Jesus Christ
The King of Israel
As Seen In
Matthew's Gospel

A Radio Message

Louis T. Talbot
Pastor of the Church of the Open Door
WHY FOUR GOSPELS? In the beginning of our study of this greatly misunderstood Gospel according to Matthew, let me raise the question that has perhaps already been in your minds; namely, why are there four Gospels? If one did not suffice, why were not two enough? Why did the Holy Spirit cause to be recorded four records of the life of the Lord? Then, too, why were matters of tremendous import recorded in one Gospel and omitted in another? For instance, in Matthew we find the genealogy and miraculous birth of Christ, while these subjects are not mentioned in either Mark or John. This is only one of many illustrations that might be given.

In answer to these questions several reasons may be set forth, the principal one being that in the Old Testament the coming Messiah is portrayed as the One who was to fill a four-fold office as the King of Israel, the Servant of Jehovah, the Son of Man, and the Son of God. In Jeremiah 23:5 He is referred to as the King of Israel: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”

* A radio message by Louis T. Talbot, who speaks over Radio Station KMPC every morning, Tuesday to Friday inclusive, from 11:00 to 11:30.
Zechariah 3:8 He is referred to as the perfect Servant of Jehovah: "Behold, I will bring forth my Servant the Branch." In Zechariah 6:12 He is referred to as the perfect Son of Man: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the MAN whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord." In Isaiah 4:2 He is referred to as the Son of God: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."

In a word, Matthew presents Christ as the King of Israel; Mark, as the perfect Servant; Luke, as the Son of Man; and John, as the Son of God. These are the four viewpoints of the person and work of Christ; they are the four angles from which the evangelists have written.

This fourfold vision of Christ is also emphasized in Revelation 4:7 and in Revelation 5:5: "And the first living one was like a lion, and the second living one like a calf, and the third living one had a face as a man, and the fourth living one was like a flying eagle. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (The word "beast" in Revelation 4:7 of the Authorized Version is more correctly translated "living one" or "living creature" in the Revised Version. Hence the quotation above.)

In these verses John describes the throne of God. In the midst of the throne, the place where only Deity can dwell, John sees four living ones: the first like a lion, the second like an ox, the third like the face of a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle. The lion, of course, represents Christ as the King of Israel, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"; the ox, as the perfect Servant ministering unto His people; the face of a man, as the Son of Man; the flying eagle, which belongs to the heavens, as the Son of God. If you bear these things in mind, you will have little difficulty in understanding the content of the four Gospels.

The Four Evangelists. A word should be said in regard to the instruments used by the Holy Spirit as the writers of the four Gospels; for divine wisdom is seen in the kind of men selected to write these records of the life of Christ. Matthew was an official connected with the vast Roman Empire; he was, therefore, a fitting instrument to write of Christ in His official connection with the rule of the heavens over the earth in that day when His dominion shall be "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8). Mark was not an apostle, but a servant to an apostle. He is known to us in the book of Acts as John Mark, who served Paul and Barnabas. Thus it is fitting that he, a servant, should be selected to write the second Gospel, presenting Christ as the perfect Servant of Jehovah. Luke was a physician, a student of human nature and the human body. He was, therefore, the Holy Spirit's choice for a writer of that Gospel which bears his name and presents Christ as the perfect Son of Man. John, who possibly lived nearest the Lord, and who leaned "on Jesus' bosom" (John 13:23; 21:20), was significantly selected to write about Him who, "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18), is the eternal Son of the eternal God.

What an evidence of divine inspiration do we behold as we study this fourfold picture of our Lord!

THE FIRST COMING OF THE KING
Matthew 1:1-2:23

The Earthly Lineage of the King. Both the earthly lineage and the heavenly descent of the King are recorded in the opening chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. In keeping with the theme of the book, the earthly lineage is given first. His genealogy is traced back to Abraham and to David in verses 1-17.

Let us look at Matthew 1:1 which reads as follows: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Please note particularly the two titles given to our Lord in this verse: "The son of David" and "the son of Abraham." Why does Matthew's Gospel trace Christ's lineage back to David and Abraham, but no farther? The answer is that it was with these men that God
had made covenants concerning the land of Palestine and the throne of David. These covenants are found in Genesis 13:14-17 and in II Samuel 7:4-17. These titles, therefore, provide the key which unlocks the subject matter of this first Gospel, and they connect Jesus Christ with Israel's throne and Israel's land. In other words, He is presented as the Heir to the throne of David and the covenant Heir to Abraham's land.

Recently a very significant cartoon from the pen of Dr. E. J. Pace appeared in "The Sunday School Times," entitled "The Empty Throne." As the name suggests, the cartoon portrayed an empty throne. We shall see in our study of Matthew's Gospel that the Heir to that throne was rejected by the nation of Israel. When He came to be their King, they cried out, saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us." And they thrust Him out of this world at the point of a spear; consequently, the throne is vacant now. The King is seated at God's right hand, from whence He shall return, even as He promised. Then He shall occupy the empty throne because, as the Son of David, He is the legal Heir. If is with this subject that Matthew's Gospel has to do.

The Lord's title to that throne is established by His royal descent from David. While Joseph was not the actual father of Jesus, he was legally recognized as such, as the records in the temple at that time bore witness. Matthew is writing only from the legal standpoint; for Christ's blood-right to the throne was through Mary who was also of the line of David.

It is worthy of notice that in this genealogy the names of many kings who ruled over Israel are mentioned, but David is the only one designated as "the king." Look at the following: "And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias" (Matt. 1:6). Why is only David so designated? The purpose of this is to bring David into prominence because, as already stated, the covenant concerning the throne was made with him. Thus the prophecy of Jeremiah 23:5 was fulfilled, which declared that the King was to come from the house of David: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

It is also worthy of notice in the study of this genealogy that while Joseph is presented as the legal father, the Holy Spirit has been very careful to avoid using the word that would indicate that he was the actual father of Christ. For instance, it is said of each one of the kings that he "begat," and the text continues to use this verb until verse 16, which reads: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." You will note that here the form changes and that only Mary is presented as an actual parent. Please read these words again in order to get firmly fixed in your minds this all-important fact. "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

Thus we have established in Matthew 1:1-17 the claims of Jesus Christ to David's throne through His legal father and His actual mother, both of whom were of the seed of David.

The Heavenly Descent of the King. Matthew 1:18-25 gives us the heavenly descent of the King, in fulfillment of many passages of Scripture, two of which are as follows: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23, quoted from Isa. 7:14).

To summarize, in chapter one we have Jesus Christ, the answer to the great prophecies of the Old Testament which presented the coming King as having two natures—human and divine.

The Search of the Wise Men for the King. In chapter two we find an incident recorded in connection with the birth of our Lord that is passed over by Mark, Luke, and John.
This is the account of the visit of the wise men who came from the East, seeking the Christ Child, bringing their gifts, and worshipping Him as both God and King. A glance at the story will reveal how appropriate it is that Matthew should have recorded this fact, and that Mark, Luke and John should have omitted it from their Gospels. The wise men asked the question: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matt. 2:2). Please note what their inquiry was. They did not ask where a Saviour was born, but where He was born who was “King of the Jews.” This explains why Mark, Luke, and John are silent in regard to this incident; they are not emphasizing the fact that Christ is the King of Israel.

The remarkable fact is that, when the wise men found the Christ Child, He was not in Jerusalem as one would suppose, but outside the capital city. This was a shadow of what was to take place eventually, when the Son of David should present Himself officially to the nation of Israel as their King. They were not only unaware of the presence of the King, but they were also indifferent as to His presence; otherwise they would have joined the wise men in their journey to Bethlehem. Moreover, these wise men were Gentiles. All of this seems prophetic of the fact that the Gentiles were to seek Him after the nation of Israel had refused to recognize His crown rights.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN “AT HAND”

Matthew 3:1-4:25

The Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace. In the third chapter of Matthew we have the account of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the King. The message of John is significant: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). What is the meaning of the expression, “the kingdom of heaven”? What did those Jews who formed John’s audience understand him to mean? Without question, they knew he referred to the Messianic kingdom, the rule of the heavens over the earth. In that day David’s greater Son, the Lord from heaven, will sit upon the throne of David, and rule not only over the house of Jacob, but over the whole earth. This kingdom, or rule of the heavens over the earth through the Son of God, is described throughout the Old Testament. It forms the burden of the message of all the prophets.

There is a distinct difference between the “gospel of the kingdom,” which John and Jesus preached, and the “gospel of grace” which we preach during this church dispensation. The “gospel of the kingdom” heralds a coming King who will rule over a literal kingdom upon this earth, and offers to men citizenship in that kingdom upon a basis of repentance and faith toward God. The “gospel of the grace of God,” however, makes the receiver of it a heavenly saint and member of the body of Christ, an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ. In other words, the gospel of the kingdom of heaven has to do with the earth, and offers citizenship in that kingdom; whereas the gospel of the grace of God has to do with heaven and the church.

John announced the kingdom of heaven as being “at hand” because the King, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, Jesus Christ, was in their midst. We shall see later how that kingdom was postponed because the people refused the King; they could not have a kingdom without a King. They wanted a kingdom, but they would not have it on God’s terms; namely, repentance and turning to God.

When we come to the Olivet discourse, we shall see our Lord’s statement that at the end of the age, after the translation of the church, the gospel of the kingdom, heralding the coming King, will be preached again by the Jewish remnant during the reign of the Antichrist. This will be the time of the seventieth week of Daniel. At the end of the tribulation the King will return, and those who have received Him will become citizens of the millennial kingdom. Then Christ, the King, will reign in righteousness and peace!

SATAN’S EFFORT TO ROB THE KING OF HIS KINGDOM The first thing we have recorded in chapter four is the temptation
of the King, when Satan offered the Son of God the kingdoms of the earth and the glories of them if He would become subservient to him (Matt. 4:1-11). What audacity! Satan knew that Christ had come to establish a kingdom; and when he offered the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of the earth, he had in mind the literal kingdoms over which he himself, as "the prince of this world," held sway. It would have been an easy matter for Satan to displace Caesar and hand the political kingdoms to the Son of God. But the Lord Jesus Christ would not have them on that basis.

THE KINGDOM "AT HAND." The second thing to be noted in chapter four begins with verse seventeen, where we read that Jesus took up the message John had delivered, and preached, saying: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Here the Son of God proclaimed the same message that John the Baptist had been preaching: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Toward the end of the chapter the record tells us that Christ called some of His disciples and sent them forth to preach the same message, giving them power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse the leper—all signs of the kingdom. By these signs the Jews should have known that the King was in their midst and that the kingdom was at hand.

THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM
Matthew 5:1-7:29

In chapters five, six, and seven we have recorded the so-called Sermon on the Mount. Here the laws of the kingdom are propounded, those laws by which the King shall govern the earth when He returns. Will you please note how this sermon begins? Look at verses one and two of chapter five: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying..." Then we have recorded, in the words of our Lord Himself, the constitution of His kingdom.

Let us note the actions of the Lord, for His actions as well as His words are prophetic. His going up into a mountain—to the place of elevation—is suggestive of the time when He shall be elevated to the place of power over His kingdom; for a mountain in Scripture is often used to represent the Messiah's kingdom. You will remember that Nebuchadnezzar saw the stone "cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet." This image represents the times of the Gentiles. "And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34, 35). That mountain is prophetic of the Messiah's kingdom, which will extend "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8).

Moreover, the mountain has a prominent place in the Gospel according to Matthew. It was on a mountain that the Lord Jesus was transfigured. It was on a mountain that He gave the great Olivet discourse. It was on a mountain that the King of the Jews was crucified. It was from a mountain that He ascended into the presence of God. It is to a mountain that He shall come, when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives.

What a wonderful picture we have here in Matthew 5-7 of Jesus' being elevated to the place of power, sitting on a mountain and enumerating the laws which are to govern the citizens of His kingdom! Again and again in this discourse we hear His voice of authority: "I say unto you, I say unto you," suggestive of the fact that by His own words He shall govern the nations in the day of His kingdom.

The laws of the kingdom, as found in the Sermon on the Mount, enumerate the fundamental principles of righteousness that are characteristic of every age. However, in reading the beatitudes it is well to bear in mind that, while primarily they refer to the kingdom, yet in a special sense they shall become operative in the Jewish remnant after the church has been translated. Believing Israel will at that time be persecuted for righteousness' sake. The Antichrist will endeavor to blot out all those who give allegiance to Christ, the King. It is always true in every dispensation that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are filled, that the pure in heart shall see God,
that all these promises of blessing shall be realized by the faithful. But the Sermon on the Mount, as a whole, is applicable only to the tribulation and kingdom periods. Such a statement as, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,” certainly does not apply to this age or to any past dispensation. Some of the meekest of God’s people do not own a foot of land, and have little prospect of ever entering into possession of temporal things. They have heavenly riches, indeed, but very little of that which pertains to the earth. The faithful remnant in Israel, however, will “inherit the earth” in a literal sense—when Jesus reigns as their Messiah. What a wonderful day that will be, my friends, when God sets His King upon His holy hill of Zion, and governs the earth with His Word, causing these laws of righteousness to operate in the lives of people.

The Sermon on the Mount closes with the statement that “it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matt. 7:28, 29). That word “authority” is in keeping with the Gospel that presents Jesus as the King, the Heir to David’s throne, and the covenant Heir to Abraham’s land.

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE KING
Matthew 8:1-10:42

In chapters eight and nine we have recorded twelve miracles or groups of miracles; in chapter ten, the commission to the disciples to a ministry of teaching and working of miracles. These mighty works of the Lord Jesus constitute His credentials as King, and prove that He was not only the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, but also the mighty God, the everlasting Father, Emmanuel, God with us. The Old Testament declared that the Messiah would not only be the Son of David, but that He would also be the One “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). And these twelve miracles reveal Jesus Christ as the eternal God who has power over

the heavens, over the earth, over the sea, and over hell. They are as follows:

- The healing of the leper, 8:1-4.
- The healing of the centurion’s servant, 8:5-13.
- The healing of Peter’s wife’s mother, 8:14, 15.
- The healing of those possessed of demons and evil spirits, 8:16, 17.
- The stilling of the tempest, 8:23-27.
- The healing of two men possessed of demons in the country of the Gergesenes, 8:28-34.
- The healing of the man sick of the palsy and the forgiveness of his sins, 9:1-8.
- The healing of the woman with the issue of blood, 9:20-22.
- The healing of a dumb man possessed with a demon, 9:32-33.
- The healing of every sickness and disease, 9:35.

If you make a study of these miracles that the Spirit of God has grouped together here, you will note that they prove that Jesus is none other than the Jehovah of the Old Testament. By these wonderful works, Israel should have recognized Him not only as the Son of David, but also as the mighty God, the everlasting Father, Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh.

ISRAEL’S REJECTION OF HER KING
Matthew 11:1-12:50

In chapters eleven and twelve we find that the Son of God came to an open break with the nation of Israel. It is very evident that the eyes of His people were blinded, that their hearts were closed to Him and to the kingdom which He was offering them. After sending His disciples into their cities, where mighty works had been done, even to the raising of the dead, and after finding no response from
the people, except one of opposition and definite refusal of Him as King. He began to upbraid the cities and to foretell coming judgment. With the voice of authority He said unto them: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matt. 11:21).

Then we find that “the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him” (Matt. 12:14). The leaders of the nation charged that all His miracles were performed “by Beelzebub the prince of the demons” (Matt. 12:24), thus declaring that the Son of God was in league with the devil himself. In response to this false accusation we read in verses 31 and 32 of this same chapter the solemn warning of the Lord Jesus concerning the sin against the Holy Spirit; that is, attributing to Satan the mighty works of the Holy Spirit of God. In verse 34 He described these Jews as a “generation of vipers.” In verse 41 He declared that the “men of Nineveh” would rise up in judgment upon their generation. In verse 42 He said that “the queen of the south” would “rise up in the judgment” with their generation, and condemn it. In verses 43-45 He likened the nation to a house that is swept of an unclean spirit, which evil spirit later returns with seven other spirits even more wicked than himself.

What an indictment we have in chapters eleven and twelve! Surely there is a message here for us today, showing us the tremendous responsibility that is ours when we receive the light. The great sin of Israel was that the King was among them, that He had demonstrated by His works that He was the One spoken of in the Old Testament, and that still they closed their eyes to the light. Consequently the Son of God pronounced judgment upon them. It is very significant that from this time on in the book of Matthew we find no reference to the preaching of the “gospel of the kingdom,” except in the Olivet discourse, where Christ says that at the end time it shall be preached again.

We turn now to chapter thirteen, which is one of the most interesting and yet one of the most misunderstood chapters in the Word of God. In chapter twelve we have a picture of the nation of Israel being set aside, and the kingdom postponed. In chapter thirteen we have set forth in parabolic form the events that are taking place in professing Christendom during this age, between the setting aside of Israel as a nation and the day when God shall take them up again and deal with them as a nation.

Please note the following: “The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables” (Matt. 13:1-3). It has already been pointed out that the Lord’s actions as well as His words are prophetic, and this is true of His actions here.

“The same day”; that is, the day when He pronounced judgment on Israel, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea side. From the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, we learn that the sea is a type of the Gentile nations. Therefore, His going out of the house to the sea side was prophetic of His leaving the house of Israel and going to the Gentiles during the setting aside of His chosen people.

Now as He sat by the sea side, Jesus uttered seven parables that are descriptive of this present age—during the absence of the King—when the Gospel is being offered to the Gentiles. These parables are as follows:

- The parable of the sower.
- The parable of the wheat and the tares.
- The parable of the mustard tree.
- The parable of the leaven.
- The parable of the hidden treasure.
A MESSAGE FROM MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

The parable of the pearl of great price.
The parable of the dragnet.
That these parables refer to this age—the period during which Israel as a nation is set aside—is made clear from verses 34 and 35. Here Jesus said He was talking about things which had been “kept secret from the foundation of the world.” In other words, they refer to that age during which God is calling out the church—“the mystery... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men.” In the Word of God a “mystery” is not something mysterious; but it is, rather, “something not hitherto revealed.” And this is what Paul meant when, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he wrote, referring to the church as “the mystery... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:3-6). This calling out of His Gentile Bride, the church, covers the period of time while the Lord, the King, is absent from the earth.

What, then, may we expect concerning the events of this age while He is away? What do the Scriptures teach in these parables? The Lord here states very clearly that we need not expect the world to be converted by the preaching of the Gospel during His absence. Let us look briefly at each of these parables to find His own teaching in regard to this question.

The Parable of the Sower. “Behold, a sower went forth to sow.” The reference is familiar to all of us; and the Lord Himself gave the key to the interpretation of it when He explained the parable of the wheat and the tares in verses 36-42 of this same chapter. “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (or, as the Greek states it, ‘the consummation of the age’); and the reapers are the angels.”

Likewise, in the parable of the sower, the field is the world. The good seed is the Word of God, which falls upon four kinds of soil, only one of which brings forth fruit. Hindering the growth of the seed sown are the birds, the stony ground, and the thorns—representing the world, the flesh, and the devil. Thus the Lord made the meaning very plain. During His absence there is this period of sowing the seed. Some ground yields an abundant harvest; other ground is stony. In other words, some who hear the Gospel message heed it, while others turn a deaf ear to its call. During the absence of the King the sowing of the seed continues, but nothing in the parable indicates that all who hear shall accept the offer of salvation. Nothing indicates that the church shall convert the world. Rather, in this age God is calling out “a people for his name” (Acts 15:14); and He is calling this people, the church, from among a “crooked and perverse generation” (Phil. 2:15).

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. As we have just seen from Christ’s own words, the second parable makes clear that during this age there is to be a mixture of the false and the true religion. A tare is a weed greatly resembling wheat. It represents a spurious Christianity that will grow side by side with the true, and will continue until the end of the age. At that time there will be a great separation, when the reapers, God’s holy angels, shall glean the harvest, even as the Lord said: “The harvest is the end of the world (or age); and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world (age). The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:39-43).

The apostasy in professing Christendom is very clearly foretold here. Moreover, even as it is difficult to distinguish between wheat and tares, so also many who merely profess
the name of Christ, at the same time denying His deity, His atoning work on Calvary, His bodily resurrection, and His supernatural power—many of these appear to be what they are not, parading a righteousness of their own, even as they reject the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus. And it shall be so until the end of the age, for the Lord Himself has declared it!

**THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD TREE.** “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt. 13:31, 32). This parable speaks of the fact that in the early church a small number made a profession of faith in Christ; then this body grew and developed until today professing Christians are found in every part of the inhabitable globe. The birds of the air, coming in and lodging in the branches of the mustard tree, are not sinners entering the church to find rest, but are representatives of the demons, who are working in the church to mar the testimony of God’s people, and to deceive the unwary, undermining the “faith... once for all delivered unto the saints.” This is not mere supposition or fanciful interpretation; for Christ tells us in the explanation of the parable of the sower that “the birds came and snatched away the seed.” The parable of the mustard tree is prophetic of professing Christendom, with a great body of adherents, but sheltering a brood of darkness, as well as true believers in the Christ whose name she professes to bear. When we think of all the Unitarians, the Christian Scientists, the Mormons, and the host of others in so-called evangelical churches who take the name of Christ and yet deny the efficacy of His blood, we see how literally this parable has come to pass.

**THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN.** “Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33). This parable gives an insight into the inward corruption of professing Christendom. A woman takes leaven, a type of sin, and hides it in meal, a type of the Word of God—the children’s bread. And the whole becomes leavened. Leaven is always a type of sin, according to the Bible. Nowhere is it used to represent good. (See Ex. 12:15; 34:25.) Our Lord uses leaven as a symbol of bad doctrine. In Mark 8:15 He warns against the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. In I Corinthians 5:6-8 Paul uses leaven to represent malice and wickedness. While the parable of the mustard tree speaks of the outward expansion of the so-called Christian Church, the parable of the leaven speaks of the inward corruption of the same profession. If we, with our finite minds, can see flagrant tokens of this corruption, what must the all-seeing eye of a holy God behold as He looks into the hearts of those who falsely bear His name—wolves “in sheep’s clothing”?

**THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE.** “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matt. 13:44). The treasure represents Israel, now hid in the field—the field representing the world, as in the other parables in this chapter. Israel as a nation is now buried among the Gentile nations. She is, as it were, in a national cemetery. But the day will come when she shall be as one alive from the dead! The Scripture refers to Israel as a treasure: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people” (Ex. 19:5). “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psalm 135:4).

The man in the parable, who in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys the field, is the Lord Jesus Christ who on the cross of Calvary paid the price for the redemption of a world lost in sin. He set aside His manifested glory—not His deity—to redeem the world, which is His by right of creation, and His by right of redemption. The treasure, Israel, during this age is hidden in the field; but
it will not always be so. After the church has been caught away, He shall bring the dispersed of the nation of Israel out from among the Gentiles and put them in their own land. “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isa. 11:10-12).

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matt. 13:45, 46). This parable refers to the church, the body of Christ, the blood-bought company; and the merchant seeking goodly pearls is Christ, for He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The pearl of great price is the one body, the church; and the price that He paid for her was His own life’s blood on Calvary. “Christ...loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

How wonderfully the pearl represents the mystical body of Christ! This precious gem is found at the bottom of the sea. Now in the Scriptures the sea always represents the Gentile nations. The church is being called out from among all the nations—and to Christ she is precious! Moreover, the pearl is produced through suffering. A grain of sand enters the oyster and causes irritation. The oyster seals the grain with a substance, layer upon layer, until the pearl is produced, fit to occupy a place in a king’s crown. Likewise, through the sufferings of Christ, one after another of believers has been baptized into one body, which one day shall shine in the Redeemer’s crown.

The difference between the hidden treasure and the pearl is significant: the treasure is hidden in the field, which is the world; while the pearl is taken from the water, which represents the Gentile nations.

The Parable of the Dragmet. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:47-50). This parable refers to the preaching of the “gospel of the kingdom” at the end of this age. As we have already seen in this study, this message that was preached by John the Baptist and by the Lord Himself at the beginning of His ministry will be proclaimed again by the Jewish remnant after the translation of the church and before the visible return of Christ to set up His kingdom. Just as the net of the parable was cast into the sea and caught good fish and bad; just as this was followed by a great separation of the good from the bad; so at the end of this age, after the church has been completed, the “gospel of the kingdom” as a great net will be cast into the sea of the nations. And this will culminate in a great separation of the good from the bad by the Lord Himself.

How wonderfully these parables set forth the history of the period while the King is away! They show us what we may expect during His absence, and they point toward the day of reckoning that is to come upon the world when He returns in power and great glory. They tell us not to be discouraged over the fact that we cannot win the world to Christ; for they tell us also that He will bring the world to Himself—perhaps very soon! They encourage us to go on sowing the seed, which is the Word of God, trusting Him to give the increase, and leaving the issue with Him!

SHADOWS OF “THE LAST DAYS”
Matthew 14:1-23:39

From chapters fourteen to twenty-three we have a number of shadows of the coming kingdom which will be established when the Lord Jesus returns the second time;
and we have exhortations and warnings for the people to heed while He is away.

PERSECUTION FORETOLD. In chapter fourteen we find three events grouped together that have dispensational and practical lessons. The first incident is the martyrdom of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-12). This incident is recorded to show that during this age the world will hate and persecute those who love the truth. This will be increasingly true toward the end of the age. Herod may be a shadow of the Antichrist; for later on he accepts worship and takes the place of God, as recorded in the twelfth chapter of Acts. There we read that the people said of him, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:22, 23).

John the Baptist may represent the faithful Jewish remnant that will be made the object of persecution by the Antichrist, of whom Herod was the shadow. But even before the Antichrist appears, God’s people will pass through persecution. I wonder if any of you to whom I am speaking are going through such experiences? If so, do not be bewildered by these things. You must expect them, for you are on alien territory. Satan is still the “god of this age,” but happy are you if you are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake!

MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION PROMISED. The second event recorded here is that of the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21). Note verse 13: “When Jesus heard of it (the death of John the Baptist), he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart.” This speaks of Him as the rejected One. But during the time of His rejection, those who sought Him found Him and were miraculously fed, even in the desert. Is not this a shadow of the end of the age, when those who receive the “gospel of the kingdom” during the reign of the Antichrist shall not be able “to buy or sell” because they have refused to have the mark of the beast? Yet even in their time of tribulation these shall be miraculously preserved by their Messiah and Lord, who during His earthly ministry fed the multitudes by His divine power.

PEACE AND BLESSING ASSURED. The third event referred to above is recorded in verses 22-32. Please get the picture portrayed here. The Son of God was on a mountain, alone with the Father; the disciples were in a boat, in the midst of a terrible storm. “And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Matt. 14:25-27). All this is a shadow of the Jewish remnant at the end time. They will be in the grip of a storm, when the fury of the nations shall be like a raging sea. This will be under the reign of the Antichrist. But in the darkest hour, “at the fourth watch of the night,” the Lord Jesus will appear with the encouraging words: “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” In that hour He shall speak peace to His people; He shall speak peace to the nations; and the sea shall cease from raging; for He is the Son of God! What wonderful words are these—“Be not afraid”!

The chapter ends very significantly. Jesus is worshipped by those in the ship, and the Gentiles are blessed. Please read verses 33-36: “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.” And so shall it be at the close of the tribulation, after the Lord speaks peace to the nations. Not only shall the faithful remnant in Israel enter into His millennial kingdom; but every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue shall confess that He is “Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11).

ISRAEL BLINDED. In chapter fifteen the Spirit of God has
significantly grouped together three other events: First, the Lord is seen in conflict with the nation of Israel (verses 1-20). They had rejected Him, as we have already seen; and according to these verses a deputation of Pharisees was endeavoring to ensnare Him in His doctrine. The spiritual condition of the nation at that time was such that Jesus said, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind” (verse 14).

In verses 22-28 we have recorded the second event, that of the Canaanitish woman who plead with the Lord and received a blessing. She was a Gentile, belonging to an accursed race; yet the Lord Jesus turned to her in response to her supplication. How significantly she represents this age when Gentiles are seeking and finding blessing during the setting aside of Israel as a nation!

A MILLENNIAL PICTURE. The third event is found in verses 29-31, a description of multitudes seeking Him on “a mountain,” and being healed, glorifying “the God of Israel,” and finding satisfaction in Him. All this is suggestive of what will take place at the return of the Lord, after the church age comes to a close. The picture of the Lord on a mountain, healing the multitudes, who in turn glorify God—all this is a millennial picture.

CHRIST’S FIRST PROPHECY CONCERNING HIS CHURCH. The opening words of chapter sixteen are very significant, referring as they do to the red sunset and the red sunrise. (See verses 1-4.) The Lord Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. Figuratively speaking, there was a red sunset when He died, giving promise of fair weather for those who believe in His finished work on Calvary. Look back at that sunset. Everything is red—Gethsemane—scourging—Calvary—everything is red with His own blood, fore-shadowing weather eternally fair for those who believe. But look at the future. There everything is red, not with His blood, but with the blood of His enemies. There will, indeed, be a red sunrise when He returns as the Sun of Righteousness, but foul weather for His enemies. And be-

tween the sunset and the sunrise there is this age, which He has called the night.

In verses 15-20 Peter declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, which confession called forth the first statement the Lord made concerning the church. Moreover, the church is viewed here as being, at that time, in the future; for Christ Himself said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (verse 18). He knew that the apostasy of Israel was rapidly coming to a climax, when He would be crucified; and He knew that the church age would then be ushered in—His church, founded upon the rock, which is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself.

A PORTRAIT OF THE KING IN HIS GLORY. In the opening verses of chapter seventeen we have a portrait of the coming of the Lord in His glory. Let us note here several things: First, “After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.” Six is man’s number, the number of man. After man’s days have run out and the times of the Gentiles have come to a close, the day of the Lord’s kingdom will be established.

In the second place, He “bringeth them up into an high mountain.” A mountain is a picture of His kingdom, as we have already seen. The scene which followed was but a foregleam of His glory which shall shine forth at His coming to be recognized by all the world—yea, by all the universe—as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In the third place, Jesus “was transfigured before them.” His was not an outward glory shining upon Him, but an inward glory shining out. “And his face did shine as the sun.” Now the sun rules the day; and when Jesus appears, He will be the Sun of Righteousness, rising with healing in His wings.

In His transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. Moses represents those who will have a part in the first resurrection, when all those who “sleep in Jesus,” the dead in Christ, shall rise. God put Moses to sleep on Mount Nebo, and he aptly represents all those who sleep in Jesus.
Elijah, who went up to heaven without seeing death, represents the company who shall not die, but “shall be caught up together with them (who sleep in Jesus) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (I Thess. 4:17). It was to this glorious translation of the church that Paul referred when he wrote further, saying: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (I Cor. 15:51, 52).

Peter, James, and John, looking on in wonderment at the transfiguration scene, represent the faithful Jewish remnant who will see Jesus and will look on in wonderment when He returns in glory with His redeemed church to sit upon the throne of His father David.

Immediately after the transfiguration, at the foot of the mountain, a father brought his demoniac boy whom Satan had bound. In His compassion Christ broke Satan’s power and set the captive free (verses 14-18). So it will be in the millennial reign of Christ; Satan will be chained, and his captives shall know the liberty that only the Lord of glory can give!

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS. The Lord was nearing the last days of His life upon the earth; the shadow of the cross was looming before Him; and, in view of these things, He gave some precious teachings in regard to godly living. How vital are these things! It is wonderful to know the truth of God; it is better to do the will of God. How sadly people in our own day need to know and obey the exhortations that are given in these chapters!

The first lesson is on humility (18:1-10). How encouraging are these words to those who are not in possession of great gifts or who are unable to do great things. The Lord shows through a little child how to become greatest of all. How sadly this lesson needs to be learned by Christian workers! Many blight their service by offensive egotism. Let us take heed.

Again, He tells us what our attitude should be toward the offending brother (18:15-18). He anticipated our difficulties with each other and gave us instructions in regard to forgiving love. How often we dishonor our Lord when we fail to heed this exhortation!

In the next place, He gave us the assurance of His presence when we come together in His name (18:19-21). This is not a bodily presence, of course. His bodily presence is at the right hand of God; but being omnipresent, He is everywhere; and we have His own assurance that where His people are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst. In verse 19 we find a promise of prevailing prayer for those who are agreed in their petitions. What a wonderful assurance!

In chapter twenty we have the parable of the householder, with exhortations concerning our duty and service during the King’s absence. In verse 18 of the same chapter we read the words of the Son of God, speaking plainly concerning His death that was drawing very near and the cross that was looming before Him. In chapter twenty-one we have the triumphal entry of the King, and the last public offer of Himself as King of the nation. From verse 19 of the same chapter, the people only demonstrated themselves as like a fig tree covered with leaves, but bearing no fruit.

In chapters twenty-two and twenty-three the Son of God uttered the last terrible warnings to the nation before His crucifixion. With the voice of authority He spoke: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (23:14); “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (23:15); “Woe unto you, ye blind guides” (23:16); “Ye fools and blind” (23:17); “Ye fools and blind” (23:19); “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (23:23); “Ye blind guides” (23:24); “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (23:25); “Thou blind Pharisee” (23:26); “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (23:27); “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (23:29); “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers” (23:33); and “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (23:37-39).

How minutely this prophecy has been fulfilled! For two-thousand years Palestine has been the land of tears and bloodshed. Israel has been the people of the bleeding feet. They have been the object of unspeakable suffering. In Russia they have been shot down in the streets; they have been denied the rights of human beings. Their lot in Roumania, in Germany, in Austria, in France, and in other countries has been the same. “Desolate” is the word that describes their land and nation. But this desolation will pass when, in that coming day, they will cry out, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” This prophecy, of course, looks forward to the second advent of the Lord Jesus, when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives and His chosen people, Israel, shall herald Him as their Messiah and King.

THE LAST GREAT PROPHETIC UTTERANCE OF THE KING
Matthew 24:1-25:46

The Olivet discourse was the last great prophetic utterance made by the King before His crucifixion on Calvary. It was spoken in answer to a question propounded by the disciples. The Lord had just foretold the destruction of the temple; and as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, where His feet shall stand in that day when He returns in glory, His disciples asked: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (or age)?”

The “coming” that the disciples had in mind was the manifestation of Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They did not have in mind the Rapture of the church; for, as we have already seen, that was a “mystery” revealed later through the Apostle Paul. These disciples were Jews well versed in the Old Testament, the pages of which are filled with the prophecy of the Day of Jehovah and the coming of the King to take the reigns of government. That is the “coming” they had in mind.

The Olivet discourse, therefore, is largely a description of the seventieth week of Daniel, that short period which will run its course between the Rapture and the manifestation of Christ as King. And the disciples to whom these words were spoken represent the faithful remnant at the time of the end. They occupied the same relationship to Christ as will the Jewish remnant in that day. Please bear in mind what has just been said, that the church was at this time still in the future. Consequently they were not members of the church when the Lord gave them this great prophecy, but they were individual Jewish believers. It was not until the Day of Pentecost that they became members of the church, the body of Christ. Therefore, in the Olivet discourse they aptly represent the faithful Jewish remnant during the tribulation period, that company who will occupy the same relationship to the Lord as did the disciples before Pentecost.

In answer to their question the Lord cast His all-seeing eye on down the age, and gave them a detailed description of its closing hours. His words as recorded in Matt. 24:6-14 are descriptive of the first three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel, and are called by the Lord “the beginning of sorrows.” The last three and one-half years, described from verse fifteen on, is the period of the tribulation, the greatest of all sorrows, called in Jeremiah “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

“The Beginning of Sorrows.” Let us look first at the words descriptive of the first three and one-half years. The Lord emphasizes seven things: (1) false Christ; (2) wars and rumours of wars; (3) famine; (4) pestilence; (5) many hated and killed as martyrs; (6) earthquakes; (7) the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

It is worthy of notice that these things harmonize minutely with the seven seals of the book of Revelation, which also are descriptive of the first three and one-half years
of Daniel's prophecy. When the first seal is broken, a white horse appears. The rider is the Antichrist who will go forth "conquering, and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2). The breaking of the second seal brings into view a red horse, symbolic of war. "And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Rev. 6:4). The breaking of the third seal brings into view a pale horse of famine. (See Rev. 6:5, 6.) The breaking of the fourth seal brings into view the black horse of pestilence and death. "And his name that sat on him was Death" (Rev. 6:8). With the breaking of the fifth seal there is a martyred company; with the sixth, a great earthquake; and with the seventh, a silence in heaven, during which the 144,000 Jews—12,000 from each tribe—are called out to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Of course, all these things, with the exception of the last, have been characteristic of the age ever since the Lord went away. There have always been false Christs and false prophets. There have always been wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, martyrs. But these things are only shadows of the same disorders which will be greatly intensified during Daniel's seventieth week.

The reference to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, of course, is just the revival of the message preached by John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. We have already pointed out the difference between the "gospel of the kingdom" and the "gospel of the grace of God." The gospel of grace is the message preached today; and through it the church, which is the Bride of Christ, His Body, is being formed. The gospel of the kingdom, however, has to do, not with the Body of Christ, but with a kingdom, the earthly kingdom to which Jesus, as the Son of David, is Heir. The gospel of the kingdom, therefore, will be revived and preached after the translation of the church, and at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel.

This preaching is to be accomplished by the 144,000 sealed ones of the seventh chapter of Revelation, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. The veil of blindness will be lifted from their eyes, and they will begin their message immediately after the church has been translated. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" will be their theme as they herald the coming King and set His claims over against the claims of the Antichrist. A great multitude will hear and receive this message. They will be the nations whom the Lord compares to "sheep" in Matthew 25:31-46. And they shall enter the earthly kingdom when it is established by the returning King.

"The Time of Jacob's Trouble!" The prophecy of the second half of Daniel's seventieth week begins with Matt. 24:15: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, whoso readeth, let him understand: then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (verses 15-22).

From the ninth chapter of Daniel we learn that it is in the midst of the seventieth week that the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, and the "abomination of desolation" is set up. An "abomination" to an Israelite was an idol of some sort; and the probability is that the setting up of the "abomination of desolation" refers to the erection of an image of the last world-emperor, who will be in league with the Antichrist, and who will require that divine honors be paid him. A mark on the forehead and on the right hand will be a token of allegiance to this last world-emperor and the Antichrist, without which mark no man shall be able to buy or sell. In other words, the ultimatum will be: "Worship me, or starve." This will be the signal for the beginning of "the great tribulation." And in verses 16-26 of this chapter the Lord Jesus has given instruction to the faithful Israelite of that day who refuses to worship a false Christ, telling him how to escape from the terrible persecution that will follow his refusal to
worship the Antichrist: "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains; let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

The place to which they will flee is the land of Moab, on the east side of Jordan, where there are cities that have been preserved for thousands of years. Why is it that other cities have passed away, while the cities of Petra remain? They stand just as they did thousands of years ago, marvelously preserved, almost inaccessible; and yet during these thousands of years no one has lived in them. We have reason to believe that the persecuted Jewish remnant will take refuge in these cities; for Daniel 11:41 tells us that Moab is one of the countries that will escape out of the hands of the Antichrist.

Following the description of the persecution of those days, the Lord again warns against false Christs, because the delusions in this time of trouble will be powerful. The Satanic cults of today, such as Christian Science, Mormonism, Theosophy, and Spiritism, are only a shadow of what shall be prevalent in that day. Many of the delusions of that hour will distort the truth of the Lord's return; for, in connection with this warning, He makes clear the manner of His appearance: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27). What a marvelous sight that will be! The whole universe, radiant with His glory, shall see the King coming with great power and great glory!

The Parable of the Fig Tree. The reference to the fig tree putting forth its leaves, in connection with these events, is very significant. The fig tree is a type of the Jewish nation, and the putting forth of its leaves is understood when connected with the cursing of the fig tree that had taken place previously in our Lord's ministry. The fig tree covered with leaves but destitute of fruit was a picture of the state of Israel at the time the Lord came. The leaves of profession were there, but there was no fruit of holiness in reality. The cursing and the withering of the fig tree foreshadowed what was to follow Calvary—the scattering of Israel through the nations. This scattering has already lasted nearly two thousand years, and Israel is still the barren fig tree. But the fig tree putting forth her leaves again speaks of the resurrection of the national idea of the return of the Jews to Palestine. Surely the Zionist Movement of today is a shadow of the fig tree putting forth her leaves! How solemn these days are! And how serious people should be, in the light of this and other events that indicate that the seventieth week of Daniel will soon begin to run its course!

The Characteristics of the End of the Age. The reference to the days of Noah is also significant (Matt. 24:36-42). What were the characteristics of Noah's day? It was a time of great apostasy. It was a time of violence. The thoughts of men were evil continually. And so shall the closing hours of this age be—eating, drinking, thoughts for everything but God. And the storm will break suddenly, just as it did in Noah's day, sweeping away the ungodly. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and other left" (Matt. 24:40, 41). These verses do not refer to the Rapture, but to the tribulation period. The two being "taken" means that they will be taken away in judgment; and the two "left" shall remain upon the earth to enter into the millennial reign of Christ. The reference to the flood in this connection makes this interpretation clear; for concerning the "ungodly" in Noah's day, Jesus says, "The flood came, and took them all away" (verse 39).
A Message From Matthew's Gospel

The Exhortation to Watchfulness. The verses with which the chapter closes are an exhortation to watchfulness and godly living: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh... If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:42-51).

The Parable of the Virgins. In chapter twenty-five we have three things recorded: the parable of the virgins, the parable of the talents, and the judgment of the living nations at the return of Christ. While the Olivet discourse has to do, in the main, with the seventieth week of Daniel, the opening verses of the parable of the virgins make clear that the parable is descriptive of the sphere of profession during the Lord’s absence in this age. “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto...”—this is the same language as that of the parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and it emphasizes again the warning that during the absence of the King there will be a great body of mere professors who are doomed to a sad disappointment when the Lord comes. The foolish virgins are like the wise in their profession, but unlike them in possession. The difference is the oil which “the wise” have and “the foolish” lack. The oil is a type of the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer (Gal. 4:6). The unwise represent that great mass of professors who name the name of God, who are sticklers for forms and ceremonies, but who have never been born again. The Lord’s answer to their cry, “I know you not,” should be a warning to all those who have nothing but a dead profession.

The foolish virgins do not represent immature believers, as some would hold, thus teaching a divided Rapture: for what the Lord says to the unwise virgins could never be said to any child of God, however immature he might be. A careful reading of the parable will show that the unwise virgins had no oil; and, as we have already seen, oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in Romans 8:9, “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The Spirit of Christ here is the Holy Spirit, as the context shows. Unquestionably the unwise virgins represent mere professors, and the parable is given as a solemn warning to such as these.

The Parable of the Talents. The parable of the talents emphasizes the same thing. The man with the one talent who charges the Lord with being harsh and unjust, and whose portion is in the outer darkness, represents the unconverted man who is occupied with service, but who does not know the Lord Himself. No one but an unconverted man would address the Lord as this man does, and only the unconverted will experience the destiny of this man.

The Judgment of the Living Nations. The judgment of the living nations will close the seventieth week of Daniel. Christ will come in the clouds, and sit upon the throne of His glory. Before Him shall be gathered all nations. Please note the three classes mentioned here: the nations compared to “sheep”; those likened unto “goats”; and those whom the Lord calls “my brethren.” The “sheep” nations are those who will hear the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by the faithful remnant in Israel; the “goat” nations are those who will line up with the Antichrist; and “my brethren” are the Jewish remnant who will preach the kingdom message. They shall go forth as did the disciples of old, carrying no purse, no gold, no scrip of any kind. (See Matt. 10:9, 10.) The giving of meat and drink to these will be the outward expression on the part of the nations who heed their message, even as it was when the gospel of the kingdom was preached at Christ’s first coming. The “sheep” nations will inherit the kingdom. This is not heaven, but the earthly kingdom which Christ shall establish, and over which He shall reign. The portion...
THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF THE KING
Matthew 26:1—28:20

In chapters twenty-six and twenty-seven of Matthew we find the record of the crucifixion and the resurrection of the King. There are two striking statements recorded in connection with the trial and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus that are peculiar to Matthew; that is, they are not found in Mark, Luke, or John. These statements are in keeping with the whole of Matthew's message:

"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (25:64). How suggestive these words are of the glory of the coming King!

The second reference in this connection is the prophetic word of the Jews themselves when they cried out in their rage against the Lord Jesus, saying, "His blood be upon us, and on our children" (27:25). This prophecy has been fulfilled in the history of the Jewish race from that day to this—the history that has been written in blood and tears.

The closing chapter of Matthew is very significant in that there is no record of Christ's ascension. Such an important event as the bodily ascension of the Son of God into the presence of His Father, one would expect to find incorporated in each of the four Gospels. And the absence of this record in Matthew is not only a proof of the divine arrangement of the Bible, but it is also in keeping with the theme of this first Gospel. The King of Israel belongs to the earth, not to heaven. The covenant God made with His chosen people has to do with Israel in the land.

The last scene in Matthew, therefore, is a prophetic one. "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain," and there the risen Lord gave kingly directions for the carrying out of His purposes and will. (See Matt. 28:16-20.) As we have already seen, the mountain occupies a prominent place in this Gospel, and represents the kingdom of Christ. And this last scene in the Gospel according to Matthew is a picture of that day when Christ shall be in His kingdom exercising government, His people carrying out His purposes and will.

It is very significant to note how the closing of each of the Gospels is in keeping with the theme. The last scene in Matthew is that of a King on a "mountain," issuing commands—a beautiful millennial picture. The last scene in Mark presents Christ, the perfect Servant, in the midst of His servants, "working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). The last scene in Luke presents the Son of Man being "carried" up into heaven (Luke 24:51). The emphasis here is placed upon His humanity. The last statement in John is one of limitless extent, one that could be applied only to Deity: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

My friend, Christ is one day going to return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He shall not only sit upon the throne of His father David, but He shall wear many crowns, and shall in that day sweep the earth with His purifying judgments. All His enemies will be made His footstool. Have you ever bowed the knee to Him and recognized His Lordship and authority? If not, God's exhortation to you is: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion... Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way" (Psalm 2:6, 12). The kiss speaks of reconciliation. And there is only one place where you can find a reconciled God. That place is Calvary. In Colossians 1:20 we read that He has "made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." "Kiss the Son," my friend, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."
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