepts of conduct went to the very heart of his problem. He did not love other men as much as he loved himself. Yet he felt he had “kept” “all these things.” He had observed the letter of the law but not its spirit, yet he considered himself to be living in harmony with its principles. Jesus seeks to open the young man’s eyes to the fact that the principles of the law must be conscientiously applied to all the practical relationships of life.

20. From my youth. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of this phrase. The young man sincerely felt that he had “kept” the commandments, all of them, and was not conscious of any imperfection (see DA 519).

What lack I yet? Apparently the young man was confident that there was but a step between him and perfection. But though he had diligently obeyed the letter of the law, he still felt that that was not enough. He felt that he lacked something, but what it was he honestly did not know. His life had been one of purity, honesty, and truthfulness. But his attitude toward his fellow men had been essentially a negative one—he had not stolen their goods, he had not borne false witness against them, he had not taken their wives or their lives. True, the letter of the law is negative in form, but its spirit calls for positive action. It is not enough to avoid hating or hurting our fellow men; the gospel calls upon us to love and help them as we love ourselves. This young man lacked the love of God in his heart (see DA 519), without which his observance of “all these things” was of no real value in the sight of Heaven.

21. Perfect. See on ch. 5:48. Jesus assumes that the young man really means what he says, or rather, what he implies in the question, “What lack I yet?” Perfection had been his ideal. But, as Paul points out, perfection cannot be achieved by works (see Gal. 2:21; Heb. 7:11). If, therefore, the young man would achieve perfection he must not expect to do so by performing works of merit. He must experience a complete change of heart and life. His mind must be transformed, his objectives changed.

Go and sell. In a character otherwise lovable (see Mark 10:21), one serious defect remained—selfishness. Unless the blighting influence of selfishness were removed, the rich young ruler could make no further progress toward perfection. The malady may vary from person to person, and the remedy may therefore vary also. When Peter, Andrew, James, and John were called to follow the Master, He did not ask them to sell their boats and fishing tackle, for the reason that these things did not stand in the way of their following Him. Nevertheless, when called, “they forsook all” in order that they might follow the Master (see on Luke 5:11).

Whatever a man loves more than he loves Christ, makes him unworthy of Christ (see on Matt. 10:37, 38). Even the most important earthly responsibilities take second place to following Christ in the pathway of discipleship (see on Luke 9:61, 62). Paul “suffered the loss of all things” in order to “win Christ” (see Phil. 3:7–10). To secure possession of the heavenly treasure or to purchase the pearl of great price (see on Matt. 13:44–46), a man must be ready to sell “all that he hath.” But this, the rich young ruler could not bring himself to do. Here was his cross, but he refused to bear it.

That thou hast. Literally, “your belongings.”

Treasure in heaven. For comment see on ch. 6:19–21. Jesus confronted the young man with the choice between earthly and heavenly treasure. But the young man wanted both, and upon making the discovery that he could not have both, “went away sorrowful” (ch. 19:22). The painful discovery that he could not serve both God and mammon (see on ch. 6:24) was too much for him.

Come and follow me. See on Luke 5:11.

22. Sorrowful. Literally, “sorrowing,” or “grieving.” Great was his disappointment when he realized the sacrifice it involved. The eager joy with which he had run up to Jesus (see on v. 16) turned to gloom and sadness. The price of “eternal life” (v. 16), for which the young man came seeking, was higher than he was willing to pay.

Great possessions. His possessions constituted the most important thing in his life. They were his idol, and at this shrine he chose to pour out the adoration and devotion of his heart. It was to free him from the clutches of the god of riches that Jesus proposed that he sell all that he had. This was his only hope of heaven (see DA 520). He had great possessions, but without heavenly wisdom to administer them aright, he would find them to be a curse to him rather than a blessing. Eventually, he would lose even what he had (see on ch. 25:28–30).

23. Unto his disciples. The young man turns away, and Jesus and the disciples proceed on their way.

A rich man. See on ch. 13:7. It is hard for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven not because he is rich, but because of his attitude toward riches (see on Luke 12:15, 21). Abraham was “very rich” (Gen. 13:2) and at the same time “the Friend of God” (James 2:23). For the rich young ruler the “gate” Jesus pointed out by which he might “enter into life” (Matt. 19:17) was too “strait” and the “way” by which he must henceforth walk, too “narrow” (see on ch. 7:13, 14). The disciples here had an opportunity to witness an example of how hard it is for a man whose heart is set on riches to “enter into the kingdom of heaven.” How many otherwise upright men Satan successfully binds to this earth by the web of riches!

Kingdom of heaven. See on Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2; Luke 4:19.

24. Camel. Jesus deals with a human impossibility, as He clearly states (see v. 26). The truth stated is precisely the opposite of what men, even the disciples, believed (see on v. 25). The Pharisees thought and taught that riches constitute an evidence of divine favor (see on Luke 16:14). When Jesus discussed riches upon this occasion, He may have had Judas particularly in mind—Judas, whom love of money was soon to conquer (see John 12:6; 13:29). The problem of Judas was fundamentally the same as that of the rich young ruler (see on Mark 3:19).

Eye of a needle. The explanation that the “eye of a needle” refers to a smaller gate cut in the panel of a large city gate, through which men might pass when the large gate was closed to major traffic, originated in the centuries after Christ’s day. There is, therefore, no valid basis for such an explanation, plausible though it may appear. Jesus is dealing with impossibilities (v. 26), and there is no point in contriving an explanation by which to render possible what Jesus specifically points out as impossible.

Than for a rich man. See on Luke 12:15, 21. In happy contrast with the usual possessor of riches, Matthew forsook riches in order that he might follow the Master (see on Mark 2:13, 14), and Zacchaeus, another wealthy tax collector, transferred his affections from riches to Jesus (see on Luke 19:2, 8).

25. Exceedingly amazed. The false concepts of the disciples concerning the nature of the kingdom of heaven (see on Luke 4:19) and concerning riches as a sign of divine favor (see on Luke 16:14) left them greatly puzzled at this categorical declaration.

Who then? If prestige, influence, and wealth are not evidences of divine favor, the disciples reasoned, those who lack these have even less chance.

26. Beheld them. That is, Jesus probably observed the expression of astonishment on the faces of the disciples.

This is impossible. Impossible, “with men”—but not “with God.” It is impossible for a rich man to get into heaven on the basis of human effort, because he has no means of freeing himself from the clutch of the love of riches upon his heart. For that matter, salvation is impossible for anyone on the basis of his own efforts. Only a miracle of divine grace will avail to save a rich man from a supreme love of riches, or any other man from his particular besetting sin (cf. Heb. 12:1).

All things are possible. That is, for the man who is willing to permit God to control his life (see Phil. 4:13). Only the power of God operating in a man’s life can bring about that transformation of character requisite for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

27. Then answered Peter. As so frequently the case, Peter comes forward as spokesman for the disciples (see on chs. 16:16; 17:4; etc.).

We have forsaken all. Peter did not overstate the case (see on Luke 5:11). The disciples had fulfilled basically the requirement just set before the rich young ruler (see on Matt. 19:21). They had done what he was unwilling to do. Were they, then, well on the road toward that perfection of which Jesus spoke? Were they eligible to “enter into life” (v. 17)?

What shall we have? Peter’s thoughts were on the rewards of discipleship. Self-denial practiced with one eye diverted in the direction of the expected reward will never merit the “well done” that Heaven waits to bestow for faithful service (see ch. 25:21, 23).

28. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Regeneration. Or, “renewal.” Here Jesus refers to the “regeneration,” or “renewal,” of this world, that is, to the earth in its re-created state (see Isa. 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1).

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Throne of his glory. Or, “His glorious throne” (see on chs. 16:27; 25:31).

Twelve thrones. They would reign with Jesus (see 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21; 20:6).

29. Forsaken houses. The disciples had forsaken house and family that they might follow Jesus (see on Luke 5:11), not in the sense of leaving their families destitute, but rather in the sense of making the service of Christ their primary objective. Shortly before Jesus had stated this requirement of discipleship in even stronger terms (see on Luke 14:26).

For my name’s sake. See on ch. 5:11.

An hundredfold. Compare Job 42:10; Luke 18:30. Jesus is obviously speaking in figurative language. Approximately a year and a half before this, Jesus had observed that those who do the will of His Father in heaven are His “mother” and “sister” and “brother” (see Matt. 12:46–50). The “hundredfold” that Christians receive in this life consists in the joy of Christian fellowship and in the more real and intense satisfaction that comes with service for God. Paul speaks of “having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:10).

Everlasting life. See on John 3:16; 6:27. When a man gives up all to follow Christ, he receives in return “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Similarly, this was what Jesus had done in order to make the plan of salvation possible (Phil. 2:6–8).

30. First shall be last. See on Luke 13:30. Many who, like the rich young ruler, had every appearance of being first to enter heaven, would actually be last. Matt. 19:30 forms a connecting link between the incident and subsequent discussion recorded in vs. 23–29, and the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, recorded in ch. 20. Note that the same summary declaration is repeated at the close of that parable (see v. 16), a parable that was told specifically to illustrate this great paradox of the Christian faith.

A few weeks after this—during the course of His last day of teaching in the Temple—Jesus declared to the chief priests and elders that publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of heaven ahead of them (ch. 21:31, 32). In fact, from all over the earth would come a host of humble, faithful ones worthy to “sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29), while the religious leaders of Israel would themselves be “thrust out” (v. 28). For a further discussion of the reversal of conditions in the future life compare the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (see on Luke 16:19–31). Earthly success and popularity are based on altogether different standards from those by which God estimates a man’s worth.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 MB 63

5 AH 106

8 AH 340; MB 63

13 DA 511; ML 230

13, 14 AH 273

13–15 DA 511–517

14 CSW 55; CT 180; DA 512, 517; FE 69; ML 228; 9T 175

16 CS 210; MYP 391; PK 221; 1T 350; 4T 49
 16, 17 COL 390
 16–22CS 151, 152; DA 518–523; EW 49; 1T 207
 16–261T 170
 16–30COL 390–396
 17 2T 43; 4T 219; 6T 225
 17–22COL 391
 18, 19 DA 518
 19 2T 43; 5T 606
 19, 20 DA 519
 20 CS 210
 20, 21 4T 49
 20–221T 351, 483; 4T 220
 21 COL 395
 21, 22 CS 211; DA 520; PK 221; 4T 50
 23, 24 CS 150; 2T 680
 24 MH 215; 1T 151, 537; 6T 82
 27 COL 396
 27, 28 COL 395
 28 CS 340
 29 CS 158; 1T 88, 226, 510; 5T 428
 29, 30 1T 173
 30 CS 339

CHAPTER 20

1 *Christ, by the similitude of the labourers in the vineyard, sheweth that God is debtor unto no man: 17 foretelleth his passion: 20 by answering the mother of Zebedee's children teacheth his disciples to be lowly: 30 and giveth two blind men their sight.*

1. For. [*Laborers in the Vineyard, Matt. 20:1–16.* See on parables pp. 203–207.] The break between chs. 19:30 and 20:1 obscures the close relationship, both in time and in subject matter, between the two chapters. It was Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler (ch. 19:16–22) and His subsequent discussion with the disciples that led to the narration of the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. In fact, the parable specifically illustrates the truth stated in ch. 19:30, a truth that is repeated at the close of the parable by way of emphasis (ch. 20:16). This repetition immediately preceding and following the narration of the parable emphasizes the lesson the parable was designed to teach (see COL 390).

This parable was addressed to the disciples in response to their query, "What shall we have therefore?" (ch. 19:27). Inasmuch as they had "forsaken all" to follow Jesus, they anticipated a reward in compensation for their sacrifice. Of such a reward Jesus gave them assurance (vs. 28, 29), but with it coupled a warning to the effect that they need not think that merely because they had been first to follow Jesus they could therefore expect greater rewards and honors than other subjects of the kingdom were to receive. In the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard Jesus sets forth the manner in which God deals with those who devote their service to Him and the basis on which they will be rewarded (see COL 396). The parable teaches that they will receive neither more nor less than others, for the citizens of the kingdom of heaven are all equal.

Kingdom of heaven. See on Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2; Luke 4:19.

Is like. This was a common formula used to introduce a parable. For principles of parable interpretation see p. 204.

An householder. Gr. *oikodespotēs*, that is, the “master of the house” (see on Luke 2:29). In this instance the “householder” is the owner (see Matt. 20:15).

Early in the morning. Gr. *hama prōi* (see on Mark 1:35), at daylight.

To hire labourers. In Oriental lands day laborers still gather in the market places, where they await employment.

His vineyard. The prophet Isaiah had spoken of Israel as the Lord’s vineyard (see Isa. 5:1–7).

2. Agreed with the labourers. In Oriental lands bargaining is an essential and expected part of any transaction involving goods or services. See on John 9:4.

A penny. Gr. *dēnaron*, the Roman *denarius*, a silver coin weighing about .125 oz. troy, or 3.89 g. (see p. 49). It was worth considerably more than today’s “penny” (though only a fraction of a dollar). It had much more purchasing power then than now, however, for it represented the usual day’s wage for the ordinary laborer. The working day in those times was from dawn to dusk.

3. Third hour. That is, about 9:00 A.M. (see p. 50).

Standing idle. See vs. 6, 7.

Marketplace. See on Matt. 11:16; Mark 7:4. The market place might be located on any readily accessible street in the town or city, or inside the city gate.

4. Whatsoever is right. That is, fair, in proportion to the time the men would work. In this instance there was no bargaining with any of the men hired later in the day. They asked no questions, but went at the employer’s bidding, trusting in his promise and his sense of fairness.

5. Sixth and ninth hour. That is, at noon and again at 3:00 P.M.

6. Eleventh hour. That is, about 5:00 P.M. The men who went to work about five o’clock would thus work but a short time until nightfall (see v. 12; see also on v. 2), and that in the most pleasant part of the day.

Why stand ye here? The context of the parable indicates that these men had not been in the market place earlier in the day when previous groups of laborers were hired, and had not refused the owner’s previous invitations (see COL 399).

7. No man. Perhaps for the latter part of the day, or possibly, for all day.

Whatsoever. See on v. 4.

8. Even was come. Probably about the time of early nightfall (see on v. 12).

Lord of the vineyard. That is, the “householder” (see on v. 1).

Call the labourers. It would seem that they kept on working until called by the steward, the man whom the owner had entrusted with oversight of the work.

Give them their hire. According to the OT (see Lev. 19:13), an employer was required to settle accounts with day laborers at the close of each day. This wise provision was designed to help prevent unscrupulous employers from postponing or avoiding payment of wages.

Beginning from the last. It would hardly seem that this was the usual custom, but this procedure is necessary to the lesson of the parable. Had the workmen been paid off in the order in which they were hired, the dissatisfaction of the first men hired for the day

would probably not have occurred. The lesson of the parable rules out the explanation suggested by some that the men who had “borne the burden and heat of the day” had not worked as diligently as they should have, and that the “lord of the vineyard” sought to teach them a lesson.

9. A penny. See on v. 2.

10. The first. These represent those who expect and claim preferential treatment because of supposed greater sacrifices and more diligent service. They also represent the Jews, who had been first to accept the call of the Lord to work in His vineyard (see COL 400; Vol. IV, pp. 26-32).

11. Murmured. Or, “grumbled.” The disciples, who thought themselves “first” (see on ch. 18:1), no doubt recognized that Jesus here referred to them to a certain extent as grumblers (see ch. 19:27, 30). At least, they had not accepted service in the Lord’s “vineyard” in the trusting spirit of the laborers called later in the day (see on ch. 20:4).

Goodman of the house. See on v. 1.

12. Equal unto us. Having witnessed the generosity of the owner toward all the other workmen, the men hired first naturally felt that they deserved more. They might have reasoned that if a man who had worked “but one hour” deserved one *denarius*, they deserved 12. They expected more because they did not understand the basis on which payment for the day’s work was being made (see on v. 15).

Heat. Gr. *kauson*, “burning heat [of the sun],” or “scorching heat [of the wind].”

Kausōn is used in the latter sense in the LXX to refer to the hot, blasting east wind, blowing in from the desert (see on Jer. 18:17).

13. One of them. The spokesman of the group, apparently (cf. on ch. 19:27).

Friend. The owner replies in a kindly way. The first laborers had charged him with unfair treatment toward them, but he explains his actions as being entirely a matter of generosity and not of just deserts (see vs. 14, 15).

Agree with me. The first laborers had entered into the arrangement voluntarily, and had no valid basis for complaint. The owner had paid them what his agreement with them called for.

14. Take. Literally, “lift up.”

I will give. That is, “It is my will to give.” Here the word “will” implies volition, not simple intention.

15. Is it not lawful? The owner does not refer to any legal statute, but simply inquires, “Is it not permissible for me to do what I desire with mine own?”

What I will. Or, “what I desire” (see on v. 14). Evidently the owner had greatly appreciated being able to secure more help in order to gather in the harvest. The willingness of the last group of workmen to help when help was so much needed, seems to have struck a responsive chord in his heart. He considered their willingness to work a favor, and now he was expressing his appreciation for it.

Is thine eye evil? These men had done no more than they agreed to do, and were therefore not entitled to expect any special compensation (see on Luke 17:10). Instead of the literal KJV rendering, the RSV gives the meaning of the final clause of the verse in idiomatic English: “Do you begrudge my generosity?” For the idiom “evil eye” see on Matt. 6:22–24.

Because I am good. They had charged him with partiality and, by implication, with personal injury. The owner explains that it is not a matter of justice or injustice at all, but of generosity. He had treated all his hired help justly, and could he not do more if he so chose? Jesus here makes plain that divine favor is not earned, as the rabbis taught. Christian laborers do not strike a bargain with God. If God were to deal with men merely on the basis of strict justice, none could ever qualify for the incomparably generous rewards of heaven and eternity. It is not learning, position, talent, length of time, amount of labor, or visible results that count in the sight of Heaven, but the spirit of willingness in which we take up our appointed tasks (see COL 397), and the faithfulness with which we pursue them (see COL 402).

16. Last shall be first. See on chs. 19:30; 20:1.

Many be called. See on ch. 22:14. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the omission of these words and the remainder of the verse.

17. Going up to Jerusalem. [*Jesus Foretells His Death, Matt. 20:17–19=Mark 10:32–34=Luke 18:31–34.* Major comment: Matthew.] Again and again the gospel writers speak of Jesus as being on His way to Jerusalem ever since He took His final departure from Galilee (see on Matt. 19:1, 2; Luke 9:51). During these last months of His life on earth, Jesus had been in and out of Jerusalem and Judea a number of times, but devoted most of His ministry to Samaria and Peraea. It was now probably late March or early April of the year A.D. 31. Jesus arrived in Bethany on the Friday before the Passover (see John 12:1; DA 557).

It was doubtless along the way, prior to the arrival in Jericho, that the incidents of Matt. 20:17–28 took place. From the Jordan valley, which was at this point approximately 1,000 ft. below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, it was literally “up to Jerusalem,” more than 2,500 ft. above sea level (see on Mark 10:46; Luke 10:30). But it was not alone in a geographical sense that the Jews spoke of “going up to Jerusalem”; the expression also denotes Jerusalem as the center of the Jewish national life, the place to which they looked for leadership. Since it was but a short time before the beginning of the Passover season, all roads “up to Jerusalem” were no doubt thronged with pilgrims converging on the city to participate in the services connected with that important occasion.

Took the twelve. Jesus had been walking on ahead of the disciples, alone, and His demeanor filled them with awe and fear (see DA 547; see on Mark 10:32). The account in Mark is more detailed and graphic than that of Matthew.

Apart in the way. That is, apart from other wayfarers making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and probably apart, also, from disciples other than the Twelve, who doubtless accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem. The instruction upon this occasion is for the inner circle of disciples only. But even the Twelve, after repeated instruction (see on Luke 18:31), have failed to grasp the fact that the Messiah must die for the sins of the world.

18. Up to Jerusalem. See on v. 17.

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Betrayed. This was the third of the attempts by Jesus to inform the Twelve concerning His sufferings and death that Matthew records (see Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23; cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34). Luke reports the same three occasions (see chs. 9:22, 44; 18:31–33), but also mentions three other instances not recorded by Matthew or Mark (see chs. 12:50; 13:33; 17:25). The latter three are incidental references to Christ’s suffering

and death rather than occasions devoted primarily to this subject, and occur within the time of the Peraean ministry, which is recorded only by Luke (see on ch. 18:31).

Chief priests. See on ch. 2:4.

Scribes. See pp. 51, 55.

Condemn him to death. The Jews had been plotting to kill Jesus ever since the healing of the invalid man at the Pool of Bethesda two years previously, and had set spies to follow Him wherever He went (see on John 5:18; DA 213). The success of His Galilean mission had led them to intensify these efforts (see on Luke 5:17). Repeatedly thereafter they became more bold in their public attacks upon Him (see on Matt. 15:21; 16:1; Mark 7:1, 2). More recently, during the course of the Peraean ministry, they had made repeated attempts to arrest Him and to kill Him (see on Matt. 19:3). Their plans were now rapidly taking more definite shape, particularly since the resurrection of Lazarus a few weeks prior to this time.

19. Deliver him. For the first time Jesus specifically mentions the fact that the Gentiles, the Roman authorities, will be instrumental in His death.

To crucify. Three years before, Jesus had told Nicodemus that He must be “lifted up,” thus implying crucifixion (see on John 3:14). Now, for the first time, He clearly foretells the manner of His death.

Third day. See pp. 248-250.

20. Then came to him. [*The Ambition of James and John, Matt. 20:20–28=Mark 10:35–45. Major comment: Matthew.*] This inopportune incident is closely connected with that of the preceding verses (vs. 17–19). To think that James and John came to Jesus with their selfish request to be first in the kingdom, immediately after Jesus had so vividly set forth the circumstances of His approaching death! Here the selfishness that moves the human heart stands forth in stark contrast with the selfless love of God. Perhaps it was meditation upon the announcement that the Twelve would sit upon twelve thrones “when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory” (ch. 19:28), that prompted James and John to request the thrones next to that of Jesus.

Zebedee’s children. Or, the brothers James and John (see Luke 5:10). Their mother, probably Salome (see Matt. 27:56; cf. Mark 15:40; 16:1), may possibly have been the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (see on John 19:25). She was one of a group of women who had accompanied Jesus and His disciples on their travels and had ministered to their needs (see Luke 8:1–3; cf. DA 548). Mark specifically mentions that James and John presented their request to Jesus in person (Mark 10:35), whereas Matthew withholds their names, but states that their mother presented the request. This mother had encouraged her sons in their ambition, and accompanied them in coming to Jesus with it (see DA 548). Apparently she broached the subject (see Matt. 20:20), and then James and John spoke on their own behalf (see Mark 10:35; see on Matt. 20:22).

Worshipping. See on chs. 8:2; 15:25.

21. What wilt thou? Or, “What do you desire?” Jesus here addresses the mother, perhaps out of respect, though the two disciples were with her also.

On thy right hand. James and John requested the two positions of greatest honor and privilege.

In thy kingdom. Mark reads, “in thy glory” (Mark 10:37), which parallels the expression “throne of his glory” (Matt. 19:28). On the nature of Christ’s kingdom see on Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2; Luke 4:19.

22. Ye ask. Literally, “ye ask for yourselves.” The use of the plural “ye” makes it evident that James and John had also spoken on their own behalf (see on v. 20).

The cup. A figurative expression for the cup of suffering Jesus was to drink in the Garden of Gethsemane, at His trials, and on the cross (see Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11). A “cup” is a common Bible figure for suffering or punishment (see Isa. 51:17; Jer. 49:12; Lam. 4:21; see on Ps. 11:6; 16:5).

Be baptized. Gr. *baptizō*. See on ch. 3:6. Here it is obvious that the word is used figuratively. As the “cup” stands for the sufferings of Jesus, “baptism” stands for His death (see Rom. 6:3, 4; see on Luke 12:50).

We are able. James was the first of the Twelve to become a martyr (see Acts 12:2), but his brother John outlived all the other disciples (see AA 542, 569).

23. Not mine to give. Instead of rebuking the audacity of the two brothers openly, Jesus deals with them less directly. Apparently, James and John and their mother came to Jesus alone.

For whom it is prepared. In the kingdom of heaven position is not awarded on the basis of influence or favoritism, nor can it be earned. It is awarded exclusively on the basis of fitness, and fitness is measured by the spirit of service for others (see on ch. 20:15). It is overcomers who will be invited to sit with Christ on His throne (see Additional Note on Rev. 3:21).

My Father. As a man among men Jesus did not exercise His kingly prerogatives (see on John 1).

24. Indignation. The ten felt that James and John were seeking to take advantage of them, perhaps because of the possible relationship of the two brothers to Jesus (see on v. 20).

25. Princes. This was not the first time Jesus had instructed His disciples with respect to humility and service (see on Matt. 18:1, 3; Mark 9:35).

Exercise dominion. Literally, “lord it over,” or “exercise lordship over.” Earthly authority functions on the basis of power. Indeed it cannot be otherwise.

26. Not be so. On earth, men in positions of authority tend to “lord it over” those under them. But among the citizens of the heavenly kingdom, power, position, talent, and education are to be devoted exclusively to serving others, and may never be used as levers to lord it over others.

Will be great. See on Mark 9:35. He who is greatest will serve others most unselfishly. Apparently, the approval of Jesus rests upon the desire to “be great” in terms of serving instead of dominating.

Minister. Gr. *diakonos*, “waiter,” “servant,” or “deacon” (see on Mark 9:35).

27. Servant. Gr. *doulos*, “bond servant,” or “slave.”

28. Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10. The life of Jesus was pre-eminently a life of service. Throughout His ministry He took advantage of none of the privileges commonly claimed by the rabbis, He had no possessions that He might call His own, He never exercised divine power for His own advantage.

Life. Gr. *psuchē* (see on ch. 10:28).

Ransom. Gr. *lutron*, “ransom,” “atonement,” or “recompense.” *Lutron* is used in the papyri of the price paid for a slave in order to make him a freeman. It is also used of

money paid for redemption of a pledge. The related verb, *lutroō*, is translated “redeem,” or “redeemed” (see Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18). Here for the first time Jesus makes a clear statement concerning the substitutionary nature of His death. This aspect of His supreme sacrifice was clearly set forth by the prophet Isaiah more than seven centuries before the time came for that sacrifice to be made (see on Isa. 53:4–6). It is true that there was an exemplary aspect to Christ’s death, but there was far more to it than that. It was first and above all else substitutionary. Otherwise Jesus could not have the power to save men from their sins (see on Matt. 1:21). For the spirit that prompted Jesus to make this great sacrifice on behalf of sinners see Phil. 2:6–8.

There is no basis whatever for the suggestion some have made that Jesus paid a “ransom” either to the devil or to God.

29. As they departed. [*Blind Bartimaeus, Matt. 20:29–34=Mark 10:46–52=Luke 18:35–43. Major comment: Mark. See Closing Peraean Ministry; The Ministry of Our Lord*].

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 COL 396
- 1–16COL 396–404; 9T 73
- 3, 4 FE 365
- 6 5T 394; WM 146
- 6, 7 AA 111; ChS 80; COL 399; MM 333; 5T 203
- 7 COL 397; 5T 203
- 8–10COL 396
- 9 COL 399
- 12 7T 290
- 12–16COL 399
- 13 CS 339
- 18, 19 DA 777
- 20, 21 4T 226
- 20–22SL 56
- 20–23AA 542; DA 548
- 20–28DA 547–551
- 21 DA 644
- 22 DA 689; GC 631
- 22, 23 1T 155, 183; 2T 32, 73, 178; 3T 48, 107
- 23 DA 549
- 25, 26 DA 550; MH 478
- 25–28 AA 542
- 26 DA 650
- 26–28AA 359; 4T 226
- 27 EW 102; GC 58
- 28 COL 139, 361, 389; CW 87; DA 550, 642; Ed 308; Ev 636; GC 68; GW 190; MH 396; ML 168; MYP 211; SC 78; 2T 426, 460; 3T 54, 107, 229; 4T 416

CHAPTER 21

- 1 *Christ rideth into Jerusalem upon an ass, 12 driveth the buyers and sellers out of the temple, 17 curseth the fig tree, 23 putteth to silence the priests and elders, 28 and*

rebuketh them by the similitude of the two sons, 33 and the husbandmen, who slew such as were sent unto them.

1. Nigh unto Jerusalem. [*The Triumphal Entry*, Matt. 21:1–11=Mark 11:1–11=Luke 19:29–44=John 12:12–19. Major comment: Matthew. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; the Passion Week.] This was Sunday (see DA 569) before the Passover, which fell on Friday in A.D. 31 (see Additional Notes on ch. 26, Note 1). Jesus had arrived in Bethany, about 2 mi. from Jerusalem, the preceding Friday, and had rested there over the Sabbath. It was during the course of this visit that Simon entertained Jesus and Lazarus (see DA 557, 558; see on ch. 26:6). The account in John calls for this sequence of events (see John 12:1–19).

All four gospel writers record the Triumphal Entry, except for Simon's feast the first specific incident all four mention since the Feeding of the Five Thousand. The account of the Triumphal Entry is given in its simplest form in John, and is related at greatest length by Luke. The details given by the four evangelists vary from writer to writer, indicating separate accounts, yet the accounts are not contradictory but rather complementary.

Preparations for the Triumphal Entry began, apparently, late in the morning, for it was about the time of the evening sacrifice, approximately 3:00 P.M., that Jesus reached the brow of Olivet overlooking Jerusalem and that events reached a climax (see DA 571). It was much later than that when He finally reached the Temple.

Bethphage. Except in a general way nothing is known of the location of this village. It was doubtless situated somewhere on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and probably not far from Bethany (see Mark 11:1; Luke 19:29). The name is Aramaic, and means "house of unripe figs."

Mount of Olives. A low mountain ridge on the east side of Jerusalem, separated from the city of the Kidron Valley. It rises about 2,700 ft. (c. 823 m.) above sea level, approximately 250 ft. (c. 76 m.) higher than Jerusalem averages, and some 300 ft. (c. 91 m.) higher than the Temple plateau. Sometimes it is called Olivet (see 2 Sam. 15:30; Acts 1:12), which name is derived from the Latin of the Vulgate. Gethsemane was at or near the western foot of the Mount of Olives, opposite Jerusalem (see on Matt. 26:30, 36). This is the first mention of the Mount of Olives in connection with the life of Jesus, though He no doubt spent the night here on previous visits to Jerusalem. See illustration facing p. 517.

Then sent Jesus. Whereas in the past Jesus has taken every precaution against any popular demonstration acknowledging Him as the Messiah (see on Matt. 14:22; Mark 1:25; John 6:15), He now not only encourages this very thing but takes the initiative in bringing it about. To be sure, the disciples and many of the people no doubt expected Jesus to set up His kingdom at this paschal season (see Matt. 20:20, 21). Any surprise the disciples may have experienced arose from the fact that Jesus now apparently reversed His former attitude toward publicity. This changed attitude must have filled the disciples with unwarranted enthusiasm and hope. They failed to understand the true significance of the event until after the resurrection (see John 12:16).

Two disciples. None of the gospel writers identifies either of these two.

2. Village over against you. Jesus and His disciples had rested over the Sabbath in Bethany. It was probably now the latter part of Sunday morning (see on v. 1). Possibly the "village over against you" refers to Bethphage, which was apparently not far from Bethany.

Straightway. The directions Jesus here gives are explicit, and Mark records them in greater detail than do the other three evangelists.

An ass tied. Mark adds that they actually found the animal tied “by the door without in a place where two ways met” (see on Mark 11:4).

A colt. As part of Jesus’ instructions with respect to the errand, Mark adds, concerning the colt, “whereon never man sat” (ch. 11:2), a detail also noted by Luke (see ch. 19:30).

Bring them. The two were not to be separated. The reason for the requirement that both were to be brought, in view of the fact that Jesus actually rode only the colt (see Mark 11:7; see on Matt. 21:5), is not stated and is not entirely clear. The purpose may have been to make the prophecy of Zech. 9:9 more vivid to those who watched its fulfillment.

3. *If any man say ought.* Luke remarks that it was “the owners” who raised a question as to the right of the two disciples to loose the animals and lead them away (see ch. 19:33).

Lord. Gr. *Kurios* (see on Luke 2:29). This is the first time Jesus refers to Himself as *Kurios*, “Lord.” His usual designation for Himself has thus far been “Son of man” (see on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10).

Hath need of them. It may seem strange that Jesus did not instruct the two disciples to request the use of the animals rather than command them. However, it should be remembered that upon this occasion Jesus assumed the role of King of Israel (see on v. 1). He made reference to Himself as Lord, implying that He had the power and authority to call upon the subjects of His kingdom for any property or services deemed essential. A king did not *request* property and services, as this would imply the right of the subject to decline the request. Therefore, His directions to take the two animals were fully in keeping with the role Jesus now assumed, and would be so understood by both the disciples and the owners of the beasts. The popular sentiment in favor of proclaiming Christ King (see on v. 1), together with the explanation the two disciples were sure to make about Christ’s intentions upon this occasion, would be sufficient to secure consent for their use.

4. *Might be fulfilled.* See on ch. 1:22.

Prophet. The quotation is from Zech. 9:9, though the first clause of it more closely resembles Isa. 62:11 (cf. on Mark 1:2). Compare the quotation as given by John (ch. 12:14, 15).

5. *Tell ye.* Note that Jesus’ directions to the two disciples closed with v. 3. In vs. 4 and 5 Matthew refers to the Triumphal Entry as the fulfillment of certain specific OT prophecies.

Daughter of Sion. A Hebraism for the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem (see on Ps. 9:14; Isa. 1:8).

Thy King cometh. Jesus was following the custom of a royal entry into the city, as in the days of old (see DA 570). His hour had come, and for the first time He presented Himself to Israel as her rightful King, the One who was to sit upon the throne of David (see on 2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Matt. 1:1; Acts 2:30). Jesus later acknowledged the title “King of the Jews” (Luke 23:3; John 18:33, 34, 37), but hastened to add, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). But the Jewish leaders refused to accept Him as their King (see on John 19:14, 15). Jesus was not now appearing in His role as King of the kingdom of

glory (see Matt. 25:31), but as King of the spiritual kingdom of divine grace (see on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2). Jesus knew that this episode in His life mission would inevitably lead to the cross, yet went through with it steadfastly and purposefully. It was necessary that the eyes of all men be turned toward Him in the closing days of His life, that all might understand, if they would, the significance of His mission to earth.

Sacred memories and visions of future glory must have pressed upon His mind as Christ traversed the way that led upward to the crest of the Mount of Olives and down the father side into Jerusalem. The holy Shekinah, in taking its departure from the first Temple shortly before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, had paused briefly at the crest of the mountain (see DA 829; see on Eze. 11:23). The Triumphal Entry was “the dim foreshadowing” of Jesus’ return in the clouds of heaven (see DA 580). It was from the eastern slope of the mountain that Jesus Himself, nearly two months later, was to ascend to heaven (see DA 829, 830). When, at the close of the millennium, He returns to earth, accompanied by the saints and the Holy City, He will descend upon the Mount of Olives (see GC 662, 663; see on Zech. 14:4). The Holy City then settles down where old Jerusalem once stood, and Christ, the saints, and angels enter into the city (see Rev. 21:2, 10; GC 663).

And a colt. From the English translation it appears that Jesus rode both animals. However, the Greek may more properly be translated, “upon an ass, even a colt.”

6. Disciples went. What emotions must have stirred within the hearts of these two disciples as they went on their errand! To all Jesus’ friends among the throngs of people (see on v. 8) whom they met, the two disciples imparted their interpretation of what was about to take place (see DA 570). With excitement they could not conceal, they hastened on their way, thinking they were soon to realize the long-cherished desire of their hearts (see DA 570, 571). Matthew omits the account of the experience of the two disciples in finding the ass and cold and securing the owner’s permission to return with them to Jesus (see Mark 11:4–6; Luke 19:32–34).

7. Clothes. Gr. *himatia*, meaning their outer garments, or “mantles” (see on ch. 5:40).

8. Very great multitude. Rather, “most of the multitude” (see on v. 9).

Spread. For this custom as an expression of homage to royalty see on 2 Kings 9:13.

Their garments. Literally, “their own garments,” in contrast to those of the disciples (see v. 7).

Branches. In addition to those of the olive trees (from which the Mount of Olives received its name), there were branches of palm trees, which were used in connection with a triumphal entry, as a symbol of victory (compare the experiences of Simon and Judas Maccabaeus, 1 Macc. 13:51; 2 Macc. 10:7). In triumph Jesus rode forward to the cross, where, in seeming defeat, wearing a crown of thorns as “King of the Jews” (John 19:19), He died a mighty Conqueror.

9. Multitudes. The throng that gathered as Jesus moved on toward the summit of the Mount of Olives. Among these, undoubtedly, who constituted the throng were many who had come to Bethany to see Jesus and to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had but a few short weeks before raised from the dead (see John 12:17, 18). Even the priests and rulers came out to join the vast concourse of people. In this triumphal procession were many who had been captives of Satan and whom Jesus had delivered from demons, from blindness and dumbness, from sickness and lameness, from leprosy and death.

Cried, saying. According to the Greek, they kept on shouting and repeating the words. Compare the joyous acclamation first used in welcoming the ark to Jerusalem (see on Ps. 24:7–10).

Hosanna. Gr. *hōsanna*, a transliteration of the Aramaic *hosha‘ na’*, meaning “save, now” or “save, I pray thee” (see on Ps. 118:25). Here the expression may be considered a prayer to God that salvation may come to Israel through Messiah King.

Son of David. See on ch. 1:1.

Blessed is he. The quotation is based on Ps. 118:26. The parallel passage in Mark reads instead, “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David” (Mark 11:10).

Hosanna in the highest. See on Luke 2:14. Only Luke gives an account of the climax of the Triumphal Entry, when the priests and rulers from Jerusalem met Jesus, and only he records Jesus’ exclamation of grief over the doomed city of Jerusalem (see on ch. 19:39–44).

10. Was moved. Literally, “was shaken,” or “was caused to tremble.” The extreme agitation of the whole city is here graphically portrayed. Mark’s account of what Jesus did in the later afternoon and evening of this momentous day is more complete than that of the other evangelists (see on ch. 11:11).

11. Multitude. See on v. 9.

Jesus the prophet. See Matt. 21:46; see on John 7:40; cf. v. 52. The people were not entirely convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, though they realized that the power of God was with Him.

12. Jesus went into the temple. [*Second Cleansing of the Temple*, Matt. 21:12–17=Mark 11:15–19=Luke 19:45–48. Major comment: Matthew. See Closing Ministry at Jerusalem; The Duration of Christ’s Ministry, the Passion Week, The Duration of Christ’s Ministry, the Opening of the Galilean Ministry, the Passion Week, the Resurrection to Ascension.] The First Cleansing of the Temple is recorded only in John (see ch. 2:13–25), which, in turn, contains no account of this Second Cleansing. The First Cleansing took place in the spring of A.D. 28, at the beginning of Jesus’ early Judean ministry (see on John 2:13–17).

Because Jesus entered the courts of the Temple late Sunday afternoon, following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (see on Matt. 21:1), and because the Gospel record leaves more or less obscure the transition from this visit to the Temple to that of the following day, some have concluded that the cleansing of the Temple occurred on Sunday, immediately following the triumphal ride into the city. Matthew’s deviation from strict chronological order in recording the cursing and withering of the fig tree (see on v. 18) has also tended to leave the actual order of events less apparent than it would otherwise be. The narrative in Mark is in more nearly strict chronological order; hence the Second Cleansing of the Temple occurred on Monday (cf. DA 581, 582).

Cast out. Undoubtedly, the throng that accompanied Jesus had intended to crown Him as king of Israel. Although Jesus never lent encouragement to the erroneous ideas the Jews held concerning His kingdom, He now proceeded to act in the role of Messiah-King in order that all men might have full opportunity to understand the significance of the crucifixion (see on vs. 1, 5). He declared the Temple to be “my house” (v. 13), and as its rightful owner He exercised His authority to determine what use should be made of its sacred precincts (see on v. 23).

Them that sold and bought. The outer court, the court of the Gentiles, was the scene of this unholy traffic. In the Temple market were sold the various kinds of animals and birds required for sacrifice, together with cereal, salt, incense, and oil (see Vol. I, pp. 698-705). This market was considered a necessary convenience for the pilgrims who came from great distances, and who thus found it impractical to bring their own sacrifices. The noise, commotion, and sharp bargaining carried on must have offended the religious consciousness of those who worshiped God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). This traffic was licensed by the Temple authorities, who made a handsome profit from it. But those who carried it on revealed that they had a gross misconception of the character of God and of the requirements He made of those who love and serve Him (see p. 70; see on Micah 6:8; Matt. 9:13; Eze. 44:23).

Tables. Gr. *trapeza* (see on Luke 19:23).

Moneychangers. Here, those who exchanged other currencies for the half shekel of the Temple, at a profit to themselves, of course (see on ch. 17:24).

Doves. Or, “pigeons.” Doves were the offering of the poor (see Lev. 12:8; see on ch. 1:14; Luke 2:24).

13. It is written. The quotation is from Isa. 56:7, which, taken in its context, refers specifically to the fact that Gentiles were to be converted to the true God (see on Isa. 56:6–8). For the place God designed the Temple at Jerusalem to fill in the great ingathering of the nations to the worship of the true God see Vol. IV, pp. 28-30.

Den of thieves. Rather, “den of robbers.” Jesus employs the language of Scripture (see on Jer. 7:11) in giving His own comment on the scene before Him. By making the sacred symbols of the Lamb of God a source of personal profit, the rulers were making sacred things common and robbing God of the honor and glory that were His. They were also robbing all the worshipers of a knowledge of the character and requirements of God; and particularly were they robbing the Gentile worshipers of the opportunity to know God as He is. In their spirit of greed the dignitaries of the Temple were no better than thieves.

14. Blind and the lame. In the triumphal procession the day before, the trophies that Jesus’ healing power had rescued from the oppression of Satan had marched along shouting the Saviour’s praises (see on v. 9). As Jesus set about healing those who now flocked to Him in the Temple courts, He gave a practical demonstration of the truth that the Temple had been ordained of God to serve man’s need, not his greed. It seems that for a brief time Jesus was in complete control of the Temple (see Mark 11:16), and during the time demonstrated, in part, how these sacred precincts should be used. He had come to earth that men “might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10; not that they might sacrifice more abundantly or make profits more abundantly).

15. Priests and scribes. See p. 55. These were the very men who had licensed the illegal Temple traffic, and who reaped a handsome profit from the buying and selling that went on there.

Hosanna. See on v. 9.

Son of David. See on ch. 1:1.

16. Hearest thou? The situation was entirely out of the control of the “chief priests and scribes.” The throngs that had gathered in the Temple area to see Jesus were acclaiming Him as Messiah King, and this aroused in the Jewish leaders the same

mingled emotions of fear and rage they had felt on the late afternoon of the day before (see on Luke 19:39). Now they made a frantic appeal to Jesus, as they had the day before, to quiet the acclamations of praise.

Have ye never read? This quotation agrees exactly with the LXX of Ps. 8:2, differing slightly from the Hebrew. This question, implying a severe rebuke, suggests that the leaders should have recognized that events now taking place were in harmony with the teachings of Scripture (see on Matt. 19:4).

17. Bethany. Evidently this was where Jesus had lodged since Friday (see on Matt. 21:1, 2; Mark 11:11).

18. In the morning. [*The Fruitless Fig Tree*, Matt. 21:18–22=Mark 11:12–14, 20–26. Major comment: Mark.] Following a topical arrangement of events, Matthew unites the two parts of the story of the Fruitless Fig Tree. For the chronological sequence of events see on Mark 11:12.

23. When he was come. [*The Leaders Challenge Jesus' Authority*, Matt. 21:23–27=Mark 11:27–33=Luke 20:1–8. Major comment: Matthew. See Closing Ministry at Jerusalem; the Passion Week.] This occasion, the Tuesday before the Passover A.D. 31, was the last time Jesus taught in the Temple. He was already teaching the people when accosted by the leaders (see Luke 20:1).

Chief priests. See on ch. 2:4. Many of “the chief priests” were Sadducees, as most of the scribes were Pharisees. Both Mark (ch. 11:27) and Luke ch. 20:1 include the scribes in their accounts of this incident.

Elders. The Sanhedrin had already met, earlier in the morning, and had determined to demand of Jesus His credentials (see DA 593). Possibly some of the same men who now confronted Him may have been among the number sent to John the Baptist with a similar question three and a half years before (see on John 1:19). If so they had heard John declare Jesus to be the Messiah (see John 1:26, 27, 29).

By what authority? At the First Cleansing of the Temple the Jewish leaders had demanded a “sign” as proof of Jesus’ authority to teach (see John 2:18). Since that time the leaders of Israel had been provided with repeated evidences of Jesus’ power and authority (see on Matt. 16:1). The Jews recognized that prophets might teach the people without rabbinical approval, but expected them to give evidence of their divine commission. Now, by their question, the Jewish leaders sought incriminating evidence against Jesus.

These things. That is, His Triumphal Entry, His cleansing of the Temple, and now, His teaching in the Temple courts.

24. I also will ask you. The procedure of answering one question by propounding another was approved in rabbinical debates. The counterquestion was supposedly designed to point the way to the answer of the original question. Jesus now adopted this mode of reply.

One thing. In reality Jesus was not evading the issue, for their answer to His question would, in principle, provide also an answer to their own question. The wisdom and skill with which Jesus met the challenge was an additional evidence of His divinity.

25. Baptism of John. See on Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:29. Baptism was the characteristic feature of John’s ministry, and came to be the popular designation for it.

Whence was it? Neither John nor Jesus had received an endorsement from the authorities at Jerusalem. What authority they had came, not from men, but directly from

God. Therefore, the question posed by the rulers, and Christ's question in reply, revolved about the ability to evaluate the divine credentials.

Reasoned. The Jewish leaders were in a quandary, and so hurriedly conferred among themselves.

Why did ye not then? The Jewish leaders well knew that an honest admission would elicit this reply from Jesus. But more was involved. If they acknowledged John's divine credentials, they must of necessity accept his message, and the climax of his message was the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (see John 1:26, 27, 29). Thus, to acknowledge John's authority was equivalent to acknowledging that of Jesus.

26. Fear the people. Fear of physical violence seems to have controlled the minds of the leaders (see Luke 20:6). If popular opinion turned against them, their influence over the people would be lost. Position and influence meant more to them than truth. Public sentiment was strongly in favor of John the Baptist, and now similarly favored Jesus (see Mark 12:37; DA 594).

27. We cannot tell. The Jewish leaders must certainly have known that John was a prophet, but to escape a dilemma they took refuge in professed ignorance. Even so, they did not escape unscathed. Their answer to Jesus' question automatically canceled their right to press Him for an answer to their original question, and this accounts for the fact that they did not continue to urge the demand. Furthermore, they forfeited the respect of the people. They were inextricably entangled in the net they had so cleverly spread for Jesus. Jesus had tested their professed ability to evaluate divine credentials, and they had miserably failed. They had, for practical purposes, abdicated their claim to be the spiritual leaders of the nation.

28. What think ye? [*The Two Sons*, Matt. 21:28–32. See on parables pp. 203–207.] The purpose of Jesus in this parable was to set forth the true nature of the choice the Jewish leaders were making with respect to the gospel of the kingdom as proclaimed by John the Baptist and by Jesus. Tactfully but purposefully Jesus led them, as He so often did, to condemn themselves (see v. 41), so that they might view their conduct in its true light.

A certain man. In this parable, God.

Two sons. Ever since the entrance of sin the two classes here represented have been in the world, those who obey and those who do not. Thus it is today, and thus it will be till the close of time.

First. This son is representative of all who make no profession of service to God, but are living in open transgression.

Go work to day. This command God gives to every "son." None are exempt.

29. I will not. This son openly flouted his father's authority. He made no pretense of obeying his father. He was willing to enjoy the privileges of sonship—he apparently still lived in his father's home—but was unwilling to bear the responsibilities of sonship.

30. Second. This son represents all who profess to be sons of God yet fail to do His will.

31. Whether of them? With which of the two sons would the father be the more pleased? Obviously, neither was perfect. Both erred, the one in his original attitude, and the other in his performance.

Will of his father. Profession without action is of no value (see on ch. 7:21).

Verily. See on (ch. 5:18).

Publicans and the harlots. See on Mark 2:14; Luke 3:12. This expression was a catch-all phrase designating all social and religious outcasts, who generally avoided the Temple and synagogue and were usually unwelcome when they did attend. Compare the expression “publicans and sinners” (Matt. 9:11; see on Luke 5:30).

Before you. So far as the baptism of John was concerned this was literally true (see Luke 7:29, 30). Many of the irreligious were painfully aware of their dire spiritual need, and rejoiced that John and Jesus made room for them in the kingdom of heaven. The scribes and Pharisees, on the other hand, were self-satisfied and therefore impervious to the gospel (see on Luke 15:2).

32. Way of righteousness. The “way of righteousness” is the Christian way, or philosophy, of life. For comment on the “strait” gate and the “narrow” way see on ch. 7:13, 14.

Believed him not. See Luke 7:29, 30. Like the second son in the parable, the Jewish leaders refused to enter into the Lord’s vineyard and labor there, after having professed that they would.

Repented not afterward. They did not alter their original decision. When the One to whom John bore witness appeared, and for three and a half years gave evidence of His divine nature and of the character of His kingdom, the Jewish leaders persevered in their impenitence. Their obdurate hearts remained unchanged (see on Ex. 4:21). The fact that tax collectors and harlots responded so readily to the preaching of John and that of Jesus offended the Jewish leaders (see on Matt. 11:19). The latter were unwilling to labor in the same vineyard where social outcasts such as reformed tax collectors like Zacchaeus (see Luke 19:1–10) and reformed harlots like Mary (see on Luke 7:36, 37) were accepted as laborers.

33. Hear another parable. [*The Wicked Husbandmen*, Matt. 21:33–46=Mark 12:1–12=Luke 20:9–19. Major comment: Matthew. See on parables pp. 203–207.] This, the second parable was addressed *to* the people who had been listening attentively to Jesus as He taught (see Luke 20:9), but it was aimed *at* their leaders. As in the parable of the Two Sons (see Matt. 21:31), these leaders are led to confess their own guilt and to pronounce upon themselves their own sentence of doom (see v. 41).

Householder. Gr. *oikodespotēs*, that is, the “master of the house” (see on Luke 2:29).

A vineyard. The grapevine was one of the national symbols of Israel. Near the very spot where Christ now stood, at the entrance to the Temple, was a large, magnificent vine wrought in gold and silver that represented Israel (Josephus *Antiquities* xv. 11.3; see DA 575; see on John 15:1). The words of Matt. 21:33 are borrowed largely from Isaiah’s allegory of the Lord’s vineyard (see Isa. 5:1–7).

This parable places emphasis on the rich blessings God had bestowed upon Israel, that they might provide the world with the fruit of divine character (see on Matt. 21:34). In health, intellect, skill, prosperity, and character the people of Israel were to become the greatest nation of the earth, revealing to all men the glory of God’s purpose. For an analysis of these blessings and a composite picture of the manner in which the nations of the world were to be brought to a knowledge of the true God see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30.

Hedged. Gr. *phragmos*, “a hedge,” or “a fence.” The hedge represents the precepts of the divine law, obedience to whose principles of truth and justice protects against all wrongdoing.

A winepress. This was usually a trough or tank hollowed out of solid rock. Such wine presses may be seen in Palestine even today.

Let it out. Or, “leased it.” In ancient times rent for a field was paid either in cash or in kind. In the latter case, either a specified amount of the harvest or a proportionate amount was stipulated in the agreement. The tenants in this parable were sharecroppers, which fact does not imply that the difficulties of some present-day sharecroppers were necessarily theirs.

Husbandmen. Or, “tenants” (RSV).

Far country. He was an absentee landlord.

34. His servants. In ch. 23:34 Jesus speaks of sending “prophets, and wise men, and scribes” (cf. v. 37). The priests were in a special sense the appointed custodians of the Lord’s vineyard, the prophets were God’s chosen representatives, or servants.

The fruits of it. Or, “his fruit.” The owner sent for his share of the crop (see on v. 33). Israel was to bring forth the fruit of character and thus reveal to the world the principles of the kingdom of heaven. The fruit of character was first to be manifest in their own lives, and then in the lives of men in the nations about them. Similarly, the Lord expects from His church today returns commensurate with the great blessings He has bestowed upon her (see COL 296).

35. Took his servants. Matthew speaks of various groups of servants, some of the first of whom were murdered (see vs. 35, 36). Mark has one servant sent upon each occasion, some being killed (see ch. 12:3–5). Luke also has one servant on each occasion, with none of the servants mentioned as being killed (see ch. 20:10–12). The number of servants and the particular fate each suffered are obviously not essential to the parable (see p. 204). A little later this very day Jesus spoke in literal language of the treatment the Jews accorded the messengers God had sent (see Matt. 23:29–37). For specific illustrations of the fate of various prophets, see 1 Kings 18:13; 22:24–27; 2 Kings 6:31; 2 Chron. 24:19–22; 36:15, 16; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 37:15; see also Acts 7:52. The tenants of the vineyard not only refused to pay rent; they insulted the owner of the vineyard by mistreating his representatives and by acting as if they themselves were its rightful owners.

37. Last of all. See Mark 12:6. When Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah they rejected God’s last offer of mercy to them as a nation. Jesus here foresees no future time when the Jews as a nation are to be restored to divine favor (see Vol. IV, p. 33).

Reverence. Or, “respect.”

38. This is the heir. Paul speaks of Jesus as being “appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2), and of those who accept Him as being “joint-heirs” with Him (Rom. 8:17).

Let us kill him. At this very moment the Sanhedrin was seeking means to do away with Jesus (see Luke 19:47; see on Matt. 21:23). Repeatedly during recent months they had met to consider means by which to bring His ministry to a close (see on Matt. 19:3; 20:18), the latest occasions being the preceding Sabbath day (see DA 563, 564) and this very morning (ch. 21:23).

40. Cometh. The tenants respect none but the owner (cf. John 8:41), who comes to make a personal investigation of the situation. He comes to them in judgment.

41. They say. There could be no other response than that here made. The order of the Greek is striking, and may be rendered, “Wretches, wretchedly will he destroy them.”

His vineyard. See on vs. 33, 43.

42. Did ye never read? See on v. 16. Among this deputation were scribes, whose duty it was to study and expound the Scriptures (see on vs. 16, 23).

Stone. The quotation is from Ps. 118:22, 23, and is identical with the text of the LXX. The rabbis themselves recognized this passage as Messianic (see DA 597). The RSV heightens the contrast: “the very stone,” etc. For the “stone” as a symbol of Christ see on Matt. 16:18. For the historical experience that forms the background of the rejected cornerstone see DA 597, 598.

Head of the corner. The cornerstone was a most important part of the structure, since it bound together the two walls meeting at the corner. For other references to the cornerstone see Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:7; see on Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16.

43. Kingdom of God. That is, in this instance, the privilege of being God’s chosen people. In the future God’s plan to save the world would no longer be dependent on the Jewish nation, as a building was on its cornerstone. For Israel’s part in God’s plan see Vol. IV, pp. 26-33.

Given to a nation. That is, to the Christian church (see 1 Peter 2:9, 10).

Fruits. See on v. 34.

44. Fall on this stone. That is, submit to Christ. This was the very thing the Jewish leaders refused to do (see on vs. 25, 27).

It shall fall. That is, in judgment. This judgment was soon to fall upon the Jewish nation and its perversely impenitent leaders.

Will grind ... to powder. Gr. *likmaō* “to winnow [chaff from grain],” “to scatter,” or “to crush to pieces.” These words strongly reflect the thought of Dan. 2:44, 45, where *likmaō* is found in the LXX (v. 44). A heavy object pulverizes whatever it falls on, and the fragments are scattered far and wide. The same word is used in the LXX of Ruth 3:2. The expression “grind him to powder” could thus also be rendered, “blow him away like chaff,” or “scatter him like chaff.” Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of Matt. 21:44.

45. Priests and Pharisees. See on v. 23.

Perceived. The application was so clear that no explanation was necessary. Undoubtedly the Jewish leaders knew full well the meaning of such OT passages as Isaiah’s allegory of the vineyard (ch. 5:1–7) and the various passages that referred to the Messiah as a “stone” (Ps. 118:22, 23; Isa. 28:16; etc.).

46. Lay hands on him. That is, to arrest Him. As they saw it, Jesus was defying their authority, and they could scarcely restrain themselves from carrying out, immediately, their designs.

Feared the multitude. Public sentiment was now strongly in favor of Jesus. Each encounter He had with the Jewish leaders must have diminished the respect in which the people, generally, held these perverse ecclesiastics.

For a prophet. See on Matt. 21:11; John 7:40.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 DA 569

1–11 DA 569–579

3, 5 DA 570

5 GC 100

8 DA 570; EW 109; GC 367

9 DA 572, 609; EW 110, 175, 179, 244, 292; GC 367, 402, 404; LS 62; SR 370, 373; 1T 57; 4T 188
 10 DA 570, 578, 580
 12 DA 589; GC 127; MM 122
 12, 13 CT 25; FE 174; PK 185; 1T 471; 8T 67
 12–15COL 273
 12–16DA 589–592; 9T 75
 13 DA 591; Te 64; 4T 252; 8T 92
 13, 14 MM 123
 14–16DA 592
 16 GC 367
 17–19DA 580–588
 19 Ev 511; FE 50; 4T 385, 403, 614; 5T 146, 352
 21 9T 96
 22 AA 564; CD 189; COL 174; GW 263; LS 60; 7T 274
 23 COL 273
 23–25DA 593
 23–32COL 272–283
 23–46DA 593–600
 24–28COL 274
 27 DA 594
 28 ChS 80; COL 281; CT 35, 415; Ev 24; FE 334, 356, 362, 367, 514; Te 236; TM 184; 2T 263; 5T 462; 7T 220; 8T 36, 216; 9T 169
 28–31COL 272
 28–32DA 595
 29, 30 COL 275
 31 COL 117, 226; 4T 614; 8T 72, 75
 31, 32 COL 276
 33 COL 284
 33–40PK 21, 711
 33–41DA 596
 33–44COL 284–306
 37, 38 COL 293
 38, 40 DA 597
 40–44COL 295
 41 GC 643; PK 714
 41–44PK 712
 42–44AA 64; DA 597
 43 AA 174
 44 CE 11; COL 411; DA 600; FE 284; GW 336; TM 80, 146; 2T 301; 5T 218; 6T 317; 9T 155
 46 DA 597

CHAPTER 22

1 *The parable of the marriage of the king's son.* 9 *The vocation of the Gentiles.* 12 *The punishment of him that wanted the wedding garment.* 15 *Tribute ought to be paid to Caesar.* 23 *Christ confuteth the Sadducees for the resurrection:* 34 *answereth the lawyer,*

which is the first and great commandment: 41 and poseth the Pharisees about the Messias.

1. Spake unto them. [*The Man Without a Wedding Garment*, Matt. 22:1–14. See on parables pp. 203–207.] Compare on Luke 14:16–24. For circumstances leading to the giving of this parable see on Matt. 21:12, 23, 28, 33. Undoubtedly ch. 22 is simply a continuation of ch. 21, and therefore represents events occurring on the Tuesday before the crucifixion.

The parable of the Marriage Feast has much in common with the parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:16–24). Some critical scholars have concluded that the similarities point to a basic identity of the two parables. Their conclusion denies Christ the privilege of relating the same story on different occasions and varying its details to suit the needs of the truth He designed to teach on each occasion.

The following differences seem to indicate clearly the separateness of the two parables: (1) The parable of the Great Supper was given in the home of a Pharisee; that of the Marriage Feast in the Temple courts. (2) The first banquet was given by an ordinary man; the second by a king. (3) The first was simply a social occasion; the second a marriage feast in honor of the king's son. (4) In the first, emphasis is placed upon the flimsy excuses offered by those who declined the invitation; in the second, upon the preparation necessary on the part of invited guests. (5) In the first, excuses are offered; in the second, no excuses are given. (6) In the first, indifference was shown the messengers; in the second, some were abused and killed. (7) In the first, the only penalty imposed upon those who declined the invitation was exclusion from the feast; in the second, those who declined were destroyed.

Again. This expression implies that the parable was given upon the same occasion as the other parables recorded in ch. 21, as its setting in Matthew's Gospel indicates. This word would seem inappropriate if the parable actually belonged in the setting given the parable of the Great Supper in Luke, as critics claim.

2. Kingdom of heaven. See on Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2; Luke 4:19.

A certain king. Here, God the Father.

A marriage. Gr. *gamoi*, literally, "wedding festivities." The pleasures of a feast were a common Jewish symbol of the privileges and joys of the Messianic kingdom (see on Matt. 8:11; Luke 14:15). In Oriental lands a feast such as this might last for several days (see Judges 14:17; see on Esther 1:4, 5; John 2:1).

His son. That is, Christ (see on ch. 25:1). For comments on Christ as the Son of God see on Luke 1:35, and as the Son of man see on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10. See Additional Note on John 1.

3. Sent forth his servants. Note that the guests had already been invited or "bidden." To this present day it is customary in Oriental lands to honor guests by dispatching personal messengers to remind them of an invitation they have already accepted (see on Luke 14:17).

To call. The original invitation to the Jews had been given by the prophets of OT times (see on Matt. 21:34; Luke 14:16). This, the first call of the parable and the second invitation to the Jews, was given by John the Baptist, and by Jesus and His disciples (see on Luke 14:17).

Them that were bidden. In this parable, the Jews. The alliteration present in the Greek phrase may be rendered, "to call the called [ones]."

Wedding. See on v. 2.

Would not come. This refusal pictures the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, particularly by their leaders (see on ch. 21:38; COL 307). Jesus later expressed the same thought in the words, “ye would not” (see ch. 23:37). Even now the leaders of Israel were not only refusing to enter in themselves, but seeking also by every means to prevent others from entering in (see on ch. 23:13).

4. Again. This second call of the parable was the third invitation to the Jewish nation. The king is anxious that the invited guests come to his feast. Though bitterly disappointed and greatly humiliated, he is willing to forgive their rudeness and to forget their insults. The fact that a little later he sent bands of soldiers out and “destroyed those murderers” (v. 7) indicates that he could have compelled those who were invited to attend the feast had he desired to do so. God might compel men to accept the gospel invitation, but He does not do so. Every man may accept or decline, according to his own choice.

Other servants. This, the second call of the parable, was given the Jews by the disciples, after Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. The disciples were to work first “in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea” before going forth “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Dinner. Gr. *ariston* either “breakfast”, or “midday luncheon” (see on Luke 14:12). Here it evidently refers to the noon meal. According to Josephus *Life* 54) it was a Jewish custom to have “dinner,” or *ariston*, on Sabbath at least, at the 6th hour, or noon.

Ready. That is, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (see on ch. 3:2). Here Jesus referred to the kingdom of divine grace set up at the time of His first advent (see on chs. 4:17; 5:2).

5. Made light. They did not even bother to make excuses (see on Luke 14:18).

Merchandise. Gr. *emporía*, “commerce,” “trade,” “business,” or “merchandise”; from *emporos*, “merchant.”

6. The remnant. Or, “the rest,” that is, certain ones who were not content merely to ignore the invitation.

Took his servants. This refers primarily to Jewish persecution of the early Christians (see Acts 8:1–4).

Slew them. In the Jewish persecutions of the early Christian church Stephen was the first to fall (see Acts 6:9–15; 7:54–60). James, the first of the Twelve to be martyred, was also a victim of the enmity of the Jewish leaders (see Acts 12:1–3).

7. Sent forth. Hebrew narrative style often follows a topical order rather than a strictly chronological one (see p. 274; see on Gen. 25:19; Ex. 16:33 etc.).

Armies. Literally, “bands of soldiers,” rather than large “armies.”

Burned up their city. Doubtless an allusion to the fall of Jerusalem to the legions of Rome in A.D. 70 (see Matt. 24:15; Luke 21:20 p. 77).

8. Wedding is ready. Some have seen a difficulty in the statement that the wedding is still “ready” after the king has taken time to dispose of his enemies (see v. 7). But Oriental feasts often last for many days (see on v. 2), and since no guests had arrived to partake of the king’s bounties, the feast would still be “ready,” even if the appointed time for the feast had passed.

They which were bidden. See on v. 3.

Not worthy. That is, not acceptable in the sight of God (see ch. 10:11, 13).

9. Go ye therefore. This, the third call of the parable, quite evidently represents the call of mercy to the Gentiles.

Highways. That is, main thoroughfares.

10. Both bad and good. Obviously, the festive hall represents the church on earth, for there would not be “bad and good” in heaven.

11. King came in. The parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:16–24) totally lacks any passages similar to those found here in Matt. 22:11–14.

To see the guests. He came in to see if all was going well, and particularly to see what guests his servants had gathered in from the highways. His inspection of the guests represents a process of judgment, of determining who may and who may not remain. In a special sense it represents the work of the investigative judgment (see COL 310; see on Rev. 14:6, 7).

A wedding garment. The special wedding garments were provided by the king himself. A festal hall filled with properly attired guests would be an honor to the king and to the occasion. A person inappropriately clad would bring dishonor upon the host and introduce a discordant note into the festivities.

The wedding garment represents “the righteousness of Christ” (COL 310). Hence, the rejection of the garment represents the rejection of those traits of character that qualify men to become sons and daughters of God. Like the guests in the parable, we have nothing suitable of our own to wear. We are acceptable in the presence of the great God only when clad in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, by virtue of His merits. This is the “white raiment” Christians are counseled to buy (see Rev. 3:18; cf. ch. 19:8).

The man without a wedding garment represents professed Christians who feel no need of a transformation of character. This guest was apparently interested only in the privilege of eating of the king’s bounties. He did not truly appreciate the privilege accorded him. The honor of the king and the importance of the occasion meant nothing to him. He forgot that the feast was being held in honor of the king’s son, and thus of the king himself. How well clad he may have been was beside the point, for he had declined the only thing that qualified him to sit at the king’s table and enjoy the festivities and bountiful provisions that accompanied the wedding celebration.

12. Friend. The king approached the offending guest tactfully and gave him ample opportunity to defend his course of action. Apparently the king was ready to forgive the man if his present condition was not his own fault, or if by some oversight on the part of the palace servants he had been missed.

Was speechless. Gr. *phimoō* “to muzzle”; hence, figuratively, “to make speechless.” It was obviously the guest’s own fault, for had he been innocent, undoubtedly he would have hastened to speak in self-defense. His error had been intentional; he had declined the garment provided for him, possibly considering his own to be superior to it. He may have been wearing an expensive new garment he was eager for his fellow guests to see and admire.

13. Take him away. Men are excluded from the kingdom of heaven as a result of their own wrong choices. Thus it was with the five foolish virgins (see on ch. 25:11, 12). The man in the parable was able to enter the hall only by virtue of the royal invitation, but he alone was responsible for his being put out. No man can save himself, but he can bring condemnation on himself. Conversely, God is able to “save ... to the uttermost” (Heb. 7:25), but He does not arbitrarily condemn any, or deny them entrance into the kingdom.

Outer darkness. See chs. 8:12; 25:30. This is the darkness of oblivion, of eternal separation from God, of annihilation. In the parable the darkness was all the more palpable in contrast with the brilliant light of the wedding chamber.

There. That is, in that place, out in the “outer darkness.”

Gnashing of teeth. See on ch. 8:12.

14. Many are called. The truth here stated Jesus spoke upon various occasions (see Matt. 20:16; Luke 13:23, 24). The gospel call is for all who will accept it. “Whosoever will” may “take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17. Any man who thirsts for the waters of salvation is privileged to accept the invitation, “Come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus promised that all who “hunger and thirst after righteousness ... shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

Few are chosen. This truth is not based on a specific point of the parable itself, but is a general conclusion related to it. In the parable it is only implied that the guests who refused even to come to the feast were “many.” Jesus here simply states the fundamental fact that comparatively few were willing to accept the king’s gracious invitation and enter into the festive chamber. Similarly, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus clearly stated that, comparatively speaking, only a “few” find the way to salvation, whereas “many” enter into the “broad” way “that leadeth to destruction” (see ch. 7:13, 14).

15. Pharisees. [*Paying Tribute to Caesar*, Matt. 22:15–22=Mark 12:13–17=Luke 20:20–26. Major comment: Matthew.]

Took counsel. For the second time this day (see on ch. 21:23), which was the Tuesday before the crucifixion.

Entangle. Gr. *pagideuō*, “to ensnare,” “to entrap,” or “to entangle.” A graphic figure depicting the intent of the Jewish leaders.

16. Their disciples. The Pharisees’ “disciples” were younger men whom the leaders probably hoped Christ would not recognize. The Pharisees feared that if they themselves came to Jesus with the question, He would immediately suspect a plot, for He had no doubt met most if not all of them. But these strangers had every appearance of being honest young men sincerely seeking an answer to what was, among the Jews of that time, a most perplexing problem (see on v. 17). Luke speaks of these disciples of the Pharisees as “spies” (see on ch. 20:20). For three years spies sent out by the Sanhedrin had been following Jesus nearly everywhere He went (see on Matt. 19:3; Luke 11:54).

Herodians. The Herodians were a Jewish political party that favored the house of Herod Antipas (see p. 54). The Pharisees were ardent nationalists, who opposed Herod as well as Caesar, whereas the Herodian partisans were collaborationists. Bitter enemies in the realm of politics, they were united against Jesus, as they had been against John the Baptist (see on Mark 6:14). On this occasion the Herodians were to be witnesses to Jesus’ answer, ready to accuse Him if He gave the slightest hint of disloyalty to the government.

We know. Their simulated honesty was in fact an attempt at deception. By flattery they hoped to put Jesus off His guard.

Neither carest thou. They hereby profess to credit Jesus with being fair and impartial (cf. Acts 10:34).

17. What thinkest thou? These spies wanted Jesus definitely to commit Himself, one way or the other. Should He approve of paying tribute to Rome, they thought to present this as evidence that He was against the law of God, which the Pharisees claimed forbade the payment of taxes to a foreign power. Thus He would forfeit His popular acclaim as

the Messiah. Should Jesus forbid the payment of taxes, He would be represented to the Roman authorities as a traitor and a revolutionary. Either way, the Pharisees expected to gain. But Jesus disappointed them by refusing to go along with either one or the other of the two propositions of the dilemma. It was not a matter of either this or that, He replied, but of both.

Is it lawful? That is, in harmony with the principles of Jewish law. The Pharisees held that it was not, the Herodians the opposite. The question really involved the problem as to whether a man could be a good Jew and yet submit to Roman authority.

Tribute. Gr. *kēnsos*, (see on ch. 17:25). This was probably the Roman poll tax, levied in those territories directly under Roman jurisdiction. The payment of the tribute was particularly galling to the Jews, not because it was unduly burdensome, but because it was a symbol of submission to a foreign power and a bitter reminder of their lost liberties. The politically explosive question that confronted Jesus involved the problem, “Shall we submit to Rome or shall we fight for our independence?”

18. Wickedness. Mark speaks of their “hypocrisy” (ch. 12:15), and Luke of “their craftiness” (ch. 20:23). All three words aptly describe the motives that prompted the question.

Tempt ye me. That is, “put me to the test” (see on ch. 6:13). Jesus informed His would-be deceivers that He was fully aware of the trap they had so cleverly laid for Him.

Hypocrites. See on ch. 6:2.

19. Money. Gr. *nomisma*, literally, “anything sanctioned by law or by custom”; hence, “money.” Similarly, today we speak of money as “legal tender.” Roman taxes must be paid in Roman coin. Local rulers were permitted to issue their own copper coins, but Rome reserved the right to mint silver coins.

A penny. See on ch. 20:2.

20. Image. Gr. *eikōn*, “image,” “figure,” or “likeness”; from which are derived such English words as “icon” and “iconoclastic.” In contrast with Roman coins, which bore the likeness of the emperor, Jewish coins bore images of olive trees, palm trees, and the like, which seemed to the Jews to be more in harmony with the injunction of the second commandment.

Superscription. Gr. *epigraphē*, “an inscription,” or “a title.”

21. Render. Or, “give back.” The “tribute money” (see v. 19) then in common circulation bore Caesar’s image, and must therefore have been minted by him and belong to him. The fact that the Jews had the money in their possession and used it as legal tender was in itself evidence that they acknowledged, however grudgingly, Caesar’s authority and jurisdiction. Caesar therefore had a right to claim what was his.

Things which are Caesar’s. Herewith Jesus sets forth the fundamental principle that determines the Christian’s relationship to the state. He is not to ignore the just claims of the state upon him, because there are certain “things which are Caesar’s.”

Things that are God’s. God’s authority is supreme; therefore the Christian’s supreme loyalty belongs to God. The Christian cooperates with “the powers that be” because they are “ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). Therefore, to pay tribute to Caesar cannot be contrary to the law of God, as the Pharisees claimed (see on Matt. 22:17). But there are certain “things” in which Caesar has no right to interfere (see on Acts 5:29). God’s jurisdiction is absolute and universal, Caesar’s subordinate and limited.

22. They marvelled. The Pharisees had anticipated either a Yes or a No answer, and had not considered the possibility of an alternative to the dilemma they proposed. They were forced to realize that they were no match for Jesus, in spite of their careful planning.

23. The same day. [*Marriage and the Resurrection*, Matt. 22:23–33=Mark 12:18–17=Luke 20:27–38. Major comment: Matthew.] That is, Tuesday, the same day as that on which the events recorded previously in this chapter took place (see on chs. 21:23; 22:1, 15), the Tuesday before the crucifixion.

Sadducees. See p. 52. Though they professed belief in the Scriptures, they were, for all practical purposes, materialistic and skeptical in their philosophy. They believed in God as Creator, but denied that He was in any way particularly concerned with the affairs of mankind. They denied the existence of angels, of the resurrection, of the afterlife, and the operation of the Holy Spirit in men's lives (see Acts 23:8). The Sadducees posed as intellectually superior to their fellow men, and made light of the strict legalism and traditions emphasized by the Pharisees.

In coming to Jesus at this time the Sadducees aimed to embarrass Him with one of their stock questions, which had always been most confusing for the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection. They anticipated that Jesus would be no more able to give them an answer than were the Pharisees.

No resurrection. See Acts 23:8.

24. Master. Literally, "Teacher."

Moses said. The Sadducees quoted, in substance, the levirate marriage law (see on Deut. 25:5, 6). According to this law, if a woman was left a childless widow, her late husband's brother was to marry her. The first son born to this new union was to be considered the son of her first husband, to perpetuate his name, and to inherit his property.

25. Seven. A number commonly signifying completeness.

28. Whose wife? This question was not loaded with political dynamite like that on paying tribute to Caesar (see on v. 17). It was merely in the realm of speculative theology. However, failure on the part of Christ to give a satisfactory answer would deal a mighty blow to the high opinion in which He was held by the people (see ch. 21:46).

29. Do err. Gr. *planaō* (see on ch. 18:12). The Sadducees proved that the educated can be as ignorant and as steeped in error as the unlearned. Wise in their own philosophy though the Sadducees were, their information on this subject was incomplete, and there was at least one vital factor they had not considered—"the power of God." Jesus went on to show that although the doctrine of the resurrection may not be as explicitly taught in the OT as some might wish, it is implicit throughout the OT.

Not knowing the scriptures. The Sadducees are said to have prided themselves on being more exact students of the Scriptures than the Pharisees, but Jesus here asserts that in spite of all their vaunted knowledge of the Word of God, they are profoundly ignorant. Theological concepts based on speculative reasoning from incomplete information are certain to lead astray those who resort to this fanciful method of arriving at truth. Christians today should beware lest they, too, "err, not knowing the scriptures."

Power of God. Literally, the "*dunamis* of God" (see on Luke 1:35). The Sadducees forgot that a God powerful enough to raise men from the dead also had the wisdom and power to set up anew a perfect order of society in the perfect new earth. Furthermore, all who are saved will be contented and happy with the glorious new order of things, even

though they cannot fully realize in this life what the future will bring forth (see 1 Cor. 2:9).

30. *They neither marry.* Evidently there will be no need for marriage, because a different order of life will prevail.

As the angels. Angels are created beings, not procreated beings. “The doctrine that children will be born in the new earth is not a part of the ‘sure word of prophecy’” (MM 99).

31. *Have ye not read?* Note the implied rebuke in these words (see on ch. 21:42).

32. *The God of Abraham.* What honor is there in being the God of dead men? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead at the time God appeared to Moses before the burning bush. Why would God identify Himself as the God of the patriarchs, except in anticipation of the resurrection? In this same anticipation, by faith, Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). It has been suggested that Jesus quoted from the Pentateuch (Ex. 3:6, 16) because the Sadducees believed only in the inspiration of the books of Moses.

33. *Astonished.* See on ch. 7:28.

His doctrine. Literally, “his teaching.”

34. *Pharisees had heard.* [*The Great Commandment*, Matt. 22:34–40=Mark 12:28–34=Luke 20:39, 40. Major comment: Mark.] For comment on the circumstances under which the question concerning the great commandment was propounded see on Matt. 21:23, 28, 33; 22:1, 15, 23; Mark 12:28.

Put the Sadducees to silence. Literally, “muzzled the Sadducees” (see on v. 12). Though the Pharisees may have been pleased that their inveterate theological foes had been “muzzled,” they begrudged Jesus the victory that silenced those foes. Not having given up hope of yet entrapping Jesus, the Pharisees now called on one of their own number to make a final attempt to lead the Saviour to say something that could be construed as being against the law (see on ch. 5:17).

Gathered together. See on v. 15.

35. *A lawyer.* One learned in the civil and religious laws of Judaism (see p. 55). This particular “lawyer” was “one” of the Pharisees (v. 34), as most of the scribes were.

Tempting him. Or, “testing him.” The Pharisees who proposed the question were “tempting” Jesus, whereas likely the man who actually propounded the question was simply “testing” Him. Whatever may have been the original motive that prompted the question, the lawyer himself seems to have been honest and sincere (see on Mark 12:28, 32–34). Evidently he was not personally antagonistic to Jesus.

36. *Master.* Literally, “Teacher” (see on Luke 10:25).

The great commandment. Though this question dealt with fundamental principles, it was nevertheless probably prompted by the rabbinical attempt to arrange all the commandments of the law in a hierarchy of importance. Where the requirements of two commands appeared to be in conflict, the one assumed to be “greater” took precedence and released a man from responsibility for violating the “lesser” of the two (see further on ch. 5:19). Here, “great” means, in effect, “greatest.” The Pharisees exalted the first four precepts of the Decalogue as being more important than the last six, and as a result failed when it came to matters of practical religion.

37. *Love the Lord.* Jesus quotes from Deut. 6:5 (see on Luke 10:27). There must first be love in the heart before a person can, in the strength and by the grace of Christ, begin

to observe the precepts of God's law (cf. Rom. 8:3, 4). Obedience without love is as impossible as it is worthless. But where love is present a person will automatically set out to order his life in harmony with the will of God as expressed in His commandments (see on John 14:15; 15:10).

All thy heart. Christ's purpose here in enumerating different parts of one's being is simply another way of saying that love for God, if truly present, will permeate every aspect of the being.

39. Like. Like it, that is, in being based on the great principle of love, and like it in requiring the concerted attention and cooperation of all parts of one's being.

Love thy neighbour. See on Matt. 5:43; 19:19; Luke 10:27–29. Jesus here quotes from Lev. 19:18, where “neighbour” refers to a fellow Israelite. Jesus, however, widened the definition of “neighbour” to include all who are in need of help (see Luke 10:29–37). The law of love toward God and man was by no means new. Jesus was the first, however, to unite the thoughts of Deut. 6:4, 5 and Lev. 19:18 as summing up “the whole duty of man,” though Micah comes very close to the same idea (see on Micah 6:8).

As thyself. Man's natural tendency is to make self first, irrespective of obligations incumbent upon him in his relations to God and to his fellow men. To be completely selfless in dealing with his fellows, a man must first love God supremely. This is the very foundation of all right conduct.

40. Law and the prophets. A common Hebrew idiom designating the entire OT (see on Luke 24:44). In other words, Jesus affirms that the OT is nothing more nor less than an exposition of the two great principles here enunciated—love for God and love for man. For the reply of the “lawyer” to Jesus' declaration see on Mark 12:32.

41. Pharisees were gathered. [*Jesus Silences His Critics*, Matt. 22:41–46=Mark 12:35–37=Luke 20:41–44. Major comment: Matthew.] By this time, it would appear, a large delegation of priests had gathered to listen to what Jesus might say (see on chs. 21:23, 28, 33; 22:1, 15, 23, 34). Mark notes that Jesus was still teaching in the Temple (ch. 12:35).

Jesus asked them. All three attempts (see on vs. 15, 23, 34) to make Jesus incriminate Himself had failed. Now Jesus turns the tables on His would-be accusers.

42. Of Christ. That is, of the “Anointed One,” or the “Messiah” (see on ch. 1:1). Here Jesus uses the term “Christ,” not as a personal name, but as a title. The Jews acknowledged the Messiah (Christ) of prophecy, but denied, of course, that Jesus was that Messiah.

Son of David. See on ch. 1:1.

43. How then? Jesus now confronts the critics with an apparent paradox they cannot solve, a dilemma to which they had no more of an answer than when Jesus previously propounded a difficult question (see ch. 21:25, 27).

In spirit. That is, “by inspiration.” Mark says, “by the Holy Ghost” (ch. 12:36).

44. Unto my Lord. Jesus here quotes from the book of Psalms (see Luke 20:42; see on Ps. 110:1; cf. Acts 2:34; Heb. 1:13).

45. How is he his son? In other words, if David calls Messiah “Lord,” implying that Messiah is older than David himself, how can Messiah also be David's “Son,” and thus be younger than David? The only possible answer to Jesus' question is that the One who was to come as Messiah would have existed prior to His incarnation on this earth. As David's “Lord,” Messiah was none other than the Son of God; as David's “Son,” Messiah

was the Son of man (see on ch. 1:1). Obviously the Jewish leaders were unprepared to answer this question because of their erroneous concepts of the Messiah (see on Luke 4:19). They could not very well answer the question without admitting that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Son of God. In asking this question, then, Jesus brought the Pharisees and scribes face to face with the central idea of His mission to earth, for this question would undoubtedly, if faced sincerely and intelligently, have led to the recognition of His Messiahship.

46. *No man was able.* The Jewish leaders discovered that it was useless to question Jesus further, for each dilemma with which they confronted Him, He turned on them, and in so doing proved them ignorant of Scripture and incompetent to be the spiritual leaders of the people. In at least one other instance, Jesus confronted them with a question that embarrassed them (cf. ch. 21:23–27). Each attempt to discredit Jesus proved to be a boomerang.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–14COL 307–319; GC 428

4, 7 COL 308

8–13COL 309

9 6T 78; WM 73, 78, 245

11 GC 428; 4T 307; 6T 296

11, 12 TM 187

11–13COL 308; 5T 509

12 COL 317

13 2T 242

14 2T 294; 5T 50

15–46DA 601–609

21 1T 220; 3T 120, 384

22 DA 602

23 AA 78; DA 603

24–30DA 605

29 FE 279, 438, 448

30 MM 99

31, 32 DA 606

36–40PK 327

37 GC 473; 1T 436; 2T 42; 4T 281; 5T 542

37, 38 CT 329; 1T 289

37, 39 CS 157; DA 607; Ev 619; FE 187; 1T 173

37–39AA 505; CT 345; WM 49, 111

37–401T 710; 2T 228; 3T 511

39 COL 381, 382; Ed 16; ML 224; Te 213; 2T 51, 520, 547, 639, 681; 3T 58; 6T 269; 7T 91; WM 32

40 DA 607

42 DA 608; MH 456

43–46DA 609

CHAPTER 23

1 Christ admonisheth the people to follow the good doctrine, not the evil examples, of the scribes and Pharisees. 5 His disciples must beware of their ambition. 13 He denounceth

eight woes against their hypocrisy and blindness: 34 and prophesieth of the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. Then spake Jesus. [*Woes Upon Scribe and Pharisee, Matt. 23:1–39=Mark 12:38–40=Luke 20:45–47.* Major comment: Matthew. Cf. on Luke 11:39–52.] For comment on the circumstances under which this discourse was given see on chs. 21:23, 28, 33; 22:1, 15, 23, 34, 41. This was probably Tuesday, late in the day. This was Jesus' last day of teaching in the Temple, and the discourse was His concluding public address. Quite evidently He sought, by His scathing denunciations against the scribes and Pharisees, to break the chains that bound the people to tradition and to those who perpetuated it. Chapter 23:1–12 was addressed to the disciples and to the people in general, and vs. 13–33 to the scribes and Pharisees in the audience. In the latter section there are seven "woes," or eight if that of v. 14 be included (see on v. 14).

The multitude. The public, those who had assembled in the courts of the Temple.

2. The scribes and the Pharisees. For comment see pp. 51, 55, 57.

Sit in Moses' seat. That is, as official interpreters of the law of Moses. Formerly "Moses' seat" was thought to have been a figurative expression comparable to "the chair of history" at a university today. Now, however, archeologists have discovered that ancient Jewish synagogues had literal chairs in which the interpreter of the law doubtless sat. The synagogue unearthed at Hamath had a stone chair near the south wall of the synagogue, with its back toward the "ark," where the scrolls were kept (see p. 57). It is probable that Jesus was referring to such a seat as this.

3. Whatsoever they bid you. Here, in ch. 23, Jesus does not challenge the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees—which He did upon other occasions (see on Mark 7:1–13)—but focuses attention on the fact that their lives are inconsistent with their exalted profession of righteousness.

Do not ye. In vs. 13–33 Jesus specifically condemns such things as affected superior sanctity, ostentatious devotions, love of preeminence in religious and other activities, and greed. We do well to examine our own lives for traces of the same evils that made the word "Pharisee" synonymous with "hypocrite" (see on Luke 18:9–14).

They say, and do not. Or, "they preach, but do not practice" (RSV). See on ch. 7:21–23. To say without doing is what makes a man a hypocrite (see on chs. 6:2; 7:5). The scribes and Pharisees professed absolute loyalty to the Scriptures, but failed to practice the principles there set forth. Their good deeds consisted in a meticulous attention to ceremony and ritual requirements rather than to the "weightier matters of the law" (see on chs. 9:13; 22:36; 23:23). Compare the lesson from the cursing of the fig tree (see on Mark 11:12–14, 20–22) and from the example of the son who said, "I go, sir: and went not" (Matt. 21:30).

4. Bind heavy burdens. The scribes and Pharisees were rigorous taskmasters, but not burden bearers. These "heavy burdens" were a part, not of the laws of Moses, but of rabbinical tradition (see on Mark 7:1–13).

Grievous. These rabbinical requirements brought nothing but trouble and discouragement to those who essayed to bear them. There was nothing whatever about God's laws that brought grief or weariness. This was true only of the minute exactions of man-made laws. Compare ch. 11:28–30.

5. To be seen of men. They seemed to forget that God looks upon the heart, and that if He should examine their hearts He might find nothing there to commend them as

obedient sons. Their obedience was worn largely on the surface, like a cloak (see on vs. 25, 26). Their conduct was regulated by what they anticipated men would think of them, more than by love for God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14). For further comment on this type of religion see on Matt. 6:1–8.

Phylacteries. Gr. *phylaktēria*, from a verb meaning “to watch,” “to keep,” hence, “a safeguard.” The idea of wearing phylacteries was based on a literal interpretation of Deut. 6:8. For a description of the phylactery and the manner of wearing it see on Ex. 13:9. To many the phylactery doubtless became a mere protecting charm, much as the ancient Hebrews had come to regard the ark of the covenant (see on 1 Sam. 4:3). Pious Jews of the time of Christ ordinarily wore phylacteries at daily devotions, but the rabbis recommended that they be worn all day every day except Sabbaths and feast days. The Jerusalem Talmud speaks of “shoulder-Pharisees who carry all their performance of commandments on their shoulders” (*Berakoth* 9, 14b, 40, cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 914).

Borders. Gr. *kraspeda*, here, “fringes.” For a description of the “borders,” or “fringes,” referred to see on Mark 5:27. To “enlarge” them would be to make them more conspicuous, and inasmuch as the garment on which these “fringes,” or tassels, were worn was used for religious purposes, this was designed to call attention to the wearer as being pious beyond the requirements of the law and beyond ordinary men. Jewish law specified only the minimum measurements. The use of the fringe was based on Num. 15:38–40 and Deut. 22:12 (cf. on Mark 12:38).

6. Uppermost rooms. Rather, “positions of honor” (see DA 613; cf. James 2:2–4). For comment on the practice of seeking the places of honor at feasts see on Luke 14:7–11. Two days later, at the Last Supper, the Twelve were arguing about a similar situation (Luke 22:24; DA 644, 645).

The chief seats. In ancient times “hypocrites” chose to sit in front, where they could be seen; today they prefer the back seats. Ancient synagogues were not usually provided with “seats” for the congregation, which, generally speaking, either sat on the floor or stood. Sometimes benches were placed along the walls. The “seats”—reserved for the elders—were generally in front, facing the congregation. The one who delivered the sermon sat in one of these seats (see p. 57; see on Matt. 23:2). Places of honor at the synagogue were usually assigned on the basis of prominence in the community.

7. The markets. See on Matt. 11:16; Mark 7:4.

Rabbi. Literally, “my great one,” “my teacher,” or “my lord.” Later the personal pronoun lost its force. This honorific title for scholars of the law had probably not long been in use. The term *rab* for teacher is found as early as 110 B.C. in the mouth of Joshua b. Perahah (Mishnah *Aboth* 1. 6; cf. Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 5). The title “rabbi” distinguished a man as being learned in the law of Moses, and therefore implied that his interpretation of the religious duties prescribed therein was binding, or infallible. This tended to set up human authority in place of the express word of God. Jesus counseled His followers not to look to men, but to God and to His will as set forth in the Scriptures. This admonition has no bearing upon the use of such titles as “doctor” or “professor” in educational institutions today, though it would apply to such honorific titles as

“reverend,” “his holiness,” etc., which imply the same as the title “rabbi” did in the days of Christ.

8. *Be not ye called.* The “ye” is emphatic in the Greek. Probably an admonition to the disciples. They were not to assume an authoritarian role in matters of theology.

Master. Literally, “Teacher.”

Even Christ. Textual evidence favors the omission (cf. p. 146) of these words.

All ye are brethren. Those who followed Christ were to consider themselves equals. None was to exercise authority over another, and certainly not in matters of conscience.

9. *Father.* A title often applied to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see John 7:22; 8:53; etc.), and in general to worthy men of past generations. Both Elijah and Elisha were addressed by the title “father” (2 Kings 2:12; 6:21). One tractate of the Mishnah (see p. 99) is named *Aboth*, “the fathers.” The Aramaic word ‘*abba*’, “father,” appears untranslated in Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6. Jesus here seems to refer to a technical use of the term, comparable in its implications to “rabbi” (see on Matt. 23:7, 8).

10. *Masters.* Gr. *kathēgētai*, “teachers,” the modern Greek word for “professors.”

Even Christ. Literally, “the Christ” (see on ch. 1:1).

11. *He that is greatest.* See on Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35; Luke 9:48; see DA 613.

12. *Exalt himself.* See on Matt. 11:29; 20:26; Luke 14:11; 18:14. This appears to have been a favorite saying with Jesus, one He repeated more often, perhaps, than any other. A parallel statement in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Erubin* 13b, 35) reads: “God will exalt him who humbles himself, God will humble him who exalts himself” (see Additional Note on Chapter 7).

13. *Woe.* Gr. *ouai*, an exclamation of grief or denunciation (see on ch. 11:21). The seven woes (eight if that of ch. 23:14 be included; see on v. 14) illustrate the observations made in vs. 3–5 concerning the scribes and Pharisees. For Jesus’ purpose in uttering these scathing denunciations of the religious leaders of the nation see on v. 1.

Hypocrites. See on chs. 6:2; 7:5. The epithet appears seven times in ch. 23:13–29.

Shut up the kingdom. Primarily, the kingdom of divine grace, but eventually the kingdom of divine glory as well (see on chs. 4:17; 5:2). The scribes and Pharisees had made it almost impossible for the sincere in heart to find their way to salvation, first, by making religion an insufferable burden (ch. 23:4), and second, by their own hypocritical example (v. 3). Instead of illuminating the way of salvation, rabbinical tradition so obscured it that at best men could only grope their way along, as in a dense fog (see on Mark 7:5–13).

Ye neither go in. Their hypocritical way of life would bar them from entering.

Neither suffer ye. That is, neither permit ye. It was as if the scribes and Pharisees stood outside the gateway (see on ch. 7:13, 14) to keep men from entering in, and as if after bolting and barricading the door, they had thrown away the key, determined that none should enter. They were so exclusive as to think that the kingdom of heaven was a sort of private club into which only men who measured up to their standards might secure admission.

14. *Devour widows’ houses.* Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 146) the omission of v. 14. The statement is uncontested in Mark 12:40. The Pharisees persuaded well-to-do widows to donate their property to the Temple, and then used it to their own personal advantage (DA 614). Widows were, presumably, protected by law (Ex. 22:22), but this

fact did not deter the rapacious Pharisees (cf. Isa. 10:2). For comment on another device designed to legalize the defrauding of elderly people see on Mark 7:11–13.

For a pretence. See on v. 5.

Long prayer. See on ch. 6:7.

Greater damnation. Because they were leaders, their evil deeds were more reprehensible than the same acts when committed by the common people. As teachers of the law their behavior was all the more open to censure than that of ordinary sinners. In the first place, they knew the law far more thoroughly, and in the second place, their evil example would be looked to by others as justifying their own misdeeds.

15. Woe. See on v. 13.

To make one proselyte. Concerning the extensive influence of the Jews and their religion in the Roman Empire during the time of Christ see pp. 61, 62. Ancient records reveal the fact that there were countless thousands of converts to the Jewish faith. Some of these became Jews and ordered their lives in harmony with all the ceremonial requirements of Judaism. They were first fully instructed, then baptized, and required to offer sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem. All males were circumcised as a sign of accepting the Abrahamic covenant (see on Gen. 17:10–12). A far greater number believed in the true God and worshiped Him, but without participating in the rites of Judaism. These were known as “proselytes of the gate,” or “God fearers.”

Twofold more. An enthusiastic convert became, if possible, even more bigoted than the Pharisees. To be a “child of hell” means to be fitted for “hell” (Gr. *geenna*, see on ch. 5:22) and destined, accordingly, for it. In contrast, to be “children of the kingdom” means to be of a character fit for the kingdom, and thus destined for it.

16. Blind guides. Jesus refers, of course, to spiritual blindness (see on John 9:39–41). The Jews prided themselves that they were guides to the blind Gentiles (Rom. 2:19); in fact, they went to great lengths to win proselytes (Matt. 23:15). But for a blind man to assume the role of leading others who are blind is the height of folly. Jesus proceeds immediately to illustrate what He means by spiritual blindness (vs. 16–24). This section of Jesus’ indictment of the Jewish leaders is longer than any of the others recorded in ch. 23. He would therefore seem to be placing emphasis on this aspect of their hypocrisy. The only remedy for spiritual blindness is spiritual “eyesalve” (Rev. 3:18), but this they refused to purchase from the only Merchant who offered it for sale. Herein lies a sober warning for the church today.

Swear. See on ch. 5:33–37.

It is nothing. This is the first illustration of the spiritual blindness of the scribes and Pharisees. Perhaps the reasoning behind the distinction here mentioned is that an oath to be binding must be particular. For example, according to the Talmud (*Nedarim* 14b, Soncino ed., p. 38), “If one vows by the Torah, his words are of no effect; by what is written therein, his vow is binding; by it *and* by what is written therein, his vow is binding.” Notice the expression “are of no effect” and compare the expression of Jesus “it is nothing.”

He is a debtor. “He is bound by his oath” to fulfill what he promised, or to accept responsibility for what he has sworn to.

17. Fools. Gr. *mōroi*, “foolish ones.” Compare Christ’s warning in ch. 5:22 (see comment there) against the rash use of this word. Evidently, in Matthew, Jesus

condemned the motives that at times prompted the use of the word, rather than the use of the word itself. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus dealt with motives rather than with outward acts as such. He was not addressing the scribes and Pharisees in anger, but simply stating facts.

Sanctifieth. That is, makes it sacred. The gold was sacred only by virtue of the fact that it was *Temple* gold.

18. Swear by the altar. See on vs. 16, 17, where the same principle is involved.

19. Ye fools. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between including or omitting these words.

22. Swear by heaven. See on vs. 16, 17, where the same principle applies. Heaven itself and God's throne there are sacred only by virtue of God's presence.

23. Ye pay tithe. Tithing was an integral part of the law (see on Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22). The scrupulous care with which devout Jews paid tithe is reflected in the Mishnah: "Whatever is [considered] food and is guarded and grows out of the soil, is liable to tithes. And they have further laid down another rule [as regards tithe]: whatsoever is considered food both at the beginning and at the conclusion [of its growth], even though he withholds it from use so as to enable the quantity of food to increase, is liable [to tithe], whether [it be gathered] in its earlier or later stages [of ripening]. ... When do the fruits become liable to tithe? Figs from the time they are called bohal, grapes and wild grapes in the early stages of ripening, red berries and mulberries after they become red, etc." (*Ma'aseroth* 1. 1, 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 255, 256).

Mint. In the Mishnah this herb is not mentioned as subject to the tithe. It was tithed by scrupulous Jews, doubtless as evidence of their profound respect for the law of tithing.

Anise. Or, "dill." Dill is mentioned in the Mishnah (*Ma'aseroth* 4. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 274) as being subject to the tithe. All parts of the plant were to be tithed—the seeds, the plant, and pods—in fact, everything except the roots.

Cummin. A cultivated plant whose aromatic seeds were eaten as a spice or relish with food (see Isa. 28:25, 27). Cummin seeds are similar to caraway seeds, but less agreeable to the taste and less nutritious. All three herbs here mentioned were used in cooking, and the last two were also valued for their medicinal properties. See on Isa. 28:25.

Have omitted. Or, "have neglected." This was similar to the charge the Jewish leaders had brought against Christ (see on ch. 5:17–20).

The weightier matters. The scribes themselves had made an elaborate and artificial arrangement of the laws of Judaism, listing them as being of greater or less importance (see on ch. 22:36). For Jesus' own comment on the matter of certain commands being of more importance than others see on ch. 5:17–20. The scribes and Pharisees gave great weight to man-made ordinances and to the external forms of law observance (see on Mark 7:3–13), but forgot almost completely the true spirit of the law itself—love toward God and toward one's fellow men (see on Matt. 22:37, 39). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus had sought to restore the spirit to men's outward observance of the law (see on ch. 5:17–22).

Judgment. Gr. *krisis*, here probably used with the meaning "right," in the sense of righteousness. For the importance of mercy as a guiding factor in human relations see on ch. 9:13. For the meaning of faith see on Hab. 2:4.

These. That is, the less weighty things that often consisted primarily in outward form. Jesus here approves of tithing. Neither He nor any NT writer in the least relaxes the obligation. Jesus makes it clear that He was not against tithing as such, but against the hypocritical spirit of the scribe and Pharisee, whose religion consisted in the scrupulous observance of the forms of the law.

The other. That is, the “weightier matters of the law,” which the scribe and Pharisee had neglected.

24. Ye blind guides. See on v. 16.

Strain at. Gr. *diulizō*, “to strain,” as through a sieve. The clause should read, literally, “strain out the gnat,” that is, from drinking water (DA 617). The KJV use of the preposition “at” is a typographical error. Here Jesus again censures scribe and Pharisee for elaborate precautions taken in minor matters and for carelessness when it comes to things that are really important. The gnat and the camel were both unclean according to Levitical law (see on Lev. 11:4, 22, 23). The elaborate precautions taken against swallowing the most minute forms of (unclean) animal life, while gulping down one of the largest of unclean animals, the camel, are set side by side in one of the impressive hyperbolic figures for which Christ’s teaching was famous (cf. on Matt. 19:24).

25. The outside of the cup. Jesus here refers, not to the habits of the Pharisees regarding literal household utensils, in the use of which the Jews exercised scrupulous care, but to the Pharisees themselves. With literal cups the Pharisees would take as great care of the inside as they did of the outside. The difficulty was that they failed to apply the same principle to their lives. They lived to be “seen of men” (see on v. 5), seemingly completely oblivious of the fact that God could see their hearts and knew full well the hypocritical motives that prompted their outwardly scrupulous piety. Compare Mark 7:18–23.

Platter. Gr. *paropsis*, a dish on which dainties were served.

Extortion and excess. The words thus translated indicate “rapine” and “robbery” on the one hand, and “intemperance” and “lack of self-control” on the other. Christ here illustrates how the scribes and Pharisees failed in the “weightier matters of the law” (v. 23).

26. Cleanse first. Effective cleansing must begin within (see on Mark 7:3–18; Luke 11:41).

27. Woe unto you. See on v. 13.

Whited sepulchres. According to ritual law an extreme form of defilement was contact with death. Priests, for instance, were not to “defile” themselves by contact with death, except in the case of immediate relatives (Lev. 21:1–4), but even this privilege was denied the high priest (vs. 10, 11). According to the Mishnah it was customary to whitewash graves on Adar 15, a month before the Passover, in order that priests and Nazirites might avoid defilement incurred by unwitting contact with graves (*Sheḳalim* 1. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 1). For the procedure required in case of ceremonial defilement occasioned by contact with the dead see Num. 19:11–22. Compare Acts 23:3; see on Luke 11:44.

28. Appear righteous. See on vs. 3, 50.

Within. For Christ’s comment on the importance of inward rectitude see on ch. 5:22, 28.

29. Build the tombs. The martyrs of one generation often become the heroes of the next. While the prophets were alive it was popular to throw stones at them; after they had been dead for a time it became popular to set up elaborate stone monuments to commemorate them. The Jews could not honor living prophets without accepting their messages, but it was a simple thing to honor dead prophets without doing so.

30. If we had been. Each generation tends to pride itself upon being wiser and more tolerant than earlier generations. We ourselves may find satisfaction in thinking that we would not be like the scribes and the Pharisees, oblivious to the fact that in so thinking we become like them (see on Luke 18:11). Increasing light places upon men greater responsibilities. The prophets of former times suffered because they challenged the beliefs, standards, and actions of their contemporaries. Had those prophets been alive today, they would have borne the same messages in denunciation of sin, and these messages would probably have encountered the same callous indifference and provoked the same attempts to silence the prophets who bore them.

31. Unto yourselves. They made themselves responsible for the light of truth that shone forth from the messages of the prophets, who, though dead, yet spoke.

32. Fill ye up. The “ye” is emphatic in the Greek. The cup of guilt of the Jewish nation was nearly full, and the deeds of the men of Christ’s generation, particularly their rejection of Christ as the Messiah (see on John 19:15), would fill that cup full to overflowing (see Vol. IV, pp. 32, 33). As the guilt of Babylon reached the limits of divine forbearance on the night of Belshazzar’s feast, so that of Israel as a nation passed the bounds of divine grace in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus.

33. Generation of vipers. See on chs. 3:7; 12:34.

How can ye escape? See on Heb. 2:3.

The damnation. Or, “the sentence.”

Hell. Gr. *geenna* (see on ch. 5:22). They were witnesses against themselves (ch. 23:31). If they admitted guilt how could they hope to escape?

34. I send. Compare Luke 11:49.

Wise men. Men who understood the messages of the prophets and sought to apply to the life of the nation the principles therein set forth. These were men who “had understanding of the times” and who knew “what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron. 12:32) in the light of revealed truth. For the meaning of “wisdom” in contradistinction to “understanding” and “knowledge” see on Prov. 1:2. “Wise men” were safe counselors, prudent men whose leadership could be trusted. They were not “blind” leaders like the scribes and Pharisees (see on Matt. 23:16, 17).

Kill and crucify. Stephen fell to satisfy the lust of the scribes and Pharisees for the blood of those who spoke for God (Acts 7:59). It was Jewish spite that led to Paul’s rearrest and his execution (see 2 Tim. 4:6–8; AA 489, 597). It should be noted that crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish, mode of execution.

Scourge. For the custom of scourging in the synagogue see on ch. 10:17. Paul was scourged five times (2 Cor. 11:24).

Persecute. See on chs. 5:10–12; 10:17, 18, 23. For instances of persecution see Acts 13:50; 14:5, 6, 19, 20; 26:11; etc.

35. That upon you. This does not mean that the men of Christ’s generation were to be punished for the misdeeds of their fathers, for the Scriptures teach specifically that no man is punished for the sins of another (see Eze. 18:2–30; cf. Ex. 32:33). But their

rejection of Jesus and His teachings made their guilt greater than that of any previous generation.

The righteous blood. That is, of innocent persons.

Abel. See on Gen. 4:8–10.

Zacharias. Doubtless Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the high priest, who was stoned to death in the courts of the Temple upon orders from King Joash, who reigned from 835 to 796 B.C. (2 Chron. 24:20–22; see Vol. II, p. 83). Numerous references in later Jewish literature to this murder leave no doubt that it made a profound impression upon the thinking of the nation. In Hebrew Bibles the books of Chronicles appear as the last books of Scripture, in the same position occupied by Malachi in our English Bibles (see Vol. I, p. 37). On the plausible assumption that Jesus named Abel and Zechariah because, according to the order of books in Hebrew Bibles, they represent the first and the last recorded martyrs, most scholars conclude that the Jewish order of books placing Chronicles last existed at least as early as the time of Jesus.

Son of Barachias. Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2 Chron. 24:20–22) is the only person by this name mentioned in Scripture as having been slain thus (see DA 619). There is no information concerning Zechariah, son of Berechiah (Zech. 1:1), dying a violent death. The same may be said of “Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah” of Isa. 8:2. It has been suggested that Jesus did not identify Zechariah as the “son of Barachias,” but that these words were added by a later scribe who, as he wrote, had in mind either the prophet Zechariah or the Zechariah of Isa. 8:2. It is worthy of note that in the parallel statement of Luke 11:51 Zacharias is not identified as a “son of Barachias.”

The temple. Gr. *naos*, the Temple proper as distinguished from the *hieron*, or Temple complex as a whole (see ch. 21:23), which included the courts and other buildings adjacent to it. Ordinarily only a priest had access to the inner court of the Temple, where the altar of sacrifice was, and the fact that Zechariah was “between the temple and the altar” suggests that he was on duty as a priest at the time of his martyrdom. If the courts of Solomon’s Temple were the same as those of Herod’s Temple, the assassins of Zechariah—unless they were priests or Levites—probably had no right to enter this court.

36. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

All these things. That is, the climax of the evil course of action summarized in vs. 34, 35. The cup of the Jews’ iniquity as a nation was rapidly filling (see on v. 32).

This generation. Jesus here clearly refers to the “generation” of people then living, His Jewish contemporaries. In the following chapter He makes plain the fate to which He here refers—the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the armies of Rome in A.D. 70 (see Matt. 24:15–20; cf. Luke 21:20–24). Compare also Matt. 24:34; Luke 11:50.

37. O Jerusalem. Compare Luke 13:34. In Jerusalem centered all the hopes of Israel as a nation. The city was the symbol of national strength and pride. For the role of Jerusalem in God’s plan see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30.

Killest the prophets. See on v. 34.

Would I have gathered. Literally, “did I desire to gather.” No more poignant or tender expression of solicitude ever came from the lips of Jesus. With the same tender yearning Heaven looks upon all the lost (see on Luke 15:7). The time was at hand when God must reject the Jews as His chosen people (see Matt. 23:38), yet how reluctantly Heaven abandoned them to their own perverse way and to their tragic fate! For other

statements of Scripture expressing the mercy and long-suffering the God exercised toward unrepentant sinners see Eze. 18:23, 31, 32; 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9.

Her chickens. Or, “her young.”

Ye would not. It was their own choice that determined their destiny (see on Dan. 4:17; see Vol. IV, pp. 32, 33; 5T 120). No sinner will be lost because of inadequate provision on the part of Heaven. Compare Joshua 24:15; Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17.

38. Your house. Only the day before Jesus had referred to the Temple as “my house” (ch. 21:13). Now it was “your house.” Christ’s words must have struck terror to the hearts of priests and rulers. This declaration may also have come before their minds during the course of His trial (see ch. 26:61–64). The rent veil three days later was a visible sign that God no longer accepted the meaningless round of forms and ceremonies that were, for nearly 40 years longer, carried on there (see ch. 27:51). It was now the midst of the prophetic week of Dan. 9:27, and so far as Heaven was concerned the value of sacrifice and oblation was about to cease forever. See on Matt. 24:3, 15; cf. Luke 21:20; see Vol. IV, p. 35.

39. Not see me. This statement is to be understood in terms of others made by Jesus during this same week, particularly that of ch. 26:64. By “henceforth” Jesus did not refer to His departure from the Temple this Tuesday afternoon, but to all the circumstances connected with His rejection, trial, and crucifixion.

Blessed is he. Jesus referred to the time when men—including those “also which pierced him” (Rev. 1:7)—would see Him “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30). At the last great day even scoffers would be compelled to acknowledge the blessedness of the One whom they now so freely cursed (see Phil. 2:9–11). The scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke would be in that throng. Jesus meant, “You will not see me again till I return in glory.”

Soon after speaking these words Jesus departed forever from the precincts of the Temple. For other events preceding this departure from the courts of the Temple see on Mark 12:41–44; John 12:20–50.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–39DA 610–620

2–4DA 612

3 COL 278

4 AH 152; GC 568

5–12DA 613

8 CS 146; DA 414; Ev 102; FE 477; MH 165, 166; MM 172; TM 192, 224, 349, 362; 4T 226; 6T 26, 101; 7T 249; 9T 197

10 DA 414

10–124T 226

11, 12 DA 613

13, 14 DA 614

16–19DA 616

23 DA 88, 616, 617; Ev 212; FE 157, 438; TM 79; 3T 524; 4T 337; 5T 428

24 DA 617; 1T 144; 4T 323, 327

27 DA 617; TM 274; 5T 397

28 TM 79

29–31DA 617

30, 31, 34 TM 79
34, 35 DA 619; TM 72
37 DA 578; GC 21; 4T 189; 8T 67
37–39DA 620
38 AA 145; DA 627; EW 45; GC 24, 431; PP 475
39 DA 580

CHAPTER 24

1 *Christ foretelleth the destruction of the temple: 3 what and how great calamities shall be before it: 29 the signs of his coming to judgment. 36 And because that day and hour is unknown, 42 we ought to watch like good servants, expecting every moment our master's coming.*

1. Jesus went out. [*Signs of Christ's Return, Matt. 24:1–51=Mark 13:1–37=Luke 21:5–38.* Major comment: Matthew. See Closing Ministry at Jerusalem; Passion Week.] Probably late Tuesday afternoon. Jesus had spent the day teaching in the Temple courts, and had been assailed repeatedly by group after group of the Jewish leaders. Finally, in His last public discourse (ch. 23), He delineated in unmistakable terms the hypocritical character of these “blind guides” (v. 16), and then departed from the Temple courts forever. Matthew's report of the events of this day are recorded in chs. 21:23 to 23:39. The discourse given privately to some of the disciples on the slope of the Mount of Olives occupies all of chs. 24; 25. Mark and Luke parallel the account in Matthew as far as ch. 24:42.

Leaving the Temple, Jesus and at least four of His disciples made a steep descent to the Kidron Valley, and ascended the slope of the Mount of Olives, which rises some 400 ft. (c. 122 m.) above the Kidron Valley. Being about 300 ft. (c. 91 m.) higher than the Temple, the mountain provides a view of the Temple and the city. See on ch. 21:1; see illustration facing p. 513.

His disciples. Mark (ch. 13:3) identifies these disciples as Peter and Andrew, James and John—the four who had been called from their nets by the shores of Galilee less than two years before (see on Luke 5:1–11).

To shew him. Mark alone gives the words of the disciples, “Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” (ch. 13:1). The Temple was the pride and joy of every Jewish heart. Josephus compares the white stone walls of the Temple to the beauty of a snow-covered mountain (*War* v. 5. 6 [223]), and gives the fabulous size of some of its stones—45 by 5 by 6 cubits (about 66 by 7 by 9 ft., or 20 by 2.1 by 2.7 m.). The Temple had now been in process of construction for nearly 50 years (see John 2:20), and work on the entire complex of courts and buildings was not completed until about the year A.D. 63—only seven years before it was totally destroyed by the army of Titus.

2. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

One stone upon another. For the fabulous size of some of the stones used in the Temple, see on v. 1. This prediction was literally fulfilled at the time Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70 (see on v. 1).

Thrown down. Josephus (*War* vi. 4. 5–8 [249–270]) vividly describes the destruction of the Temple and efforts made by Titus to save it. The excellent construction of the building gave assurance that it would withstand the elements indefinitely. The city of Jerusalem itself was held to be, for all practical purposes, impregnable, but Jesus predicted that it would be destroyed by force.

3. As he sat. Jesus had probably come here to spend the night, rather than return to Bethany as He had the two days preceding (see on ch. 21:17).

The disciples. See on v. 1.

Privately. It was hard for them to grasp the import of Jesus' declaration concerning the destruction of the Temple, particularly in relation to recent events such as the Triumphal Entry and the Second Cleansing of the Temple, which seemed to them to presage the imminent establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Doubtless they came to Him privately because it would be considered treason to talk about such things publicly.

Tell us, when. They fondly anticipated that Jesus would proclaim Himself King almost any day now, and be acclaimed by the nation as Messiah. When, then, would the desolation of the Temple occur?

These things. That is, the desolation referred to in ch. 23:38 and more clearly stated in ch. 24:2.

The sign. See on v. 30.

Coming. Gr. *parousia*, "presence," or "arrival." *Parousia* appears commonly in the papyri for the visit of an emperor or a king. The word also occurs in vs. 27, 37, 39, but nowhere else in the Gospels, though often in the Epistles. It is sometimes used to denote *presence* as opposed to *absence*, as in Phil. 2:12, but more commonly of the *coming* of Christ, as in 2 Thess. 2:1, or of men, as in 1 Cor. 16:17. In the NT it is used as a technical term for the second advent of Christ. There is nothing in the term *parousia* to denote a secret coming.

The disciples apparently understood that Jesus was to go away for a time, after which He would return in power and glory to take His kingdom. Jesus, evidently, must already have given more explicit instructions on this subject than the Gospels record (see GC 25). Popular belief held that when Messiah came He would disappear for a time, and that when He reappeared no one would know whence He came. However, this is the first extended discussion of the second "coming" so far as the Gospel record is concerned, although it had been implied in the parables of the Pounds (Luke 19:12–15) and the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21:33–41; cf. ch. 16:27). For a synopsis of the manner in which the OT prophecies of the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom would have been fulfilled had Israel been faithful see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30. For a comment on the fundamental errors of Jewish theologians in interpreting these OT prophecies see DA 30.

In the minds of the disciples "these things"—the destruction of the Temple, and the coming of Jesus a second time at "the end of the world"—were closely united. They conceived of these events as taking place either simultaneously or in rapid succession. When, on the day of the ascension, the disciples inquired, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:6, 7). They did not yet understand that the Jewish nation would reject Jesus, and in turn be rejected as God's chosen people (see Vol. IV, pp. 32, 33). The knowledge of future events would, at the time, have been too much for them. The disciples had, in fact, proved incapable of grasping the repeated instruction Christ had been giving them for nearly a year, relative to His imminent sufferings and death (see on Matt. 16:21; Matt. 20:17–19). The events foretold proved to be almost more than they could endure (see Luke 24:11, 17–25; DA 631, 772).

End of the world. Or, “consummation of the age.” For the meaning of the Gr. *aiōn*, “world,” see on ch. 13:39. Similar expressions appear commonly in Jewish apocalyptic literature to describe the end of the present order of things and the beginning of the Messianic age. For an outline of how this transition was to have been accomplished in accordance with God’s original plan for Israel, see Vol. IV, pp. 26-30. The disciples posed their question with the Messianic messages of the OT prophets in their minds. But they, in common with other Jews, did not fully understand that God’s promises could be fulfilled to Israel only upon the fulfillment of the necessary conditions (see Vol. IV, pp. 30-34; see on Jer. 18:6–10).

Jesus blended in His answer to the disciples’ question events leading up to “the end” of the Jewish nation as God’s chosen people, and “the end” of the world. The lines cannot always be sharply drawn between the two. No small part of what Jesus delineated of the future applied particularly to events soon to take place with respect to the Jewish nation, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple. However, the discourse was also given for the benefit of those who should live amid the last scenes of earth’s history. It is worthy of note that DA 628–633 applies the signs enumerated in vs. 4–14 primarily to the fall of Jerusalem and some of them secondarily to our time, and those of vs. 21–30 quite exclusively to events leading up to the Saviour’s second coming. See on ch. 10:1.

4. Deceive. The primary reason for “taking heed” is to avoid being deceived, or led astray. In one form or another, Jesus repeated this warning again and again (see vs. 4–6, 11, 23–26, 36, 42–46).

5. In my name. That is, pretending to be the Messiah. The warning of v. 5 applies specifically to the fall of Jerusalem and to the Jewish nation, which was particularly susceptible to this form of deception. In the days of the apostles there were many false messiahs. See Josephus, *War* vi. 5. 4 [312–315]. Later (v. 27), “in unmistakable language, our Lord speaks of His second coming” (DA 631).

6. Rumours. Gr. *akoai*, “reports.” The disciples were not to be surprised or alarmed when, prior to A.D. 70 wars broke out. There would be wars before the fall of Jerusalem, but these would not portend the soon return of Jesus (see DA 628, 629).

The end. In this discourse our Lord foresees both the end of the Jewish nation as a nation and the end of the world. The rabbis would declare the signs of vs. 6–8 to be “the token of the advent of the Messiah” and “of their release [as a nation] from bondage,” but Jesus pointed to these as “signs of their destruction [as a nation]” (DA 628, 629; cf. MB 120). And as the wars and rumors of wars of apostolic times foreshadowed the end of the Jewish nation, so the international turmoil and strife of our day presage the end of the world (see PK 536; 5T 753).

7. Nation shall rise. Jewish and Roman writers describe the period from A.D. 31–70 as a time of great calamities. These words of Christ were literally fulfilled in events prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see DA 628, 629). The predictions concerning the “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes” of v. 7 also doubtless refer primarily to the same period. Jesus specifically warned the early Christians not to consider the political strife, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes of that day as signs of the immediate “end” of the world (see on v. 3).

Famines. A particularly severe famine in Judea about A.D. 44 is alluded to in Acts 11:28. There were altogether four major famines during the reign of Claudius, A.D. 41–54.

Pestilences. Textual evidence favors the omission (cf. p. 146) of this word.

Earthquakes. There was a series of major earthquakes between A.D. 31 and A.D. 70. The worst of these were in Crete (46 or 47), Rome (51), Phrygia (60), and Campania (63). Tacitus (*Annals* xvi. 10–13) also speaks of particularly severe hurricanes and storms in the year 65.

Divers places. That is, “various places.”

8. The beginning. See on vs. 6, 7.

Sorrows. Gr. *ōdines*, “birth pangs,” “birth pains,” “labor pains,” “travail.” The same word is translated “travail” in 1 Thess. 5:3; the verb form appears in Gal. 4:19, 27; Rev. 12:2. Metaphorically the word denotes pains in a more general sense (see Acts 2:24).

The Jews used a term (Heb. *cheblo shel mashiach*; Aramaic *chebleh dimeshiach*, literally, “the pang of the Messiah”); once in a disputed passage in the plural, “the pangs of the Messiah”) by which they designated, not the sufferings of the Messiah Himself, but the calamities out of which the Messianic age would be born. The expression is found as early as about A.D. 90 in a saying of Rabbi Eliezer (Midrash *Mekhiltha* 59a, on Ex. 16:29, cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 950), and was possibly already current in the time of Jesus. If so, Jesus’ use of the term would call to mind these predicted calamities. For a description of conditions that the non-canonical, apocalyptic writers expected would precede the end of the age see 2 Esdras 5:1–12; 6:18–25; 15:16; Apocalypse of Baruch 27; 48:31–37; 70:2–10; Book of Jubilees 23:16–25; Book of Enoch 99:4–7; 100:1–6.

9. Deliver you up. See on chs. 5:10–12; 10:17–24. Stephen (Acts 7:59, 60), Peter and John (Acts 4:3–7, 21), and Peter and James (Acts 12:1–4) were among the first Christians to suffer at the hands of the authorities. Paul appeared before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Caesar (Acts 24 to 28). Compare Mark 13:9–12. In Matt. 24:21, 22 Christ speaks specifically of persecution to come after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

For my name’s sake. That is, “on account of me,” equivalent to saying, “because you are Christians” (see on ch. 5:11).

10. Be offended. Literally, “be tripped up” (see on ch. 5:29). They would fall away or apostatize. Believers would lose their “first love” (Rev. 2:4). On the apostasy of the early Christian centuries see on 2 Thess 2:3, 4.

Hate one another. See on ch. 10:21, 22.

11. Many false prophets. Compare v. 4. History records that numerous false prophets appeared in the years immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans. For false prophets of the last days see on vs. 24–27; cf. DA 628, 631. For an earlier warning against false prophets see on ch. 7:15–20. In ch. 24:24–26 Christ speaks specifically of the work of false prophets prior to His second coming.

12. Iniquity shall abound. Christ’s forecast met its first fulfillment in the decades prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (DA 633; cf. 36, 37). The prophecy will again be fulfilled in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1–5; cf. 5T 136, 741).

Love. For a description of this Christian grace see 1 Cor. 13; see on Matt. 5:43, 44. For the fulfillment of this prediction in so far as it applies to the Christian church see on Rev. 2:4. Many would find it easier to go along with the world than to remain loyal and steadfast.

13. He that shall endure. That is, endure the various temptations to apostasy such as the deceptions of the false prophets (v. 11) and the lure of iniquity (v. 12).

End. Gr. *telos*. In vs. 6, 14 “end” is again from *telos* but in v. 3, from *sunteleia*. It is not clear whether Christ means “to the limit of endurance” (see 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 12:4), or “to the end of the world” (see on Matt. 24:3, 6).

14. Gospel. Gr. *euaggelion* (see on Mark 1:1).

The kingdom. See on chs. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3.

World. Gr. *oikoumenē*, “the inhabited world” (see on Luke 2:1), in contrast with *aiōn*, “world,” considered from the viewpoint of time (see on Matt. 24:3). Thirty years after Christ spoke these words Paul affirmed that the gospel had gone to all the world (Col. 1:23; cf. Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Col. 1:5, 6; 8T 26), confirming the literal fulfillment of this prediction in his day (see DA 633). However, Paul’s declaration was true in a limited sense only (see The Church at the Close of Paul’s Ministry). The complete fulfillment of this prediction of our Lord is yet to be realized (see AA 111).

The glorious progress of the gospel throughout the world during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th cheers the heart of every earnest and conscientious Christian to believe that the complete fulfillment of the promise of ch. 24:14 is soon to be realized. The era of modern Christian missions is generally thought of as beginning with the work of William Carey in 1793. The century and a half since his historic mission to India has witnessed the greatest conquests of the Christian faith since the days of the apostles.

Hand in hand with foreign missions have gone the translation and circulation of the Scriptures. Whereas the first 18 centuries of the Christian Era saw the Bible translated into only 71 languages, the next century—the 19th—saw the total climb to 567. By the middle of the 20th century the number had grown to over 1,000. There are but few peoples in the world today who do not have access to at least some part of Scriptures in their own tongue.

The end. See on vs. 3, 6, 13.

15. The abomination of desolation. See on Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. In the LXX these verses in Daniel contain similar or identical Greek words (cf. 1 Macc. 1:54). Among the Jews an idol or other heathen symbol was often termed an “abomination” (1 Kings 11:5, 7; 2 Kings 23:13; etc.) or something offensive from a religious point of view (Ex. 8:26; cf. Gen. 43:32; 46:34; etc.). The parallel passage in Luke reads, “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh” (ch. 21:20). The event foretold is obviously the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, at which time the symbols of pagan Rome were set up within the Temple area. When the Jewish rebellion under Bar Cocheba was suppressed in A.D. 135, the Romans erected a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of the former Jewish Temple, and Jews were banned from the city of Jerusalem upon pain of death.

Daniel the prophet. This reference to Daniel is evidence that Jesus believed that Daniel was a historical person, that he was a prophet, and that he wrote the book of Daniel. Because the prophecy of Daniel pointed so clearly to the time the Messiah was to appear, the rabbis, in later centuries, placed a curse on those who should attempt a computation of the time (GC 378; Talmud *Sanhedrin* 97b, Soncino ed., p. 659).

Holy place. That is, the sacred precincts of the Temple, including the inner courts, from which Gentiles were excluded on pain of death (see Acts 6:13; 21:28).⁹

Let him understand. Those who assert that Daniel is a “sealed book,” and not capable of being understood, would do well to ponder Christ’s clear statement to the contrary. As the events predicted drew near, it was essential that God’s people know whereof the prophet spoke. These events were less than 40 years away, within the lifetime of many then living. Similarly, as events connected with the end of the world (see on v. 3) draw near, Christians should be diligent in their endeavor to understand that which has been written for their admonition (see Amos 3:7; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

16. Flee into the mountains. As the Hebrew people through the centuries had done at times of foreign invasion (see Judges 6:2; 1 Sam. 13:6; Heb. 11:38). Josephus says (*War* vi. 9. 3 [420]), more than one million people perished during and after the siege of the city and 97,000 more were taken captive. However, during a temporary respite, when the Romans unexpectedly raised their siege of Jerusalem, all the Christians fled, and it is said that not one of them lost his life. Their place of retreat was Pella, a city in the foothills east of the Jordan River, about 17 mi. (c. 27 km.) south of the Lake of Galilee.

According to Josephus, Titus, commander of the Roman armies, confessed that neither his armies nor his siege engines could have been successful in breaching the walls of Jerusalem unless God Himself had so willed it. The stubborn defense of the city so infuriated the Roman soldiers, that when they finally entered, their desire for revenge knew no bounds.

17. On the housetop. Houses were generally constructed with flat roofs, which were commonly used for the drying of fruits. These roofs also afforded a place for rest, meditation, and prayer (see Acts 10:9). For scriptural references to the various uses to which the roofs of houses were put, see Joshua 2:6; 1 Sam. 9:25, 26; 2 Kings 23:12. Some think that the expression “him which is on the housetop” refers primarily to city dwellers.

Not come down. Time was of the essence. To postpone flight would entail great danger. As events proved, this counsel was appropriate, for the Roman armies soon returned. The temporary respite (see on v. 16) was the last opportunity the Christians would have to escape. See pp. 74, 75.

18. In the field. Probably a reference to those who lived in villages in the country. “The field” is a common Biblical term meaning the “country” as distinguished from cities and towns (Deut. 28:16; cf. Gen. 37:15; Ex. 9:25; etc.).

19. Woe. The rigors and privations of flight would be all but unbearable for women with small children.

20. Pray ye. The Christians in Jerusalem and Judea could not determine the time for the withdrawal of the Roman armies, but they could pray God to mitigate the suffering and dangers that attended flight to the mountains.

Not in the winter. In the wet and cold of the winter rains travel would be extremely difficult, lodging and provisions would be uncertain, and health would be difficult to

⁹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 21:31). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

preserve. Furthermore, during the rainy season the Jordan River would prove difficult to ford.

Sabbath day. Forty years after the resurrection the Sabbath would be as sacred as it was when Jesus spoke these words on the slopes of Olivet. He intimates no change in the sacredness of the day such as many Christians now suppose took place when He came forth from the tomb. The commotion, excitement, fear, and travel incident to flight from Jerusalem would be inappropriate on the Sabbath day. Christians were to pray that they might be able to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, as God intended it should be kept. Christ did not abolish the Sabbath when He was nailed to the cross. It has lost none of the sacredness God originally imparted to it (see on Gen. 2:1–3).

21. Then. That is, following the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the Jewish nation. Between the end of the Jewish nation and the end of the world were to be “long centuries of darkness, centuries for His church marked with blood and tears and agony” (DA 630, 631). Beginning with v. 21 the signs foretold point forward exclusively to the end of the world (see DA 630, 631).

Great tribulation. The first persecution of the church came from the Jewish leaders (Acts 4:1–3; 7:59, 60; 8:1–4; etc.). A little later the Gentiles also persecuted Christians (Acts 16:19–24; 19:29; 1 Cor. 15:32), and for nearly three centuries the church suffered intermittently at the hands of pagan Rome. In 538 began the 1260 years of papal supremacy and persecution (see Additional Note on Daniel 7).

22. Except. Unless God should intervene, persecution would finally destroy all the “elect.”

Flesh. A common Hebrew idiom for “human beings.”

Saved. That is, from death.

23. Then. After the “great tribulation” of vs. 21, 22. The warning of vs. 23–28 applies specifically to the last days of earth’s history, and was “given as a sign of the second advent” (DA 631). A similar warning had already been given in vs. 4, 5, but there it was set forth primarily “as one of the signs of Jerusalem’s destruction” (DA 631) and was fulfilled before the fall of that city in A.D. 70. But the same warning, repeated in vs. 23–28, was given for “those who live in this age of the world,” for “now, in unmistakable language, our Lord speaks of His second coming, and He gives warning of dangers to precede His advent to the world” (DA 628, 631).

You. Jesus addresses the disciples concerning events at the close of time as representatives of believers alive at the end of time.

Christ. The Greek equivalent of the Heb. *Mashiach*, “Messiah” (see on ch. 1:1).

Believe it not. See on vs. 4, 5.

24. False Christs. See on v. 5.

False prophets. See on v. 11, where false prophets prior to the fall of Jerusalem are mentioned. In this context a false prophet is a representative of a false messiah. For more detailed counsel with respect to such prophets see on ch. 7:15–23.

Great signs. See p. 208; see on Luke 2:12. False prophets perform “signs” as proof of their authority, and these are seen by the people as “wonders” (see p. 208; see on Matt. 12:38, 39). For a more specific reference to some of the important “signs” performed by these latter-day prophets, see Rev. 13:13, 14; 16:13, 14; 19:20. However, these false miracles lack the power of God. The two words “signs” and “wonders” appear frequently together in the NT (John 4:48; Acts 2:22; 4:30; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4; etc.).

If it were possible. The implication is that these “signs” could be *almost*, but *not entirely*, convincing to “the very elect.” These faithful ones have obeyed the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans to “anoint” their “eyes with eyesalve” (see on Rev. 3:18), and are therefore able to distinguish between the true and the false. The form of the sentence in the Greek implies that it is actually impossible for Satan to deceive those who love and serve God with sincerity. For a discussion of Satan’s “masterpiece of deception” see GC 561, 623, 624. A genuine love for the truth and diligence in obeying all the instructions God has given for these last days will prove to be the only protection against the delusions of the enemy, the seducing spirits, and the doctrines of devils (see 6T 401; 8T 298; TM 475; see on 2 Thess. 2:9–12).

Elect. Gr. *eklektos*, “picked out,” or “chosen.”

25. *Told you before.* The warning against the delusions of the last days was given so that Christians might have an intelligent understanding of the dangers that would confront them, that they might be alert to these dangers, that they might recognize the false christs and the false prophets for what they are, and thus not be deceived (see John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4). The fact that all these things have been clearly set forth by Inspiration constitutes the best possible reason why “the elect” should be diligent in their study of all that God has revealed concerning the delusions of the last days.

26. *The desert.* Perhaps a reference to sparsely settled regions, in contrast with the “secret chambers” of the city (see DA 631; see on v. 18).

Go not forth. That is, do not even be curious to hear what they have to say; do not appear to be in sympathy with them by being present to hear them speak. To “go forth” is to place oneself on enchanted ground and thus to be in danger of falling into deception.

Secret chambers. Or, “inner rooms.” Compare John 7:27. Christians would not need to make long pilgrimages to find Christ—into the deserts, or elsewhere—nor would there be anything mysterious concerning the event that would make it necessary for them to enter into “secret chambers” to investigate rumors that Christ was there. By virtue of the clear instructions Jesus gave, they would know that all such rumors were false.

27. *As the lightning.* There would be nothing secret or mysterious about the return of Jesus. No one would have to be told that He had come back to earth, for all would see Him (Rev. 1:7). Christ’s words leave no room for a secret rapture, for a mystical coming, or for any of the other false theories contrived by pious but overzealous would-be “prophets.” Men would “see” Jesus “coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 24:30; cf. chs. 16:27; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 14:62; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7). There would be no mistaking the event. When Jesus returns, all men will know of it without having to be told.

Out of the east. As Christ approaches this earth He will appear to come from “the east” (GC 640).

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

28. *The carcass.* The enigmatic statement of v. 28 was probably a popular proverb. Upon seeing a flock of vultures (probably not “eagles”; see on Luke 17:37 circling in the air or assembled on the ground a person would rightly conclude that there must be carrion near. Otherwise the vultures would be soaring about singly in search of food. In other words, these birds gather together only when there is real reason for doing so. The application of the proverb, according to various commentators, is that the multiplication of signs is evidence that something decisive is at hand. Others have suggested that in the setting of Matt. 24, the saying may be a warning to Christians against flocking out to see

the false christs or to hear the false prophets (vs. 25, 26). They are to believe that Christ is *actually* coming only when they *see* Him coming in the clouds of heaven (see on v. 27). Compare Job 39:30; Prov. 30:17.

29. Immediately after. Or, “*in* those days, after that tribulation” (Mark 13:24). Matthew and Mark here refer to the 1260 days (years) of papal persecution terminating in 1798 (see on Matt. 24:21). It was toward the close of this period of time that the sun was darkened. The signs of v. 29 are thus closely related, in point of time, to “the tribulation of those days.” See GC 306; see on Dan. 7:25.

The tribulation. See on v. 21.

The sun. The darkening of the sun here foretold took place on May 19, 1780, known as the great dark day. This was the first of the signs in the sun, moon, and stars ordained to herald our Lord’s return.

The moon. On the night of May 19, 1780, the moon’s light was veiled, even as the sun’s had been during the daytime hours.

The stars. Fulfilled Nov. 13, 1833, in what was undoubtedly the greatest meteor shower in history. These two phenomena, of 1780 and 1833, exactly fulfilled Jesus’ predictions, for they came at the specified time (see above). They were not the only such events but best met the specifications. See “Dark Day” and “Falling of Stars” in the *Source Book* (vol. 9 of this commentary series).

The powers of the heavens. That is, the sun, moon, and stars. The shaking of the “powers of the heavens” does not refer to the phenomena described in the earlier part of the verse, but to a time yet future when the heavenly bodies “will be moved out of their places ... shaken by the voice of God.” This will take place when His voice shakes “this earth also” (EW 41), at the opening of the seventh plague (see Rev. 16:17–20; GC 636, 637; EW 34, 285; cf. Isa. 34:4; Rev. 6:14).

30. The sign. Gr. *sēmeion*, “sign,” “mark,” “token” (see p. 208; see on Luke 2:12). The “token” that will distinguish Christ’s return from the deceptions of the false christs is the cloud of glory with which He returns to this earth (see EW 15, 35; GC 640).

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10; see Additional Note on John 1.

Tribes. The various nations and peoples of earth (cf. Rev. 14:6; 17:15; etc.). The reason for this mourning is stated in Rev. 6:15–17 (cf. Isa. 2:19–21; Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30).

Son of man. See on Dan. 7:13. The expression is found also in Jewish apocalyptic literature. The Book of Enoch (ch. 62:5), for instance, speaks of the time “when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory” (cf. Matt. 16:27; 25:31).

The clouds of heaven. Compare Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 1:7.

Power and great glory. Compare chs. 16:27; 25:31; see on ch. 24:27.

31. Send his angels. It is appropriate that the angels, who have ministered to the needs of those who have become “heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14), should participate in the events of that glorious morning. Now, for the first time, God’s people will have the privilege of seeing face to face these holy beings who have guarded them throughout this earthly pilgrimage.

Trumpet. When Jesus comes the “trump of God” calls from their graves all who have fallen asleep in Christ (1 Thess. 4:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:52).

His elect. See on v. 24. These are the ones whom God has chosen to constitute His kingdom because they have chosen Him. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in

that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal. 3:17). Those who have been asleep in Jesus rise to join the living saints, and together they meet their Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; cf. John 11:24–26).

The four winds. That is, from all directions (cf. Dan. 7:2; 8:8; 11:4; Rev. 7). In one of the Eighteen Benedictions of the synagogue service (see on Matt. 6:9) is found the petition, “Sound the great horn for our freedom; lift up the banner to gather our exiles, and gather us from the four corners of the earth.”

End of heaven. The “heaven” here referred to is not the abode of God and the angels, but rather the atmospheric envelope that surrounds the earth (see on Gen. 1:8). This expression thus designates the entire earth, in the sense that the earth is “under” the atmospheric heavens. For similar expressions see Deut. 4:19, 32; 30:4; Neh. 1:9; Jer. 49:36; Col. 1:23; etc.

32. A parable. See pp. 203, 204. This brief “parable” is based on an illustration from nature. It had particular meaning to the people of Palestine, where fig trees were common.

The fig tree. Its budding was a sure sign of the approach of warmer weather. Compare the parable of the Barren Fig Tree (see on Luke 13:6–9) and the cursing of the fruitless fig tree (Mark 11:12–14, 20–26).

33. When ye shall see. Emphasis is on personal recognition of the signs and an understanding of their import. Christians are to distinguish between the “great signs and wonders” of the false prophets (see on v. 24), and the true signs mentioned by Jesus. They are to differentiate between those things which Jesus foretold would mark “the beginning of sorrows” (v. 8) at a time when “the end is not yet” (v. 6), and the signs that would indicate that His return “is near, even at the doors” (v. 33).

All these things. This does not include the “sign” of the Son of man in v. 30, because when this is visible Jesus is already coming in the clouds—not simply “at the doors.” The expression “these things” goes back to the signs of v. 29, in particular, but also includes other events and signs Jesus mentions as taking place prior to the end. For a complete list of these see Mark 13 and Luke 21.

It is near. The Greek may also be translated, “He is near.” “It” would refer to the advent of Jesus. In either case the meaning is the same. The reading “He” is preferred in DA 632.

Even at the doors. That is, His next step will be *through* the door.

34. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

This generation. Commentators, generally, have observed that the expression “this generation” of ch. 23:36 refers to the generation of the apostles (see on ch. 23:36). Jesus repeatedly used the expression “this generation” in this sense (see ch. 11:16; cf. chs. 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; etc.; see on ch. 11:16). Obviously, Christ’s predictions concerning the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred in A.D. 70, did, literally, come to pass within the lifetime of many then living.

However, the words “this generation” in v. 34 are in the context of vs. 27–51, which deal exclusively with the coming of the Son of man at the end of the world (see DA 633). The signs mentioned in these verses and in Luke—“signs” in the heavens and “upon the earth” (Luke 21:25)—would take place so near the day of His coming that Christ declared that the “generation” that sees the last of the signs, shall not pass before “all these things [Christ’s coming and the end of the world] be fulfilled.”

Christ did not intend that His followers should know with exactitude when He would return. The signs foretold would testify to the nearness of His coming, but, He declared emphatically, the “day and hour” of that event “knoweth no man” (Matt. 24:36). To make the expression, “this generation,” the basis for reckoning a period of time supposedly terminating with His return violates both the letter and the spirit of His instructions (see on vs. 36, 42).

35. *Heaven and earth.* A common Biblical expression denoting the atmospheric heavens and the earth (see on Gen. 1:8; cf. 2 Peter 3:5, 7, 10, 12, 13; etc.).

Pass away. This does not mean that the earth as a planet will cease to exist, but rather that the atmospheric heavens and the surface of the earth will undergo fundamental changes. For a description of the process by which this change is to be brought about, see Isa. 34:4; Peter 3:7–13.

My words. See on ch. 5:18. The policies of even the greatest men of earth change, but the principles of God are steadfast forever, for God changes not (Mal. 3:6). Here, Jesus places emphasis on the certainty of what He has revealed concerning the future, particularly with respect to His coming and the end of the world (see on Matt. 24:3).

36. *That day and hour.* That is, of His coming and of the end of the world (see on v. 3). Those who are tempted to calculate precisely how many years remain before the appearance of Christ would do well to ponder the counsel here given, and also that of Acts 1:7. It is the privilege and duty of Christians to remain alert, to watch for the signs of His return, and to know when His coming is near (see on v. 33).

Not the angels. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) adding the words, “nor the Son.” In Mark 13:32 textual evidence unanimously supports this reading. Commentators have generally understood this to mean that as a man on earth Christ voluntarily limited His knowledge and power to the capacities of human beings in order that His own perfect life might be an example of how we should live, and that His ministry might be a pattern we could follow, aided by the same divine guidance and help that were His (see on Luke 2:52).

My father only. See on Acts 1:7.

37. *The days of Noe.* In spite of the warning sounded by Noah and testified to by his construction of the ark, men went about their usual round of work and pleasure, utterly heedless of events soon to take place. The same unconcern, Jesus said, would characterize men living in the days prior to His second coming. Their activities too, like those of the antediluvians, would, for the most part, be evil (see DA 633). For a description of conditions in the world before the Flood see Gen. 6:5–13; cf. Peter 2:5, 6.

38. *Marrying.* See on v. 37. The Scriptures are explicit concerning the prevailing iniquity of the days of Noah (see Gen. 6:5, 11–13). The same conditions are foretold of the last days (2 Tim 3:1–5). However, here in Matt. 24 our Lord stresses the additional fact that the Flood overtook the antediluvians while they were occupied in their usual round of activities, and came to them as a surprise (see vs. 36–43). The same will be true of the second advent (see GC 338, 339, 491).

39. *Knew not.* That is, literally, “did not come to know,” or “did not come to a recognition.” For 120 years Noah had warned the antediluvians of the coming of the Flood. They had ample opportunity to know, but chose not to believe. They locked themselves in the darkness of unbelief (see on Hosea 4:6).

Took them. See Gen. 7:11, 12, 17–22.

40. In the field. That is, in the countryside. The illustration probably pictures farmers (see on v. 18).

Shall be taken. Gr. *paralambanō*, meaning literally, “to take to oneself,” used in the papyri of receiving to oneself articles that belong to him. *Paralambanō* is used in ch. 17:1 of Jesus taking to Himself Peter, James, and John, and with them ascending the mount of transfiguration. In Col. 4:17 it is used of a Christian minister’s receiving the gospel commission. In John 14:3 *paralambanō* is used of Jesus receiving to Himself the waiting disciples. By contrast, “took” in Matt. 24:39 is from *airō*, “to carry off,” “to remove.” The “one” of v. 40 is “taken” by the angels as they “gather” the “elect” (see on v. 31).

The teaching known as the “secret rapture,” according to which the saints are to be secretly snatched away from this earth prior to the visible return of Christ, is wholly unscriptural. Its advocates appeal to the statements of Christ in vs. 39–41 as proof. But these verses teach no such thing. The “coming” of ch. 24 is always, without exception, the literal, visible appearance of Christ (see vs. 3, 27, 30, 39, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50). At this coming “all the tribes of the earth ... see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven” (v. 30). Everything of the nature of a “secret” coming Christ attributed to the false christs (vs. 24–26). See on v. 27.

What Jesus meant by being “taken” and by being “left” is made clear by the context. Those who are left are the evil servants, who instead of continuing in their normal pursuits after a supposed secret rapture, are cut asunder and assigned their portion with the hypocrites (vs. 48–51).

Left. Gr. *aphiēmi*, “to send away,” “to dismiss.” The Greek precludes the idea that it is the righteous who are “left.” The righteous are, literally, “received,” and the wicked “sent away.”

41. Mill. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between *mulos*, “millstone,” and *mulōn*, “millhouse.” A small hand mill turned by two women is probably referred to. One form of this mill had a handle near the upper edge of the upper stone, grasped in turn by each of the two women seated, one on either side of the stone.

42. Watch therefore. The admonitions to “take heed” and to “watch” constitute the recurring theme of the chapter. To illustrate the importance of remaining alert, Jesus spoke six parables: the Porter (Mark 13:34–37), which is here condensed into one verse (Matt. 24:42), the Master of the House (vs. 43, 44), the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants (vs. 45–51), the Ten Virgins (ch. 25:1–13), the Talents (vs. 14–30), and the Sheep and the Goats (vs. 31–46).

Christians are not to await their Lord’s return in idle expectancy. While waiting and watching they are to be vigilant in purifying their own souls by obedience to the truth, and to be earnest in working for others. It is their privilege “not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God” (DA 633).

What hour. See on v. 36. Textual evidence favors the reading “day” instead of “hour” (cf. p. 146).

43. The goodman. Gr. *oikodespotēs*, “master of the house” (see on ch. 21:33).

In what watch. The Romans divided the night into four “watches,” a system of reckoning adopted also by the Jews. See p. 50; see on ch. 14:25.

The thief. Paul (1 Thess. 5:2) and John (Rev. 3:3) also use the illustration of a thief in connection with the second coming of Jesus.

44. Be ye also ready. This is the third of the great trio of admonitions of the discourse—“take heed” (v. 4), “watch” (v. 42), “be ... ready” (v. 44). “The crisis is stealing gradually upon us” (DA 636) as we go about our daily round of activities. He who sincerely looks for the coming of Jesus will *be* ready, whenever his Lord may appear.

As ye think not. It is folly to attempt to determine the hour, day, or year of Christ’s coming (see on v. 36). Had it been necessary or desirable for the Christian to know the time, God would have made it known to him. But enough has been revealed so that he may know when the event is near. Knowing that it is near, he is called upon to watch and be ready.

45. Wise servant. This is the second of six illustrations given to show the importance of watching and being ready.

Ruler over his household. This parable applies especially to the religious and spiritual leaders of the “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10; cf. Eph. 2:19), whose duty it is to provide for the needs of its members, and who by precept and example are to witness to their belief in the nearness of Christ’s coming.

Meat in due season. Or, “food at the proper time” (RSV). It is the shepherd’s duty to “feed the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2) and to set it an example (v. 3) of watchfulness and preparedness. God will require an accounting of His flock, and it behooves each shepherd to discharge faithfully the responsibility entrusted to him (see Eze. 34:2–10).

46. Blessed. Or, “happy” (see on ch. 5:3).

47. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

All his goods. That is, he will be entrusted with greater responsibilities (see on ch. 25:21). Compare the experience of Joseph in the house of Potiphar (see Gen. 39:3–6).

48. Say in his heart. The “evil servant” may not admit openly that he believes his lord is delayed, but his way of life betrays him. He does not act as if he believed his lord would soon return.

Delayeth his coming. He is not one of the scoffers, who deny the reality of Christ’s return (2 Peter 3:4). He pretends to believe; in fact, he has accepted the responsibility of giving the members of the “household of faith” spiritual food that will help them to prepare for their Lord’s return (see on Matt. 24:45). But his words lack conviction. He is not in dead earnest. His life and labors proclaim that he does not really believe his Lord is coming soon. In a time of crisis he does not stand “between the dead and the living” (Num. 16:48). He does not minister “in season, out of season”; nor does he “reprove, rebuke, exhort” (2 Tim. 4:2), rather he adapts his message to the “itching ears” of his parishioners (v. 3). He forgets that “the message of Christ’s soon coming is designed to arouse men from their absorption in wordly things” (COL 228).

49. Smite his fellowservants. Compare Ezekiel’s bitter denunciation of shepherds who made it their main business to feed themselves, who were cruel to their sheep, and who scattered the flock (Eze. 34:2–10).

50. Looketh not. See on v. 44.

51. *Cut him asunder.* A painful and shameful form of capital punishment in which the body was cut to pieces with a sword instead of being decapitated.

With the hypocrites. See on ch. 6:2. He has a portion with the hypocrites because he has lived and acted the part of a hypocrite.

Gnashing of teeth. See on ch. 8:12.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1, 2 DA 627
- 1–51 DA 627–636
- 2, 3 GC 25
- 3 GC 371
- 3–8 DA 628
- 6 Ev 241
- 6, 7 Ed 179; PK 536; 6T 14
- 6–8 MB 120; 5T 753
- 7 ML 342; 1T 268
- 9 GC 39
- 9, 10 DA 629
- 11 DA 631; Ev 363
- 12 AA 473; CG 439; PK 187; TM 77, 334; 2T 121, 346, 348; 4T 13, 393, 536; 5T 10, 136, 538, 741; 6T 406
- 12–14 DA 633
- 13 2T 102
- 14 AA 111; Ed 264; FE 335; MB 43, 108; PK 224; 8T 29; 9T 96
- 15 DA 234; GC 341
- 15–18 GC 26
- 20 DA 630
- 21, 22 DA 631; GC 39, 267; 1T 204
- 23 TM 33; 5T 698; 9T 47
- 23–27 DA 631
- 24 CW 98; Ev 249, 364; EW 25, 60; FE 472; GC xi; MM 15, 87; TM 411; 4T 173, 185, 595; 5T 80, 450; 8T 293; 9T 63
- 24–27 GC 625
- 26 GC 525
- 27 GC 322
- 28–31 DA 631
- 29 EW 41; GC 333
- 29–31 GC 37
- 30 EW 15, 35; FE 137; LS 272, 323; PK 720; 1T 60; 4T 306; 8T 37
- 30, 31 GC 322; ML 345; 8T 75
- 31 AA 589; CG 566; GC 645; TM 232; 6T 404
- 32 GC 360
- 32, 33 7T 83
- 32–36 DA 632
- 33 GC 37, 334, 371; 9T 20
- 35 GC 26; MB 148
- 36 Ev 221; EW 15, 34, 233, 239; FE 335; GC 370, 640; LS 65, 89, 102; SR 360; 4T 307

37 Te 25; 5T 99; 8T 50
 37, 38 DA 122; FE 317, 421; MM 142; PK 275; 5T 134
 37–39CH 23; COL 228; CS 135; Ev 26; DA 633; PP 89; 3T 163
 38 AH 121; CT 414; DA 636; FE 355; MYP 456; 5T 10
 38, 39 GC 309, 491; PP 101; Te 100, 227; TM 132; 3T 207; 4T 309; 5T 361
 39 GC 338; 9T 14
 42 Ev 221; GC 371
 42–518T 75; 9T 269
 43 GC 491; TM 233
 44 COL 319; FE 137, 336; ML 343; PK 278; 1T 128; 5T 12, 14; 8T 252; 9T 48
 45 TM 236; 2T 341; 3T 228; 4T 397; 6T 129; 7T 19, 154, 158; 9T 151
 46 GC 371; TM 167
 48 DA 635; EW 22, 58; GC 371; LS 45, 89; TM 77; 1T 72; 3T 255; 4T 306; 5T 9, 15, 101, 188, 277; 8T 252
 48–50DA 635
 48–51TM 237; 1T 57
 49 5T 102, 212
 50, 51 DA 635

CHAPTER 25

1 *The parable of the ten virgins, 14 and of the talents. 31 Also the description of the last judgment.*

1. The kingdom of heaven. [*The Ten Virgins, Matt. 25:1–13.* See on parables pp. 203–207.] See on Matt. 4:17; 5:2; cf. on Luke 4:19. For the circumstances under which this parable was given see on Matt. 24:1–3, 42. Jesus and at least four of His disciples were on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. The sun had set, and the shadows of twilight were deepening (COL 405). As was so often the case with parables related by Jesus, the scene was enacted before the eyes of those who heard the story (see COL 405).

Likened. Or, “compared” (see p. 203). This parable places emphasis on the importance of preparation for the coming of Christ, and stresses the importance of *being* ready (see on ch. 24:44).

Virgins. Or, “maidens” (RSV). Apparently no significance is to be attached to the number ten, a figure Jesus seems elsewhere to have used as a round number (see on Luke 15:8). In this parable the ten young women represent all of those who profess the pure faith of Jesus (COL 406). They believe in the soon coming of Jesus. Compare Rev. 14:4.

Lamps. From the Gr. *lampades*, designating both torches and lamps, here, the latter. The lamps probably consisted of small clay bowls mounted on staves. The bowls contained oil and had a wick floating in the oil, its upper end held erect by the side of the bowl. The bridal party proceeded “by torchlight” (COL 405). The lamps represent the Word of God (COL 406; see Ps. 119:105).

Went forth. The ten young women were waiting near the bride’s home for the arrival of the groom and his party, intending to accompany the bridal party to the home of the groom, there to participate in the wedding festivities (see COL 405). The fact that the young women, upon being awakened, saw the procession moving off without them (COL 406) suggests that they were not intimate friends of the bride, but acquaintances who, according to Oriental custom, would be welcome to join the procession and share in the festivities on their own initiative.

To meet the bridegroom. As he came from his home to that of the bride, to claim her and escort her to his home.

2. Five. No significance apparently attaches to the number five, any more than to the number ten (see on v. 1). There were simply two classes of young women in the group. The difference between the two groups becomes apparent as the narrative proceeds, and, in fact, constitutes the distinctive point of the parable.

Foolish. The five foolish maidens are not hypocrites (COL 411). They are “foolish” in that they had not yielded themselves to the working of the Holy Spirit. In this respect they resemble the stony-ground hearers (COL 411; see on ch. 13:5) and the man without a wedding garment (see on ch. 22:11–14). They are attracted by the gospel, but selfishness keeps the truth from taking deep root in their lives and bearing the fruit of a Christlike character (see on Eze. 33:32; Matt. 7:21–27). They will be among those who respond to the “peace and safety” cry (see EW 282; PP 104; see on 1 Thess. 5:3; cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 28:9; Eze. 13:10, 16).

3. Oil. This symbolizes the Holy Spirit (COL 408; see Zech. 4:1–14), of which the church members here represented are destitute. They are familiar with the theory of the truth, but the gospel has effected no change in their lives.

4. The wise. The wise virgins of the parable represent those Christians who understand, appreciate, and avail themselves of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. “Wise” indeed are Christians today who welcome the Holy Spirit into their lives and cooperate with Him in His appointed task (see John 14:16, 17; John 16:7–15).

Vessels. Or, “receptacles,” in this case, flagons or flasks for oil. These receptacles were for the reserve supply.

5. Tarried. Gr. *chronizō*, “to delay,” “to linger.” The parable was a warning to those who “thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear” (Luke 19:11; cf. Matt. 24:3; Acts 1:6). Jesus would not return as soon as they had anticipated. But to have told the disciples of this in a clear and specific way would have discouraged them (see on Matt. 24:3).

Christians today would do well to remember that the heavenly Bridegroom’s delay is not due to any lack of preparedness on His part. He could have come long ago had His people been ready to welcome Him, and had they been faithful in completing their appointed task of preparing the world for His coming (see DA 633, 634).

Slumbered and slept. That is, they became drowsy and went to sleep.

6. At midnight. When the weary, waiting maidens would be most drowsy. “Midnight” represents spiritual darkness. Great spiritual darkness. Great spiritual darkness will cover the earth in the last days (see COL 414).

7. Arose. All ten of the virgins responded to the summons to join the wedding procession.

Trimmed. The lamps had apparently gone untended for a long time. They needed to be “trimmed” in order that they might burn brightly.

8. Said unto the wise. The foolish maidens had not learned the important lesson of accepting responsibility for themselves. They had fallen into the habit of relying on others to make up for their own lack of foresight.

Of your oil. That is, “some of your oil.” The preparation of the foolish virgins had not been thorough and in earnest, but superficial.

Are gone out. Literally, “are going out.” The time of test had come, but their preparation proved superficial and inadequate. They had no reserves on which to draw to meet the unexpected emergency. They had made a promising start but were not prepared to endure unto the end (see on ch. 24:13).

9. Buy for yourselves. To have given the foolish virgins sufficient oil for the occasion would have left the wise virgins without any. The latter were not selfish. Character is not transferable. One Christian cannot do for another that which he must do for himself in preparation for himself in preparation for the crisis that lies ahead.

10. They went to buy. After the close of probation it will be too late to acquire those traits of character needed to accompany the heavenly Bridegroom to His Father’s house, not because of any unwillingness on the part of God, but because character has already been fixed.

The door was shut. Compare the feelings of Esau when he discovered that he had forfeited the birthright (see on Heb. 12:17). Their exclusion from the wedding feast was the result of their own deliberate choice (see GC 542, 543).

11. Open to us. The five foolish virgins sought the rewards of faithful service without having rendered that kind of service (see on v. 10).

12. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

I know you not. It seems that the five virgins were not special friends of the bride, and the groom was in no way obligated to them (see on v. 1). It appears that they were attempting to enter when they had no right to do so, and such was indeed the case. Had they been ready to enter in when the door was open, they would have been welcome, but now it was closed. Their lack of foresight was inexcusable and their loss irretrievable. For the heartbreaking disappointment of those who intend to be among the saved but fail to make the necessary preparation, see on chs. 7:23; 22:1–14. “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’”

13. Watch therefore. The lesson of the parable (see on ch. 24:42, 44).

14. The kingdom of heaven. [*The Talents*, Matt. 25:14–30. Cf. on Luke 19:11–28. On parables see pp. 203–207.] The words, “the kingdom of heaven is,” have been supplied by the translators. For the circumstances under which this parable was told see on chs. 24:1–3; 25:1. For the truth it was given to illustrate see on ch. 24:45–51.

Whereas the parable of the Ten Virgins (ch. 25:1–13) places emphasis upon personal preparation for Christ’s promised return, that of the Talents stresses the responsibility of soul-saving labor for others. Thus, to “watch” (ch. 24:42) includes both personal preparation and personal missionary labor.

In many respects this parable and that of the Pounds are similar, but there are also great dissimilarities.

A man travelling. See on Luke 19:12. Jesus thus refers to Himself.

A far country. Jesus returned to heaven. The nobleman in the parable of the Pounds went “to receive for himself a kingdom” (see on Luke 19:12).

His own servants. Jesus thus designates His disciples, whom He has entrusted with the conduct of His affairs on earth (see on ch. 28:19, 20). We belong to God by virtue of His creative power and His redeeming grace. We ourselves and all that we have belong to Him.

Delivered unto them. The master had two objectives: (1) to increase his holdings, and (2) to test his servants in anticipation of entrusting them with greater responsibilities.

Similarly, Christ has committed the work of the gospel to men in order to advance the interests of His kingdom on earth and to train His servants for increased responsibilities. See on Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:13.

15. Talents. The silver in a talent would weigh 687.5 oz. troy, or 21.38 kg. (see p. 49); and this, according to the laboring man's daily wage, was more than 18 years' pay. (See also on Luke 19:13.) The talents represent special gifts of the Spirit, together with all natural endowments.

To every man. Each of us has a work to do for God. Though there are varying degrees of responsibility, none are altogether exempt from responsibility.

His several ability. The amount entrusted to each servant was no more than, in the estimation of his master, he could handle wisely; at the same time it was sufficient to challenge his ingenuity and skill and thus provide him with an opportunity to gain experience. The master exercised discrimination in the amount entrusted to each servant, and then demanded faithfulness in the discharge of the responsibility involved in handling it.

16. Went and traded. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) as to whether the word "straightway" belongs with v. 15—"straightway took his journey"—or with v. 16—"he straightway went and traded." According to the latter reading, the servant lost no time in setting about the task entrusted to him. He proved diligent.

18. Digged in the earth. In ancient times this was generally considered the safest means of preserving treasure (cf. ch. 13:44). Ancient coins in museums today have often come from such treasure hoards.

19. Reckoneth. See on ch. 18:23.

20. Other five. See on Luke 19:16, where the profit was much greater.

21. Well done. The master's approval was not proportionate to the amount of profit in each case, but rather to the faithfulness displayed (see on ch. 20:8–16).

Make thee ruler. The servant had manifested sound judgment and followed right principles in a little, and there was reason to believe he would do the same when much was entrusted to him. The reward for faithful service was to be an increased opportunity to serve. The use made of the lesser opportunity was the measure of ability to take advantage of greater opportunities. In part, a reward for faithful service comes in this life, but Jesus here refers primarily to the rewards of the world to come (COL 361).

The joy of thy lord. This constitutes the second, and no less real, part of the reward for faithful service.

24. Lord, I knew thee. See on Luke 19:21. The servant candidly admits that his course of action was not due to ignorance or to lack of ability. It was deliberate.

Hard. Gr. *sklēros*, "harsh," "stern." The negligent servant in the parable of the Pounds accused his master of being *austēros*, "austere," "strict," "unfriendly." In both instances the charge was altogether unjust.

Not sown. The negligent servant thought only of the material profit, and forgot the less tangible but no less real rewards that would accrue to him as a result of faithful service (see on v. 21). For further comment see on Luke 19:21.

Strawed. Gr. *diaskorpizō*, "to scatter."

25. I was afraid. The negligent servant had accepted the talent, and in so doing tacitly promised to do something with it. He feared that an unsuccessful business venture not

only might earn no interest but could result in the loss of the capital invested in it. He surmised that any profit would go to his master, and any loss would be held against him personally. He was unwilling to accept the responsibility involved, and would do the same were larger opportunities offered him.

Hid thy talent. See on Luke 19:20.

26. *Wicked and slothful.* Many men with large capabilities accomplish little because they attempt little (see COL 331).

Thou knewest. The negligent servant's excuse proves to be his condemnation. His own lips have admitted his guilt.

27. *Thou oughtest.* The servant's knowledge imposed upon him a responsibility from which there was no escape. He could have done something about the situation had he chosen to. He was without excuse. He had the ability to double the one talent. God accepts a man according to what he can do, and never expects more of him than that (2 Cor. 8:12). He requires no more of man—and no less—than his best.

The exchangers. That is, the bankers of the day (see on Luke 19:23). The servant might have invested the money, if he feared (see on Matt. 25:25) to become involved in a more complicated business deal. The amount of profit might have been less, but even that would have been better than nothing at all.

Usury. "Interest" (see on Ex. 22:25).

28. *Take therefore.* The reward for faithful service was an opportunity to render greater service (see on v. 21). The penalty for failure to serve was the loss of further opportunity to serve. Opportunities neglected are soon lost. For further comment see on Luke 19:24; cf. COL 364.

Give it. The opportunities and tasks one man refuses are given to another who will take advantage of them and make the most of them. For the principle here involved see on Luke 19:24, 25.

29. *That hath.* This great truth Jesus stated upon various occasions (cf. on ch. 13:12).

Taken away. Talents are bestowed that they may be put to use, and if they are not used, it is only natural that they be removed. Conversely, to make the most of limited opportunities often results in increasingly greater opportunities.

30. *Cast ye.* The "unprofitable servant" had been derelict in his duty, a fact he freely admitted. His failure was deliberate and premeditated, and he must bear the responsibility for that failure. In the great final day of judgment those who have drifted along, dodging opportunities and shirking responsibilities, will be classed by the great Judge with evildoers (COL 365).

Unprofitable. Or, "useless," "worthless."

Outer darkness. See on chs. 8:12; 22:13.

Weeping and gnashing of teeth. Compare chs. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51. Jesus repeated this saying upon numerous occasions, as a graphic description of the remorse of the lost.

31. *Son of man.* [*The Sheep and the Goats*, Matt. 25:31–46. On parables see pp. 207–213.] For comment on the circumstances under which this parable was given see on ch. 24:1–3; cf. on ch. 25:1, 14. Like the parables of the Ten Virgins (vs. 1–13) and the Talents (vs. 14–30), the parable of the Sheep and the Goats was told to illustrate truths set forth in ch. 24 relative to the promised return of Jesus. For the relationship of the two preceding parables to the discourse of ch. 24, see on ch. 25:14. This, the last of Jesus' parables, appropriately presents the great final assize and reduces to the most simple and

practical terms the basis on which judgment is to be meted out. Concerning the expression “Son of man” see on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Come in his glory. At His first advent Jesus veiled His divine glory and lived as a man among men (see on Luke 2:48). The kingdom He then established was the kingdom of His grace (see on Matt. 5:3). However, He will come again, “in his glory,” to inaugurate His eternal kingdom (Dan. 7:14, 27; Rev. 11:15; see on Matt. 4:17; 5:2). Jesus’ second advent is the theme of Matt. 24 and 25.

The holy angels. Although there is little textual evidence (cf. p. 146) for including the word “holy,” there can be no doubt that holy angels are meant. For the association of the angels in the work of judgment see on Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11. For their ministry on behalf of men see on Heb. 1:14. For the presence of the angels at the second coming of Christ see on Matt. 24:30, 31; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:15–17.

Then shall he sit. That is, as King (v. 34) and Judge (vs. 32, 34, 41).

Throne of his glory. Or, “His glorious throne.” Christ was seated upon the throne of the universe prior to His incarnation (DA 22, 23). Upon His ascension He was once more enthroned (AA 38), as Priest and King (Zech. 6:13; AA 39), and shared His Father’s throne (DA 832; Rev. 3:21). At the completion of the work of investigative judgment, begun in 1844 (see on Rev. 14:6, 7), Jesus will receive “His kingdom” (GC 426, 613, 614; EW 55, 280). The final coronation and enthronement of Christ as King of the universe takes place at the close of the millennium, before all men—those who are subjects of His glorious kingdom and those who have refused allegiance to Him.

32. All nations. See Rev. 20:11–15; GC 665, 666.

Separate them. See on ch. 13:24–30, 47–50.

As a shepherd. Directly or indirectly, Jesus often compared Himself to a shepherd and His people to sheep (see Eze. 34:11–17; Zech. 13:7; Matt. 15:24; 18:11–14; Luke 15:1–7; John 10:1–16).

Sheep. Palestinian sheep were usually white, and the goats black (Ps. 147:16; Isa. 1:18; Eze. 27:18; cf. S. of Sol. 4:1, 2). They were generally tended together by the same shepherd (Gen. 30:32, 33).

33. Right hand. Typifying honor and blessing (see Gen. 48:13, 14; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Col. 3:1; etc.).

The left. The left side might represent either less favor or actual disfavor. Here the latter is evidently intended (see v. 41).

34. The King. Here clearly the “Son of man” of v. 31. See on v. 31.

Ye blessed. To be “blessed” is to be “happy” (see on ch. 5:3). Those whom God makes “happy” are happy indeed! At His “right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps. 16:11).

My Father. See on ch. 6:9.

Inherit. To inherit is to enter into possession of property. Man was originally appointed king of this world (Gen. 1:28), but lost his dominion as a result of sin. Daniel looked forward to the time when the saints would once more inherit the eternal kingdom originally planned for them (Dan. 7:27).

The kingdom. That is, the kingdom of glory (see on v. 31).

Prepared for you. God’s original plan for this world, temporarily interrupted by the entrance of sin, will eventually succeed, and His will be supreme on this earth as it is in heaven (see on ch. 6:10). Compare Luke 12:32.

35. Meat. That is, “food” (see on ch. 3:4). The great final test is concerned with the extent to which the principles of true religion (see James 1:27) have been applied to daily living, particularly in relationship to the interests and needs of others.

Took me in. That is, “received me hospitably,” or “entertained me.”

36. Visited me. See on Luke 1:68.

37. When saw we thee? The spirit and practice of selfless service had become so much a habit with “the righteous” that they responded automatically to the needs of their fellow men.

40. The King. That is, Christ (see vs. 31, 34).

Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

Unto me. What consolation that Christ identifies Himself with His chosen ones to the extent that whatever concerns them concerns Him personally. We can feel no pain or disappointment, we can experience no need, but that Christ sympathizes with us. In making the needs of others our responsibility we reflect this same aspect of the divine character. When we reflect the character of Jesus perfectly we will feel as He does toward those in need, and through us He will be able to solace and succor others. The best evidence of love for God is love that leads us to bear “one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2; cf. 1 John 3:14–19; see on Matt. 5:43–48). The principle involved in the statement of ch. 25:40 is well illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (see on Luke 10:25–37). The best evidence that a person has become a son of God is that he does the works of God (cf. John 8:44).

41. Everlasting fire. Described elsewhere as “unquenchable fire” (see on ch. 3:12) and “hell fire” (see on ch. 5:22). All three refer to the fires of the last day that will devour the wicked and all their works (2 Peter 3:10–12; Rev. 20:10, 14, 15).

The word *aiōnios*, translated “everlasting,” or “eternal,” once, “for ever,” means literally, “lasting for an age,” in the sense of being continuous and not subject to capricious change. The ancient Greek papyri contain numerous examples of Roman emperors being described as *aiōnios*. The reference is to the continuous nature of their tenure—they held office for life. It is thus clear that the English words “everlasting” and “eternal” do not accurately reflect the meaning of *aiōnios*. *Aiōnios*, literally, “age lasting,” expresses permanence or perpetuity *within limits*; “everlasting” and “eternal” imply duration *unlimited*. The duration signified by *aiōnios* must, in each case, be determined by the nature of the person or thing it describes. In the case of Tiberius Caesar, for instance, *aiōnios* describes a period of 23 years, that is, the time from his ascent to the throne until his death.

In the NT *aiōnios* is used to describe both the fate of the wicked and the future state of the righteous. Following the principle stated above, that the durative quality of *aiōnios* is to be determined by the person or thing of which it is used, we find that the reward of the righteous is life to which there is no end; the reward of the wicked is death to which there is no end (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; etc.). In John 3:16 “everlasting life” is contrasted with “perish.” In 2 Thess 1:9 the wicked are said to be “punished with everlasting destruction.” The expression does not signify a *process* that goes on forever, but an act whose *results* are permanent.

“Fire” is the means by which punishment for sin is inflicted (Matt. 18:8; 25:41). That “fire” is “everlasting,” *aiōnios*, does not signify that it is of endless duration. This is clear from Jude 7. Obviously the “eternal fire” that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah burned for a time and then went out. Elsewhere, the Scriptures refer to the fires of the last day as “unquenchable” (Matt. 3:12), meaning that they will not be extinguished until they have burned up the last vestiges of sin and sinners (see on v. 12). For *‘olam*, the OT equivalent of *aiōnios*, see on Ex. 21:6.

For the devil. See 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6, 7. The fate of the devil and his angels is already determined. These beings “which kept not their first estate” are destined to perish in the fires of the last day. All who follow their example of rebellion will suffer the same fate.

44. When saw we thee? They had failed to learn the great truth that genuine love for God reveals itself in love for God’s suffering children. True religion involves, more than passive assent to dogmas.

45. Inasmuch. See on v. 40.

46. Everlasting punishment. See on v. 41.

Life eternal. Compare John 3:16; Rom. 6:23.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 SR 367
- 1–6GC 393
- 1–13COL 405–421; GC 393, 394, 426, 427
- 3 TM 86, 149, 443; 5T 21, 105, 220
- 4 CH 422; GC 427; ML 217; TM 233; 5T 276
- 5 SR 367
- 5–7GC 398; SR 369
- 6 COL 408, 412, 414; EW 238, 242, 248, 249; GC 402, 426, 427; LS 59; MM 331, 333; TM 233; 1T 53; 8T 212; 9T 48, 155
- 6–12COL 406
- 7 AH 96; GW 104; ML 109; 5T 485; 9T 61, 106
- 10 GC 426, 427, 428
- 11 8T 75
- 12 CG 483; COL 413; DA 640; 9T 252
- 13–15COL 325
- 13–30COL 325–365
- 14–30CS 114–122, 301; Ev 653; ML 116; 1T 197–200
- 15 CH 284, 529; COL 328; CS 118; ML 113; MYP 301; TM 379, 399; 2T 245, 282, 656, 659; 4T 619; WM 101, 120, 269
- 16, 17 COL 329
- 18 COL 355; CS 118
- 19 COL 360; TM 399
- 20 TM 166
- 21 AA 591; AH 510; CH 285; ChS 180, 269; COL 361; CS 112, 123, 165, 213, 288, 343, 348; CT 48, 280, 513, 553; FE 48, 213, 473; GC 549, 647; ML 54, 95, 113, 349; MYP 17, 46, 145; Te 118, 221; TM 167, 184; 1T 453, 513; 2T 179, 229, 235, 236, 285, 312,

366, 491; 3T 145, 387, 525; 4T 46, 48, 54, 76, 413; 442, 537; 5T 267; 6T 143, 303, 309, 441; 7T 297; 8T 327; 9T 59; WM 211, 307

23 CG 569; ChS 275; CS 120, 129; CSW 55, 75; DA 523; FE 51, 91; ML 158; MYP 17, 125, 301; PK 142; 1T 538; 2T 466, 686, 709; 3T 247, 327, 402; 6T 304; 8T 51, 171; 9T 252; WM 17

24 5T 271

24, 25 CT 234; MYP 308; 1T 530, 539; 2T 665

24–26COL 362; 6T 297

24–273T 386

24–305T 282

25 CS 304; GW 223; 1T 198; 2T 233; 3T 57; 4T 47, 51, 412, 479, 618; 5T 116, 155, 465; 8T 55

26 AH 207; ChS 36; CS 123; 3T 117, 145; 4T 408

26–302T 666

27 CS 83; LS 363; ML 118; MYP 319; TM 166; 1T 179; 2T 59, 167, 250, 659, 674; 3T 122; 4T 105, 118, 481; 8T 33

28 COL 364; 1T 530

29 FE 215

30 COL 365; 1T 530; 2T 242; 3T 147, 387; 4T 412, 481

31 DA 832; EW 110

31, 32 GC 301, 347

31–34GC 322

31–36DA 637

31–46DA 637–641; 1T 679

34 AA 34, 591, 601; CG 567; COL 374; CS 129, 348, 350; EW 53; MB 100; ML 351; MM 135; SC 126; Te 114; 2T 445; 3T 525; WM 314

34, 35 MYP 145

34–36CH 34

34–402T 24

34–45MM 134

34–461T 637; 3T 174

35–36ML 241; 3T 186; 6T 275

40 AH 296; CS 164; DA 638; Ed 139; GC 77, 668; MH 370; ML 11, 165, 243; MM 60, 139; MYP 145; SL 56; SR 425; Te 79; 1T 674, 693; 2T 31, 157; 3T 512; 4T 195, 225, 326, 511, 620; 5T 420; 6T 281, 303, 348; 7T 50; 9T 226; WM 23, 24, 85, 97, 239, 313

40–463T 518

41 CS 123; GC 549; PP 469; 2T 27, 237; 3T 84; 9T 252

41–43ChS 216; CS 166

41–462T 25

42 3T 391; 4T 63

42, 43 DA 639; MH 288; MM 146

45 CS 27; MM 146; PK 545, 652; Te 272; 1T 693; 2T 30, 33, 330; 3T 390, 525; 4T 423, 620; 5T 612; WM 23, 210

CHAPTER 26

1 *The rulers conspire against Christ.* 6 *The woman anointeth his head.* 14 *Judas selleth him.* 17 *Christ eateth the passover:* 26 *instituteth his holy supper:* 36 *prayeth in the*

garden: 47 and being betrayed with a kiss, 57 is carried to Caiaphas, 69 and denied of Peter.

1. All these sayings. [*The Betrayal Plot*, Matt. 26:1–5, 14–16=Mark 14:1, 2, 10, 11=Luke 22:1–6=John 12:10, 11. Major comment: Matthew. See Passion Week] That is, the discourse on the signs of His promised return, and the parables, as recorded in chs. 24 and 25.

2. After two days. The statement of v. 1 places this prediction of the betrayal and crucifixion at some time subsequent to the discourse recorded in chs. 24 and 25 (see on ch. 24:1). Whether this was late Tuesday night or on Wednesday is not certain. Commentators, thinking of the betrayal Thursday night and of “two days” in terms of Occidental reckoning, generally place this statement on Tuesday night. However, the period designated may be shorter. For example, according to NT terminology, “after three days” and “on the third day” are equivalent (see pp. 248-251), and it may be that “after two days” should be understood in a similar sense. With the betrayal falling on Thursday night, Jewish reckoning would, accordingly, indicate Wednesday as the day on which Christ spoke these words. In the year A.D. 31 the 14th day of Nisan, the day on which the Passover was slain, fell on Friday (see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1).

The passover. See Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Betrayed. Gr. *paradidōmi*, “to give up to,” or “to deliver over to.” Jesus specifies the time of His being taken into custody.

3. Then assembled together. It cannot be said with certainty whether Matthew here follows a strictly chronological order, and thus intends to show that the assembly of priests and elders took place “two days” before the Passover, or whether he is developing the subject topically. He may be simply giving a statement of Jesus (v. 2) before he records the assembly of priests and elders (vs. 4, 5). The fact that Matthew has grouped various events in the life of Christ topically rather than chronologically (see on chs. 8:2; 12:1; 13:1; 26:6; etc.) leaves it an open question as to whether he has done so here.

Matthew uses the word *tote*, “then,” some 90 times (more than all the other NT writers combined), but not always in the sense of a strict chronological relationship between the incident thus introduced and that immediately preceding it. See p. 274.

It may be noted that the feast at Simon’s house recorded farther on in this chapter (vs. 6–13) apparently occurred the preceding Sabbath, probably in the evening (John 12:1, 2, 12, 13; see DA 557, 563 [the word *deipnon*, “supper,” generally refers to an evening meal, as in John 13:2; see on Luke 14:12]). Chronologically, it should have been recorded prior to the narrative of Matt. 21 (see on ch. 26:5). The assembly of priests and elders here mentioned seems to have taken place that same Saturday night (see DA 558), and it was from Simon’s supper that Judas went to them with his offer to betray his Master (vs. 14, 15; DA 563, 564). Most probably, therefore, the incidents recorded in vs. 3–15 took place the preceding Saturday night, but Matthew places them here because of their significant bearing upon the account of Jesus’ betrayal.

For a discussion of the immediate occasion prompting this assembly of Jewish leaders see DA 557, 558. This seems to have been Judas’ first secret meeting with the Jewish

leaders (DA 563, 564). He apparently met with them a second time prior to the Last Supper, Thursday night (DA 720), perhaps on Tuesday night.

The chief priests. The men here mentioned no doubt were all members of the Sanhedrin, the national council of the Jews. A few weeks previously, soon after the raising of Lazarus, the council had decided to put Jesus to death at the very first favorable opportunity (John 11:47–53; DA 537–541). Now, popular sentiment in His favor made the matter even more pressing (DA 557). As to the meaning of the expression “chief priests” see on Matt. 2:4. In view of the fact that several ex-high priests were living at the time it may be that they are the ones here referred to as “the chief priests.”

The scribes. See p. 55. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 146) the omission of these words.

The palace. Where Jesus later appeared before Annas and Caiaphas (see v. 58), probably adjoining, perhaps within, the Temple area. (See Jerusalem in Time of Christ.)

Caiaphas. See on Luke 3:2.

4. Consulted. Their first serious consultation about Jesus had occurred two years previously (John 5:16; DA 213). Another such session had been held more recently, immediately after the raising of Lazarus (DA 558; John 11:47–53). The consultation of Matt. 26:4 was apparently held on the Saturday night preceding the crucifixion (see on v. 3), and another followed on Tuesday morning (DA 593).

By subtilty. Especially since the resurrection of Lazarus, the increasing popularity of Jesus filled the Jewish leaders with fear (DA 558). Events of the first few days of the crucifixion week served only to intensify the feeling of the people that in Jesus the nation had found the Leader of whom the prophets had spoken, and the Pharisees exclaimed in genuine perplexity, “Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him” (John 12:19; DA 570, 572, 590, 594). A crisis was imminent, and unless they could dispose of Him, their own fall appeared certain. They felt that they must act swiftly and secretly. Furthermore, a popular uprising in support of Jesus as Messiah-King (see DA 558, 570–572, 590) would certainly bring down the oppressive might of Rome even more firmly upon the nation. On the other hand, to seize Jesus openly might spark a popular uprising in His favor.

5. Not on the feast day. Popular sentiment among the throngs gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, the event that marked Israel’s first deliverance as a nation, was strongly in favor of proclaiming Jesus as Messiah-King (see on v. 4). It would not be safe, the leaders reasoned, to deal with Jesus until these crowds should have departed from the city. But, their deliberations having reached this point, Judas came with a proposal that apparently changed their plans (vs. 14, 15). It seems that Matthew here inserts the narrative of the feast at Simon’s house (vs. 6–13), which took place in Bethany, while the priests and Pharisees were in council in the palace of Caiaphas in Jerusalem, by way of explaining the change in plans. Following the rebuke received at this feast Judas went directly to the palace, and there arranged to betray Jesus.

An uproar. See on v. 4. This was presumably Saturday night preceding the crucifixion (see on v. 3). The day following witnessed the great popular demonstration acclaiming Jesus, Messiah-King, as He entered Jerusalem in triumph (see on ch. 21:1–11; DA 570–572). No doubt, as the priests went out to meet Jesus on the brow of the Mount of Olives they felt that their worst fears were about to be realized (see DA 578, 580, 581).

6. Bethany. [*Simon's Feast, Matt. 26:6–13=Mark 14:3–9=Luke 7:36–50=John 12:1–9.* Major comment: Matthew and Luke. See Closing Ministry at Jerusalem; The Ministry of Our Lord, Passion Week, pp. 231, 233.] Concerning the time of the feast see DA 557. Commentators generally deny that the feast of Luke 7:36–50 is to be identified with the one here recorded by Matthew (and also by Mark and John), and assign it to the Galilean ministry, more than a year and a half earlier. For a statement of the reasons why this commentary believes that one feast is described by all four gospel writers see Additional Note on Luke 7.

Simon. A Pharisee (Luke 7:36–40) whom Jesus had healed of the dreaded leprosy. He considered himself a disciple, had openly associated himself with Jesus' followers, but was not altogether convinced of His Messiahship (DA 557, 566; Luke 7:39). The feast was held in honor of Jesus. Lazarus was also an honored guest, Martha served, and Mary Magdalene whom Simon had led into sin and whom Jesus had healed of demon possession, was also present (DA 558, 559; see Additional Note on Luke 7).

The leper. Not that he had leprosy at the time, for then he would have been barred from society (see on Mark 1:40). Jesus had, some time previously, cured him of the leprosy, and he, in turn, gave this feast as an expression of his appreciation for what Jesus had done (DA 557).

7. A woman. This was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12:1–3; see Additional Note on Luke 7).

An alabaster box. See on Luke 7:37. According to Mark 14:3 the "box," or jar, had to be broken in order that its contents might be released.

Precious. That is, "expensive," a meaning formerly attached to the word "precious."

Ointment. Gr. *muron*, "ointment." Mark identifies it as spikenard (see on Luke 7:37).

On his head. Matthew and Mark both speak of Mary's anointing the head of Jesus, whereas Luke and John mention the anointing of the feet. At first glance this may seem to be a discrepancy between the accounts; however, there is no valid reason for doubting that both were done (cf. Ps. 133:2).

Sat. Literally, "reclined" (see on Mark 2:15).

8. His disciples. According to John 12:4, 5 the protest began with Judas. The other disciples apparently joined him in the criticism, which was probably voiced in whispers that circulated around the table.

This waste. Judas resented the fact that the perfume had not been sold and the money deposited in the communal treasury, where he could personally have access to it, "because he was a thief" (John 12:6).

9. Sold for much. According to Mark 14:5 the estimated value was more than 300 pence. In actual silver, by weight, 300 pence would be c. .125 oz. troy, or 3.89 g. (see p. 49). But a penny was the usual day's wage (see on Matt. 20:2); thus 300 pence would be practically equivalent to the annual income of an ordinary laborer.

The poor. Judas, the speaker (see on v. 8), knew well that Jewish law made the care of the poor a definite responsibility of those who enjoyed better circumstances (Deut. 15:7–11; etc.) and that attention to their needs was looked upon as meritorious. See on Matt. 5:3.

10. Understood. That is, Jesus became aware of. See on Mark 2:8.

11. The poor always. Jesus does not question our duty to the poor, He simply declares that there are obligations that transcend this duty.

Not always. Even Jesus' closest associates did not sense what another week would bring forth! Only Mary seemed to understand, albeit dimly, what lay ahead (see DA 559). Her earnest desire to do "what she could" (Mark 14:8) was highly valued by Jesus as He faced the hour of crisis that lay ahead.

12. For my burial. It had been Mary's original intent to use the spikenard in preparing the body of Jesus for burial (DA 559, 560; cf. Mark 16:1), but evidently the Spirit of God impressed Mary to use it upon this occasion instead.

13. Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

This gospel. Jesus clearly anticipated the proclamation of His "gospel" (see on Mark 1:1) everywhere (see also Matt. 24:14). Those who affirm that Jesus never intended to found a religion would do well to ponder this statement.

A memorial of her. Or, "in memory of her" (RSV). Mary's act of devotion reflected the very same spirit that had prompted Jesus to come down to this dark earth (Phil. 2:6–8).

14. Judas Iscariot. For a sketch of Judas see on Mark 3:19 (cf. DA 716–722).

Went unto. For the relationship of this event to those listed earlier in this chapter see on vs. 3, 5. The sermon in the synagogue at Capernaum about a year earlier (John 6:22–65) had been the turning point in the history of Judas (DA 719). Though outwardly he remained with the Twelve, in heart he had deserted Jesus. Now Jesus' commendation of Mary's act of devotion at Simon's feast, which was an indirect condemnation of his own attitude, spurred Judas into action (DA 563, 564, 720). How strange that Mary's supreme act of love for Jesus should provoke Judas to his supreme deed of disloyalty! In going to the "chief priests" Judas acted under the inspiration of the evil one (Luke 22:3).

15. What will ye give me? Personal advantage was uppermost in his mind as Judas offered to betray his Master. In fact, personal advantage had come to be the dominant motive of his entire life.

I will deliver him. Judas' offer solved the dilemma of the leaders in Jerusalem. They wished to silence Jesus, but were paralyzed by fear of the people (see on v. 5). Their problem was how to take Jesus into custody without provoking a popular revolt in His favor. See on v. 16.

Pieces of silver. Gr. *arguria*, thought here to refer to shekels, which, in the days of Christ, were equivalent to the Greek *statēres* (see on ch. 17:24, 27) and the Tyrian *tetradrachma*. The *statēr* weighed .458 oz. troy, or 14.245 g., and would be about 4 days' wages for a common laborer. "Thirty pieces of silver" would, accordingly, be about 120 days' wages. Thirty shekels of silver was the traditional price of a slave (Ex. 21:32). Compare the prediction of Zech. 11:12.

16. Opportunity. Gr. *eukairia*, "a favorable time," that is, one suitable to the requirements of the rulers of the nation (see on vs. 4, 5). Judas provided the missing link in the priestly plot against Jesus—a convenient means (Mark 14:11) for taking Jesus into custody "in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:6; cf. Mark 14:1, 2). No wonder the priests and elders were "glad" (Mark 14:11).

17. The first day. [*Preparation for the Passover, Matt. 26:17–19=Mark 14:12–16=Luke 22:7–13.* Major comment: Matthew.] Mark makes the additional observation that the "first day of unleavened bread" was the time "when they killed the passover" (Mark 14:12). Luke identifies the day as the time "when the passover must be killed."

The designation “first day of unleavened bread,” for the day that the Passover was killed, is somewhat unusual. Normally the 14th of Nisan is designated as the day for the slaying of the Passover lamb and the 15th of Nisan as the first day of unleavened bread (Lev. 23:5, 6; see Vol. II, p. 105). Because of the close relationship between the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread the two terms were sometimes used interchangeably, and the entire feast called by either one or the other of the two names (see Talmud *Pesaḥim* 5a, Soncino ed., pp. 15–17; cf. Josephus *Antiquities* ii. 15. 1 [315–317]). The present incident occurred on Thursday. For the relationship between this event and the Passover, and for the apparent discrepancy between the synoptic writers and John concerning the dating of the Passover, see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

Unleavened bread. See on Ex. 12:8; Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17; Deut. 16:3, 8; see Vol. I, p. 709; Vol. II, p. 108.

The disciples came. The head of the household had the responsibility of making arrangements for the celebration of the Passover, as he had for all other religious interests of the family. He was, in a sense, the priest of the family. Being, spiritually, “members of the family of Jesus” (DA 349), the disciples naturally turned to Him for directions concerning their preparation for the Passover. It was apparently Thursday morning, Nisan 13, when they came to Jesus (see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1), for they celebrated the Passover together that same night (see Matt. 26:17, 20; 14:12, 16–18; Luke 22:7, 8, 13–15).

Where wilt thou? Apparently even the disciples closest to Christ (Luke 22:8; cf. DA 292) did not as yet know in detail, at least, what plans Jesus had for the Passover supper. It seems evident, therefore, that Judas would not know either. Ever since his first contact with the Sanhedrin the preceding Saturday night (see on Matt. 26:3, 5), and particularly since his second contact with them, which probably took place Tuesday night (DA 645, 655, 716, 720), Judas was looking for a suitable opportunity to betray Christ (see on v. 16). Some have suggested that this situation may have accounted for the fact that Jesus waited till almost the last moment before making arrangements for the Passover. However, even then, the instructions He gave to Peter and John were such that neither they nor the rest of the Twelve knew where they were to celebrate the Passover. It would only be somewhat later the same day that, upon the return of Peter and John, all would know where they were to be, and Judas would have little time to lay plans for betraying Jesus to the leaders during the quiet hour He spent with His disciples in the upper room. These precautions may have been taken because Jesus chose not to be molested during that sacred occasion, the last time He would be together with the Twelve, for He had most important instructions to give them.

The passover. See Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

18. Go into the city. It would seem that Jesus had spent the night, that is, Wednesday night, outside Jerusalem. From Friday to Tuesday He had spent the nights in Bethany, probably at the home of Lazarus (DA 557; see on ch. 21:17). Tuesday night He lodged on the Mount of Olives (see DA 674, 685). Where He spent Wednesday and Wednesday night we are not told (see on chs. 21:17; 26:12). It was probably Tuesday when Judas went the second time to the Jewish leaders, completed arrangements to betray his Master, and agreed to do it at one of His places of retirement (DA 645, 716; see on v. 4). Jesus knew of Judas’ secret conspiracy against Him, and some have suggested that He may have deliberately changed His place of abode to thwart Judas’ plans (see John 6:64).

Such a man. Gr. *deina*, “such a one,” or “so-and-so,” a designation for a man whom the speaker does not wish to name. Jesus did not name the person He had in mind, but gave a sign by which the two disciples dispatched on this errand might recognize him when they met him. On the basis of Acts 12:12 (cf. Acts 1:13), tradition has conjectured that the father of John Mark was the owner of the house, and that in his house was the upper room that became the abode of the Twelve and the headquarters of the church in Jerusalem for a time. See on Mark 14:51.

The Master saith. These words suggest that the owner of the house was familiar with Jesus and friendly to Him. Perhaps, like Simon of Bethany (DA 557), Nicodemus (John 19:39; DA 177), and Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57), this man was already a disciple of Jesus.

My time. Earlier in His ministry Jesus had commented on the fact that His “time,” or “hour,” had not as yet come (see John 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; cf. ch. 8:20). By this Jesus generally meant that the time had not yet come for His ministry to close and His death to take place. Now that the day of His betrayal had dawned He said, in words fraught with vast meaning, that His “time” was at hand. Later, this very night, He said, “The hour is come” (John 17:1).

At thy house. In Jesus’ day the Passover was celebrated within the city of Jerusalem, and all homes there were to be made available for the use of pilgrims attending the feast. For a time, in keeping with instructions given when the first Passover was instituted (Ex. 12:22), participants in the Passover meal were required to remain until morning in the house where they partook of it. The increasing number of pilgrims in attendance at the Passover eventually made necessary the permission to retire from the Passover meal to places of lodging within a limited and carefully defined area in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem.

19. Made ready the passover. The preparation probably included the following: searching the room for leaven, sweeping the room, and furnishing it with a table, couches or cushions, and the utensils needed for serving the meal. Though Inspiration says nothing specifically of a lamb in connection with the supper Jesus ate with His disciples, it seems doubtful that they would have celebrated the paschal meal without one (see Mark 14:12, 16, 17, 18; Luke 22:7, 8, 13–15). Accordingly, Peter and John would purchase a lamb, slay it, and roast it. They would also prepare unleavened bread, bitter herbs, sauce, and wine. These preparations doubtless occupied a considerable part of the day, and it was probably toward evening when Peter and John returned.

20. When the even was come. [*Celebration of the Passover, Matt. 26:20=Mark 14:17, 18^a=Luke 22:14–16.* Major comment: Luke.] This was Thursday night, during the early hours of Nisan 14 (see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1).

21. As they did eat. [*The Betrayer Revealed, Matt. 26:12–25=Mark 14:18b–21=Luke 22:21–23=John 13:21–30.* Major comment: Matthew and John.] The evangelists Matthew and Mark do not mention the incident of the washing of the disciples’ feet (John 13:1–17). Also, in their narratives Matthew and Mark reverse the order of the Lord’s Supper and the identification of the betrayer. The account in Luke is more nearly in chronological order, for Judas, before he left the upper room partook of both the bread and the wine as Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper (DA 653).

According to the Mishnah (see *Pesahim* 10, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 532–623), the ritual of the Passover meal was as follows: (1) The head of the family or group

celebrating the supper together, mixed the first cup of wine, and passed it to the others, pronouncing a blessing upon the day and upon the wine. (2) He then performed a ritual washing of his hands. (3) The table was then spread. Foods served at the paschal meal consisted of the paschal lamb, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, lettuce, and other vegetables, and a relish sauce called *charoseth*, made of almonds, dates, figs, raisins, spice, and vinegar. At this stage some of the vegetables were eaten as an appetizer. (4) A second cup of wine was then passed around the circle, and the head of the family explained the meaning of the Passover. (5) The first part of the Passover hallel, consisting of Ps. 113 and 114, was sung. (6) The participants then ate of the Passover meal. The head of the family gave thanks for and broke the unleavened cakes, and distributed a portion to each guest. Portions of the paschal lamb were then eaten. (7) The third cup of wine was passed, and the benediction over the meal pronounced. (8) A fourth cup of wine was passed, after which all united in the second part of the hallel, consisting of Ps. 115 to 118.

Verily. See on ch. 5:18.

One of you. According to the record this is the first time Jesus clearly announced that one of the Twelve was to be His betrayer. All were startled, but none as yet suspected Judas. The latter, however, now began to realize that Jesus read his dark secret as an open book. According to DA 653, 654, Jesus' five statements revealing the conspirator were spoken in the following progressive order: (1) The words, "Ye are not all clean" (John 13:11), were uttered during the course of the foot washing. (2) The next statement, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18), was made as the disciples again took their places at the table. (3) The announcement of Matt. 26:21, "One of you shall betray me," followed a few moments later. (4) The words, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (v. 23), probably came at some point during the Lord's Supper. (5) The final acknowledgment, "Thou hast said" (v. 25), came at the close of the Lord's Supper and prompted Judas to leave the room forthwith. Compare Ps. 41:9.

Betray. Gr. *paradidōmi*, "to give over to," or "to deliver up to." On at least four occasions prior to this Jesus had made reference to His betrayal (see Matt. 17:22; 20:18; 26:2 John 6:64, 70, 71).

22. Lord, is it I? The form of the question in Greek implies that a negative answer was expected, as if they said, "It isn't I, Lord, is it?" With Judas, to be sure, this form of the question was used as a bluff.

23. He that dippeth. See on v. 21. Jesus made this statement in answer to a question put to Him by John (John 13:26–26), but Judas had not heard the question (DA 654). The fingers were used in eating the Passover meal. The "dish" here referred to was the *charoseth*, or sauce used with the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs (see on Matt. 26:21).

The same. In ancient times to violate the rights of hospitality marked a man as utterly beyond the pale of respectability. In Oriental lands even today a man will avoid eating at the same table with someone he may wish to take advantage of, or even with someone he does not wish to have as a friend.

24. Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Goeth. Gr. *hupagō*, a mild synonym for death.

As it is written. Jesus probably refers to such passages as Ps. 22 and Isa. 53.

Woe. The fact that Inspiration had foretold the conspiracy of Judas in no way absolved him from his personal responsibility in the matter. God had not predestined him to betray his Master. The decision of Judas constituted a deliberate choice on his part.

Not been born. Compare ch. 18:6.

25. Judas. See on Mark 3:19. Judas had not heard Christ's statement concerning him as the betrayer (see on Matt. 26:23). In the confusion he had kept silent as the others inquired, "Is it I?" and his silence now made him conspicuous (DA 654).

Thou hast said. See on v. 21. This affirmation was an indirect, perhaps slightly ambiguous, way of saying Yes (cf. v. 64). The other disciples, with the possible exception of John (see John 13:25–27), did not grasp the import of Jesus' final statement to Judas (see John 13:28). But Judas fully realized that Jesus discerned his secret, and left immediately for his third conference with the Jewish leaders (John 13:31; DA 654, 655).

26. As they were eating. [*The Lord's Supper, Matt. 26:26–29=Mark 14:22–25=Luke 22:17–20.* Major comment: Matthew. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; the Crucifixion In Relation To Passover, Passion Week, Resurrection to Ascension.] That is, the Passover supper.

Jesus took bread. Evidently, some of the unleavened Passover bread.

Blessed it. Some have suggested that Jesus may have spoken the Jewish blessing, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, king of the world, who dost bring forth bread from the earth."

Take, eat. As the body finds nourishment in literal bread, so the soul is to find spiritual nourishment in the truths Christ uttered.

This is my body. Some have interpreted literally this figurative statement of Jesus, forgetful, apparently, that He often spoke figuratively regarding Himself. For example: Jesus said, "I am the door" (John 10:7), and the "way" (John 14:6). But all agree He was not thereby transforming Himself into a door or a highway. That Jesus spoke figuratively regarding the "bread" becomes transparently evident from Luke 22:20 (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25), "This cup is the new testament in my blood." If the bread actually became His very body, by the same process the "cup" must literally have become the "new testament." The verb "is" in the phrase "this is my body" is used in the sense of "represents," as it is in Mark 4:15–18; Luke 12:1; Gal. 4:24.

27. The cup. This was the cup used in the celebration of the paschal service. The cup contained the pure juice of the grape (see DA 653), untouched by fermentation, and probably diluted with water in accordance with contemporary Jewish custom. The method used in ancient times to preserve grape juice in an unfermented state from the vintage some six months prior to the Passover season is not known. In certain parts of the ancient East today, however, this is accomplished by partially dehydrating fresh grape juice and preserving it in a semi-jelly state. The addition of the requisite amount of water restores it to its original state. Grape juice can also be made from raisins.

Gave thanks. See on v. 26.

Drink ye all. The English translation obscures the fact that Jesus said, literally, "Drink of it, all of you." The word "all" refers to the disciples, not to the wine. None were to pass it by.

28. This is my blood. As the bread represented Jesus' body, so the wine represented His blood (see on v. 26).

Testament. The blood that Jesus shed on Calvary ratified, or made valid, the new covenant, or “testament,” even as the blood of oxen stood for the ratification of the old covenant (Ex. 24:5–8; Heb. 9:15–23; cf. Gal. 3:15). Except for the vicarious death of Christ the plan of salvation would never have become a reality. Even those saved in OT times were saved by virtue of the sacrifice to come (Heb. 9:15). They were saved as they looked forward in faith, even as men find salvation today by looking backward to the death of Christ. For a further discussion of the nature of the “new covenant” see on Heb. 8:8–11.

Shed for many. The vicarious nature of the atoning death of Christ is clearly affirmed (cf. Isa. 53:4–6, 8, 10–12). Luke reads, “shed for you,” that is, shed on your behalf (ch. 22:20). Compare also Matt. 20:28.

Remission. Gr. *aphesis*, “release,” “forgiveness,” “pardon,” from the verb *aphiēmi*, “to send away,” “to dismiss,” “to forgive” (see on ch. 6:12). The word is used in the papyri for the “release” of captives and for the remission from debt or punishment. Here, the meaning of “forgiveness” is to be preferred (see John 3:16; cf. Matt. 20:28).

29. I will not drink. The word “henceforth” implies that Jesus did drink from the cup upon this occasion. As the disciples were to *drink* of the cup “in remembrance” of Jesus “till he come” (1 Cor. 11:25, 26), He Himself would *abstain* from it until He should “drink it new” with them in His Father’s kingdom.

Until that day. It may be that Jesus here refers to the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9). As the Last Supper was closely related to the great event that made possible the plan of salvation, so the marriage supper of the Lamb will celebrate the triumph of the plan.

New. This does not refer to new wine in contrast with fermented wine, but to the fact that everything in the kingdom will be “new” (Rev. 21:5).

My Father’s kingdom. The drinking of the communion cup was to “shew the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26). It is a pledge on God’s part that the kingdom will eventually become a reality, and on our part, of faith in the promise that this will be so. The ordinance of the Lord’s table significantly links the first advent with the second. The communion service was designed to keep the hope of Christ’s second coming vivid in the minds of the disciples, as well as the memory of His vicarious death (see 1 Cor. 11:25, 26; cf. DA 659).

30. Sung an hymn. [*Retirement to Gethsemane*, Matt 26:30=Mark 14:26=Luke 22:39. Major comment: Matthew. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; Crucifixion In Relation To Passover, Passion Week, the Resurrection to Ascension.] Ps. 115 to 118 were usually sung at the close of the Passover meal. For the record of the counsel Jesus imparted to the disciples in the upper room and on the way to Gethsemane see John 14 to 17.

Mount of Olives. So called because of the olive groves on its slopes. Josephus refers to it by this name (*Antiquities* vii. 9. 2 [202]; xx. 8. 6; *War* v. 2. 3 [70]; etc.). Mount of Olives is the name generally applied to the western portion of a mountain mass directly across the Kidron Valley, east of Jerusalem. The northern summit of Mt. Olivet reaches a height of 2,723 ft. (830 m.). about 300 ft. (91.5 m.) higher than the level of the Temple area in the city. See on chs. 21:1; 24:1. It is thought that before Titus destroyed all the timber in the environs of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives was covered with oliveyards, fig orchards, and with myrtle and other shrubs. Bethany, about 2 mi. (3.2 km.) to the east of

the city, was situated on the southeastern slope of the mountain. See illustration facing p. 513.

31. Offended. [*A Warning to Peter and the Ten*, Matt. 26:31–35=Mark 14:27–31=Luke 22:31–38 (=John 13:36–38). Major comment: Matthew. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus.] Gr. *skandalizō* (see on ch. 5:29). Jesus spoke these words of warning and admonition as He and the disciples began the descent from the city to the Kidron Valley on the way to the Mount of Olives (DA 672, 673). Note, however, that the warning of John 13:36–38 was given in the upper room.

This night. The time was probably an hour or more before midnight, during the early hours of Nisan 14 (see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1).

It is written. Jesus cites Zech. 13:7.

The sheep. Jesus applies this prediction to the flight of the disciples at the moment of His arrest, an hour or more later (v. 56).

32. After I am risen. Facing betrayal, condemnation, and death, Jesus speaks with confident assurance of His resurrection. The definite appointment here made with the disciples to meet them again in Galilee might have been for the disciples a source of encouragement during the hours of bitter disappointment that lay immediately ahead of them, but they apparently forgot it (see on v. 33).

33. Peter. Peter was often spokesman for the disciples (see chs. 14:28; 16:16, 22; 17:4, 24). Here, however, it seems that he spoke on his own behalf exclusively, as feeling superior to his fellow disciples. Jesus' words recorded in ch. 26:31, 32 apparently made no real impression on him. His impulsive reply was characteristic (see on Mark 3:16), but ill-considered.

34. Verily. For comment see on ch. 5:18.

This night. See on v. 31. The warning as recorded in John 13:38 was given while Jesus and the Twelve were still in the upper room; here, it is given again on the way to Gethsemane (DA 673). Both the prediction and its fulfillment are recorded in all four Gospels.

Before the cock crow. Mark reads, "before the cock crow twice" (Mark 14:30). "Cockcrowing" was a common designation for the early morning. For example, the Mishnah (*Tamid* 1. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 2) explains that "anyone who desired to remove the ashes from the Altar used to rise early and bathe before the superintendent came. At what time did the superintendent come? He did not always come at the same time; sometimes he came just at cock-crow, sometimes a little before or a little after." For the relationship of cockcrowing to the watches of the night see p. 50.

35. Though I should die. Peter meant well, to be sure, but he knew not whereof he spoke. Compare Ruth's noble profession of loyalty to Naomi (Ruth 1:16, 17), and her admirable faithfulness in living up to it.

Likewise also. How little the disciples knew of circumstances soon to develop that would lead them to forsake Jesus and flee for their lives (Mark 14:50).

36. Then cometh Jesus. [*Gethsemane*, Matt. 26:36–56=Mark 14:32–52=Luke 22:40–53=John 18:1–12. Major comment: Matthew. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; Passion Week.]

Gethsemane. From an Aramaic word meaning "oil press." To this spot the Saviour had frequently resorted for meditation, prayer, and rest, and here He had often spent the night (Luke 22:39; John 18:2; DA 685, 686). It seems probable that this was His place of

retirement Tuesday and Wednesday nights preceding the crucifixion (see Luke 21:37; see on Matt 21:17; 24:1, 3; 26:17, 18).

The exact location of the garden of Bible times is not known. This quiet spot was probably situated somewhere on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives (see on chs. 21:1; 26:30), directly across the Kidron Valley from the Temple and about ten minutes' walk from the city. The site commonly pointed out to visitors today rests on a tradition that cannot be traced earlier than the days of Constantine the Great, three centuries after Christ. In the opinion of many commentators and travelers in Palestine, the original Gethsemane was situated somewhat higher on the slope. See illustration facing p. 513.

Sit ye here. Eight of the disciples were bidden to remain near, probably just inside, the gate of the garden.

37. Took with him. Peter, James, and John enjoyed the privilege of a more intimate association with Jesus than the other disciples. They had been with Him at the raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:51) and again on the mount of transfiguration (Matt 17:1). In this supreme hour Jesus longed for human companionship, for the sympathy and understanding of kindred spirits.

Sorrowful and very heavy. See on v. 38.

38. My soul. The equivalent of a common Hebrew idiom meaning "I" (see on Ps. 16:10; Matt 10:28).

Exceeding sorrowful. It is impossible for us to comprehend the profound sorrow, the mysterious grief, that bore down upon Jesus as He entered the Garden of Gethsemane. The strange sadness that overtook Him puzzled the disciples. Here was the divine-human Son of God, Son of man (see on Matt 1:1; Mark 2:10; Luke 1:35), suffering an intensity of distress they had never witnessed before. In part, the suffering was physical, but this was only the visible reflection of the infinite suffering of Christ as the bearer of the sins of the world.

For comment on the sufferings of the Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane, and for the temptations Satan there pressed upon Him, see DA 685-694 (cf. on Matt 4:1-11; Luke 2:40, 52; Heb. 2:17; see EGW Supplementary Material on Matt 26:36-46, 42; see Additional Note on John 1).

Even unto death. It is impossible for us as sinful beings to comprehend the intensity of our Saviour's anguish as He bore the weight of the sins of the world (see on Luke 22:43).

Watch with me. A plea for human sympathy and companionship in the struggle with the powers of darkness. To "watch" means, literally, "to stay awake," but here it means to remain awake for a purpose, and that purpose is to share Christ's vigil.

39. He went. Luke adds that the distance was about a stone's throw (Luke 22:41). He was within sight and hearing of Peter, James, and John; they saw the angel (Luke 22:43), and heard his voice (DA 686, 694).

Prayed. For comment on the prayer life of Jesus see on Mark 1:35; 3:13; Luke 6:12.

Father. See on ch. 6:9.

This cup. The "cup" is a common Biblical expression denoting the experiences of life, whether good or bad (see on ch. 20:22).

Nevertheless. In spite of all the suffering and the fierce temptations Satan pressed upon His soul, Jesus submitted without question or hesitation to the Father's will. His perfect submission to God's will provides a perfect example for us to follow.

As thou wilt. See on Matt. 6:10; Luke 2:49; see Heb. 5:8.

40. Unto the disciples. It seems that Jesus came seeking for human sympathy and companionship.

Asleep. For a time they remained awake, and united their prayers with His, but after a while a paralyzing stupor came over them. They might have shaken it off if they had persisted in prayer. See on ch. 24:42, 44.

Saith unto Peter. Peter was the one who had made the inordinate boast that he would accompany Jesus to prison and to death (see on vs. 33, 35). Now, apparently, he could not even remain awake, much less perform a difficult feat.

What? Gr. *houtōs*, “thus,” or “so.” The keen disappointment Jesus felt upon finding His closest earthly friends too drowsy to pray with Him for “one hour” finds expression in this exclamation, half censure and half disappointment.

One hour. This may imply that Christ spent approximately one hour in the Garden of Gethsemane.

41. Watch and pray. For comment on what is involved in the “watch” the Christian is to keep see on ch. 24:42. For the manner in which Christ prepared to meet temptation see 2T 200–215—He fasted, engaged in the most earnest prayer, and committed Himself wholly to God. For comment on effective prayer see on Matt. 6:5–13; Luke 11:1–9; 18:1–8.

Into temptation. See on ch. 6:13.

The spirit. That is, the higher powers of the mind. Compare Paul’s experience as related in Rom. 7:15 to 8:6.

Willing. Gr. *prothumos*, “ready,” “inclined,” “disposed.” Earlier this very night they had given evidence of their willingness of mind (see vs. 33–35).

The flesh. That is, natural tendencies and desires as stimulated by the senses. By “flesh” NT writers generally refer to the lower nature of man, as represented by the various appetites or cravings (see Rom. 8:3; etc.).

Weak. Jesus does not excuse the “flesh” for being “weak,” but sets forth this weakness as the reason for needing to “watch and pray.” The comparative ease with which the disciples repeatedly fell asleep in this hour of crisis is the weakness Christ here refers to particularly (see on v. 40).

42. If this cup. The form of this statement in the Greek assumes that the suggestion thus made either cannot or will not be fulfilled.

43. Eyes were heavy. As upon the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:32; see DA 425).

44. The third time. Now came the moment of crisis, when the fate of humanity and the destiny of the world hung in the balance.

45. Sleep on now. It is not clear why Jesus should tell the disciples, “Sleep on now, and take your rest,” and then, apparently without interruption, tell them, “Rise, let us be going” (v. 46). Some suggest that this was an indirect rebuke to them for having repeatedly fallen asleep, an ironical remark, implying that the time for watching and praying was past. However, irony seems rather out of place on an occasion such as this, and others suggest the possible translation, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?” (RSV).

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Betrayed. Literally, “given over” (see on Luke 6:16).

Into the hands. Job had once been given over to Satan, with the stipulation that his life was to be spared (Job 2:6). Now, however, Jesus was given over to men who were as fully under the control of demons as the demoniacs to whom He had brought restoration of mind and body (see DA 256, 323; cf. DA 746, 749).

46. Let us be going. Instead of hiding, or seeking to escape, from the mob that was about to arrest Him, Jesus went out to meet them. He might have avoided retiring to a spot Judas knew to be His usual place of retirement (Luke 22:39; John 18:2; see on Matt. 26:36; cf. DA 685, 716), or He could have left before His enemies arrived. But He did not depart, even when He heard their approaching footsteps.

47. Judas. The betrayer knew where to find Jesus (John 18:2). Arrangements had been made to take Him at “one of His resorts for meditation and prayer” (DA 716), and Gethsemane was a spot He had often visited for this purpose, sometimes passing the night here (see DA 685, 686). Judas’ task was to lead the rulers to Jesus when He was in the quiet and seclusion of such a place of retirement, and to identify Him for the captors (see Acts 1:16).

One of the twelve. This additional comment is doubtless added by way of making even more vivid the heinous nature of Judas’ act of betrayal (see on vs. 21, 23). It intensifies the horror of his treachery.

A great multitude. Among this motley crowd was the high priest himself, accompanied by various of the Jewish leaders (see DA 695, 696), certain of the Pharisees (John 18:3), the Temple police, who were Jews (John 18:12; cf. DA 696), and a detachment of Roman soldiers (see DA 694, 695). In addition, there was a mob of the common rabble, some of them ruffians no doubt, who had come along to witness the excitement (see DA 696).

Staves. Or, “clubs.”

From the chief priests. This action was carried out by the authority of the Sanhedrin, which was made up of the “chief priests and the scribes and the elders” (cf. Mark 14:43).

John (ch. 18:6) records the fact that as the leaders of the mob approached Jesus a supernatural power caused them to fall to the ground. The angel who had so recently sustained the Saviour as He fell to the ground in agony (Luke 22:43) interposed himself visibly between Christ and them (see DA 694). It would seem that the purpose of this manifestation of divine power and glory was to provide those who had come to arrest Jesus with evidence that the deed they were about to perform met with the disapprobation of Heaven. They were fighting against God. A second revelation of divine power was afforded the mob when Jesus healed Malchus’ severed ear (Luke 22:51; John 18:10).

48. A sign. Gr. *sēmeion*. Mark uses the word *sussēmon*, a word common in ancient Greek for a signal agreed upon in advance. At night, and in a large throng, the Jews feared that they might arrest the wrong person, and that He whom they sought to arrest might escape. Perhaps, also, they feared a struggle.

Kiss. A common mode of greeting in ancient times, as in some parts of the world even today (see Luke 7:45; Acts 20:37; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14; etc.). It was no doubt particularly appropriate that a disciple should salute his master in this way. See Prov. 27:6.

Hold him fast. This may imply that Judas had no intention of assisting in the actual seizure of Jesus, that with the identifying kiss he considered his part of the bargain

discharged and he would not be considered responsible for what might happen after that point. Some have suggested the meaning, “hold him safely,” that is, without injuring him.

49. Kissed. Gr. *kataphileō*, an apparent intensive form of *phileō*, “to kiss,” hence, “to kiss fervently.” The tense of the verb denotes durative action. Compare the phrase, “he kisses Him repeatedly” (DA 696).

50. Friend. Gr. *hetairos*, “comrade,” “partner,” “mate.” Only Matthew records this response of Jesus. *Hetairos* was sometimes used to address a person whose name was unknown. Jesus may have designedly avoided the use of Judas’ personal name in order to call attention to the betrayer’s pretended friendship.

Wherefore art thou come? Rather, “Why are you here?” According to Luke, Jesus asked Judas, “Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48).

51. One of them. That is, Peter (John 18:10). Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not mention him by name, probably because they wrote while Peter was yet alive. Perhaps their purpose was to spare him the embarrassment—in the presence of all who might read the record—of a direct reminder of this hasty deed. John, writing many years after Peter’s death, mentions him.

Drew his sword. Peter had wrongly construed the words of Jesus to mean that He actually intended the disciples to use weapons in self-defense (see Luke 22:38). Peter’s misguided zeal here displayed stands forth as a warning to God’s witnesses today not to take drastic and ill-considered action in promoting what they, at the moment, take to be the interests of the kingdom of heaven.

A servant. John, who was personally acquainted with the high priest (see John 18:15), identifies the servant as Malchus (v. 10). Malchus may have been one of those who “laid hands on Jesus” (Matt 26:50).

Smote off his ear. Peter probably intended to sever the man’s head. It may be that an unseen hand deflected the blow. Only Luke records the miraculous restoration of the severed ear (see on Luke 22:51).

52. Put up again thy sword. These words of Jesus make it amply clear that His earlier statement (see Luke 22:36, 38) was not to be construed as approval of the use of force in furthering the interests of His kingdom. During the course of His trial Jesus said, “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” (John 18:36). It is only when Christians mistakenly come to believe that Christ’s kingdom *is* of this world that they resort to force in defending what they take to be its interests. Peter’s rash act could easily have been construed by the Jewish leaders as evidence that Jesus and His disciples were a band of dangerous revolutionaries, and this charge might have been pressed against Him as valid proof that His death was in the public interest. But as far as the record goes nothing was said about this unfortunate incident. Except for the instant healing of the ear, it might have been otherwise.

They that take the sword. Those who resort to force may, sooner or later, find themselves at the mercy of cruel and heartless men. Furthermore, since Heaven does not approve of resort to force, those who profess to be God’s servants cannot expect divine protection and assistance when they violate Heaven’s principles. The power of the gospel is the power of love. Victories won by force or by other devious methods are at best temporary, and in the end result in greater loss than the immediate gains can possibly

counter-balance. For the experience of an apostate religious organization that has resorted to the use of the sword see on Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:10.

53. *Pray to my Father.* Jesus relies on the assurance of His Father's love and care brought to Him by the angel from heaven (see Luke 22:43). It is by His own choice that Jesus permits Himself to be taken. He is not helpless; He does not have to go through this bitter experience unless He chooses to do so.

Twelve legions. For comment on the Roman legion see on Mark 5:9.

54. *The scriptures.* Jesus probably thinks of such passages of Scripture as Ps. 22 and Isa. 53, which foretold His death.

55. *A thief.* Gr. *lēstēs*, "robber," "highwayman." Such force as this mob represented would not be necessary for the arrest of a simple "thief." *Lēstēs* is rendered "robber" or "robbers" in John 10:1, 8; 18:40; 2 Cor. 11:26. The Jewish leaders acted toward Jesus as though He were a man like Barabbas, a "hardened ruffian" (see DA 735).

Staves. Or, "clubs."

Sat daily with you. Jesus points to the fact that His conduct denies the implied accusation that He is a hardened ruffian who must be captured, if at all, by force and violence. He has not been operating in secret, but in view of everyone (see John 18:19–21). He had given no excuse for the charge that He was plotting secretly against either the Jewish or the Roman authorities.

Laid on hold. The fact that the authorities had made no attempt to arrest Jesus publicly was evidence that they had no good case against him. Secret arrest proved that they were not acting in good faith, and that they knew their own motives to be wrong.

56. *The scriptures.* As, for example, Ps. 22 and Isa. 53.

Forsook him. Jesus requested that the disciples not be molested (John 18:8). The priests and rulers had been bound by a promise not to molest the followers of Jesus (see DA 741). The disciples remained with Jesus until it was clear that He had no intention of delivering Himself from the mob. If He did not resist, what hope was there for them? They were unwilling to submit to the experience Christ was about to suffer. It was Peter, the disciple who had been most vehement in his protest of loyalty (Matt. 26:33–35), who proposed to the others that they save themselves (see DA 697).

57. *Led him away.* [*Night Trial Before the Sanhedrin*, Matt 26:57–75=Mark 14:53–72=Luke 22:54–65=John 18:25–27. Major comment: Matthew. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; Passion Week.] Jesus was seized at midnight (see DA 698, 699, 760). His trial consisted of two phases, the first being the ecclesiastical trial before the Jewish religious authorities, and the second the civil trial before Pilate and Herod. He was given two preliminary hearings, one before Annas alone and another before Annas and Caiaphas (cf. DA 698, 703, 760), and was arraigned twice before the Sanhedrin, first by night and then by day (cf. DA 703, 714, 760). He appeared twice before Pilate (cf. DA 723, 760), and once before Herod, between the two appearances before Pilate (cf. DA 728, 760). For a discussion of the purpose of each of these stages in the trial and condemnation of Jesus, see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2.

Caiaphas. See on Luke 3:2. Caiaphas served as high priest from about A.D. 18–36, having been appointed by Valerius Gratus, predecessor of Pontius Pilate (Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 2. 2). See The Chronology of Luke 3:1, 2, Palestine Under the Herodians.

The scribes and the elders. The Sanhedrin was composed of members from these two groups, and from the priests. All three are listed in the parallel passage in Mark (ch. 14:53). Concerning the scribes see p. 55; see on Matt. 2:4; Mark 1:22.

Assembled. That is, for the night trial of Jesus, at approximately 3 A.M. Members of the Sanhedrin who were friendly toward Jesus, or at least interested in giving Him a fair hearing, were deliberately not invited (see on v. 66).

58. Peter followed. As did also John (see John 18:15). All the disciples had forsaken Jesus at the moment it became clear that He would not resist (Matt. 26:56). But these two men regained their composure, to a degree at least, and followed the mob to the palace of the high priest. The others were, apparently, less bold.

Afar off. Or, “at a distance” (RSV). Peter lacked sufficient courage to take an open stand with Jesus, but proved more courageous, after a fashion, than most of his fellow disciples.

Palace. Gr. *aulē*, the uncovered “courtyard” of a house or other building. The word appears often in the papyri in this sense. Such a courtyard was completely surrounded by the building or by a wall. See on v. 71.

Went in. Peter was granted admittance at the request of John, who was acquainted with the priestly family (see John 18:16).

Sat. He also stood to warm himself (John 18:25).

The end. Peter wanted to know for himself what happened during the course of the trial and what the verdict would be.

59. The chief priests. Probably the high priest Caiaphas, together with Annas, an ex-high priest, and other living men who had held the office at one time or another. See on Luke 3:2; Matt. 2:4.

All the council. That is, except for members of the council friendly to Jesus. These had been deliberately excluded from the plan to capture and condemn Jesus, and thus were not summoned upon this occasion (see on v. 66). This “council” was the Great Sanhedrin, which normally consisted of 71 members, and which was, at this time, the highest executive, legislative, and judicial body (see p. 67).

Sought. Or, “were seeking.” The tense of the Greek verb suggests that the leaders experienced considerable difficulty in finding the kind of witnesses they wanted, and that they had to keep on seeking for them for some time.

False witness. For two years the Sanhedrin had spies following Jesus, in order that all He said and did might be reported (see DA 213, 699). But these spies had not returned with any information useful to the leaders’ evil purposes. For the report of one group sent to arrest Jesus see John 7:32, 45–48. For a discussion of the illegal aspects of the trial of our Lord, and for the fears of the Jewish leaders that they might not be able to secure His conviction, see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2.

To put him to death. This had already been determined. But they had no case against Jesus, much as they might dislike Him, and in their haste had not had time to manufacture one. They hoped to discredit Jesus in the eyes of His fellow countrymen by proving the charge of blasphemy, and to incriminate Him before the Romans on the charge of sedition (see DA 699). They doubtless hoped to dispose of the case immediately and to get Jesus into the hands of the Romans, where, accused of exciting rebellion, He would have no chance of escape through the interference of His friends. The Jews objected to

His claim to be the Son of God, and the Romans would, they thought, object to Him as King of the Jews.

60. Found none. They were unable to find even false witnesses whose tales could be made to agree. They had been looking for evidence on which to build a case, but evidently their efforts had proved utterly fruitless. According to the Mishnah all witnesses must be cross-examined in order to test the accuracy of their statements, and where witnesses contradict one another their evidence becomes invalid (*Sanhedrin* 5. 1, 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 255, 256). The testimony of these false witnesses apparently broke down under cross-examination.

Two false witnesses. The testimony of these witnesses appeared to agree, and according to Mosaic law (Deut. 17:6; 19:15), what they reported was presumed to be true. The judges—in this case the Sanhedrin—were obligated to make every effort to see that justice was done (Deut. 25:1). They were diligently to cross-examine witnesses to determine whether what the witnesses said was true or not (Deut. 19:16–19). But here were men of the supreme court of Israel conniving with false witnesses in their perjury, in direct violation of Mosaic law (see Ex. 23:1), and of the ninth commandment of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:16). Even these last two witnesses actually disagreed (Mark 14:59) on essential points, and their testimony was vague and contradictory. Nevertheless, the high priest pretended to accept their testimony (Matt. 26:62), although he knew well that Jesus could not be sentenced on the basis of it. This, his further conduct reveals (vs. 62, 63).

61. This fellow. A contemptuous manner of referring to Jesus. The word “fellow” is supplied.

Destroy the temple. The witnesses apparently referred to a statement made during the early part of Jesus’ ministry (see John 2:19, 21; cf. Matt. 24:2; Mark 13:1, 2; Acts 6:14). But it was only by lifting the statement out of its context that it could be made to appear an affront to the Temple. In a strict, legal sense, however, even this could not make Jesus worthy of death.

Build it in three days. Jesus referred to the body temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20), and in particular to His own resurrection (see John 2:19, 21). For the expression “three days” see pp. 248-250.

62. The high priest arose. Knowing well that he had no case against Jesus, he sought by bluster to pretend that he had one.

63. Held his peace. Or, “kept on being silent.” He persistently refused to speak. This characteristic had been the subject of prophecy for more than seven centuries (Isa. 53:7).

I adjure thee. Caiaphas demanded that Jesus reply under oath to the question now put to Him. In spite of the testimony of all the false witnesses, the Sanhedrin still had no case against Jesus. Caiaphas hoped to make Jesus incriminate Himself. This, too, was illegal. A man could not be condemned on His own testimony (see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2; see on v. 59).

The living God. Caiaphas pretended to arraign Christ before the bar of God.

The Christ. That is, the Messiah (see on ch. 1:1). Jesus had avoided making the direct claim to being the Messiah, or Christ, perhaps in part because in popular fancy Messiah was to lead the Jews in an armed revolt against Rome. Jesus forbade His disciples to make the claim for Him (ch. 16:20). This was not the first time the question had been put to Jesus (see John 10:24).

Son of God. See on Luke 1:35. Jesus commonly referred to Himself as the “Son of man” (see on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10). The expression “Son of the Blessed” (Mark 14:61) is a circumlocution commonly used to avoid uttering the divine name. See Additional Note John 1.

64. Thou hast said. Equivalent to “Yes.” Mark (ch. 14:62) has “I am.” When placed under oath Jesus did not refuse to testify; in fact, that is precisely when He did testify. It is apparent that the instruction of Matt. 5:34 does not apply to judicial oaths. Here Jesus gave an example of His instruction to the Twelve, recorded in ch. 10:32.

Nevertheless. Gr. *plēn*, “furthermore,” or “but.”

Shall ye see. Jesus points to the future, when, as Judge of the universe, He will appear to “give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12). Compare Rev. 1:7.

Son of man. See on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10. The high priest had used the expression “Son of God,” but in His reply Jesus, as usual, referred to Himself as the “Son of man.”

Right hand. Later NT writers often speak of Jesus being at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33; 7:55; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). See on Ps. 16:8; Luke 1:11.

Power. Here used as a substitution for the sacred name *Yahweh* (see Vol. I, pp. 171, 172.).

65. Rent his clothes. This is, as a sign of being overcome with righteous indignation at Jesus’ alleged blasphemy (see v. 64). The Mosaic law prohibited the high priest from tearing his garments (Lev. 10:6; 21:10), the reason being that his garments represented the perfect character of Jesus Christ (DA 709). Caiaphas thus stood condemned before the very law he posed as defending, and disqualified himself from serving as high priest (DA 708). However, rabbinical regulations permitted one hearing blasphemy to rend his garments (Talmud *Mo‘ed Qatan* 26a, Soncino ed., pp. 165, 166; cf. Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 7. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 378).

Blasphemy. See on Mark 2:7. Among the Jews it was considered blasphemy for a man to make himself equal with God (John 10:29–33), and Caiaphas refused to recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was different from any other man. Had He been only a man, it would have been blasphemous for Him to make the claim recorded in Matt. 26:64. Jesus had claimed under oath to be the Messiah, and had assented to the title “Son of God” (see vs. 63, 64). The Sanhedrin had known for two years that Jesus made this claim in the highest sense (see DA 207, 208; John 5:17, 18; cf. ch. 10:29–36).

66. What think ye? Caiaphas now placed the decision to a vote of the members of the Sanhedrin present. He called for their verdict as judges sitting in the highest tribunal in the land.

Guilty of death. Death was the Mosaic penalty for blasphemy (Lev. 24:15, 16). But Jesus had not blasphemed, either in reality or according to the accepted rabbinical definition (see on Matt. 26:65). This was an illegal vote, for it was taken at night (see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2). Even though voted, the verdict did not have standing in law unless and until it was ratified by the Romans (see DA 698; cf. Josephus *War* ii. 8. 1 [117, 118]).

According to Mark 14:64, “they all condemned him to be guilty of death.” That is, all who were present. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and others known to be favorable toward Jesus, or at least to be conscientious in their desire that justice be done Him, had

not been summoned (see DA 699). Luke (ch. 23:51) specifically states that Joseph did not consent to the execution of Jesus. Nicodemus had, upon previous occasions, prevented the condemnation of Jesus (John 7:50, 51; cf. DA 539, 699). The leaders considered that men like Joseph and Nicodemus were biased in Christ's favor. They chose to forget that they themselves were biased against Jesus.

67. *Spit in his face.* This the prophet Isaiah had predicted (see Isa. 50:6). Mark and Luke add that Jesus was blindfolded (Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64). The indignities mentioned in Matt. 26:67, 68 took place after the close of the night trial, in a guardroom (see DA 710) adjoining the chamber in which the Sanhedrin met, and where Jesus was held for the formal day trial (see on v. 57).

68. *Thou Christ.* This title they used in a way to ridicule the reply that Jesus gave to the solemn adjuration of the high priest (vs. 63, 64).

69. *Peter sat without.* For Peter's entry into the courtyard see on v. 58. He was sitting in the courtyard outside the building in which the trial was conducted. According to Mark 14:66, the courtyard was on a lower level than the floor of the council chamber.

The palace. That is, the "courtyard" of the palace (see on v. 58). Mark (ch. 14:67), Luke (ch. 22:55), and John (ch. 18:18, 25) all mention that Peter was warming himself before a fire kindled in the courtyard.

A damsel. This was the woman doorkeeper who had admitted Peter (John 18:16, 17; DA 710, 711).

70. *He denied.* Peter had apparently completely forgotten Jesus' warning given but a few hours earlier (see on vs. 31-35). He hoped that he would be unrecognized, and even joined the crowd in their rude jests concerning Jesus (see DA 712). This was Peter's first denial. The record indicates that all three denials were made during the first trial before the Sanhedrin, which took place between about 3:00 and 5:00 A.M. The first light of dawn would become visible about 4:00 at this season of the year, in the latitude of Jerusalem, and sunrise would be about 5:30.

I know not. The various gospel writers agree as to the idea Peter gave expression to, but present the reply in different forms (Mark 14:68; Luke 22:57; John 18:17). See Additional Notes on Chapter 3, Note 2.

71. *The porch.* Gr. *pulōn*, "gate," or, "porch." Here *pulōn* possibly refers to the passageway leading from the courtyard to the street, and thus just inside the gate. Peter might have feared that he would be taken into custody himself were his identity discovered.

Another maid. The second person to identify Peter.

72. *Denied with an oath.* His second denial is more emphatic than the first.

73. *After a while.* According to Luke 22:59, approximately an hour elapsed between the first two denials and the third.

They that stood by. John (ch. 18:26) identifies Peter's third accuser as a servant of the high priest, a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter had severed. Peter immediately realized the seriousness of the situation. If he should be identified as the man who had struck Malchus, there was danger of his being haled into court as an attempted murderer.

Speech. Apparently Peter's Galilean accent, or pronunciation (see Mark 14:70). The Galilean dialect was broader and rougher than that of Judea, and no doubt the people of Jerusalem listened condescendingly to the speech of the ruder provincials. Galilean pronunciation of the gutturals is said not to have been so smooth as that of the Judeans.

Bewrayeth. Old English for “betrays.” The Greek reads literally, “makes evident.”

74. Curse. This was in direct violation of the principle of pure and simple speech laid down by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (see on ch. 5:33–37). Peter’s false oath was no guarantee of the truthfulness of his words, and it was this very evil against which Christ warned. For the moment, Peter was no better than the false witnesses who were testifying against Jesus.

75. Peter remembered. All too obviously Peter had forgotten Jesus’ repeated warnings, first spoken in the upper room and again on the way to Gethsemane (see on v. 34). The root of his error was in his own self-confidence and boasting (v. 35). Now, too late, he remembered. Unwittingly, he had fulfilled the words of Jesus. Humility and willingness to heed good counsel are often one’s best protection against making foolish blunders.

He went out. That is, out of the courtyard he had entered some two or three hours earlier. According to Luke 22:61 Jesus glanced in the direction of Peter just before he made his hasty departure. After wandering about aimlessly for a time Peter found himself in Gethsemane, on the very spot where his Master had so recently lain prostrate (see DA 713).

Wept bitterly. Or, “burst into tears.” Had Peter been as earnest in heeding Jesus’ admonition to “watch and pray” (v. 41) as he now was in shedding tears for his traitorous words, he would never have uttered them. But though it no doubt seemed to Peter that all was lost—himself included—the Saviour’s love buoyed him up and brought him safely through his tragic experience. So it may be with us. No hour is so dark, no experience of chagrin and defeat so bitter, but that the light of the love of Jesus can strengthen and save. See DA 382.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 26

Note 1

All four Gospels agree that Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Last Supper on the night preceding the crucifixion, that He lay in the tomb over Sabbath, and that He arose early Sunday morning. The Synoptics, however, call the Last Supper, the night preceding the crucifixion, “the Passover,” whereas according to John, the Jews celebrated the Passover supper on the night following the crucifixion. The statements of John and the Synoptics thus appear to be in conflict.

Most critical commentators dismiss this apparent conflict with the casual observation that, obviously, either John or the synoptic writers were mistaken. But those who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures reject such an explanation and propose, instead, one of various possible solutions to the problem. In order to evaluate intelligently these solutions it is necessary, first, to review Biblical and secular data relating to the time and typical significance of the Passover, and to time factors connected with the Last Supper and the crucifixion.

Time of the Passover.—The paschal lamb was slain in the late afternoon of Nisan 14, following the regular evening sacrifice, and eaten, with unleavened bread, after sunset that same night, during the early hours of Nisan 15 (Ex. 12:6–14, 29, 33, 42, 51; 13:3–7; Num. 9:1–5; 33:3; Deut. 16:1–7; Josephus *Antiquities* ii. 14. 6; iii. 10. 5; xi. 4. 8 [311, 312; 248, 249; 109, 110]; *War* v. 3. 1 [98, 99]; vi. 9. 3 [423]; Philo *De septenario*, sec. 18; Mishnah *Pesaḥim* 5. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 287). Nisan 15, a ceremonial

sabbath, also marked the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:8, 18, 34, 39; Lev. 23:5, 6; Num. 28:16, 17; Deut. 16:3, 4, 8; *Antiquities* iii. 10. 5 [249]; cf. ii. 15. 2 [318]). On Nisan 16, the second day of this feast, the wave sheaf of the first fruits was presented in the Temple (see Lev. 23:10–14; *Antiquities* iii. 10. 5 [250, 251]). The term “Passover” was originally applied to Nisan 14 only, but in the time of Christ it was sometimes used of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as well (*Antiquities* ii. 14. 6; xi. 4. 8; xiv. 2. 1 [311–313; 109–111; 21]; xvii. 9. 3; *War* ii. 1. 3; v. 3. 1 [10; 99]). Apparently, also, the term Feast of Unleavened Bread was similarly used to include the Passover (Luke 22:7; Acts 12:3, 4; cf. ch. 20:6).

Tables that purport to give the Christian Era dates for each paschal full moon during the ministry of our Lord are of no real help in this problem for all such tables are based on modern Jewish methods of computing the time of the Passover. How the Jews of Christ’s time coordinated their lunar calendar with the solar year is not known today, all supposedly learned statements to the contrary notwithstanding. It is therefore impossible to determine with absolute certainty the day of the week or even, always, the month in which the Passover of any year of our Lord’s ministry may have occurred. For a discussion of this problem see Vol. II, pp. 100–105; Vol. V, pp. 250–264.

A notable perversion of Biblical data regarding the time of the Last Supper is the Wednesday crucifixion theory, which assumes: (1) that the Christian Era date of the paschal full moon of the crucifixion year can be determined with absolute accuracy (see p. 258), (2) that the Hebrew idiomatic expression “three days and three nights” indicates a period of 72 full hours (see Vol. I, p. 182; Vol. II, pp. 136, 137; Vol. V, pp. 248–251), and (3) that the Greek of Matt. 28:1 (see comment there) assigns the resurrection to Sabbath afternoon. This theory does not bear the marks of sound scholarship and is utterly at variance with Biblical meanings of terms. Therefore it is untenable.

Some have assumed that the expression “in the evening,” of Ex. 12:6, literally, “between the two evenings,” denotes the moment of sunset beginning Nisan 14, or the period between sunset and dark. Although some modern commentators have adopted this theory, a careful examination of other Biblical passages, of the writings of Josephus and Philo, and of the tractate *Pesahim* (see Mishnah *Pesahim*, 4. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 243; 5. 1, 10, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 287, 325; Talmud *Pesahim* 58a, Soncino ed., pp. 287–290; and other references cited above) provide no clear evidence in support of it. See p. 265.

Typical Significance of the Passover.—The paschal lamb prefigured Christ, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), “Christ our passover,” who was to be “sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). Similarly, the wave sheaf of the Feast of Unleavened Bread typified “Christ risen from the dead, ... the first-fruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

The Last Supper and the Crucifixion.—The following chronological statements appear to be either explicit or implicit in the Gospel narrative and are rather generally accepted by Bible students:

a. The crucifixion took place on “the preparation [eve] of the passover,” that is, on Ni

san 14 (John 19:14; cf. Talmud *Pesaḥim* 58a, Soncino ed., p. 288; *Sanhedrin* 43a, Soncino ed., p. 281; Ex. 12:6; cf. GC 399).

b. The death of Christ took place on a Friday afternoon (Mark 15:42 to 16:2; Luke 23:54 to 24:1; John 19:31, 42, 20:1), about the time of the evening sacrifice (DA 756, 757; cf. GC 399).

c. Accordingly, in the year of the crucifixion, Nisan 14, the day appointed for slaying the paschal lambs, fell on a Friday; the preparation for (or eve of) the Passover coincided with the preparation for (or eve of) the weekly Sabbath (John 19:14; cf. vs. 31, 42; ch. 20:1). The first ceremonial sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15, thus coincided with the weekly Sabbath (Lev. 23:6–8; cf. Mark 15:42 to 16:2; Luke 23:5 to 24:1).

d. The Last Supper took place the night preceding the crucifixion (Matt. 26:17, 20, 26, 34, 47; Mark 14:12, 16, 17; 22:7, 8, 13–15; John 13:2, 4, 30; 14:31; 18:1–3, 28; 19:16; cf. DA 642; GC 399), that is, during the early hours of Nisan 14 (see Vol. II, p. 101) and thus on a Thursday night.

e. The synoptic accounts call the Last Supper a Passover supper (Matt. 26:17, 20; Mark 14:12, 16, 17; Luke 22:7, 8, 13–15; cf. DA 642, 652; GC 399).

f. John's account places the official Jewish celebration of the Passover supper 24 hours later than the Last Supper, and thus on Friday night following the crucifixion, during the early hours of the weekly Sabbath (John 18:28; 19:14, 31; cf. DA 774), which would be Nisan 15.

g. At the time of the Last Supper (John 13:1), during the course of the trial (Matt. 26:5; Mark 14:2; John 18:28; 19:14; cf. DA 703, 723), and on the way to Calvary (cf. DA 742), the official celebration of the Passover was apparently yet future.

h. Jesus lay in the tomb over the Sabbath (Matt. 27:59 to 28:1; Mark 15:43 to 16:1; Luke 23:54 to 24:1; John 19:38 to 20:1), which would be Nisan 15.

i. Jesus arose from the tomb early Sunday morning, Nisan 16 (Matt. 28:1–6; Mark 16:1–6; Luke 24:1–6; John 20:1–16; see on Mark 15:42, 46; cf. GC 399; DA 785, 786).

Proposed Solutions of the Problem.—In the light of the foregoing let us examine the problem of the time of the Passover in the crucifixion year. Conservative commentators have generally sought to solve the problem on the basis of one of the four following assumptions:

a. That when referring to the Last Supper, the synoptic writers describe, not *the* Passover meal, but *a* ceremonial meal that preceded it by 24 hours. According to this assumption Nisan 14 fell on Friday in the year of the crucifixion and the Passover of John was the official Passover meal.

b. That “the passover” to which John refers was not *the* Passover meal, but *a* ceremonial meal connected with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. According to this assumption Friday was Nisan 15, and the Last Supper the preceding night was a celebration of the official Passover meal, at the regular time. This explanation is the reverse of the preceding one.

¹⁰Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 24:16). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

c. That the Last Supper was a true Passover meal, as in the Synoptics, even though celebrated only by Jesus and His disciples, 24 hours in advance of the official Passover meal referred to by John, and thus of the time other Jews celebrated it. According to this assumption Friday was Nisan 14.

d. That in the time of Christ sectarian differences with respect to calendrical reckoning, as to whether Nisan 14 and 16 should be correlated with certain days of the week, had led, in actual practice, to a celebration of the Passover on two successive days, that is, a double celebration. According to this assumption one religious faction (the Pharisees and other conservatives) would have considered that Nisan 14 fell on Thursday in the crucifixion year, and the other (the Boethusian Sadducees and other liberals), that it fell on Friday. Christ and the disciples thus, presumably, celebrated the Passover with the first group—the “passover” of the Synoptics—and the Jewish leaders celebrated it the following night—the “passover” of John. This assumption differs from the preceding one in that here Christ and the disciples were not alone in their celebration of the Passover.

For a more detailed discussion of the various attempts that have been made to harmonize the statements of John and the Synoptics with regard to the time of the Last Supper in relation to the Passover, over, the reader is referred to the following: Grace Amadon, “Ancient Jewish Calendation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 61, part 4, 1942, pp. 227-280; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, pp. 38-41; J. H. Bernard, *International Critical Commentary*, on St. John, vol. 1, pp. cvi-cviii; D. Chwolson, *Das Letzte Passamahl Christi und der Tag Seines Todes*; *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, art. “Chronology of the New Testament”; J. K. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, tr. Herbert Danby, pp. 326-329; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, on Matt 26:17; John 18:28; H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2, pp. 812, 813. (See bibliographical notes on pp. 82, 102, 265.) For a full discussion of the calendrical problems involved see pp. 248-264.

Evaluation of Proposed Solutions.—These four proposed solutions to the problem may be evaluated as follows:

a. The view that the Last Supper was a preliminary ceremonial meal in advance of the regular Passover meal assumes that the Synoptics use the word “passover” in an accommodated sense. While it may be granted that the word “passover” could have been used in this sense (see p. 533), available evidence is strongly against such an accommodated use: (1) This view rests on the conjecture that such a preliminary ceremonial meal *may* have been celebrated in the days of Christ. (2) The more natural and obvious reading of these passages in their context (see references listed on p. 534, par. e) points to the conclusion that the synoptic writers consistently and repeatedly speak of the Last Supper as “*the passover*.” (3) The comment of both Mark (ch. 14:12) and Luke (ch. 22:7), that the day preceding the Last Supper was “the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover” (see Mark 14:12), would seem to preclude any possibility that the “passover” of the Synoptics could have been anything but a true Passover meal (cf. DA 642, 646, 652, 653; EW 165: GC 399). The disciples apparently took for granted that Thursday was the day of preparation for the Passover, that is, the day on which the paschal lamb should be slain and roasted (see p. 533).

b. The view that “the passover” of John 18:28; 19:14 was a ceremonial meal connected with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 24 hours after the official Passover supper, which was on Nisan 15, assumes that John uses the word “passover” in an

accommodated sense. In favor of this view, it may be noted that common usage in NT times, as reflected, for instance, by Josephus (see p. 533), commonly applied the term Passover to the combined celebration of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But although it may be granted that John could have used the word “passover” in this accommodated sense (see p. 533), available evidence is strongly against his so doing in the passages cited: (1) There is no clear use of the word “passover” in this sense anywhere in the NT. (2) The more natural and obvious reading of John’s statements in their context points to the conclusion that the Passover meal to which the apostle refers was the official celebration of *the* Passover, at least the one generally recognized by the Jewish leaders. (3) The anxiety of the Jewish leaders to conclude the trial and execution of Jesus *immediately, before* the feast, in order to avoid delaying the case until *after* the feast, would appear to preclude any possibility that the feast had already begun (Matt. 26:3–5; Mark 14:1, 2, cf. DA 703). (4) Jewish law, as later codified in the Mishnah and the Talmud, prohibited the trial on a feast day of a case involving the death penalty (Mishnah *Beṣah* 5. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 185; *Sanhedrin* 4. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 185), or purchases such as that of the linen shroud and possibly also of spices for embalming the body of Jesus (Mark 15:46; Luke 23:56; however, see Mishnah *Shabbath* 23. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 771). The violation of these regulations—if they were in force in earlier times, as seems probable, and if, indeed, heed was given to them, which, however, cannot be established (see Note 2)—would appear to rule out the possibility that the arrest, trial, and crucifixion took place on Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and a ceremonial sabbath. (5) Preparations for embalming the body of Jesus (Luke 23:54 to 24:1), such as the women made on the day of the crucifixion, were considered labor, and as such would seem to be inappropriate even for a ceremonial sabbath (Lev. 23:7; however, see Mishnah *Shabbath* 23. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 771). (6) At sunset of the crucifixion day the women “rested the sabbath day according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56), obviously a reference to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. (7) If, as this view assumes, the crucifixion fell on Nisan 15, the first day of unleavened bread, then the resurrection fell on Nisan 17, or the third day. But the offering of the first fruits, a type of the resurrection of our Lord, took place on the second day, or Nisan 16 (see Lev. 23:10–14; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; GC 399; DA 785, 786). According to this view, then, the resurrection did not occur at the time called for by the ceremonial type of the wave sheaf. (8) In Jewish literature “the preparation of the passover” (John 19:14) is consistently applied to Nisan 14, never to Nisan 15, as this view would require (see Mishnah *Pesaḥim* 4. 1, 5, 6, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 243, 268, 271). (9) “The Passover was observed [by the Jews generally] as it had been for centuries [in other words, during the early hours of Nisan 15 (see p. 533)], while He to whom it pointed had been slain by wicked hands [late on Nisan 14], and lay in Joseph’s tomb” (DA 774; cf. GC 399).

c. The view that the Last Supper, although a true paschal meal, took place 24 hours prior to the time when the Jews, generally, celebrated it assumes that such a practice was possible. This view, unlike the preceding one, does take into account the fact that the crucifixion occurred in fulfillment of the type provided by the slaying of the paschal lamb on Nisan 14. It was, admittedly, impossible for Christ to eat the paschal lamb at the usual time, and also, as Himself the true paschal Lamb, to be slain at the usual time for the

slaying of the Passover lambs. It would seem more important that His death should synchronize with the death of the Passover lambs than that His eating of the Passover should synchronize with the official time for eating that meal (pp. 533, 534; GC 399). Accordingly, His eating of the Passover would take place earlier than the time regularly set for it if the types of the slaying of the lamb and the offering of the first fruits were to be fulfilled “not only as to the event, but as to the time” (GC 399). However, this view is also confronted with difficulties. It is difficult to see how Jesus and the disciples, as sole exceptions to the rule, could have celebrated the Passover a day in advance of the usual time. Note that: (1) There is no historical evidence of anyone else having ever eaten the Passover early. The Passover lambs were to be slain at the Temple (Mishnah *Pesahim* 5. 5–7, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 323, 324) at a specified time (see p. 533), and, consistently as far as the record goes, there was no provision for slaying them at any other time than the late afternoon of Nisan 14 (for an exception see Num. 9:6–11). (2) The disciples apparently recognized Thursday as the day on which preparations for the Passover should properly be made, in the crucifixion year (see Matt 26:17; Luke 22:7), and seemed to take for granted that Thursday night was the proper time for eating the paschal meal. Whether the subject had been under discussion and Jesus had informed them that the time of celebration would be an exception and come on Thursday rather than Friday night, or whether they considered that Thursday night was a normal time for the celebration, we are not informed. The synoptic writers are silent as to anything out of the ordinary about the eating of the Passover on Thursday night by Jesus and the disciples.

d. The view that there was a double celebration of the Passover is based on one or another of various conjectures. What is perhaps the most plausible of these conjectures assumes that the “passover” of the Synoptics was the one celebrated by the Pharisees and other conservative Jews, whereas that of John was the one observed by the more liberal Boethusian Sadducees and others sympathetic with their interpretation of Scripture. (The Boethusian Sadducees of Christ’s day are known to have contended that the “sabbath” of Lev. 23:11 referred to a weekly Sabbath instead of a ceremonial sabbath.) Those who set forth this view conjecture that in a year like A.D. 31, when, they assume, Nisan 16 would normally have fallen on the weekly Sabbath, the Sadducees would advocate the adjustment of the Jewish lunar calendar to make Nisan 16 fall, instead, on the first day of the week. This *could*, it is granted, have given rise to a double celebration of the Passover, but there is no evidence that, in actual practice, it ever *did* so. However, in that it makes the “passover” of the Synoptics and that of John both valid occasions for the celebration of the Passover, theory offers a possible solution of the apparently contradictory statements of the various gospel writers.

Conclusions.—We have here one more instance where our present-day ignorance of ancient Jewish practices appears to be the cause of our inability clearly to harmonize the seemingly conflicting statements of John and the Synoptics. However, on the basis of all available evidence, but without accepting any one of these four proposed explanations, this commentary suggests the possibility of the following sequence of events connected with the Last Supper, the crucifixion, and the Passover:

a. That in the year of the crucifixion, whether as a result of controversy between liberal and conservative elements of Judaism, or because of other circumstances now unknown, there may have been a double celebration of the Passover.

b. That, with other conservative Jews, Christ and the disciples celebrated the Last Supper on Thursday night, during the early hours of what was officially Nisan 14, and that the Last Supper was a true celebration of *the* Passover.

c. That Jesus died on the cross about the time of the evening sacrifice and the slaying of the paschal lambs, on Friday, Nisan 14.

d. That, in the year of the crucifixion, the official celebration of the Passover came on Friday night, after the crucifixion.

e. That Jesus rested in the tomb over the weekly Sabbath, which, in that year, coincided with the ceremonial, or annual, sabbath, Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

f. That Jesus arose from the tomb early on Sunday morning, Nisan 16, the day when the wave sheaf, which typified the resurrection, was presented in the Temple.

Happily, it is not necessary to solve this problem in order to avail ourselves of salvation through “Christ our passover,” who was “sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

Note 2

The leaders of the nation had already reached their decision as to what to do with Jesus; all they now lacked was plausible evidence with which to justify their action. They had fully determined to condemn Him to death, but knew not how to do this and yet maintain the appearance of legality. As the council gathered, the leaders were in a tense state of mind, fearful that their unscrupulous plan might fail. They were afraid: (1) that the people, who increasingly took the side of Jesus in opposition to them (see John 12:19), might attempt to rescue Him; (2) that delay in disposing of the case, particularly postponement of the trial until after the Passover season, might lead to a public reaction in His favor that they could not resist; (3) that some of their own number might speak in His defense, as upon previous occasions (see on Matt 26:66), and demand justice; (4) that, in spite of all their efforts, they might fail in their purpose to condemn Jesus; (5) that Caiaphas might not be able to prosecute the case through to a conclusion; (6) that an attempt might be made to examine the nature of Jesus’ Sabbath miracles; (7) that Jesus might excite the conflicting prejudices of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and thus split the council, as Paul did upon a later occasion (Acts 23:6–10), so making action on the case impossible; (8) that Jesus would reveal unsavory facts about their personal lives, and also about the illegal devices by which they were proceeding against Him. As the trial progressed Jesus also gave them reason to stand in mortal fear of the great final day of judgment. See DA 698–708.

Two fundamental steps were necessary to condemn and execute Jesus: (1) the religious trial before the Sanhedrin (see on v. 57), in order that action against Him might appear to be justified on the basis of Jewish law, and (2) the civil trial before Pilate (see on v. 57), in order to secure Roman approval for executing the death sentence. The charge preferred against Jesus before the Sanhedrin, and on the basis of which He was sentenced to death, was blasphemy, specifically His claim to being the Son of God. The charge preferred against Him before the Roman authorities was that of sedition and insurrection. There were altogether seven stages in the trial (see DA 760), four of these being before the religious authorities and three before the civil authorities. The purpose, nature, and result of each of these seven hearings and trials were as follows:

1. *Preliminary hearing before Annas.* (See on John 18:13–24; cf. DA 698–703.) Annas (see on Luke 3:2) had been high priest from about A.D. 7–14. He was honored and

respected as the elder statesman of the nation, and “his counsel was sought and carried out as the voice of God” (DA 698). Because of Jesus’ popularity with the people it was considered necessary to preserve the appearance of legality in dealing with Him. The Sanhedrin had already decided to do away with Jesus (John 5:16, 18; 7:19; 8:37, 40; 11:53; cf. Matt. 12:14; Mark 3:6; John 10:31, 39), but, after two years of effort to make a case against Him (see DA 213, 699), they had not yet been able to formulate a plan by which to accomplish their purpose. It was therefore considered expedient that Annas should conduct a personal examination of Jesus in order to secure, if possible, charges that might be preferred against Him. This preliminary hearing occurred approximately between 1:00 and 2:00 o’clock Friday morning. Annas failed completely and was utterly silenced by the incisive logic of Jesus’ reply (John 18:23; DA 700).

2. *Preliminary hearing before Annas and Caiaphas.* (See DA 703, 760.) Having taken Jesus into custody, Annas and Caiaphas summoned a carefully selected group of members of the Sanhedrin (see on v. 59) for an immediate session, in the hope of convicting Jesus before His friends could speak in His favor and before the weight of public opinion could be brought to bear against their decision to do away with Him. According to *The Desire of Ages* (p. 703), Annas and Caiaphas made a second attempt to elicit incriminating evidence from Jesus that might be used in the trial while the selected members of the Sanhedrin were assembling, but met with no success. As high priest, Caiaphas was ex-officio president of the Sanhedrin, and would therefore preside at the trial, but his comparative lack of experience (see DA 698) aroused fears that he might not be able to press the case through to a decision. The gospel writers do not mention this, the second, informal hearing preliminary to the first trial before the Sanhedrin, which took place approximately between 2:00 and 3:00 A.M. (see DA 703).

3. *Night trial before the Sanhedrin.* (See on ch. 26:57–75; cf. DA 703–714.) According to Jewish law the court was to sit in judgment over capital cases during the day. The Mishnah states the rule thus: “Civil suits are tried by day, and concluded at night. But capital charges must be tried by day and concluded by day” (*Sanhedrin* 32a [p. 200]). The leaders feared a popular attempt to rescue Jesus if He remained in their own custody. They remembered also that previous attempts to dispose of Jesus had been thwarted by certain influential members of the Sanhedrin (see on v. 66). Hence they determined to settle the case, and put Jesus in the custody of the Romans, before anyone should have opportunity to speak in His defense. This trial occurred approximately between 3:00 and 4:00 o’clock in the morning. At this season of the year day dawns at about 4:00 in the latitude of Jerusalem, and the sun rises about 5:30, local time. This trial resulted in a unanimous verdict of death (see on v. 66), but the verdict must be affirmed by daylight in order to be legal (see statement from *Sanhedrin* 32a above).

4. *Day trial before the Sanhedrin.* (See on Luke 22:66–71; cf. DA 714, 715.) Jewish law forbade the holding of trials at night in cases where death might be the penalty, nor could a verdict in capital cases, under any circumstances, be issued at night (see on No. 3). Accordingly, the decision of the Sanhedrin unanimously arrived at during the night must, in order to preserve a show of legality, be reaffirmed by daylight. This the Sanhedrin did when they reassembled soon after sunrise. They condemned Jesus as being worthy of death and agreed to hand Him over to the Roman authorities for execution.

5. *First trial before Pilate.* (See on Luke 23:1–5; John 18:28–38; cf. DA 723–728.) Pilate was aroused early in the morning, at approximately 6:00 o’clock or soon thereafter.

During his investigation he acquainted himself with the facts in the case and became convinced of Jesus' innocence. Except for the obvious animosity of the Jews he would have released Him. Learning that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod Antipas, who at that time was in Jerusalem, having come probably to attend the Passover.

6. *Hearing before Herod Antipas.* (See on Luke 23:6–12 cf. DA 728–731.) Although the arrest had taken place in Jerusalem, Jesus was a Galilean, and Herod Antipas, Roman puppet king of Galilee and Peraea (see on Luke 3:1, 2), could hear the case and pass sentence. He was convinced that Jesus was innocent, and was at first minded to set Him free, but declined to pass sentence, and sent Him back to Pilate. This hearing took place at approximately 7:00 o'clock Friday morning.

7. *Second trial before Pilate.* (See on Matt. 27:15–31; John 18:39 to 19:16; cf. DA 731–740.) The Roman governor of Judea and Samaria sought various means to release Jesus, but in vain. When the Jews threatened to make his conduct of the case an issue with the authorities in Rome, Pilate capitulated to their demand that he crucify Jesus. This trial probably began about 8:00 A.M. and ended before 9:00 A.M. (Mark 15:25).

Various aspects of the judicial proceedings against Christ were in contravention of Jewish law, as later codified in the Mishnah, a collection of Jewish oral tradition down to about the end of the 2d century A.D. Certain sections of the collection reflect a tradition later than the time of Jesus. But to the extent that various laws were already in force in the time of Jesus. But to the extent that various laws were already in force in the time of Jesus, their violation represents a perversion of justice in the conduct of His trial.

Following is a partial list of Mishnaic judicial laws:

1. *Charges* involving the penalty of capital punishment must be tried by day (*Sanhedrin* 4. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 200; see DA 710). This was also true of civil cases.
2. The *verdict* in capital cases must be rendered by day. "Capital charges must be tried by day and concluded by day" (*Sanhedrin*, 4. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 200).
3. An *unfavorable verdict* in a capital case must be postponed until the day after all evidence has been heard. "Capital charges may be concluded on the same day with a favourable verdict, but only on the morrow with an unfavourable verdict" (*ibid.*).
4. Because an unfavorable verdict in a capital case had to be postponed till the day after the hearing closed, such a case could not be heard *on Friday or on the day preceding a religious festival*. "Therefore trials are not held on the eve of a Sabbath or Festival" (*ibid.*).
5. *Witnesses* who bore contradictory testimony were to be disqualified and their testimony rejected. If witnesses "contradict each other ... their evidence is void" (*ibid.* 5. 2 [p. 256]).
6. The charge of *blasphemy*, on the basis of which Caiaphas demanded the death penalty (vs. 65, 66), was invalid. According to *ibid.* 7. 5 (p. 378), "The blasphemer is punished only if he utters [the divine] Name" itself, that is *Yahweh* (Jehovah), and the punishment for blasphemy was death by hanging (*ibid.* 6. 4 [p. 300]) or stoning (*ibid.* 7. 4 [p. 359]). Jesus did not use the sacred name for God (see on v. 64).
7. At least in the case of a man condemned to death by stoning, every opportunity was to be given for *witnesses* to testify in his behalf: "A man was stationed at the door of the court with the signalling flag in his hand, and a horse-man was stationed at a distance

yet within sight of him, and then if one says, ‘I have something [further] to state in his favour,’ he [the signaller] waves the flag, and the horse-man runs and stops them. And even if he himself says, ‘I have something to plead in my own favour,’ he is brought back, even four or five times, providing, however, that there is substance in his assertion. If then they find him innocent, they discharge him; but if not, he goes forth to be stoned. And a herald precedes him [crying]: so and so, the son of so and so, is going forth to be stoned because he committed such and such an offence, and so and so are his witnesses. Whoever knows anything in his favour, let him come and state it” (*ibid.* 6. 1 [pp. 275, 281]). Obviously these provision were disregarded at Jesus’ trial. There was no excuse for the failure to summon defense witnesses.

Other infractions of the Jewish criminal code at Jesus’ trial were:

1. Trial before a group of judges selected because of prejudice against the accused, with the deliberate exclusion of members friendly to Him (cf. DA 699, 710).
2. Treatment as a condemned criminal before being legally tried and found guilty (cf. DA 703, 710). According to Jewish law, a man was considered innocent until proved guilty (see DA 699). “Civil suits may be opened either for acquittal or condemnation” (*Sanhedrin* 4. 1 [p. 199]).
3. Sentence of death based upon His own testimony (see DA 715).

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6 DA 557, 716
6–13 DA 557–568
7–9 EW 165, 268
7–10 4T 551
8 DA 565, 720; 5T 268
8–12 DA 560
11 PP 535; 3T 391; WM 17
12–14 DA 563
13 4T 551
14–16 CS 139; DA 716; EW 166
15 DA 564; EW 268; 4T 41
20–29 DA 652–661
21 DA 720; 4T 41
21–25 DA 654
26–29 DA 653, 659
27, 28 MH 333
29 DA 149
30 DA 672
31 DA 673, 688, 743; EW 166
32 DA 674
33 DA 811; EW 166, 169
35 2T 204
36–56 DA 685–697
37, 38 AA 539; DA 686
38 DA 685
38, 39 2T 206
38–41 2T 204

39 CH 376; DA 687, 759; GW 218; MH 230; 9T 102
 40 DA 688; EW 167
 41 CT 412; DA 688, 713; FE 349; MYP 265; 4T 124; 5T 485
 42 DA 690, 693, 753
 42, 43 2T 205
 45 DA 694; 2T 205
 46 DA 694
 47 EW 167
 48 DA 695, 721
 49 GC 263
 49–54DA 696
 51–54EW 168
 55, 56 DA 697
 56 EW 168
 57–75DA 698–715
 58 EW 169
 63 DA 706
 63, 64 MB 67; 1T 203
 64 DA 707, 710; GC 643
 65, 66 DA 708
 67 EW 169, 170
 67, 68 DA 715
 69–75AA 62, 516, 537; EW 169; 5T 427
 71–74DA 711
 72 DA 712
 75 DA 713

CHAPTER 27

1 *Christ is delivered bound to Pilate. 3 Judas hangeth himself. 19 Pilate, admonished of his wife, 24 washeth his hands: 26 and looseth Barabbas. 29 Christ is crowned with thorns, 34 crucified, 40 reviled, 50 dieth, and is buried: 66 his sepulchre is sealed, and watched.*

1. When the morning was come. [*Day Trial Before the Sanhedrin, Matt. 27:1=Mark 15:1=Luke 22:66–71.* Major comment: Luke.] Matthew and Mark report more fully the night trial before the Sanhedrin, but mention the day trial only briefly. As is evident from Luke's account of the day trial, the proceedings went over practically the same ground as the night trial, in so far as essential points are concerned.

2. Bound him. [*First Trial Before Pilate, Matt. 27:2, 11–14=Mark 15:2–5=Luke 23:1–5=John 18:28–38.* Major comment: Luke and John.] Jesus had been bound in the garden by the officers who arrested Him, and appeared bound before Annas (John 18:12, 13, 24). It would seem that at some time during the trial before the Sanhedrin His hands had been freed.

Led Him away. According to Josephus (*War* v. 4. 2 [143, 144]) the building where the Sanhedrin met was at the southwest corner of the Temple area (see Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus). Thence, Jesus was conducted to the Roman Praetorium, Pilate's official residence. This, some have identified with the Tower of Antonia, which was immediately to the north of the Temple area; others, with the former Palace of Herod, less than half a mile to the west of the Temple area. It is known that later Roman

governors resided at this place when in Jerusalem (see Josephus *War* ii. 14. 8; 15. 5 [301; 328]).

Delivered him. Apparently the entire Sanhedrin accompanied Jesus to the palace (Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1).

Pontius Pilate. See on Luke 3:1.

Governor. Gr. *hēgemō*, more accurately translated “procurator.” A *hēgemōn* was a Roman of the equestrian order appointed by Caesar and directly answerable to him. The official residence of the Roman procurator, or “governor,” was in Caesarea. However, particularly at the times of the various great Jewish festivals, when there were thousands of pilgrims in Jerusalem, it was the practice of the “governor” to move temporarily to Jerusalem in order to guard against disorder of any kind. There was ever the possibility of a popular uprising against Rome, and an occasion such as the Passover provided the Jews with an ideal opportunity to raise an insurrection. Pilate was expected to confirm the death sentence and execute Jesus (see DA 723).

3. Then Judas. [*Judas’ Confession and Suicide, Matt. 27:3–10.* See Passion Week] Judas appeared to make his confession as the official, or day, trial before the Sanhedrin drew to a close, probably about the time the verdict was rendered. Judas either saw that Jesus was about to be condemned or had heard the sentence pronounced.

Condemned. See on ch. 26:66.

Repented. Gr. *metamelomai*, literally, “to be sorry afterward.” Paul uses *metamelomai* of his regret after having sent a sharp rebuke to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 7:8). The repentance of Judas was like that of Esau. It consisted of remorse and was not accompanied by a change of mind. In the case of Judas it led to suicide. There was no basic change of character.

Thirty pieces. See on ch. 26:15.

4. I have sinned. Judas had fully expected Jesus to deliver Himself from His tormentors (see DA 721). The discovery that Jesus would not do so led to the confession of Judas. The betrayer steps forward as the only witness to testify to the innocence of Jesus. For Jewish judicial regulations that safeguarded the interests of a condemned man see Additional Notes on Chapter 26, Note 2.

What is that to us? The Sanhedrin completely ignored the new testimony forcibly introduced into the trial by Judas’ confession. His confession must have greatly embarrassed the leaders, whose complicity in the plot was thereby made public. It was evident that they had bribed Judas, and this act was a direct violation of the laws of Moses (see Ex. 23:8).

5. In the temple. The Sanhedrin did not meet in the Temple itself, but in a building close by the Temple (see on v. 2).

Hanged himself. This he must have done almost immediately, for those conducting Jesus to Calvary discovered the mangled body of Judas by the roadside as they left the city (see DA 722; cf. Acts 1:18).

6. Not lawful. The restriction was probably based on Deut. 23:18.

The treasury. Gr. *korbanas*, the transliteration of an Aramaic word meaning “gift.” As here used, *korbanas* probably designates the place where gifts were stored.

The price of blood. The priests shrank from placing the thirty pieces of silver back into the Temple treasury, but were eager to shed the innocent blood they had purchased therewith. They manifested a similar scrupulousness when they refused to enter Pilate's hall of judgment, lest they be defiled and thus be unable to eat the Passover (John 18:28).

7. Took counsel. Whether at this time or later is not stated. A trivial matter such as this was probably postponed until after the Passover.

Potter's field. Called "Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood" (Acts 1:19). "Potter's field" has become the name for a burial place for paupers and strangers. The location of the field is not known.

8. This day. That is, when Matthew wrote the Gospel that bears his name.

9. Fulfilled. For the sense in which Matthew refers to OT prophecies being fulfilled see on ch. 1:22.

Jeremy. That is, Jeremiah. The quotation, however, is chiefly from Zech. 11:13, with possible allusions to Jer. 18:2–12; 19:1–15; 32:6–9. For comment on the fact that a quotation may be derived from several OT writers yet credited to the foremost of them see on Mark 1:2.

The children of Israel. Literally, "[Some] from the sons of Israel."

10. Appointed. That is, "ordered," or "directed."

11. Jesus stood. Matthew resumes the narrative begun in v. 2 (see comment there), having interrupted it for the account of what Judas did at the close of the day trial before the Sanhedrin (see on v. 3). The members of the Sanhedrin refused to enter the judgment hall lest they should be defiled and unable to eat the Passover (John 18:28).

Governor. See on v. 2.

Art thou? The word translated "thou" is in the emphatic position, implying that Pilate was unable to believe that a person like Jesus could be a wild revolutionary, as the Jews had implied in their charges against Him (Luke 23:2, 5, 14). Luke (ch. 23:2) records the threefold charge Caiaphas preferred against Jesus: seditious agitation, forbidding the payment of taxes, and pretension to a kingly throne. Only John (ch. 18:28–38) gives a more or less extended account of the first trial before Pilate, and the background for the question here abruptly stated by the synoptic writers.

Thou sayest. Equivalent to "Yes" (see on ch. 26:64). Throughout His trial, whether before the Jews or before Pilate and Herod, the only questions to which Jesus replied were those that involved His Messiahship. He claimed to be both the Son of God and the King of the Jews (Matt. 26:63, 64; John 18:33–36). The first claim was considered blasphemy by the Jews and the second an act of treason by the Romans.

12. He answered nothing. Compare ch. 26:63.

13. Hearest thou not? Ordinary men would be expected to protest loudly their innocence, whether innocent or guilty. Pilate marveled at Jesus' self-control, for to him it was as unaccountable as it was admirable. By this time Pilate well knew that the charges against Jesus were wholly malicious (see Mark 15:10). There was therefore no need for Jesus to speak up in self-defense.

14. Marvelled greatly. See on v. 13.

15. Governor. [Second Trial Before Pilate, Matt. 27:15–31^a=Mark 15:6–19=Luke 23:13–25=John 18:39 to 19:16. Major comment: Matthew and John. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; Passion Week, Resurrection to Ascension, and Palestine Under the Herodians.] Gr. *hēgemōn* (see on v. 2). John provides a more complete and more

nearly chronological record of the second and final trial than do the Synoptists. No doubt John's record should, in large part at least, be inserted between vs. 23 and of 27 of Matt. 27, prior to the climax of the trial as recorded in vs. 24–26.

Release. Amnesty for political prisoners at festival time was a practice of pagan origin (see DA 733). It was a demonstration of the conciliatory policy of Rome toward the people of subdued provinces and was designed to win their favor.

16. Notable. Gr. *episēmos*, “marked,” “illustrious,” “notorious.” Here the latter meaning seems to be intended. Barabbas was probably the leader, or one of the leaders, of a riot that had recently occurred in Jerusalem. Contemporary historical records indicate that riots and insurrections were common in both Judea and Galilee.

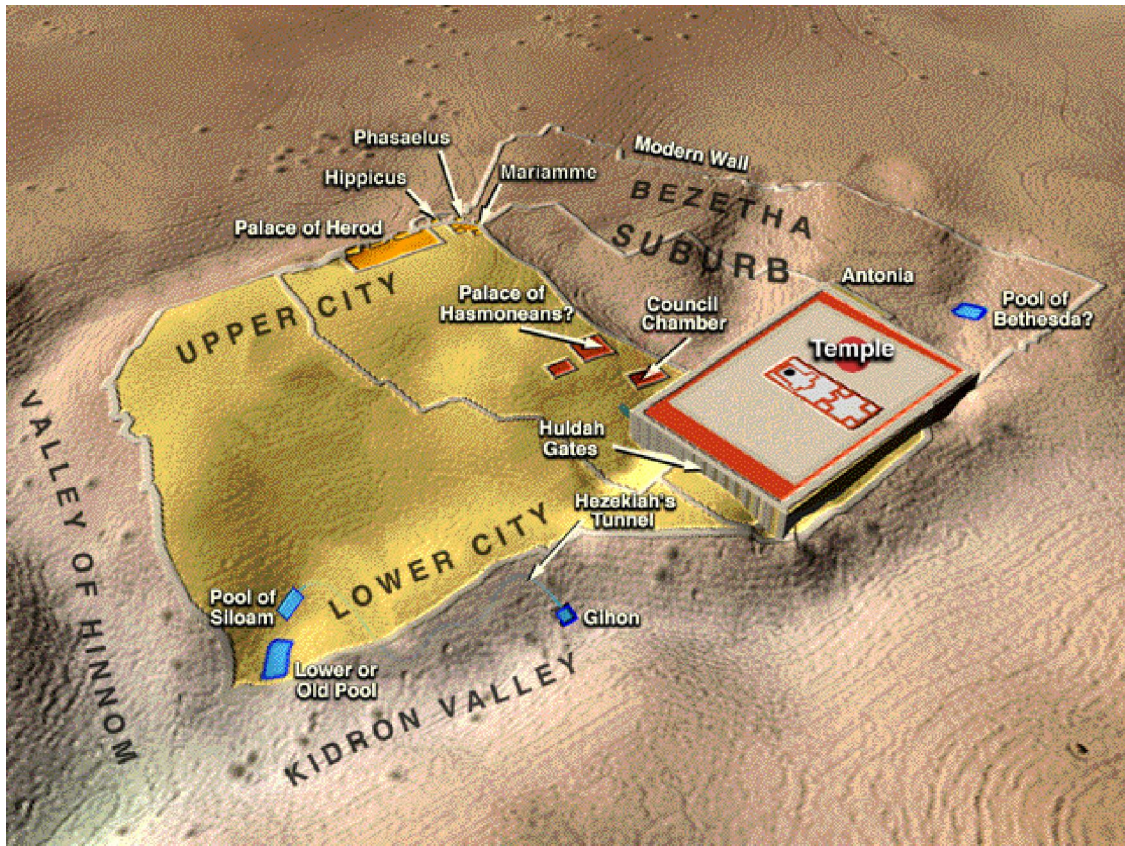
Barabbas. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 146) for the reading “Jesus Barabbas.” Pilate offered the people the choice between a self-styled political savior (see DA 733), who promised salvation from the tyranny of Rome, and the Saviour of the world, who had come to save men from the tyranny of sin. They preferred submission to the leadership of Barabbas rather than to the leadership of Christ.

17. Which is called Christ. Members of the Sanhedrin had already accused Jesus before Pilate as one who claimed to be “Christ a King” (Luke 23:2). The title Christ is from the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word transliterated Messiah (see on Matt. 1:1). By the Jews of Christ's time the Messiah of prophecy was conceived of as a military leader destined to liberate their nation from the bondage of Rome. Pilate doubtless understood well the significance of the title Messiah, or Christ. The offer to release Jesus implied that, for purposes of bargaining, Pilate acknowledged Jesus as a prisoner, presumably guilty of the charges brought against Him, and that as such He was eligible for amnesty on the basis of custom.

Jerusalem in the Time of Christ

11

¹¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 27:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



18. For envy. Pilate already surmised the malicious motives of the Sanhedrin, and may have proposed the choice between Christ and Barabbas with deliberate intent to prove both to the people and to his own satisfaction the insincerity he had already detected in their leaders. The Jews had charged Christ as a rebel against Rome, but they desired the release of Barabbas, who was openly guilty of rebellion.

19. His wife sent. Apparently the letter from Pilate's wife, whom tradition has named Claudia Procla, arrived immediately before Pilate sent for Barabbas (see DA 732, 733). Pilate was already convinced of the innocence of Jesus, and the warning from his wife provided a supernatural confirmation.

In a dream. Compare the dreams given to Nebuchadnezzar (see on Dan. 2:1) and to the wise men who came to see Jesus (see on Matt. 2:1).

20. Persuaded the multitude. The efforts of the leaders to influence the decision of the unthinking mob constituted absolute proof of the insincerity of their charges against Jesus. Much of Jesus' popular support had come from Galilee and Peraea, where He had recently labored, and pilgrims from these regions probably slept outside the city and had not as yet entered at this early hour. One thing the leaders greatly feared was an attempt on the part of such friendly pilgrims to liberate Jesus (see on ch. 26:59). These wily leaders evidently purposed to have the matter settled before such an attempt should be made. The Jerusalem mob, which Josephus repeatedly describes as riotous, was fully under the control of the religious leaders. Pilate anticipated that some of the friends of Jesus would speak forth in behalf of the prisoner. He apparently did not know that the mob before his judgment seat was made up mostly, if not altogether, of men who were

unfriendly or at least indifferent toward Jesus. For this reason Pilate's ruse failed, doubtless to his great surprise and chagrin.

Ask. Literally, "ask for themselves." The leaders proposed the liberation of a man guilty of the very crime—being a false messiah—of which they accused Jesus (see on v. 16), and urged the condemnation of the true Messiah! To put the matter another way, had Jesus actually been the political messiah for whom they looked, and had He made Himself king of the Jews and led the nation in revolt against Rome, they doubtless would have eagerly flocked to His standard!

22. What shall I do? Pilate lacked the moral courage to render the verdict he knew to be right. Like him, many today cast about for ways to avoid the issue (see on v. 24), but sooner or later they must make their final decision for or against Christ.

23. What evil? Pilate, representing the power of imperial Rome, was arguing the question with the rabble of Jerusalem! Not only so; he was being worsted in the argument. True, they could not answer his question, for the only valid answer was that Jesus had done no wrong. But what they lacked in logic they made up in wild clamor.

Cried out the more. Like a pack of wolves howling after their prey, the rabble of Jerusalem literally "kept crying still louder."

It should be noted that the various incidents recorded in John 19:1–16 fit into the narrative at approximately this point (see DA 736, 737). These incidents consist of further attempts on Pilate's part to release Jesus.

24. A tumult. The mob was rapidly getting out of control and a riot was in the making, for which Pilate would have to account to his superiors in Rome (cf. Acts 19:40). Pilate began to realize that every attempt he made to secure the consent of the people and their leaders to release Jesus served only to increase their unreasoning fury.

Washed his hands. For the strategy that finally led to Pilate's action see John 19:12–16. Pilate had repeatedly declared Christ's innocence and endeavored, if possible, to release Jesus, and if not, to evade responsibility for pronouncing judgment (John 18:38; etc.). (1) He had attempted to persuade the Jews to handle the case themselves, within the limit of the law (John 18:31). (2) He had sent Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:7). (3) He had attempted to release Jesus as the pardoned Passover prisoner (John 18:39). (4) He had scourged Jesus in the hope of arousing pity for Him, and thus of saving Him from the death penalty (Luke 23:22). Compared with other ancient peoples, the Romans were noted for their keen sense of justice in dealing with accused individuals, an attitude that Pilate no doubt shared. The emperor Tiberius is known to have dealt severely with Roman officials who mistreated any of his subjects. Pilate had already incurred imperial displeasure because of inconsiderate and brutal treatment of the Jews, and it was for the same cause, in part, that he was deposed five years later, and soon thereafter committed suicide (DA 738; cf. Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 3. 2; 4. 1, 2; etc.). Pilate hesitated to displease the Jews, yet if he ordered the execution of Jesus knowing Him to be innocent, he might also be called to account by the emperor.

The symbolic washing of the hands as evidence of innocence was well known among the Jews, and was in certain instances prescribed by law (see Deut. 21:6, 7, cf. Ps. 26:6; 73:13). However much Pilate might seek to evade responsibility for the death of Jesus, his guilt remained.

25. His blood be on us. The Jews eagerly accepted responsibility for the death of Jesus; they almost appeared to boast of their course of action. The apostles later charged

the leaders of the nation as murderers of Christ (Acts 2:23; 3:14, 15; 7:52), and the leaders, forgetting their earlier acceptance of responsibility, resented the charge (Acts 5:28).

On our children. God does not punish children for their parents' sins; however, the results of wrong decisions and wrong actions have their natural effect on later generations (see Ex. 20:5; see on Eze. 18:2). In the bitter siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, a generation after the crucifixion (see on Matt. 24:15–20), the Jews suffered the inevitable result of their fateful decision the day they withdrew from the covenant (see DA 739) by their declaration, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15), and as a people they have suffered for nearly 19 centuries since.

26. Scourged Jesus. In vs. 26–31, as often elsewhere (see pp. 191, 192), Matthew departs from strict chronological order, his purpose being to complete Pilate's part in the narrative before turning to that of the soldiers (v. 26; cf. v. 31). The mockery of vs. 27–31 actually preceded the scourging and release for crucifixion of vs. 26, 31. There were two scourgings, the purpose of the first being to elicit the approval of the mob for releasing Jesus (Luke 23:16, 20, 22; John 19:1; DA 734, 735), and that of the second, punishment preliminary to crucifixion (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; DA 738, 742). Josephus (*War* ii. 14. 9 [306]) states that Florus, a later Roman governor of Judea, flogged certain inhabitants of Jerusalem prior to their execution. For a description of flogging as administered by the Jews see on 10:17.

Delivered him. Pilate acceded to the demand that Jesus be crucified, and passed sentence accordingly (see Luke 23:24). In doing so Pilate surrendered every iota of justice and mercy to the bloodthirsty leaders and those who followed them.

27. The soldiers. That is, Roman soldiers, for this took place under Pilate's immediate jurisdiction. The second Italian cohort was then stationed in Palestine.

The common hall. Gr. *praitōrion*, the “Praetorium” (Mark 15:16; see on Matt 27:2). Reference may be either to the building itself or to the court adjoining it.

28. Stripped. Gr. *ekduō*. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 146) between this and the reading *enduō*, “clothed.”

Scarlet. Gr. *kokkinē*, a dyestuff made from the desiccated bodies of insects. Mark (ch. 15:17) has “purple,” Gr. *porphura*. Certain shades of ancient scarlet and purple blended almost imperceptibly into each other, so that it would be easy for two observers to use the two terms in describing the same color. This “robe” may have been a soldier's cloak, possibly a cast-off garment formerly worn by Pilate. It was thrown about Christ's shoulders in mock imitation of a royal purple robe.

29. A crown. Gr. *stephanos*, generally a victor's “crown.” The *stephanos* usually consisted of a garland of leaves or flowers, such as might be awarded victors in athletic contests and in war. Little did Jesus' tormentors realize the appropriateness of the victor's crown, for in this case the wearer, by His death, triumphed over “principalities and powers” (Col. 2:15), and won the greatest victory of time and eternity.

Thorns. Possibly a shrub with flexible branches and numerous sharp thorns, commonly found in the warmer parts of Palestine and known technically as *Zizyphus spina Christi*.

A reed. This was an imitation of a royal scepter.

Bowed the knee. To render mock allegiance.

King of the Jews. An allusion to the charge on which Jesus was condemned and executed (see on vs. 11, 37).

30. Spit upon him. Compare the abuse Jesus suffered after His trial before the Sanhedrin (see ch. 26:67).

31. Led him away. [*The Crucifixion, Matt. 27:31b–56=Mark 15:20–41=Luke 23:26–49=John 19:17–37.* Major comment: Matthew and John. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; the Crucifixion In Relation To Passover, Passion Week, Resurrection to Ascension.] The time was perhaps between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning. For the probable location of Pilate's judgment hall see on v. 2. The route of the journey from Pilate's judgment hall to Calvary is not known, owing to the fact that neither location can be identified with certainty. The modern Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem is the traditional way to the cross. This tradition assumes that the trial before Pilate took place in the Tower of Antonia, immediately north of the Temple area (see *War* ii. 15.5 [328]), and that the modern Church of the Holy Sepulcher stands upon the site of ancient Golgotha (see on v. 33). This traditional identification can be traced back no farther than the time of Constantine in the 4th century. Compare on chs. 26:36; 27:33.

32. Cyrene. A city of Libya, in North Africa. In ancient times there was a large colony of Jews in Cyrene. There was a synagogue in Jerusalem identified with Cyrenians and others (Acts 6:9).

Compelled. Faint from His recent ordeal, Jesus was unable to bear His cross, as custom required. Jesus' disciples might have come forward and offered to do so, but fear held them back from any demonstration of allegiance to Him. What a privilege it was for Simon to bear that cross, and thus to have a share with Jesus in His sufferings Today, it is our privilege to bear the cross of Jesus by remaining true to principle in the face of unpopularity, slighting remarks, and abuse.

33. Golgotha. A transliteration of the Greek *Golgotha*, which in turn is a transliteration of the Aramaic *Golgotha'* (Heb. *Gulgoleth*), meaning "skull." The Latin Vulgate renders the word for skull as *Calvaria*; hence, the English name Calvary (Luke 23:33). The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, asserted by some to be on the site of ancient Golgotha, is far inside what is known today as the Old City of Jerusalem, but may possibly have been situated outside the second wall of Jerusalem in Christ's day. The evidence for this location of Golgotha is a 4th-century tradition. Jesus "suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). The site was not far from the city (John 19:20). The Sheep Gate is thought to have been situated at the northeast corner of the city, not far from the Temple (The Walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's Day), and Golgotha seems to have been near this gate (see DA 576). Compare on chs. 26:36; 27:31.

Skull. This probably refers to the shape of the hill on which the crucifixion took place, rather than to human skulls which some have supposed lay exposed at the site. Those who point to the skull-like formation of a certain hill of modern Jerusalem, a few hundred feet beyond the northern wall, as identifying the site of Calvary, do not take sufficiently into account the fact that the ancient surface of the area in question probably has been greatly changed during centuries of weathering and of alteration by human

hands. Attempts to identify the site with any particular locality known today are altogether inconclusive.

34. Vinegar. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the reading *oinos*, “wine,” instead of *oxos*, “vinegar,” According to Rabbi H̥isda (c. A.D. 309), “When one is led out execution, he is given a goblet of wine containing a grain of frankincense, in order to benumb his senses” (Talmud *Sanhedrin* 43a, Soncino ed., p. 279). This custom was intended to mitigate the suffering of the one condemned to death.

Gall. Mark (ch. 15:23) states that the “wine” was mixed with myrrh (see on Luke 7:37).

Would not drink. For the reason see DA 746.

35. Crucified him. As He had foretold (see chs. 20:19; 26:2). The act of crucifixion was performed by Roman soldiers (John 19:23). It is said that those crucified sometimes died from exposure and exhaustion after about 12 hours, though in other cases death did not come for two or three days. Mark (ch. 15:25) states that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, by Jewish reckoning, or about 9:00 A.M.

Parted his garments. His clothing was divided into four parts, one for each of the soldiers participating in the execution; for His coat they cast lots (John 19:23, 24), as predicted in Ps. 22:18.

36. They watched him. That is, they kept guard. Roman authority had decreed the sentence of death, and Roman soldiers carried out the sentence.

37. His accusation. John (ch. 19:20) states that the indictment was written in Hebrew (Aramaic), the common language of the people, in Greek, the language of learning and culture, and in Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire. He also states (v. 19) that the wording of the “title” was Pilate’s. The Jews protested (v. 21), apparently because the title seemed to be an insult to their nation. Pilate, in resentment against the pressure the Jewish leaders had brought to bear in the case—even to the point of threatening him—refused to alter it (v. 22).

King of the Jews. John (ch. 19:19) no doubt gives the “title” in full, whereas each of the synoptic writers gives an abbreviation (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; see Additional Notes on Matt. 3, Note 2). The “title,” which was also an accusation, consisted of the condemned man’s name, place of residence, and offense. The Jews were irritated by the fact that this accusation constituted a Roman warning that any man who posed as a king of the Jews could expect a similar fate. This implied perpetual submission to Rome, a prospect most galling to the pride of the Jews.

38. Thieves. Gr. *lēstai*, “robbers,” or “brigands” (see on ch. 26:55). Jesus’ cross was erected in the center, the location reserved for the ringleader of a criminal group.

39. Wagging their heads. As a gesture of scorn and mockery (see Ps. 22:7; 109:25; Isa. 37:22; Jer. 18:16).

40. Thou that destroyest. This was a restatement of an accusation preferred against Jesus by the Sanhedrin (ch. 26:61).

If thou be. These words are reminiscent of the challenge uttered by Satan as he approached Christ in the wilderness of temptation (see on ch. 4:3). To all appearances, Jesus could not possibly be the Son of God. Even His disciples had completely lost hope that He might be (see Luke 24:21; cf. DA 772). Once more, speaking through demon-possessed men, Satan aims his sharpest dart at Jesus’ faith in His heavenly Father (see

DA 733, 746, 760). This taunt upon the cross reflects the question put to Jesus by the high priest before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:63).

Son of God. See on Luke 1:35.

41. The chief priests. Members from the three classes here named composed the Sanhedrin, many of whom, apparently, were present at the crucifixion to witness the climax of their bloodthirsty plot. What men to lead the nation How cruel, heartless, and utterly devoid of mercy and compassion were they, exulting at the suffering of their victim Thus it was with apostate religious leaders during the Dark Ages; thus it is today in lands where persecution is rampant.

42. He saved others. Jesus had saved men from disease, demon possession, and death. Perhaps those mocking Jesus were thinking of the recent resurrection of Lazarus.

Himself he cannot save. Had Jesus now saved Himself He would have forfeited the power to save others. The plan of salvation would have been broken. Though they knew it not, the Jewish leaders gave utterance to a profound truth. Christ's refusal to save Himself was the supreme demonstration of divine love (see John 15:13). It is precisely because Jesus chose not to save Himself at this moment that He can save others. On the cross Christ gave an example of the principle stated in Matt. 10:39. In the wilderness of temptation Jesus had faced the question of using His divine power for personal benefit, and made the decision that He would not do so.

If he be. He had claimed to be (John 18:33–37). As the inscription above His head announced, He was condemned to death for this claim. Failure to come down from the cross, the speakers implied, would be proof that Jesus was not what He claimed to be, and also that He deserved the fate that had overtaken Him.

We will believe. According to Jewish thinking prosperity was evidence of divine favor, and adversity, of divine disfavor. The lesson exemplified in the experience of Job had not altered their philosophy of suffering (see on Job 42:5; Ps. 38:3; 39:9). At various times during His ministry Jesus had sought to refute their false concept, but without success (see on Mark 1:40; 2:5; John 9:2). This false view of suffering was a device by which Satan designed to darken the minds of those who witnessed the suffering of Jesus upon the cross. To the average Jew it was inconceivable that God would permit the Messiah to suffer as Jesus was suffering; therefore Jesus could not be what He claimed to be.

43. He trusted in God. Through wily hypocrites Satan attacked Christ's faith in His Father (see on v. 40). As Jesus went through the experience of Gethsemane, and now as He hung upon the cross, Satan spared no device, however cruel and false, to shake the Saviour's hold on His Father's love and overruling providence. It was this love that was the citadel of the Saviour's strength to endure and of His victory over all the fiery darts of the wicked one (see DA 119).

Let him deliver. Unwittingly, Jesus' tormentors used the very words of prophecy (Ps. 22:8).

Will. Gr. *thelō*, here meaning, "to desire."

He said, I am. See on v. 40.

44. The thieves. See on v. 38. For the account of the penitent thief, see on Luke 23:40–43.

45. Sixth hour. That is, noon, according to Jewish reckoning. The "sixth hour" of John 19:14 is Roman time, about 6:00 A.M. The noncanonical Gospel of Peter (sec. 5; see

p. 128) says that “it was noon, and darkness came over all Judaea.” According to Mark 15:25 it was about “third hour,” or 9:00 A.M., when Jesus was crucified. He had therefore been upon the cross now for approximately two or three hours.

Darkness. This was a supernatural darkness (see on Luke 23:45). In no case could it have been caused by an eclipse of the sun, because the moon was already past full.

The land. Just how far the darkness extended is not evident from these words.

Ninth hour. About 3:00 P.M.

46. Jesus cried. For a summary of the seven utterances of Jesus upon the cross see on Luke 23:34. This is the only utterance of the seven recorded by either Matthew or Mark. Luke and John each list three, though not the same three.

Eli. See on Ps. 22:1. The form Eloi (Mark 15:34) is a transliteration of the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew.

47. Calleth for Elias. Perhaps suffering and fatigue had rendered the voice of Jesus indistinct. Jewish tradition had made Elijah the patron saint of pious men in their hour of extremity (Talmud *Sanhedrin* 109a, Soncino ed., pp. 747, 748; *Shabbath* 33b, Soncino ed., p. 157; *Abodah Zarah* 17b, 18b, Soncino ed., pp. 90, 94).

48. Vinegar. Gr. *oxos* (see on v. 34). *Oxos* was wine turned sour by fermentation (see on Num. 6:3). See Ps. 69:21 for a prediction of this very incident.

49. Let be. Mockingly, the priests proposed waiting to see whether what they misinterpreted to be Jesus’ appeal for Elijah would be answered by Elijah’s coming to assuage the suffering of Jesus or to deliver Him.

Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for adding: “and another took a spear and pierced his side, and water and blood came out.”

50. Loud voice. Compare Luke 23:46; Ps. 31:5.

Yielded up the ghost. Gr. *aphēken to pneuma*, literally, “to emit the breath” (see on Luke 8:55). Mark and Luke use the word *ekpneō*, literally, “to breathe out” (Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46).

He died triumphant over the grave (Rev. 1:18) and over all the forces of evil (Col. 2:15). Though the sense of His Father’s presence had been withdrawn, so that while He hung upon the cross He “could not see through the portals of the tomb” (DA 753), “the sense of the loss of His Father’s favor was [now] withdrawn” (DA 756). Jesus did not die in defeat. He was fully conscious of the triumph that was His and was confident of His own resurrection.

51. The veil. That is, the curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy (see on Ex. 26:31–33; 2 Chron. 3:14). Access to the most holy place was restricted to the high priest, and he could enter but once a year. The rending of the veil, and the consequent exposure of the heretofore sacrosanct place, was Heaven’s signal that the typical service had ended—type had met antitype. This occurred at the hour of the regular evening sacrifice, as the priest was about to slay the lamb of the daily burnt offering. The time was probably about 2:30 in the afternoon, or about the “ninth hour” according to Jewish reckoning (see Additional Notes on Chapter 26, Note 1; cf. DA 756, 757; GC 399).

From the top. Indicating that it was not accomplished by human hands.

52. Many bodies. Only Matthew records this incident connected with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Compare Ps. 68:18; Eph. 4:8. It should be noted that while the

graves were opened at the time of Christ's death, the resurrected saints did not rise till after Jesus arose (Matt. 27:53). How appropriate that Christ should bring forth with Him from the grave some of the captives whom Satan had held in the prison house of death. These martyrs came forth with Jesus, immortalized, and later ascended with Him to heaven (see DA 786).

54. The centurion. That is, the one in charge of the crucifixion. For comment on the word "centurion" see on Luke 7:2. According to tradition this centurion's name was Petronius, some say Longinus (*Acta Pilati* xvi. 7; Gospel of Peter, Fragment i. 31).

The Son of God. The Greek here has no article; therefore the expression would more accurately be translated, "God's Son." The translation "a Son of God" is rather vague. See *Problems in Bible Translation*, pp. 191, 192; cf. DA 770; see on Dan. 7:13; Luke 1:35.

55. Many women. There were numerous women disciples who believed in Jesus, some of whom accompanied Him and ministered to the needs of the little company (see on Luke 8:2, 3). John (ch. 19:27) also mentions the mother of Jesus.

56. Mary Magdalene. See Additional Note on Luke 7; see on Luke 8:2.

Mother of James. Possibly, "Mary the wife of Cleophas" (John 19:25).

Mother of Zebedee's children. Possibly the Salome of Mark 15:40 (cf. Matt. 20:20).

57. When the even was come. [*The Burial*, Matt. 27:57–61=Mark 15:42–47=Luke 23:50–56=John 19:38–42. Major comment: Matthew and Mark. See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; the Crucifixion In Relation To Passover, Passion Week, and the Resurrection to Ascension.] That is, the late afternoon hours of Friday, the day of the crucifixion. Jesus died about 3:00 P.M. (see Mark 15:34–37), and the sun set about 6:30 at this season of the year in the latitude of Jerusalem.

A rich man. Mark describes Joseph of Arimathaea as "an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43). Luke adds that he was "a good man, and a just," who "had not consented to the counsel and deed" of the leaders (Luke 23:50, 51). John describes him as "a disciple of Jesus, ... secretly for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38). The provision for the interment of Jesus, arranged by Joseph of Arimathaea, fulfilled Isaiah's prediction (ch. 53:9) that Messiah would make "his grave ... with the rich in his death."

Arimathæa. The Greek form of Ramah. There were several towns by the name Ramah, but it is not known which one is to be identified with the Arimathaea of the NT. See Additional Note on 1 Sam. 1.

Joseph. John adds that Nicodemus (see John 3:1; 7:50) was associated with Joseph in arranging for the burial of Jesus (ch. 19:39).

Jesus' disciple. Both Joseph and Nicodemus had been intentionally excluded from the Sanhedrin trials of Jesus, for in times past they had spoken in Jesus' favor and thwarted plans to silence the Saviour (see on ch. 26:66; cf. DA 773). Now they boldly stepped forward to do what no other friends of Jesus were in a position to do. In the crucifixion Nicodemus witnessed the fulfillment of what Jesus had said three years before concerning the lifting up of the Son of man (John 3:14, 15), and to him the vivid scenes of this day constituted positive evidence of Christ's divinity (see DA 775, 776).

58. Went to Pilate. Nicodemus went to purchase spices for embalming the body of Jesus (see on John 19:39, 40), probably at the same time Joseph went to see Pilate. Time was short, as the task must be completed before sundown (see on Matt. 27:57). It must

have taken courage to step forward and manifest sympathy for a man who had been condemned and executed as a traitor to Rome, and who had been branded by the highest Jewish court as a blasphemer. The courage of Joseph and Nicodemus shines with added luster in contrast with the cowardice of the disciples.

Begged. About the same time the Jewish leaders came to Pilate with the request that the bodies of Jesus and the two thieves be removed from the cross before the Sabbath (John 19:31). The law of Moses required that the bodies of impaled criminals be removed before sundown (Deut. 21:22, 23). It would be considered particularly offensive for the bodies to remain on the crosses over Sabbath, especially in view of the fact that this Sabbath was “an high day” (John 19:31, 42). Compare Josephus *War* iv. 5. 2 (317, 318). In the normal course of events Jesus, as a traitor to Rome, would have been given a dishonorable burial in a field reserved for the basest of criminals (see DA 773).

Pilate commanded. Before ordering Joseph to take custody of Jesus’ body, Pilate secured from the centurion official confirmation of His death (Mark 15:44, 45). It was unusual that a crucified person should die within six hours. Usually the agony of death continued for many hours longer, sometimes for several days.

59. Linen cloth. Compare Mark 15:46.

60. His own new tomb. Luke (ch. 23:53) explains that no one had yet been buried in the tomb. The fact that Joseph owned this tomb so near to Jerusalem suggests that Arimathaea was no longer his place of residence. It was probably his native city, the place where his family owned land.

Hewn. Natural caves and hewn rock tombs abound in the vicinity of Jerusalem. They were the usual places of burial in ancient Palestine. Upon entering a typical tomb, one would probably find a recess in the walls on each side, in which bodies were laid. Often there was a small room behind the main part of the tomb where the bones of previous generations were collected, to make room for new arrivals at the grave. Joseph’s generous gift of a burial place solved a problem for which the disciples had no solution.

Rolled a great stone. Probably a stone resembling a grindstone in shape, so placed as to roll into position in a small groove to close the door of the tomb.

61. Mary Magdalene. That is, Mary the sister of Martha (see Additional Note on Luke 7; cf. DA 558–560, 568). Mary was one of the last to leave the tomb Friday afternoon, as she was first to return there Sunday morning (Matt. 28:1; cf. DA 568, 788).

The other Mary. Probably “Mary the mother of Joses” (Mark 15:47) and James (Mark 16:1). For comment on the devout women who accompanied Jesus and His disciples and ministered to their needs see on Luke 8:2, 3. “The other Mary” was with Mary Magdalene at the sepulcher early on the resurrection morning (Matt. 28:1).

62. The next day. [*The Guard at the Tomb, Matt. 27:62–66.* See Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus; Passion Week.] This incident is recorded only by Matthew, though it occurs also in the noncanonical Gospel of Peter (secs. 8–11; see p. 128). “Next day” was the weekly Sabbath day (see Luke 23:54, 56).

Critics have made elaborate attempts to discredit the incident Matthew here relates. The critics have branded as incredible that the Jewish authorities knew that Jesus had predicted His resurrection, that they would go to Pilate on the Sabbath day, that Pilate would grant their request, that the Roman soldiers would conspire to make a false report, even for a bribe, and that they were terrified and fell to the ground when the angel appeared to roll away the stone. To be sure, so far as the inspired record itself goes,

Matthew is our sole source. But it may be pointed out that both Pilate and the Jewish authorities are here found acting entirely in character, and this fact constitutes strong internal evidence of the genuineness of the story. The Gospel record makes evident that there were no lengths to which the priests and rulers would not go. Furthermore, their deep apprehension throughout the preceding two days, that they might not succeed in their sinister plot to destroy Jesus (see Additional Notes on Matt. 26, Note 2), together with their suspicion that He was indeed the Messiah, would lead them to do the very thing Matthew here ascribes to them. Pilate had feebly acquiesced in their insistent demands for the blood of Jesus (see John 19:12), and they had every reason to believe that he would comply with this request also. It was the Passover season, and in view of past difficulties he had experienced with the Jews he would no doubt go to the most unreasonable lengths to appease them (see on Matt. 27:24).

The preparation. See on Mark 15:42.

Chief priests. See on ch. 26:59.

Pharisees. See pp. 51, 52.

63. *We remember.* Jesus had implied this as He spoke publicly (ch. 12:40), and stated it even more clearly, though cryptically, in response to a demand for a sign (John 2:19). Apparently they understood what Jesus meant, even though at His trial they were ready to misconstrue His words (see on Matt. 26:61).

That deceiver. Or, “impostor” (RSV). See John 7:47. Both Jewish and pagan critics of Christianity during the 2d and 3d centuries frequently charged that Jesus was a deceiver.

Three days. See pp. 248-250.

64. *The third day.* Here (vs. 63, 64), the terms “after three days” and “the third day” are obviously synonymous. See p. 249.

Error. According to them the first “error” or deception, was the idea that Jesus was the Messiah of prophecy (see on ch. 26:63–66). The “last error” would be the claim that He had risen from the dead.

65. *A watch.* Gr. *koustōdia*, “guard,” a loan word from the Latin.

As sure as ye can. These ironical words are reminiscent of his earlier statement, “What I have written I have written.” Pilate here speaks in character. He despised the Jewish leaders, and complied with their request out of disdain for them. The efforts of the Jewish authorities to prevent the resurrection only resulted in more positive and conclusive proof of the reality of that great event.

66. *Made the sepulchre sure.* On the method of sealing see DA 778.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 DA 723

3–5 DA 722; EW 172

4 SC 24; 5T 637

11 DA 726

11–31 DA 723–740

17 AA 43; DA 733; TM 38

19 DA 732; EW 173

21, 22 TM 38

22 COL 294

22, 23 DA 733

24, 25 AA 43; COL 294; DA 738; EW 174
 25 DA 739, 785; EW 178, 195, 212; GC 32; SR 256, 424
 28–30EW 170
 28–311T 241
 29 EW 170; 3T 379
 31–53DA 741–757
 32 DA 742; EW 175; SR 221
 34 EW 177
 35 DA 746, 751; SR 223
 38 DA 744; EW 176
 40 EW 177
 40, 41 DA 746
 40–432T 208
 42 AA 25; DA 780; EW 177; GC 630; TM 67
 42, 43 GC 643
 43 DA 749
 45 DA 753; EW 177; SR 226
 45, 46 4T 374
 46 PP 476; SC 13; SR 225; 1T 138; 2T 209, 210, 212, 215
 47 DA 755
 48 DA 746
 49 DA 755
 50 DA 772
 51 DA 757, 775; EW 184, 209, 253, 260; PK 699; SR 226; 2T 211
 52 DA 756
 52, 53 DA 785, 786; EW 184, 189, 208
 54 DA 770
 57, 58 DA 773; SR 227
 57–61EW 180
 59–61DA 774; SR 228
 60 DA 769; ML 184
 62, 63 DA 796
 62–66DA 778
 63, 64 SR 228
 64, 65 EW 181
 65, 66 SR 229

CHAPTER 28

1 *Christ's resurrection is declared by an angel to the women.* 9 *He himself appeareth unto them.* 11 *The high priests give the soldiers money to say that he was stolen out of his sepulchre.* 16 *Christ appeareth to his disciples,* 19 *and sendeth them to baptize and teach all nations.*

1. End of the sabbath. [*The Resurrection*, Matt. 28:1–15=Mark 16:1–11=Luke 24:1–12=John 20:1–18. Major comment: Matthew and John. See *The Resurrection and Subsequent Events; the Crucifixion In Relation To Passover, Passion Week and Resurrection to Ascension.*] Gr. *opse de sabbatōn*. The word *opse*, here translated “end,”

may mean either “late” or “after.” *Opse* is used but three times in the NT, here and in Mark 11:19; 13:35, where it is translated “even.” In Mark 11:19 it is not clear whether *opse* designates the late afternoon of the day mentioned earlier in the narrative, or time after sunset, which would be, according to the Hebrew method of reckoning time, the day following. In Mark 13:35, *opse*, “even,” designates the first watch of the night, from about sunset till about 9:00 P.M. Usage of *opse* in the NT is thus comparatively indefinite so far as determining whether the phrase *opse de sabbatōn* of Matt. 28:1 means late Sabbath afternoon, before sunset, or after Sabbath, on the first day of the week. Use of *opse* in the LXX is similarly indefinite.

Opsia, a related form, appears more frequently in the NT. *Opsia* is always translated “even,” “evening,” or “eventide.” In Matt. 8:16 and Mark 1:32 it is specifically used of time following sunset. In Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:47; John 6:16 it also designates time after sunset (cf. DA 377, 380). In Matt. 26:20 and Mark 14:17 it is used of the Passover meal, which was supposed to be eaten during the early hours of Nisan 15, after the sunset that brought Nisan 14 to a close (see Additional Notes on Chapter 26, Note 1). In John 20:19 it also refers to time after sunset, probably after darkness had set in (cf. DA 800–802); in Matt. 27:57 and Mark 15:42, time preceding sunset.

Commenting on *opse de sabbatōn*, E. J. Goodspeed concludes that “the plain sense of the passage is: ‘After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning’” (*Problems of New Testament Translation*, p. 45). Similarly, J. H. Moulton assigns *opse* the meaning of “after” in ch. 28:1 (*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 1, p. 72). “After the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week” is the RSV translation of the time statement of this passage. Goodspeed (*op. cit.*, p. 43) cites Greek writers of the 2d and 3d centuries who use *opse* in the sense of “after.”

Indefinite as the word *opse* itself is, parallel passages in the other Gospels seem to make clear that Matthew here means “after the Sabbath,” not “late on the Sabbath.” According to Mark 16:1, 2, “when the sabbath was past,” the women “bought sweet spices,” apparently after sundown Saturday night, and went to the tomb “very early in the morning the first day of the week ... at the rising of the sun.” Mark’s words are clear and definite, and there seems to be no substantial reason for doubting that he refers to the same visit mentioned in Matt. 28:1. It may also be observed that Jewish regulations on Sabbath travel (see on Ex. 16:29) would have precluded any visit to the tomb from a distance greater than 2/3 mi. The home of Mary Magdalene was Bethany, a distance of 2 mi. from Jerusalem (see on Matt. 21:1). If she spent the Sabbath in Bethany (Luke 23:56), she would not have traveled to the tomb until the Sabbath had closed.

If, as some hold, the women’s visit to the sepulcher (Matt. 28:1) took place late Sabbath afternoon, the narrative of vs. 2–15 thereby becomes detached from the time statement of v. 1. But vs. 2–15 appear to give an account of what took place at the time designated in v. 1. It seems improbable that the detailed time statement of v. 1 should be given for the supposed Sabbath afternoon visit to the sepulcher, and no time be indicated for the momentous events of vs. 2–15. There is nothing to indicate a transition in time from Sabbath afternoon to Sunday morning.

In the second place, if, as some have tried to show, the resurrection itself took place Sabbath afternoon, other difficulties appear. The Roman guard had been stationed at the sepulcher during the light hours of the Sabbath day (ch. 27:62–66), yet one night intervened between the beginning of their vigil and the resurrection (ch. 28:13). When both language and context permit interpreting ch. 28:1 in harmony with the unanimous statements of the other gospel writers, there is no valid reason for doing otherwise.

Some have suggested that the phrase “in the end of the sabbath” should be connected with ch. 27:66. However, the Greek does not favor such a relationship.

It began to dawn. Gr. *epiphōskō*, literally, “to grow light,” “to dawn.” *Epiphōskō* is used of both the “dawn” of the 12-hour day (sunrise) and the 24-hour day (sunset). In Luke 23:54 *epiphōskō* is translated “drew on,” in reference to the approach of the Sabbath at sundown. Expositors are generally agreed that in Matt. 28:1 it retains its literal meaning, and this seems to be confirmed by the parallel statements in the other Gospels. At this season of the year astronomical morning twilight began about 4:00 in the latitude of Jerusalem, and the sun rose about 5:30. If Mary Magdalene arose about the time it began to get light (see John 20:1), and walked from Bethany to Calvary, she would have arrived there about sunrise (see Mark 16:1, 2; cf. John 20:1).

First day of the week. Gr. *mia sabbatōn*. The word *sabbatōn* in both its plural form, as here, and in the singular, means either “Sabbath,” the seventh day of the week, or “week.” Examples of its use in the latter sense are Luke 18:12; 1 Cor. 16:2; etc. Some whose zeal to promote their personal ideas greatly exceeds their knowledge of Greek have interpreted *mia sabbatōn* as “the first of the sabbaths,” and concluded that Matthew here designates the resurrection Sunday as the first occasion on which Sabbath sacredness was transferred to the first day of the week. No Greek scholar has ever attempted to make an argument in favor of Sunday sacredness on the basis of this grammatically impossible translation of Matt. 28:1. Novices who have made such an attempt have been rebuked by their more scholarly Sundaykeeping brethren who categorically deny the possibility of such a translation. For such a rebuke, see note no. 1593 in *Source Book* (vol. 9 of this series).

Came. Each of the four evangelists gives his own account of the rapid and dramatic events of the resurrection morning, and, on the surface, each account differs from the others (see Additional Notes on Chapter 3, Note 2). The seeming differences are not due to discrepancies between the various accounts, but rather to their brevity.

Mary Magdalene. See Additional Note on Luke 7. The women “beheld where he [Jesus] was laid” (see on Mark 15:47), apparently in order that they might return after the Sabbath to complete the preparation of His body.

The other Mary. Probably Mary the mother of James (Mark 16:1) and Joses (ch. 15:47).

To see the sepulchre. In view of the fact that Mark (ch. 16:1, 2) and Luke (ch. 24:1) speak of the bringing of spices, some have concluded that Matthew is referring to an earlier visit to the sepulcher, perhaps late Sabbath afternoon, a simple visit to see the tomb. Concerning the improbability of such a visit see on Matt. 28:1.

2. *The angel.* According to Luke 24:4 there were two angels, of whom Matthew mentions but one. That Matthew and Mark (ch. 16:5) mention but one angel need not be considered a discrepancy between the gospel writers. Gabriel was the chief angel (see DA

780), and is the one both Matthew and Mark refer to. The fact the other angel is not mentioned must not be taken as a denial of his presence. For comment on similar instances where the gospel writers differ as to the number of persons connected with various incidents see on Mark 5:2; Mark 10:46.

4. For fear. Compare the experience of Zacharias (see on Luke 1:12, 13) and that of Mary (see on Luke 1:29, 30) at the appearance of the angel.

Keepers. That is, the Roman guards.

Did shake. Gr. *seiō*, the verb form of *seismos* (see on ch. 8:24).

5. Which was crucified. They had not come to the tomb seeking a risen Saviour.

6. Not here. The empty tomb proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus. All the Jewish authorities needed to do to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. All the Jewish authorities needed to do to disprove the resurrection story was to produce the dead body of Jesus. Had they been able, they would certainly have done so. At their own suggestion and under their own supervision (ch. 27:62–66) the tomb had been sealed, and some of their own number had no doubt witnessed the sealing.

As he said. See chs. 16:21; 20:19.

Come, see. An invitation to verify the facts concerning the empty sepulcher.

7. Tell his disciples. Perhaps God chose to make these godly women messengers of the joyful news of the resurrection, rather than to give the tidings directly to the disciples themselves, because of their continuing ministry of love and devotion at a time when the disciples had practically forsaken Him.

He goeth. As A Jesus had foretold on the night of His betrayal (see ch. 26:32).

There shall ye see him. This promise was fulfilled when some 500 believers assembled together secretly on an appointed mountain in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; cf. DA 818, 819). The appearances in Judea were, for the most part, very brief.

8. Run. The distance was probably less than half a mile.

9. As they went. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 146) the omission of the clause, “as they went to tell his disciples.” The context appears, however, to confirm the fact thus stated.

Jesus met them. For the circumstances of this appearance see Additional Note at end of chapter. This appearance probably took place not far from the tomb, as it seems unlikely that Jesus would have appeared to the women inside the city.

All hail. Literally, “be glad,” or “rejoice.” This was a common form of greeting (see Matt. 26:49; 27:29; Luke 1:28; Acts 15:23; James 1:1).

Held him by the feet. Not many minutes previously Jesus had forbidden Mary Magdalene to “touch” Him (see on John 20:17). However, between these two appearances Jesus had ascended briefly to heaven (John 20:17; see Additional Note at end of chapter; cf. DA 790, 793).

Worshipped him. Doubtless in recognition of His divinity (see on ch. 14:33).

10. Be not afraid. A common admonition by celestial visitors (see Matt. 28:5; cf. Luke 1:13, 30).

Tell my brethren. Compare Mark 16:7.

Go into Galilee. See Additional Note at end of chapter.

11. When they were going. That is, while the women were on their way bearing Jesus’ message to His disciples.

The watch. That is, the Roman guard (see v. 4).

12. With the elders. Probably a formal session of the Sanhedrin (see on ch. 26:3), which had turned Jesus over to Pilate.

Taken counsel. As Jesus had predicted—in the indirect form of a parable, to be sure—the leaders of Israel were unconvinced even though One had now risen from the dead (see Luke 16:27–31). Earlier, when Lazarus was raised, the Jewish leaders had become all the more determined to take Jesus’ life (John 11:47–54).

Gave large money. They had bribed Judas in order that they might kill Jesus; now they bribed the Roman soldiers to falsify the account of His resurrection.

13. His disciples came by night. Had this charge been true, the priests, the men who fabricated it, would probably have been the first to demand severe punishment for the soldiers involved in the supposed case of negligence. Instead, they rewarded the soldiers handsomely. Furthermore, the fact that the disciples utterly disbelieved in the face of repeated reports of the resurrection (Mark 16:11; Luke 24:11; John 20:24, 25) eliminates the faintest possibility that they might have conceived a plot to remove the body and announce publicly that Jesus had risen. Also, the utter panic that took possession of them in the garden (Matt. 26:56), and Peter’s fear of detection during the trial (vs. 69–74), preclude the possibility that any of them would have dared to pass the Roman guards, even though sleeping, break the Roman seal, roll away the stone, and carry off the body of Jesus.

While we slept. Death was the Roman penalty for permitting a prisoner to escape. Knowing this, the guard would not likely have slept. Furthermore, it is almost inconceivable that all the soldiers should have fallen asleep at once and should have remained asleep during the removal of the stone and of the body of Jesus. Finally, if the soldiers had been asleep when the body was removed, how could they have known who removed it? From every angle the tale invented by the Jewish leaders presents impossible difficulties. It is inconsistent with itself.

14. The governor’s. See on ch. 27:2.

We will persuade him. This the Jewish leaders actually did in person (see DA 782). Perhaps they had a royal bribe in store for Pilate, should circumstances demand it.

Secure you. Literally, “make you not anxious,” that is, protect you from the death penalty. The priests and elders assumed full responsibility for the situation, as they had previously done for the death of Jesus (ch. 27:24, 25). To be sure, they had no alternative; the whole affair was of their devising.

15. This saying. For several centuries this fabricated account of the empty tomb appeared in Jewish and pagan attacks on Christianity. Justin Martyr, toward the middle of the 2d century, and Tertullian, early in the 3d, mention it.

16. Then. [*Appearance on a Mountain in Galilee*, Matt. 28:16–20=Mark 16:15–18. Major comment: Matthew.] On this appearance see Additional Note at end of chapter.

A mountain. The place is not specified. It may have been some spot already closely associated in the minds of the disciples with the life ministry of Jesus, such as the place where the Sermon on the Mount was given (see on ch. 5:1), or where the Transfiguration occurred (see on ch. 17:1). About 500 believers were gathered together upon this occasion (1 Cor. 15:6; cf. DA 818).

17. When they saw him. They were gathered, awaiting His arrival. Suddenly He appeared among them. Such had been the case with His previous postresurrection appearances.

They worshipped him. In acknowledgment of His divinity and Messiahship. Before the crucifixion and resurrection it was seldom that even the Twelve worshiped Jesus.

Doubted. See on ch. 14:31. This does not refer to the Eleven, all of whom were now convinced, but to others among the 500 believers assembled on the mountainside, many of whom had never before seen Jesus (see DA 819).

18. Power. Gr. *exousia*, “authority” (see on Matt. 10:1; Mark 2:10). Jesus had exercised authority (*exousia*) throughout His earthly ministry (Matt. 7:29; 21:23); nevertheless that authority had been voluntarily limited. Now He once more had all authority as before He came to this earth to assume the limitations of humanity (see Phil. 2:6–8). The sacrifice in behalf of man had now been completed. Jesus had already entered upon His mediatorial work in the sanctuary above. See Additional Note on John 1; see DA 819.

19. Go ye. Verses 19, 20 constitute the great charter of the Christian church. In the word “ye” Christ included all believers to the very end of time (see DA 822; cf. 819). As disciples, the Eleven had been learners in the school of Christ; now, as apostles, they were sent forth to teach others (see on Mark 3:14). For further comment on the responsibility of believers in Christ to share their faith see on Matt. 5:13–16; Luke 24:48.

Therefore. That is, in view of the “power” referred to in v. 18.

Teach all nations. Literally, “make disciples of all nations,” including both Jews and Gentiles in every nation (cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:10). Compare this with the great promise that the gospel of the kingdom would be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” (see on Matt. 24:14). This commission is sometimes referred to as the “charter of foreign missions.” Christianity was the first religion to assume a truly international character. Pagan religions were largely devoid of missionary zeal and activity. They were primarily national in character and did not set out to make converts of other national groups. The gospel commission effectively eliminates national boundaries, and men of all nations find themselves members of one great brotherhood in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female,” for all are “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3:11). Christianity effectively destroys all barriers of race, nationality, society, economics, and social custom. Christianity depends for success on its disentanglement from all national peculiarities, forms of government, social institutions, and everything of a purely local character.

Baptizing. See on Matt. 3:6; Mark 16:16.

In the name. This may mean into the family of, or upon the basis of authority delegated by, God, etc.

The Father. For the significance of this title see on ch. 6:9.

The Son. For the significance of the title “Son” as applied to Christ see on Mark 2:10; Luke 1:35. For Jesus as the Son of man, see on Matt. 1:1; Mark 2:10.

Holy Ghost. Or, “Holy Spirit.” See on ch. 1:18. For the office and work of the Holy Spirit see John 14:16–18; John 16:7–14. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a divine mystery, one on which Inspiration has not seen wise to speak. On this subject speculation is futile.

20. Teaching them. The acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ involves the action of the intelligence. Only an intelligent Christian can be a real Christian. Concepts of Christianity that make of conversion and salvation a simple assent to faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour—important though that be—omit a most important part of the gospel

commission. It is fully as important to teach men to observe the things Christ has commanded as it is to baptize. In fact, faith in Christ calls for constant growth in “the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Without the exercise of the mental faculties to understand the revealed will of God, there can be no real Christianity, no real growth. Instruction is thus of vital importance before and after baptism. Without adequate instruction in the great vital truths of the gospel, there can be no true religious life. At the same time, it is the wonderful love of Christ that subdues hearts. Without genuine love for Christ the doctrines and forms of religion lose their meaning and value.

All things. Nothing is to be omitted. It is not for man to declare that some of Christ’s teachings are outmoded.

Whatsoever I have commanded you. Human traditions and human requirements are of no value before God. Any teaching that is without the authority of Christ has no place in the Christian church. For comment on the vital distinction Jesus drew between “the commandment of God” and “the tradition of men” see on Mark 7:7, 8, 13.

I am with you always. At first thought it seems strange that Jesus should make such an announcement as this when He was about to ascend to heaven and be parted, bodily, from His disciples until the day of His return in power and glory. However, by virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus would be closer to believers throughout the earth than would be possible had He remained bodily present (see John 16:7). The Scriptures make the presence of Christ real to every humble believer. Through the gift and guidance of the Holy Spirit, every disciple of the Master may find fellowship with Christ as did the disciples of old.

The end of the world. Or, “the end of the age” (see on chs. 13:39; 24:3). From “the foundation of the world” (ch. 25:34) Jesus has been working for the salvation of His people, and He will continue with them till the close of time.

Amen. See on ch. 5:18. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 146) for the omission of this word.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 28

Because each of the gospel writers provides so brief an account of the events of the resurrection morning and notes details not mentioned by the others, the exact order of events at the sepulcher is difficult to ascertain. The following tentative arrangement seems to accord best with all available information on the subject:

1. At the last hour of the night, just before daybreak of Sunday morning, the body of Jesus was still in the tomb (see DA 779; see The Resurrection and Subsequent Events).
2. While it was still dark Mary Magdalene started on her way to the tomb (John 20:1). The other women appear to have been together as they approached the sepulcher (see DA 788). Perhaps they had agreed to meet Mary at the tomb about sunrise (see Mark 16:2).
3. While it was still dark (see DA 779, 780), and while the women were on their way to the tomb (see DA 788), “the angel of the Lord descended from heaven,” “rolled back the stone from the door” (Matt. 28:2), and called out, “Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee” (DA 780).
4. When Christ and the angels (see on ch. 28:2) departed, the Roman soldiers, who had seen the angel roll away the stone, had heard him call forth the Son of God, and had

actually seen Christ come forth from the tomb, left the sepulcher and hastened into the city with the greatest news of time and eternity (vs. 3, 4, 11–15; cf. DA 780, 781).

5. Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, and finding the stone rolled away (John 20:1), hastened to tell the disciples (John 20:2; cf. DA 788).

6. The other women, including Mary the mother of James, together with Salome and Joanna (see Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1, 10), arrived at the sepulcher. They found seated on the stone he had rolled from the door of the tomb, the angel who had descended from heaven and summoned Christ from the grave (Matt. 28:2; cf. DA 788). Seeing him, the women turned to flee, but were restrained by the assuring message of the angel, who spoke to them the words recorded in vs. 5–7 (cf. Mark 16:6, 7; DA 789). Entering the sepulcher, they found another angel sitting on the stone slab where Jesus had lain (Mark 16:5; cf. John 20:12). He spoke to them the words recorded in Luke 24:5–7 (cf. DA 789).

7. Without lingering, the women left the sepulcher to report to the disciples, as bidden by the angels (Matt. 28:8, 9, 11; cf. Mark 16:8; Luke 24:9, 10). Events thus far apparently took place in rapid succession, for it was while the women were on their way to find the disciples that the Roman guards arrived at the residence of “the chief priests” with their report (Matt. 28:11).

8. In the meantime Mary Magdalene had found Peter and John and reported finding the sepulcher empty (John 20:2). The two disciples ran to the sepulcher, but John arrived first (John 20:3, 4). Peter, and then John, entered the sepulcher, but neither of them saw the angels (John 20:5–10; cf. Luke 24:12). Mary followed them to the sepulcher, and remained after Peter and John had departed (John 20:11; cf. DA 789).

9. Mary stooped to look into the sepulcher and saw the two angels seated on the slab of stone where Christ’s body had lain (John 20:11–13; cf. DA 789).

10. Raising herself from her stooping position, Mary heard the voice of Jesus, who asked the same question previously posed by the angels, but did not realize that it was Jesus (John 20:14, 15). Then Jesus revealed Himself to her, the first human being—aside from the Roman soldiers (see DA 790)—to see Him risen from the grave (Mark 16:9). The conversation of John 20:15–17 took place, and Mary hastened to report to the disciples that she had seen the Lord (John 20:18).

11. After Mary’s departure Jesus ascended briefly to heaven for the personal assurance that His sacrifice was acceptable, and the Father ratified (accepted, or approved) the covenant entered into between Himself and Christ before the world was (John 20:17; cf. DA 790).

12. After He had ascended to the Father, Jesus appeared to the other women (DA 793), addressing them with the words “All hail” (Matt. 28:9, 10; see DA 793). This was while the women were on their way to report to the disciples (v. 9), and events must therefore have followed one another in rapid succession. This seems to have been the last appearance connected with the events of the resurrection *morning*, unless the appearance to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5) occurred soon after that to the women.

It should be noted that after the resurrection Jesus appeared only to His personal followers (see EGW Supplementary Material on 1 Cor. 15:6). Later appearances on the resurrection day were:

1. To Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5), prior to the walk to Emmaus.
2. To two disciples on the way to Emmaus, one of whom was named Cleopas (Luke 24:13–32; Mark 16:12).

3. To the ten disciples who were in the upper room, following the return of the two disciples from Emmaus (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33–48; John 20:19–23; 1 Cor. 15:5). Thomas was absent (John 20:24, 25).

Additional appearances between the resurrection day and the ascension were:

1. To the Eleven, Thomas being present, in the upper room, a week later, probably the following Sunday (John 20:26–29).

2. Soon after the close of Passover week (DA 809; see Additional Notes on Chapter 26, Note 1) the disciples left for Galilee to keep the appointment Jesus had made with them (Matt. 28:7; Mark 16:7). The appearances in Galilee came, roughly, within the limits of Friday, Nisan 28, and Sunday, Iyyar 21. These limits are based on the travel time to and from Galilee. The disciples were back in Jerusalem in time for the ascension, Iyyar 25. The disciples thus remained in Galilee about three weeks, and during these three weeks Jesus met with them twice. The first of these appearances was to seven of the disciples as they were fishing on the lake of Galilee (John 21:1–23). See the Resurrection to Ascension

3. The appearance to about 500 persons on a mountain in Galilee, the place and time having been appointed by Jesus before His death (Matt. 28:16; Mark 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:6; DA 818). On this occasion Jesus spoke the words of Matt. 28:17–20 (see DA 819). Jesus' brothers were converted at this time (see EGW Supplementary Material on Acts 1:14).

4. Jesus also appeared to James, whether in Galilee or at Jerusalem is not revealed (1 Cor. 15:7).

5. The appearance to the Eleven in Jerusalem on Thursday, Iyyar 25, when Jesus led them out to the Mount of Olives, in the vicinity of Bethlehem, and ascended to heaven (Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50–52; Acts 1:4–12). This is probably the meeting with the apostles that is mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:7.

The repeated postresurrection appearances of Jesus were designed to convince the disciples and others of the reality of the resurrection, to give them the opportunity to become familiar with their Master in His glorified body, and to enable Jesus to prepare them for the task of proclaiming the good news of salvation to the world (see DA 829). Efforts to prevent the resurrection and to circulate a false report concerning it (Matt. 27:62–66) served only to provide additional confirmation of it as a historical fact.

It was the certainty of a risen and living Lord that breathed conviction into the message of the apostles as they went forth to proclaim the good news of salvation. Of this certainty they spoke again and again, in words charged with power and inspired by the Holy Ghost (see Acts 3:12–21; 4:8–13, 20; 29–32; 1 Cor. 15:1–23; 1 Thess. 1:10, 17; 1 John 1:1–3). The dynamic fact of the Christian religion is that its Founder is “alive for evermore” and has “the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). To this transcendent truth the many postresurrection appearances of our Lord bear witness. Inspiration has certified this momentous event in a way that will convince all who are willing to examine the evidence.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 DA 779, 788; EW 181, 186

2 GC 631

3, 4 DA 779; EW 182; GC 512

5–8DA 789

7 DA 794, 818; EW 186, 189
 9, 10 DA 793
 11–15 DA 781; EW 183
 13 AA 60; EW 189
 16–20 DA 818–828
 17–20 DA 819
 18 AA 122; CE 34; CM 108; DA 25, 319, 800; Ev 224; EW 187; ML 47; PK 73, 586; 5T 471; 7T 31; 8T 14; 9T 107, 186, 190
 18, 19 AA 282; DA 818; MH 106
 18–20 TM 417; 6T 447; 8T 204; 9T 63
 19 AA 105, 174; DA 823; Ev 307, 615; EW 101; 6T 99
 19, 20 AA 28, 30; CH 316; Ev 15; FE 121; GW 314; TM 65; 4T 401; 9T 20; WM 193
 20 AA 33, 65; CE 31; CH 211, 248, 545; ChS 23; CM 38; CS 349; CT 540; DA 166, 224, 825, 826, 830, 831; Ed 94, 96, 282; Ev 544; FE 452, 535; GC viii, 351; GW 17, 469; MH 107; ML 158, 238; MM 196, 304, 319, 327; SC 74; TM 144, 311, 330, 380, 391; 1T 504; 2T 122, 271; 3T 406; 4T 393, 529; 5T 454; 6T 228, 335, 399; 7T 32; 8T 17, 46; 9T 34, 107, 123; WM 70
 12

¹²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mt 27:18). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.