

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those **in** Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, **examining** the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 12.

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## CONTENTS.

### The Parables:

The use and interpretation of parables . . . . . 1

### THE PARABLES.

The use **and** interpretation of parables.

**From** Atherton. —This introductory aspect of the subject may be divided into three parts: (1) Old Testament parables to Old Testament people; (2) Old Testament parables to New Testament people; (3) New Testament parables to New Testament people.

The first of these parts opens up to us the principle that the divinely recorded history of men was to be considered by each succeeding generation and dispensation as emphasized in Psalm 78. 1-6; for example this psalm begins at the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and concludes at the choice of David as king. Four distinct uses of Old Testament parables are here set forward: (1) that men might believe in God; (2) that they might not forget the works of God; (3) that they might keep His commandments; (4) that they might not be stubborn or rebellious (Psalm 78. 7, 8). Thus it will be realised that a large portion of the Old Testament is in parabolic language which includes many of the shadows, figures, types and similitudes.

We next come to the second type of parable, namely, Old Testament parables to New Testament people. This greater use of Old Testament parables is outlined in the New Testament when Paul says in the Holy Spirit, —" These things were our examples " (or types), and " these things happened into them by way of example " and were written for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10. 1-6, and 11, Romans 15. 4). Their interpretation also is revealed by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24. 27, 44, 45). So that whether parable, prophecy or whatever we like to consider, the interpretation of the Old Testament is revealed in Christ. In addition there are seen many fundamental principles surrounding His person and work (*e. g.*, redemption by blood, the sinfulness of man, separation).

The third part, New Testament parables to New Testament people, is principally before us in this year's study. Some of the objects of the Lord's parables are: (1) to reveal heavenly things, truths and principles (*i. e.*, Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God); (2) to indicate His divine wisdom and Deity (John 7. 45-46; Proverbs 26. 7-9); (3) to reach and win willing hearts in the simplest of language (Luke 15. 1); (4) to impress His doctrine upon the disciples (Luke 11. 9); (5) to veil from deliberately hardened and stubborn hearts the mysteries of the Kingdom (Matthew 13. 11-13).

Some principles of interpretation may be suggested, *e. g.*: (1) Each parable has one leading theme throughout and it is intended to convey at least one simple lesson, *e. g.*, the unmerciful steward impresses the simple lesson of forgiveness (Matthew 18. 21-35); new wine in new wine skins illustrates that regeneration is vital, not reformation (Matthew 9. 17); the labourers in the vineyard indicate Divine justice and sovereignty (Matthew 20. 1-16). (2) Some parables have a two-fold application; (a) local, temporary and individual; (b) a wider, collective and future applications—*e. g.* the unfruitful fig tree applies to those who thought there were greater sinners than themselves in that day; secondly to Israel as a

nation; and their future condemnation (Luke 13. 6-9). The servants and the pounds: firstly, **the** faithfulness, service, and reward of three servants; secondly, the coming again of the Lord **Jesus** to judge, and the future accountability of all **His** servants. (3) The preface, or close of a parable often indicates the interpretation, *e. g.*, (a) some parables begin with "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto" (Matthew 25. 1); (b) other similar prefaces are given in Luke 18. 1 and 18. 9; (c) in Luke 12. 21 the interpretation is given at the end and not at the beginning.

We noted the important fact that the Lord Jesus Christ never made reference to anything in the parables which could not happen in real life. Most of the parables **He** told were of everyday happenings. In fact, we believe some had already happened (*e. g.*, Luke 10. 30-37). In contrast to this it was seen that in the Old Testament there are one or two fables or allegories brought before **us** (*e. g.*, Judges 9. 8-15). **G. A. Jones.**

**From Ilford.**—An understanding of the **use** and interpretation of parables in Scripture is fundamental to a correct grasp of the meaning underlying them and of the practical lessons which they are intended to convey to us. A parable is a story given to illustrate a spiritual truth or, as has often been explained, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Hebrews 9. gives **us** a clear example of this, and we have the tabernacle of old and those things pertaining thereto, referred to as a "parable for the time now present."

In the Lord's ministry we find that **He** used parables on many occasions for illustration, and, although not exclusively, very many have a bearing on spiritual truths concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God. The **use** of parables in this connection is clearly indicated in Matthew 13. 11, where in answer to the disciples' enquiry as to why **He** spoke<sup>1</sup> to them in parables, the Lord answered, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given." Great spiritual truths underlay the simple stories of everyday things which the Lord told, and spiritual perception is necessary for a correct interpretation thereof. We need to have the Spirit's enlightenment if we are to understand them aright. It should be our aim and desire to be so indwelt by the Holy Spirit that we may discern the mysteries of the kingdom of which the parables speak. During the Lord's sojourn here **He** Himself was oftentimes the expositor of the parables to **His** disciples (*e. g.*, Matthew 13. 36) and we too should definitely seek to be taught of the Spirit in this connection, for the truths of which they speak are of deep significance. Not only did the mysteries of the kingdom figure largely in the Lord's teaching, but both Philip and Paul taught the things concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts 8. 12, Acts 20. 25).

**A. G. Jarvis (Jun. ).**

**From Glasgow.**—The Lord's teaching in parables occupies no mean place among all the other things that **He** spoke. Matthew 13. 1, 2, tells us, "On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. And there were gathered unto **Him** great multitudes, so that **He** entered into a boat and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach." This we judge was a new mode of teaching, entirely different from the way in which **He** had usually taught. The disciples themselves seemed surprised and said unto **Him** in the house, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" The answer which the Lord gave unto them **must** have delighted their hearts, as it does ours who are also **His** disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13. 11).

We are of the mind that verses 12 to 15 are of prime importance, as they contain a guiding principle which we should keep before **us** in our study of the parables. Verse 12 deals with "the haves" and "have nots," and with the accompanying verses from Isaiah the prophet, clearly unfolds why the Lord made **use** of parables. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." They who have are the disciples to whom the Lord said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I

say unto you, that many prophets and righteous **men** desired to **see** the things which ye see, and **saw** them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not " (Matthew 13. 16, 17). The eyes of the disciples were opened by God that they might **see** the glory of the One who was sent from heaven. What **a** contrast between the condition of the multitude and that of the disciples ! In the multitudes **is** fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, "By hearing he shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no **wise** perceive: For this, people's heart **is** waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed " (Matthew 13. 14, 15). Their condition, **seems** to have been largely brought about by themselves and has been characteristic of that **same** people from early times, albeit there have been some individual exceptions. **J. Rae.**

### EXTRACTS.

From Wigan. —A parable usually means **a** placing together or alongside and especially **a** comparing together, by which matters relating to Heaven and the spiritual life are described in language borrowed from earthly ways and things. It can also mean simply an illustration, and the story of the poor wise man of Ecclesiastes **9**. demonstrates this use. Wisdom **as** an abstract factor **is** rather difficult to explain, **but** by the **use** of this parable, the working and results of wisdom are clearly illustrated. In the gospels, however, parables couched in simple everyday language are constantly used by the Lord, and we may be sure that, even **if** the hidden spiritual meaning was lost upon the majority in **His** audiences, at any rate the literal story of the parable was understood by all.

The second question to be answered is the reason why parables were used, and in particular why the Lord **Jesus** so favoured their use. Fortunately **we** have the Lord's own explanation in Matthew 13. 10-17. In essence **He** says that **He** preached by parables because in that way the things of God were made more clear to those eager to learn\* **His** will, but more difficult to those in ignorance, who desired to remain in ignorance; and thus the gospel could be **a** savour of life to some, and of death to others. No blame of harshness can be imputed to the Lord **Jesus**, for it must always be remembered that these people had themselves of their own volition first closed their ears and their minds to the truth (Matthew 11. 20-24). Before God hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh had already hardened his heart against God.

Although it would appear that the Lord **Jesus** was the first to use parables for the instruction of **His** followers, **a** few decades afterwards **we** find the apostle **John** writing the Revelation, **a** book which contains **a** series of parables, though **it** **is** not **a** parable **as** **a** whole. And, just **as** it **was** the duty of those desirous of doing God's will to search into the parables of the Lord **Jesus** to find their hidden meaning, so **we** in our day should endeavour to discover God's plans for the future through the parables in Revelation. [Revelation **is** symbolic rather than parabolic. —S. B.]

**R. B. P. M.**

From Birkenhead. —The word parable **is** derived from the Greek root *paraballien*, which means, " to throw beside, to compare. " **As** commonly **used**, both in scripture and in ordinary conversation, there **is** implied **a** narrative from which **a** moral **is** deduced. The incidents of the narrative are usually ones which are readily intelligible to the hearer, being frequently drawn from everyday life or from nature.

When the narrative used to illustrate **a** message **is** inherently impossible, **as** for example Jotham's story in Judges 9. 7, it **is** then termed **a** fable or apologue. Another instance of this form of teaching is, perhaps, Ezekiel 17. 2. Though to this passage the word parable **is** applied in the text, it would appear to be more fitly called, in modern usage, **a** fable.

The allegory **is** **a** type of illustration rarely used in the New Testament. It differs essentially from the parable in that the qualities and characteristics of one set of things are transferred to the other set. It **is** of interest to note that in John 10. where the " parables " of the fold and porter, and of the good shepherd occur,

the word in the original is not that which is commonly used for a parable. It would seem that the Holy Spirit has deliberately chosen here a word which allows a latitude of meaning, for the form of the teaching is more allegorical than parabolic.

The Greek word for parable is translated proverb (in the A. V. ) in Luke 4. 23, and, indeed, the proverb is very commonly a concise and pointedly expressed parable.

In the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, there are, we might almost say, innumerable parables, though those explicitly nominated such in the text are relatively few. In the Old Testament the Lord could say that, " by the ministrations of the prophets I have used similitudes, " and it is clear that in the past dispensation, parables, both simple and elaborate, were used freely by the messengers of God to Israel.

In connection with interpretation it is well to bear in mind that there is no necessity for a parable to be true, though it might conceivably be true; it is not propounded with a view to teaching historical fact. Further, such characters as receive commendation are not always exemplary for justice or morality, as for example, the unjust steward. We may also say that parables are not always merely verbal, but may be literally enacted, as that referred to in Hebrews 9. 9. In this passage we find that the ceremonies of Jewish worship were a parable, in that they prefigured, and were a type of, their spiritual counterparts in the present dispensation, and as such serve to illustrate the loftier truth.

*W. Rowan.*

From **Cardiff**. —The parable was the most characteristic form of speech used by the Lord Jesus. It was usually an incident from common life, moulded into a perfect picture and forming a pictorial vehicle for conveying divine truth. It was memorable even to the simplest because of its concise and figurative style, but the truth conveyed was often incomprehensible to the multitudes. The use of parables by the Lord Jesus was not an innovation, for parables were used in Old Testament times and we know that, even to this day, the language of the eastern nations is much more figurative than that of the western nations.

The Lord always had a deep meaning in His parables and we should not be satisfied with merely seeing the first lessons contained in them, but, like the disciples, we should long to find out more fully the teaching which they contain.

There may be two or more interpretations of a parable, equally good, which may lead to some confusion, but is it not possible that the different interpretations may be equally true and the " spoil " therefore richer ? It is our task mainly to ascertain the spiritual teaching, and, in doing so, our interpretations will inevitably refer to either past, or present, or future time, and a parable may contain teaching not only for the past, but also for the present or future. The teaching will not only be moral and practical, but also dispensational and prophetic. Above all, there will be found in many parables a portrait of the Lord Himself.

The parable of the little city in Ecclesiastes 9. is very beautiful, —a picture of the soul attacked by Satan, but delivered by the hand of Jesus. " There came a great king, against it and besieged it and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. " The contrast of the small garrison with the powerful army besieging it is very marked, and again between the " great king, " and the " poor wise man. " The poor man's wisdom devised the plan which delivered the city, and is not the wisdom of the Lord Jesus better than all the strength of Satan ? Well may we say with Solomon, " I have also seen wisdom . . . on this wise, and it seemed great unto me. " The treatment of the poor wise man who suffered at the hands of " a few men, " is prophetic, speaking clearly of the treatment received by the Lord Jesus at the hands of His people, and now being received at the hands of all Christ rejectors. [I must say I do not follow our friends' application of Solomon's story. Bunyan writes of " The City of Mansoul, " but that was taken by Diabolos and had to be re-taken by Immanuel. What City does the Lord deliver that never was taken by the Devil with few men in it ?— J. M. ].

It is clear that in the above parable there is more teaching than can be seen at a glance, and it behoves us to study all the parables in detail, in order that we may experience the richness of the blessing which God wants us to receive.

*Martin D. Follett.*

From Leicester. —In the east speaking in parables is customary. It was no new thing for the Lord to address His hearers in this manner. His parables, of course, excel all others for He is Wisdom. The Lord sometimes disclosed the meaning of His parable, but usually He left the application to those whom He desired to teach. It seems evident that the purpose of the Master in speaking as He did was to illustrate the need of the listeners and the limitations of men.

The disciples enjoyed a blessed experience; to them it was "given to know the mysteries of the kingdom," and following this statement are the words, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given." In the hearts of these men had been sown the precious seed of the Sower, and time would reveal how that seed would bring forth one hundred fold! Day by day the Great Teacher taught them more and more. In the case of the crowds who pressed about Him there was no genuine appreciation of the words spoken. Hearing they did not understand. Eager at times to listen, yet not giving a thought to the deeper aspects of the lessons taught, face to face with Incarnate Truth they yet saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

Of Scriptural parables the importance is marked by the fact that they take up such a large portion of the Gospels. We need to approach the Lord, and, like the disciples, say, "Explain unto us the parable." So shall we obtain the instruction we need.

*D. K., L. C. S.*

From Southport. —We read, "And Job again took up his parable" (Job 27. 1, 29. 1) when Job commenced to speak. It is again recorded of Balaam, "And he took up his parable" (Numbers 23. 7, 18, and Numbers 24. 3). The word is also used as a dark saying (Psalm 49. 4, 78. 2), while the same word is used in the original language in certain cases for proverb (*e. g.*, 1 Kings 4. 32, Proverbs 1. 1, 10. 1).

The story which Jotham told concerning the trees having a king over them (Judges 9. 8-15), is used as a parable. There are several other parables told in the Old Testament, such as 2 Samuel 12. 1-4, 14. 6, 7, 1 Kings 20. 39, 40, and Isaiah 5. 1-6.

*M. A. Sands, W. S. Holden.*

From Mountain Ash. —In Ecclesiastes 9. 13-16, Solomon illustrates the splendours of wisdom by giving a simple yet wonderful illustration of the "poor wise man," which speaks so plainly, when spiritualised, of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, "The little city" speaking of this world, "the great king" of Satan. How sadly this parable ends! "No man remembered that same poor man." To-day the world forgets the Christ of God, and we must thank God for every remembrance we have of our Lord Jesus who by His great wisdom has saved us. [If the world is the city of Ecclesiastes 9. 13-16, did not the world cast out Christ, the poor Man, and take sides with the great king, the Devil? The parable is clearer than this interpretation. —J. M. ]

All God's affections and purposes were centred in Christ, so it is not surprising to see that many such parables in the Old Testament speak of the beauties and virtues of this blessed Person. Thus the Apostle saw in Him the fulfilment of that which was written concerning the Tabernacle, which "was a parable of the time now present" (Hebrews 9. 9). The Old Testament is full of such parables, and the desire and work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us that all these speak of Christ (Romans 15. 4).

*T. D. Mortimer.*

From Hereford. —The parable concerning David's sin is unique, for David was so upset by the narrative that he added to it by pronouncing judgment on the rich man. This parable so clearly outlined to David the dreadfulness of his sin that he immediately admitted his guilt.

The will of God is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance as David did, but when the Lord Jesus commenced parabolic teaching it was in answer to the hardness of heart of the majority of His hearers. His ministry divided His hearers into two groups, those who had ears to hear, and those whose ears were dull.

While in the parable of the sower the moral application takes in the minutest particulars of the narrative, in the interpretation of the parable of the tares and that of the unjust steward, the Lord Himself does not apply any interpretation to such phrases as " while men slept, " " I cannot dig, " and " to beg I am ashamed. " We do well, in seeking to interpret the parables, to bear this in mind, so that if there are any details about which we find difficulty of interpretation, we should not strain the whole by trying to make every small detail signify something.

J. O. Tidmas,

From Aberfan. —God in Old Testament times used parables to point forward to the One who was to come. Hebrews 9. 9 tells us that the Tabernacle with its ordinances was a parable of the then future time—the time now present. God spoke significantly in the furniture and ordinances of the Tabernacle regarding His Beloved Son. In each article of the furniture belonging to the Tabernacle we have some type of the things which were to come. Each Day of Atonement with the two goats spoke of Him whose sacrifice was to put away from the sight of God, all the sins of His people. Year by year the rites of the great Day of Atonement were enacted. Thus God has illustrated what were His divine purposes contained in and expressed through His wondrous Gift of His only begotten Son.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2. 14); and in order to bring men to a comprehension of the spiritual things, the Lord Jesus Christ used the natural to explain the spiritual.

% Reg. Jones.

**From Edinburgh.** —The word " parable " immediately brings to mind the parables spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, and causes one to picture scenes such as the sower going forth to sow; fields white unto harvest; the shepherd with his flock; and the woman seeking the lost piece of silver. To the Lord's hearers such scenes were well known, and for that reason they were excellent subjects for His parables. Day by day those scenes would bring His words to mind and, no doubt, would cause some to ponder them; and as they did so, if they were willing to receive it, understanding would be given concerning those truths of which His parable spoke. Nevertheless, many who heard His parables still closed their ears and hearts to His words.

In Hebrews 9. 9 we read that the Tabernacle and its service is a parable for the time now present. That is to say that the Tabernacle, with the holy place and the holy of holies, bears a likeness to the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands; and that the ordinances of the Mosaic Tabernacle bear a likeness to the service of the greater and more perfect Tabernacle. The ordinances of the Tabernacle were carnal and could not, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect; but Christ has come [" Come " does not here signify Christ's coming down from God to earth, but His drawing nigh to God as did the high priest, in type, in the Tabernacle of old. —J. M. J a High Priest through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, and, through His own blood, has entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. \* He, through the eternal Spirit, has offered Himself without blemish unto God; and His blood cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. By His blood we may enter in spirit into the holy place, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. How important it is that we should study the types, shadows and patterns of the Old Testament! A proper understanding of them will lead to a fuller understanding and appreciation of Christ and His work, and of God's will for us to-day.

Some parables are interpreted for **us** in scripture, *e. g.*, that of the sower, which the Lord Jesus Himself interpreted. Others are not interpreted; and these we cannot interpret correctly without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who, the Lord Jesus promised, shall guide us into all the truth, and shall take of that which

is Christ's, and shall declare it unto us (John 16. 13, 14). Well might our prayer be, " Lord, open Thou our minds that we might understand the Scriptures. " **He** who did so for His disciples when **He** spoke to them after His resurrection, is able to do so for us. If we allow Him to do so, blessed will be our eyes, for they will see, and our ears, for they will hear. When we consider that many prophets and righteous men desired to see these things, and saw them not, and to hear them, and heard them not, we are impressed with our responsibility to carry out and to make known the truth God has revealed to us. The Lord's parables teach us that privilege involves responsibility, and teach us the principles of judgment of, and reward for, service.

*John A. H. Robertson.*

**From Manchester.** —It was the Lord Jesus Christ who, above all others, took up this form of teaching at a certain stage of His ministry. When **He** first began to teach, His words were direct and definite, and their meaning was quite easily understood. When it became apparent that the Jews refused His claims, however, **He** spoke unto them in parables, in fulfilment of prophecies in Isaiah and the **Psalms**. It is solemn to think that when God's clear word is refused, **He** does not always continue to speak in the same way. Even the disciples were at a loss to understand the meaning of the early parables, and the Lord had to explain them in private (Matthew 13. 36). His interpretation of the parable of the sower is an important guide as to the truth we can gain from His parabolic teaching. It is essential that when interpreting parables we should not attempt to spiritualise minor details, unless our interpretation is clearly borne out by other scriptures. Most of the parables have a definite theme, and were spoken on a specific occasion to convey some line of teaching. We must guard against losing sight of the main object of a parable, because if certain points are wrested from their context the simple teaching which the Spirit would have us learn may be easily obscured. For instance some find difficulty in the father's commendation of the elder son in the third parable of Luke 15. It has even been suggested that the words, " Thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine " (Luke 15. 31) prove that it is only people who have got far from God who really need to be saved. This is of course contrary to the clear teaching of the Lord and the apostles. The Lord Jesus Christ was in Luke 15. concentrating our attention on the love of God for the wandering sinner, and we are not justified in basing a doctrine on an incidental detail of the story.

*R. Bowden.*

**From Broxburn.** —How often the Lord Jesus Christ in speaking to men referred to the things of nature and customs of everyday life, that from these **He** might illustrate and set forth spiritual instruction for His hearers ! The Lord by His words, no less than by His works, ever manifested His Deity, and even when speaking of earthly things the matchless wisdom and skill displayed in the choice of His words, coupled with the aptness and beauty of His power of illustration, drew from His hearers the acknowledgment that " never man so spake. "

Eastern languages are largely pictorial, lending themselves readily to figurative forms of speech. Hebrew and also Syriac, which was the language spoken by the Lord, are of the same character. Parabolic teaching therefore had its use because it set one line of thought over against another by way of comparison or similitude, and also because the picture or image thus presented was not readily forgotten.

In the interpretation of parables, as in the general interpretation of Scripture, the first and great necessity is a mind illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit, avoiding strained or fanciful ideas and reining in the imagination. " Search " (John 5. 39), " meditate " (Psalm 1. 2), " compare " (1 Corinthians 2. 13); these are the general principles upon which the word of God itself counsels the earnest reader to pursue his study. How simple and natural was the Lord's mode of interpretation ! \* " The field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy that sowed them is the devil " (Matthew 13. 38, 39). Here is wholesome instruction for us.

*Henry Dyer.*

From London, S. E. —The Lord Jesus, **the** greatest Teacher of **all times**, **used** natural things by comparison, to illustrate the **meaning** of the spiritual which **He** wished to convey to the hearts and minds of those to whom He spoke.

Many, in these days of materialism, ridicule the parables, and relegate them to **the** position of a homily or even a fable, which **has** but a moral meaning, or maxim of worldly prudence; whereas a parable conveys **in** Scripture a spiritual truth. A fable rests on what **man** has in common with the lower creatures (*e. g.*, Judges 9. 8-15, 2 Kings 14. 9).

A parable is not a myth, which has no foundation of fact, but **is** represented as truth. A myth is the spontaneous symbolic expression of **an** " untrue " religious notion. A parable **as** spoken by the Lord is full of the divine wisdom and truth of God. Nor must a parable be confused with **an** allegory. It does not place imaginary persons and things in the place of real ones, and is not self interpreting. The allegory personifies directly ideas or attributes, and may be about other than religious truths. Galatians 4. 24 contains an allegory.

In a parable the courses of action related and understood run indeed parallel, but the persons are strictly confined to their own natural places and actions, which are, in their relation and succession typical of higher things. It may well therefore be summarised what a parable is. It is a serious narration, within the limits of probability, of a course of action pointing to some moral or spiritual truth; and derives its force from real analogies impressed by the Creator of all things on the creatures. At the **same** time it is true a parable teaches through imagination, or rests on the imagination.

To the carnal the parable is a veiling, but to the spiritually receptive a revealing of truth. Therefore **He** who would learn must humble be. As a babe whose parents teach what is needful, many sat **at** Jesus' feet and learned of Him with a heart and mind emptied of all things of self. Thus must we be for the revealing to our hearts of the wonderful truths of the parables that teach of the kingdom of heaven, and the fulness of the gospel and all things concerning **Jesus** Christ the Lord.

v G. A. Reeve.

From Birmingham. —Apart from adhering to the current method of conversation, the Lord, by speaking in parables, was fulfilling a prophecy. (See Matthew 13. 34, 35). The beautiful word pictures **He** drew were all " life studies, " **and** not allegory **as** some dictionaries interpret the word " parable. "

It was to the multitude only that the Lord used this method of address. In the mixed audiences there would no doubt be learned doctors and lawyers, who, with all their earthly wisdom and knowledge, could not interpret the truth contained **in** those " earthly stories with spiritual meanings. " What use would **it be** for the ignorant and unlearned to go to them for **an** explanation of the Master's discourses ? How forcibly this reminds us of the Lord's prayer, " I thank Thee, O Father, . . . that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding. . . . "

Though the Lord spoke directly to the multitude, it **was** not to them that **He** gave **the** explanation of **His** parables, but **to** the disciples. The multitudes were spiritually deaf and blind and could not understand the heavenly aspect of the parables spoken to them. It was because they were so carnally minded that they only knew **Him** as Jesus, and not as Christ. When Peter acknowledged **Him** as <sup>44</sup> Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, " the Lord replied, <sup>44</sup> Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My father which **is** in heaven. " The multitudes, like the disciples, needed first to be born from above, " for the natural **man** receiveth not the things of the Spirit. " It was essential for **men** first to believe **in** **Him** and **His** message, before they could understand the meaning of **His** words. This essential must needs be observed also by men to-day.

The multitude, though they seemed willing listeners, did not **ask** for an explanation of the parables, but the disciples did. By going to the **One** who knew all things with their anxious enquiries, they gave a guide **as** to where all disciples should go **if** they would desire the key to the casket of God's truth.

R. Darke, T. H. Darke, and D. S.

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## EDITORIAL.

The same Hebrew word, *Mashal*, is sometimes translated proverb and sometimes parable, so that actually there is no distinction in the Old Testament between proverb and parable. The word *Mashal*, as used in Psalm 78. 2, " I will open my mouth in a parable, " finds its equivalent in the Greek word *Parabole*, in Matthew 13. 35, " I will open my mouth in parables. "

Teaching by parables is the most forceful and abiding form of instruction. Long after much of an address is forgotten the parable or similitude used remains imprinted in the memory of hearers. One remembers the illustrations used by speakers more than forty years ago, though almost all else that was said has gone like snow in a thaw. Much of the power of great speakers lay in their forceful use of illustration.

This no doubt brought kings and queens and the wise men of the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Solomon wrote of himself thus: "And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words (words of delight, R. V. marg. ), and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth " (Ecclesiastes 12. 9, 10). Here was the method followed by a great preacher in his day. He pondered, sought out, and set in order many proverbs or parables. He ranged through the field of nature and " spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the Avail: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom " (1 Kings 4. 33, 34).

He was a diligent student of the book of nature, and like another great preacher could undoubtedly say, " Doth not even nature itself teach you ? " It may be said that Solomon was a genius. True ! But an eminent man of letters has described genius as " an infinite capacity for hard work. " Though few preachers attain to Solomon's fame to have kings and great men in their audiences, yet much may be accomplished if his course of study is followed—in pondering, seeking out, and setting in order proverbs or parables.

Alas, one fears, there is little of this these days. The chapter or portion of scripture that is to form the theme of an address is hastily or incorrectly read. Most of the thinking about it is done when the preacher is on the platform. The audience bears the punishment and all are heartily thankful when it is over. Instead of such seasons being times of enlightenment for the mind and providing food for hungry hearts, they are times of disappointment and discouragement and the secret largely lies in the complete lack of exercise on the speaker's part in pondering, seeking out, and setting in order his parables, if parables are used at all.

Besides, the Preacher said that he sought to find out acceptable words,

words of delight, words that first of all delighted himself, and which would in turn delight his hearers. Solomon says in Proverbs 10. 11, "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life;" and again in Proverbs 13. 2, "A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth;" and yet again in Proverbs 15. 23, "A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth: and a word in due season, how good is it!" How delightful indeed are beautiful thoughts wedded to beautiful words! Correct diction without thought behind it is like beautiful trees without fruit. It is, in the apostle's comparison in another connexion, like to a tinkling cymbal and sounding brass.

Oh, that there were more pondering over what is to be said and how it is to be spoken! Whilst clothes do not make a man, every man is the better of respectable clothing. Words are as the clothing, but thought we may liken to the man. Some superficial people may be entirely taken up with the clothing, and consider the man must be a good man if he has good clothes, but men of wiser mood think of the man. Such kind of men seek the thought in an address, the impression that will outlast the mere dressing. Thus we have in Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 12. 9, 10, first the thoughts and then the acceptable words by which he clothed his thoughts.

This brings us to the effect of the spoken word. He says, "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies (or collectors of sentences, R. V. marg. ), which are given from one shepherd" (verse 11). How sharp and effective are *sought out parables* and *sought out words*; they are compared to goads and nails. As goads to oxen so are right words to men. Think of the effect of Peter's address in Acts. 2.; it says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart," and what a mighty movement followed! The effect of Stephen's remarkable address is described thus, "Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart." How effectively the goads were used by these great men! Their words were also as nails well and truly fastened. Those who speak should seek to speak words that will be felt, words that will stick; felt by themselves first and by those who hear afterwards. 'Tis a pity when the speaker is so Pharisaical that he thinks himself above the correction of his own words, when the words of the people in the synagogue in Nazareth, interpreted by the Lord, do not find a place, "Physician, heal thyself." There was but **One** who did not need the healing of **His** own words, but both speaker and hearer now are of the same class.

We need something that is sharp, something we shall not easily forget, something that touches us in the tenderness of our heart and in the quick of our conscience. We also need something that, like a well-driven nail, will stick and remain with us. Such indeed are the words the One Shepherd gives for the good and blessing of **His** lambs and sheep. Men, if they would feed **His** lambs and sheep, must get their ministry from the Lord, as truly as the disciples who fed the five thousand got from **Him** what they gave to the multitude. The Lord was the Giver, and He is the Giver still.

Let us beware lest we fall into the category of Proverbs 26. 7, "The legs of the lame hang loose: so is a parable in the mouth of fools."

We cannot leave this matter of parables in the Old Testament without briefly considering that pathetic figure, Balaam the soothsayer. Seven times it is recorded that he "took up his parable." Some of the most remarkable things concerning Israel, and concerning Christ, and concerning the truth of inspiration, fell from this remarkable man's lips. His words are rich in parabolic imagery. In the awful struggle which went on in Balaam's breast between the lust for worldly gain and the unalterable will of God to bless Israel **His** chosen people, we see how a man may even speak the very words of God yet be unaffected by such words. Here was one on the pinnacle of fame, a man used by God to speak prophetically of Christ and **His** people. Yet he fell, being blinded by the glamour of material gain.

If in Solomon's use of parables they blessed the hearers, goading them on in the paths of uprightness, Balaam's parables were to his deceived and irresponsible heart what the Lord's parables were to the worldly minded leaders of Israel in **His** day; for seeing they saw not and hearing they heard not, neither did they under-

stand. They heard the story, but it was to them but a story, it never distilled as the dew, nor as the small rain upon the tender grass. Balaam reaped no precious fruit from his own parables, nor did Israel from the Lord's. But we may gather the fruit they so lightly esteemed and learn the things which it was the Lord's will to teach. " Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears for they hear. "

Let me stress again the great need of pondering, of seeking out, and of setting parables in order, and, following Paul's parabolic language in 2 Timothy 2. 4-7, " Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things. "

*J. M.*

"SEEDTIME AND HARVEST. "

" While the earth remaineth, " declared God to Noah, " seedtime and harvest . . . shall not cease. " So the vast annual cycle of growth, fruition and decay has continued for almost six millenniums. Men of every age have sown the seed, watched and tended the growing plant, and in due season reaped the hard earned harvest. "Doth not even nature itself teach you?" asked the Apostle, and perhaps in the divinely ordained sequence of seedtime and harvest we have a reflection of the way God often works for the fulfilment of His great spiritual purposes. Mere mortal minds, limited and impatient, crave for immediate and spectacular evidences of the development of God's plan; when the desired type of evidence is not forthcoming they all too readily leap to the conclusion that He is not overruling at all. Happy are they who, with minds subject to the Holy Spirit's guidance, can be led into the secret of His thoughts and ways, which so far transcend the highest human conception.

Let us recall the " seedtime " of the Lord's dealings with the patriarchs, leading ultimately to the fruition of His purpose to separate a people for His own possession. Genesis has aptly been called " the seed plot " of the Bible. The call of Abram, the sojournings of Isaac and Jacob, and the four centuries when the children of Israel were in Egypt, may be likened to the time when the seed lies unseen in the soil, later to shoot forth a tiny green blade. Although a man " should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. " Nor could unaided human observation readily detect the consummate skill with which God was furthering His design. Abraham must wait twenty-four years for the promised son; Isaac must know deception and sorrow in the autumn of his days; Jacob must experience fierce and varied trials throughout his sojournings; latterly the nation itself must pass through the kiln of sore affliction. How often the north wind's blast, the chilling rain, and the bitter keenness of the frost are used by the Lord of the harvest to produce the richest sheaves ! So His wise purpose was vindicated as Israel triumphantly swelled the song of Moses, and it found fuller fruition when the people were later organised for divine service.

Can we not trace a similar sequence in His purpose regarding the Church which is Christ's Body ? " Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. " The harvest in all its golden fulness is not yet seen by us. Over some twenty centuries the death of Christ has been the source of life to multitudes. His resurrection is harbinger of the mighty harvest yet to be—" Christ the Firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at His coming. " In the meantime, how silently, mysteriously, but irresistibly the growth goes on !

The parable of the tares throws light on the principle of God's working. Both the disciples and the multitude eagerly desired the open establishment of Messiah's kingdom at that time. For those privileged to understand, the Lord corrected this impression, showing that only when the harvest was ripe would the sickle of divine intervention be cast forth. Hence the otherwise inexplicable mystery of evil being tolerated by God, the sons of the evil one being allowed to pursue their activities side by side with the sons of the kingdom. " He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. " The prevalence and growth of wickedness may sometimes evoke the cry, " O Lord, how long ? " but the instructed disciple readily reposes in the assurance that "it is not for you to know times and seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. " Faith pacifies premature yearnings by trusting

wholly in the infallible wisdom of God with whom a thousand years are as one day.

Yet this confidence in the certain outworking of divine counsels should not lull us to sleep, but rather be balanced by an appreciation of the startling reality that God deigns to use human agents to further their fulfilment. The parable of the sower especially emphasises our responsibility in this. To us the incorruptible seed of the word has been committed, a sacred trust. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season." Results must be left to Him, for we are entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit's quickening power, but whatever the apparent prospects our function is to continue sowing the seed.

In our individual experience there was a seedtime and a harvest. How often the seed bears fruit only after many days, during which God may have to prepare the soil of the heart by adverse circumstances! Our sowing may appear fruitless in many cases, but perhaps at the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be glorious surprises as sheaf after sheaf is seen to have resulted. In view of that "harvest home" let us sow without ceasing regardless of ominous cloud and in spite of deterring sorrows. For we shall come again with joy, bringing our sheaves with us, since His word will prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. As diligent and patient sowers of a guaranteed harvest we can be used to help forward the infinite purposes of God.

G. P., Jun.

#### The use and Interpretation of Parables in Scripture.

From Hamilton, Ont. — "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" The Lord's answer would lead us to believe that parables in this case, as far as the multitude was concerned, were not given for illustration, for He says, "To them it is not given." [But this cannot mean that they were not given for illustration. — J. M. J. Why then did He not want them to understand? One answer might be that when He spoke to them in parables He did so in fulfilment of Psalm 78. 2, and that when they did not understand, Isaiah 6. was fulfilled. This shows us once again the importance God attaches to the fulfilment of scripture. Perhaps Matthew 13. 11 will further help: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." God had hidden in the parables mysteries of the kingdom, and just like other mysteries of the Scriptures, such as that of the Church the Body, only those who were spiritually enlightened can understand them. Another suggestion is that were the parables made plain to all, it would be like casting pearls before swine—such was the depravity of heart of the Lord's hearers.

Another thought in connection with the hidden meanings of the parables may be that "Christ did not come to bear witness of Himself." After His death the apostles did not use parables, but spoke plainly of the Christ, but when His Person was hidden in the parables, we see His humility. [Note the subject in Matthew 13. —the kingdom of heaven. It was not given to the unbelieving Jews to understand such mysteries. When Christ spoke of Himself as in John's Gospel, He spoke without the use of parables. —J. M. J. Although many parables had hidden meanings which were only for His disciples, yet some were used as a rebuke and in these cases their meaning was understood, e. g., Matthew 21. 45, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them."

Although many in the world have stumbled over the parables, those who have faith in Him are indwelt by the Spirit of God, the great Interpreter, the One who guides us into all the truth. So it seems that this is the secret of the interpretation of the parables, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2. 11).

N. McKay.

#### Divine purposes and their mode of fulfilment.

From Hereford. --The purposes of God in connection with the kingdom were very different from the popular expectations of the rabbis and leaders of the Jews at that time, for from the beginning of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom they had not understood it, had rejected it, and had soon adopted an attitude of settled hostility toward the Preacher, whom they accused of being empowered by Satan (Matthew 12. 24).

To the Pharisees and other leaders, the hope of the kingdom was of a sudden glorious appearing of the Messiah **in** divine power, to restore the kingdom to Israel; their ideas were of a national harvest of all Israel. But the early preaching of the gospel was clearly a call to individual faith and submission to the laws of the kingdom. In actual fact, this had always been God's way with men—the individual first, then the people—but the Word of God had been buried and lost **in** the mass of tradition with which generations of rabbis had hedged it around; the leaders of the Jews had forsaken the actual Scripture for the innumerable and sometimes ridiculous sayings of the rabbis, and were consumed with the ideas of the glorification of their national position **as** the chosen people of God, rather than with their personal responsibility to walk humbly before God **in** faith and obedience.

Thus it was that the seed of the kingdom fell largely upon unproductive ground, and the parables were already being fulfilled as they were being spoken. Although the earthly scenes described were familiar to all—perhaps fields of growing corn were in view as the Lord taught at the sea side in Galilee—yet the spiritual truths implied were very strange to Jewish hearers, who, because of their previous unbelief were unable to understand the parables. Not so with those who had accepted the Preacher **as** the Divine Sower, and His Word as the Seed of the Kingdom: these were they who, from an honest and good heart, received the word, understood it, and bore fruit.

If the parable from Mark 4. should be read next, it concerns only that part of the field previously designated "good ground," and shows the seed growing according to the laws of seed and soil, we know not how. The outward activity of the Sower was in the sowing, and there **is** no more to be done until the time of reaping, for it **is** God that giveth the increase. What lies between the Son of Man's labour **as** Sower, and **His** appearing as Reaper, **is** of the dispensation of the Spirit.

**Of** the parable of the tares, it **is** noticed that "the kingdom of heaven *is likened*" or *is become* like " . . . . ; tares had already been sown among the wheat, already false disciples were mixed with the true, and would later prove a temptation to the genuine sons of the kingdom (John 6. 66, 67); by bitter experience the disciples were to learn that the Devil had sown a traitor in their most intimate circle. [Note that this parable of the tares of the field does not deal with an "intimate circle," for the field **is** the world. It is not false disciples in church fellowship, but sons of the evil one in the world, who in outward appearance are like the sons of the kingdom. —J. M. ]

Deeds of enmity as here described were apparently not uncommon in the east, and according to ancient Jewish ideas the tares or darnel were a different type but hardly distinguishable from the real; poisonous, and requiring to be separated from the wheat. But the separation could not take place until the growing time was past, when the wheat would come to no harm by being uprooted in the process of gathering out the tares, which will be done first, and then will the "sons of the kingdom" shine forth in glory.

This, and the parable of the drag-net, taught the disciples that mere growth in the field or inclusion in the gospel net was not sufficient [The drag-net **is** not the gospel net, but **is** the net of divine judgment at the end of the age, when Christ shall separate the righteous from the wicked. —J. M. ] and that separation will have to take place, the bad being removed in order that the good might be manifested. So shall it be at the completion of the age: the angels shall be sent forth to separate the wicked from among the righteous, the former to be cast down to everlasting punishment, and the latter to receive a kingdom prepared for them by the Father.

*E. H. Merchant.*

**From Manchester.** —It was thought that the parables forming this month's study had a general application to all God's dealings with men, although they particularly refer to the present dispensation. For instance, the following principles have always obtained:

1. God has always required faith in **His** word, and difficulties "by the way" have hindered loyal service. (The parable of the sower.)

2. The wicked and righteous have always, in some degree, lived together. (The parable of the tares.)

3. Man plays no part in that secret work accomplished by God in a **man's** heart. (The parable of the seed growing secretly.)

If we think of the four parables together, the main theme of their teaching may be stated as divine purposes, and their mode of fulfilment in connection with the wicked and the righteous, or the unregenerate and those born from above. While this is the main theme, there is much teaching corollary to it.

We were interested to see the stress that is given in these parables to the word of God. Faith in this is vital, and emphasis is laid on it throughout scripture (e. g., 1 Peter 1. 23-25). God's purposes have been furthered by those who first receive, and then promulgate God's word. Nor do we forget that Christ was spoken of as "The Word." He was the Word incarnate.

Having discussed the subject generally, let us consider one or two points of teaching in these parables.

(a) *The Sower* (Matthew 13. 1-24).

1. The example of Christ as the Sower.

The lot of a sower of natural seed is not an easy one, but entails much labour. Years ago in eastern countries it often involved leaving the safety of a walled city to go out into the fields. The Saviour left the heights of celestial glory to sow the good seed on earth. Meditate too, on the results of His ministry. A mere handful were really loyal to Him. His followers to-day must not be discouraged if the way seems hard, or if results are small.

2. Necessary preparation if we are to serve God as sowers,

- (i) Our ears must be opened to hear.
- (ii) We must understand as helped by the Holy Spirit,
- (iii) Having heard and understood the word of God we must take God at His word and accept the Saviour provided.
- (iv) The word of God must be our continued meditation.
- (v) We need to hold fast to the thing learnt,
- (vi) Our duty to hold forth the word of life to others. •

ⓄS. Warnings to us as Christians,

- (i) The power of the Adversary is great. He will spare no pains to thwart our efforts and cause us to stumble.
- (ii) If tribulation or persecution arises are we going to stumble? Rather, shall we not endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible"? Let us see to it, that our roots are deep in the things of God.
- (iii) Do the riches and cares of this life lure us from the pathway? Surely these things should "seem strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

(b) *The Tares* (Matthew 13. 24-30).

1. When the Lord explains this parable to His disciples He says, "The good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom" (verse 38), whereas in the parable of the sower "the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8. 11). The word has done its work, and the sons of the kingdom are those whose hearts are good ground, into which the seed has fallen.

2. "While men slept" (verse 25). It is possible for us as sowers of good seed to sleep, and leave ourselves open to the malice of our adversary. Sowing of weed amongst a neighbour's field of good seed was often done out of hatred or malice. It is a common form of revenge practised in India and similar countries, even to-day.

3. Righteous and wicked have dwelt together ever since the Fall (cf. Noah's day). Satan is allowed to work his fell purpose to a measure unhindered, and he makes it his business to hinder and obstruct the purposes of God. Wherever there is something being done for God the devil is at work. Paul said, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16. 9).

4. Though there is no direct or divine intervention at present, there will be in the future. At the consummation of the age righteous and wicked will be separated\* The unsaved will suffer eternal punishment but regenerated ones will enjoy eternal happiness.

(c) *The Drag-Net* (Matthew 13. 47-50).

The teaching of this parable is similar to that of the preceding one. One slight distinction may be mentioned. In the parable of the tares the present intermixture of good and bad is emphasised. In the parable of the drag-net the future separation of good and bad is stressed.

(d) *The Seed growing secretly* (Mark 4. 26-29).

We suggest that the sower here refers to Christ, though as in the other parables it covers His followers as well. The period of verse 27 may refer to the time during which Christ makes no visible interference. He came to earth, sowed the good seed, and has ascended to heaven until the time of harvest.

Disciples of Christ also sow the good seed. They may also plant and water. God alone gives the increase. As with the natural so with the spiritual, germination rests with God. This is something outside the scope of the follower of Christ, neither can he understand it, for he "knoweth not how" (see Ecclesiastes 11. 6).

*N. L. Crabtree.*

#### EXTRACTS.

From **Wigan**. —In order to ascertain what are the divine purposes and their mode of fulfilment we have turned to the words of the Lord Jesus who, as the One with all authority in two spheres, heaven and earth, is the central Figure in them. In particular we have considered His speakings in Matthew 13. and Mark 4. As a result of our consideration we suggest that the divine purpose with mankind, broadly speaking, consists of a gigantic selective process. God knows those who are loyal to His claims and subject to His rule whether in the kingdom of God or in the kingdom of heaven. The distinction between the loyal subject and the rebel, unknown to the greater part of mankind, is made during man's life on earth. The separation then made really becomes operative in eternity, either in eternal happiness for the former (Matthew 13. 43) or eternal damnation for the latter (Matthew 13. 42 and 50).

We believe from the first parable in Matthew 13. that the one important test which will decide a man's destiny in the purposes of God, is his attitude to the word of God. We do not forget that Christ is the Living Word. It is the word, then, which is perhaps the principal instrument in God's hand for achieving His purpose. In other words we can describe it as the mode of fulfilment. The Lord Jesus most aptly illustrates this in the parable of the sower. More than anything else in the workings of man, seed-sowing is the one operation which has been performed without fail, year by year, since his creation. Do we not recall God's promise of seedtime and harvest? Just so persistent has been the work of God in bringing His word before men. And now we are keen to know what will be the response.

It is understood by all men who believe in the Divine existence that God is also the Omnipotent One. And yet the amazing feature of this is that God does not impress His wishes upon men. The will which man exercised originally in rebellion has been allowed to operate by God right through the ages, with divine intervention only on rare and necessary occasions as at the Flood and the Tower of Babel. It is the will of man, then, when faced with the word of God, which will decide his position in the divine purposes. It follows therefore, that the response to the sowing of the seed will be limited. We must emphasise, however, that all have equal opportunities. We believe that the result of the sowing will\* prove to be much greater than seemed apparent to the Lord's multitude of hearers. Indeed we suggest that only those typified in the seed sown on the hard ground will be rejected from the divine promises. To the multitude the parables of the sower and the tares indicated weakness and partial failure. But the parables told privately in the house, by the Lord to His disciples, give the divine work a different appearance. The hidden treasure and the pearl of great price can only speak of final achievement and joyful completion. How we should rejoice that we are by God's grace found in the treasure and the pearl of great price!

So far we have not referred to the distinction which the Lord makes in the telling of the parables. Some speak of the kingdom of God, whilst some are likened to the kingdom of heaven, and yet again some apply equally to both. Hitherto we have described the subject principally in relation to the kingdom of God. This phase in God's purposes will be completed by the ingathering of Christ's harvest at His coming to the air. This does not imply that there will be any change in God's great plan. The word will still be sown right unto the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven. Even though the rule of man, after that time of the saints' blessing, will be exercised directly by the Son of Man, yet mankind will still retain its own free choice and will. Open rebellion to divine authority will not, however, be tolerated. Referring to this time, the Lord does not give an incomplete picture of the position. The parable of the sower first gives the impression that circumstantial adversities are the only opposition to the seed. That which has come to fruition seems to be prospering unhindered. Now the Lord gives another picture which fundamentally alters the scene. There is other opposition in the form of a determined and cunning enemy. From the first, his hopes to overtake the good grain by the quick growing tares are dashed. Both are allowed to grow together until the harvest. Now we come to the grand climax of the divine purposes. It is at this juncture that we see one great difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. In the former (vide parable in Mark 4.) the harvest is gathered straightway. The thorns and other weeds which may be growing continue into the next phase. In the latter case as explained in the parable of the tares, and confirmed in the account of the drag-net, the bad and rejected are first taken away for eternal destruction, and only the good remains.

*J. H. Ollerton,*

**From Windermere.**—The Gospel by Matthew makes it clear that one great purpose of the Lord's ministry to the nation of Israel was that those who heard Him should enter the kingdom of heaven, that this kingdom was associated with the Lord's presence among them, and that entrance to it was by reception of Him as Messiah. Therefore the "word of the kingdom" was proclaimed by the Lord and His apostles. The word "behold" in Matthew 13. 3 calls attention to the object before the Lord and His hearers, a very homely and beautiful illustration of mowing. This parable is given the first place among the parables, and instructs us concerning the blessings of the reception of the word, and those things which frustrate the word, that it become unfruitful. These same principles are seen in the present aspect of the kingdom of God—God's purpose in grace.

In the parable of the tares in the field, we have presented an outward aspect of the kingdom. Side by side with the good seed (the children of the kingdom) sown by the Son of Man, we have the sowing of the tares, by Satan, tares being very similar to wheat until it is in the ear, but at the approach of the harvest it can be distinguished, and women and children have been seen in Palestine picking out the tall stalks. In the Lord's explanation of this parable, He throws light upon a subject that to-day puzzles many, and gives rise to the question, "Why does God not intervene?"

The parable of the drag-net indicates that the good and bad will be included in the activities of the kingdom. "When the net is full," seems to allude to the fulness of the Gentiles (Romans 11. 25).

*T. Barnett.*

**Prom Cardiff.**—To the parables of the sower and the tares, the Lord gives detailed interpretations for His disciples. It will be observed that in the former He does not define who the sower is, whereas, in the latter, He tells us that "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." - It would appear therefore that the parable of the sower not only refers to the time of the Lord's ministry and the time of the early Church, but also to present day and future day, since the sower may have several meanings. In the parable of the tares, however, the time referred to is "the end of the world," and we are immediately made to think only of that time. [The harvest is the end of the world or age, but not so the sowing and growing of the seed. —J. M. J.] Further, in this parable the scattering of the good seed is the work of the great Sower Himself, and the parable undoubtedly

takes **us** right on to the time of the Lord's coming **in** power to set up His kingdom. For this reason " the harvest " cannot refer to the taking up of the Church, but we can look upon ourselves as being the " firstfruits " of that harvest. This **is** the main lesson that **is** gleaned from **a** comparison of the two parables.

**A** point of interest **is** one regarding the interpretation of the parable of the sower. In Matthew the good seed **is** spoken of as " he that heareth the word and understandeth it "; in Mark " such as hear the word, and accept it "; **in** Luke " such **a** s . . . having heard the word, hold it fast. " This progression of hearing, understanding, accepting and holding fast, shown out by a comparison of the three accounts, not only gives us a picture of the fruit in its growth, but also proves beyond doubt the richness of meaning to be found in the parables, and **is** a manifestation of the divine inspiration of Holy Writ.

The parable of the drag-net, in some respects, **is** one of the most difficult parables to understand. Clearly, it is intimately connected with the parable of the tares. Both parables show good and bad, side by side at first, and then divided; both were explained by the Lord in the words, "So shall it be at the end of the world "; both describe the doom of the wicked, the " fire where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. "

The parable of the mysterious growth of seed **is** only to be found in Mark, and this **is** significant, for the parables **in** Mark are suited to the revelation which **is** there given to us of the Lord Jesus as Servant of Jehovah. This particular parable exhibits, primarily, the Lord Jesus in the place of service and not of authority, for it **is** He Himself who, at the first, **is** the Sower, and, at the end, the Reaper. The prominent lesson **is** the absence of the owner from his field, until the time of harvest, and until such time he " waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it. " The seed **is** good, the soil good, and a good harvest **is** expected, but time and patience are required before it can be reaped. The seed sprang up, the sower not knowing how, and not being able to do anything towards hurrying on the harvest, and so it **is** equally vain for us to have any anxiety regarding the fruits of our sowing for Him, since God Himself and God alone will give the increase.

*Martin D. Follett.*

**From** Aberfan. —There are many parables which speak most significantly of the death of the Lord Jesus. The analogy **is** quite clear in such parables as the seed that fell into the ground and died, and brought forth fruit abundantly (John 12. 24); the husbandmen and the heir to the vineyard (Matthew 21. 33-41); the lost sheep (Luke 15. ); and the Good Shepherd who laid down **His** life for the sheep (John 10. ). These parables bring before us the death of the Lord Jesus in several aspects. From Matthew 21. we infer that God's purposes were, even as was fulfilled, that the Lord Jesus would be cruelly murdered at the hands of those who ought to have been His friends. Also from the parable of the Good Shepherd we learn that the Lord Jesus laid down **His** life of **His** own volition, and that by His death He would gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. In such a parable as that of the Good Samaritan, where the allusion **is** more obscure, we learn of the great sacrifice the Lord Jesus made, of **His** despising by those who were **His** own kindred.

In the parable of the tares (Matthew 13. 24-30), the tares are taken from the wheat, and not vice versa. This seems to indicate that the wheat does not refer to saved of this dispensation, for at the Lord's coming to the air they will be taken from the world. Thus the wheat refers to those who are faithful to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ after the Lord's coming to the air. Also in the parable we note that after the good seed had been sown, the men slept. This would suggest a period such as the present, when the leaders of the Jews are occupied in the fleeting things of this life, and **as** far as the truth of God **is** concerned they are asleep. [If as our friends say the wheat does not represent the saved of the present dispensation, how does the period of when men slept suggest the present, for that time comes in between the time when the seed was sown and the field reaped? Surely there is some continuity between the sowing and the reaping. Moreover the Lord says when men slept, not when the Jews slept. Note, too, that the field **is** the world. —J. M. ]. When they awake they find that the enemy

has already wrought his evil work, and marred the work of the Lord. The Lord of the field, *i. e.*, the Son of man, forbids the men to pull up the tares lest they uproot the wheat also and bids them leave both to grow together. Thus the wheat has to contend with the tares for its nourishment from the ground. The struggle for existence is a difficult one for the wheat, and may be compared to the tribulation through which God's people will pass. Those who are able to endure to the end are, at last, saved by the sickle of the Lord of the harvest, who gathers up the tares first, and burns them. Then the wheat is gathered, and after being threshed (signifying judgment), it is gathered into the barn. *Reg. Jones.*

**From Kilmarnock.** —Although the sowing of the seed can apply to the preaching of the gospel to the unsaved, we think it is here as the "word of the kingdom" (Mark 4. 10, 11) to disciples in the present dispensation. According to John 3. 5 no one can see the kingdom of God except they are born again. The Lord mentions four conditions of the hearers of the word. The "good ground" hearers show a preparation of the soil before the sowing of the seed, a very necessary work, which, we think, typifies the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, resulting in fruit being borne. It requires the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit for saints to see (or perceive) the present sphere of God's rule in the "Fellowship of His Son."

In the explanation of the parable of the tares in Matthew 13. 37, etc., we note the Sower is the Son of Man and the field is the world. We therefore conclude that its application is to the kingdom of heaven with the nation of Israel on earth, after the rapture of the Church. While the Jewish nation will have a place in the land of Palestine, many of them will be unbelievers and these will be purged ere the Son of Man sets up His kingdom. Malachi 4. 1 would seem to refer to that time.

We think the drag-net might be likened to the flying angel of Revelation 14. 6, as he proclaims the eternal gospel to all nations that dwell on the earth, thus giving them the opportunity to "fear God" and "worship Him." [I should say that the drag-net described the judgment of the world by the Son of Man. —  
J. M. J. A. G. S.]

**From Birkenhead.** —The four parables under discussion appeared to us to have no similarity which is common to all. There is an essential difference between the parable of the sower and the parable of the tares and, it is suggested, there is an essential difference between the latter and the parable of the drag-net.

The principle of sowing and waiting for the harvest is present in the first two of the three parables in Matthew, and in the parable in Mark, but the figure of the drag-net does not resemble the others except for the separation of good and bad mentioned in the parable of the tares. The parable in Mark is similar to the parable of the sower in the absence of mention of the final judgment and in the elements of illustration.

In the parable of the tares there are many things which can be inferred although not deliberately indicated. The decision of God, when evil first sprang up in His kingdom, was not to destroy the evil immediately as He had done at the Flood, but to allow it to exist amongst the good until the day in the future when the reapers will go into the field and gather all the unfruitful things to destruction. [Was not God's method of working in antediluvian times strikingly parallel to that illustrated in the parable of the tares; to let good and evil continue side by side until His time was ripe for summary judgment?]

The parable of the drag-net is essentially different from the parable of the tares in that what is involved in the sowing of the seed is absent from the figure. It was suggested that this was a deliberate omission and that the separation of the good fish and the bad was a reference to the time mentioned in Romans 2., when the heathen will be judged by the standards God has set. [The parable of the drag-net shows a phase of the kingdom of Heaven, which is heaven's rule upon the earth. When the judgment of Romans 2. takes place (the Great White Throne judgment), the earth and heaven will then have fled from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. My understanding of the drag-net is that it is the same judgment as is indicated in that of the tares and the wheat. —J. M. J. There has been always a

large section of humanity, the major portion in fact, which was never sown with the seed of the gospel or knew anything of God save through Creation. Yet there is a divine standard by which each will stand or fall in the coming judgment and the **figure** of the drag-net suits exactly the little we know of their position. **L. B. H.**

**From Atherton.** —It is most important to observe at least five major points regarding the subject of divine purposes. (1) They are eternal in character. This is clearly emphasized in connection with the redeemed of this present dispensation. 2 Timothy 1. 9 reads, "Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal" (see also Ephesians 3. 9-11). (2) They are changeless. With God there is no change of mind; "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance" (or change of mind) (Romans 11. 29; Isaiah 14. 24; and 46. 9-11). (3) They are unaltered and unaffected by angels, men, or demons. [It is difficult to know what our friends mean that God's purposes are unaffected by angels, men or demons. Take for instance such a statement as that of Samuel to Saul: "For now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Samuel 13. 13, 14). Surely God's purpose in Saul was affected by Saul's disobedience. Though disobedience cannot thwart God's purposes, yet surely His purposes are affected by disobedience. —J. M. J. Proud Nebuchadnezzar was made to confess, "None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4. 35). Job, at the end of his supreme trial, was caused to say, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained" (Job 42. 2).] (4) The Son was sent with the message from God. He came primarily with a message to Israel, though the word of God through His Son has a voice for all men (Hebrews 1. 1, 2). (5) In the purpose of God we see man's side of the matter, that is, human privilege as well as responsibility, with regard to the message sent from God and given by the Son. God demands that men should hear His word, —acceptance bringing divine blessing, and rejection incurring divine judgment. We also see the extensive character of divine purpose, in the mention oftentimes of the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven.

67. Sankey.

**From Ilford.** —The purposes of God in these four parables is clear and unmistakable. From the first parable it is God's object to have a kingdom, and as is obvious a kingdom presupposes a ruler and subjects. The ruler has already been chosen, but subjects also are needed. Men and women, boys and girls can become such by simple trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. But God's purposes do not end in salvation, which is just a beginning. He saves us for a purpose, and the main object is that of fruit-bearing. He desires that we should make headway in spiritual things, as it were first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. This indicates the steady growth which God desires to see in each one who has accepted Him as his Saviour. If this growth takes place then only one thing can result and that is the bearing of fruit. This appears to be the purpose of God with individuals.

E. H. Jarvis.

**From Glasgow.** —In our consideration of this month's study we were forcibly reminded of the words of the Preacher who wrote, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3. 1). We could not do better than to connect this truth in relation to the Lord's parables which He spake under the heaven amongst men, because He told them at the right season and in them were divine purposes to be learned. We believe that all the parables were spoken primarily to the Jewish nation [Surely this is an overstatement, that all parables were spoken to the Jewish nation. —J. M.] albeit many divine principles can be taken from them for God's people to-day. The first parable spoken by the Lord, we judge, speaks more of the general character of the men who in different states of heart heard the word of God, whereas the other ones speak of the truths and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven or God. In the parable of the tares we see the development or mode of fulfilment of the kingdom of heaven which goes right on to the consummation of the age. Then the harvest is ready for

reaping, so God sends **His** angels the reapers to gather all that cause stumbling **in** His kingdom. Afterwards the wheat shall be gathered into His barn, speaking to us of the righteous who shall shine **as** the brightness of the stars of heaven (Daniel 12. 3; Matthew 13. 42, 43).

In the parable concerning the seed that was cast upon the earth, its growth being hid from the eyes of men, is illustrated **the** manner of fulfilment of the kingdom of heaven or God. [The kingdom of heaven **is** not the kingdom of God. There are points of similarity **in** each, hence they can **be** shown under the figure of the same parable, but their dissimilarity **is** seen in the parables which are used to illustrate the one, but are not and cannot be used to describe the other. Many diverse things have points of similarity, but it **is** in their diversity that we **see** the difference. So **is** it with these two kingdoms. —J. M. J. This **is** never understood by the natural eyes because the natural man beholdeth not the things of God. Yet although such **is** the case, it **is** openly manifested **in** its own season for there **is** nothing hid that shall not be made manifest, neither **is** there anything made secret but that it should come to light. Therefore we see, that what the Lord told His disciples privately, they in later days openly spake that all might come to the kingdom.]

*Fred Harvey.*

**From** Edinburgh. —In many of the Lord's parables, as **in** other parts of Scripture, God's purposes are likened unto the fruit of the ground, and their stages of fulfilment to the stages of development of the fruit of the ground, *e. g.*, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." **As** there are times and seasons for development in plant life, so there are times and seasons for the fulfilment of God's purposes concerning individuals, concerning **His** people, and concerning the nations of the world. "To everything there **is** a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3. 1).

The Lord Jesus, **in** the parable of the sower, likens the preacher of the word to the sower, the word of God to seed, and the hearts of men to the ground into which the seed falls. The seed is good, but it must be sown **in** season. It must be sown faithfully and in faith. There are, of course, different kinds of soil, and there are various adverse influences which prevent the bearing of lasting fruit in many hearts. Therefore do we find in the world all the different types of people spoken of in this parable and in its interpretation. All these, living together in the world, are fulfilling God's purposes.

In Mark 4. 26-29 the Lord Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, likening those within it to seed sown on the earth. The seed springs up and grows, the earth bearing fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. This, we suggest, depicts the different stages of development in spiritual life, the child, the young man, the father. It is God's desire that we should pass through these stages of growth (see Hebrews 5. 12-14). At whatever stage of development each one of us may be we ought all to work together to God's glory, each taking his part in the fulfilment of God's purpose. In this connection also there comes **a** time when the fruit is ripe, and the sickle **is** sent forth to reap.

*Joseph Lang.*

**From** Leicester. —Six of the seven parables found **in** Matthew 13. are divinely described as similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. The opening phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto" has a more literal interpretation, "The kingdom of heaven has become like," and suggests that **a** change has been effected by Christ's arrival on earth. It **is** evident that to the true sons of the kingdom it is eventually manifest that tares have been sown amongst the wheat. But the separating of the good and the bad must be postponed until the harvest, which time **is** generally believed to be just prior to the commencement of the Millennium. This does not **mean** that in church capacity they can have fellowship, for such an evil blend was not contemplated by the Lord.

*L. C. S.*

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

### EXTRACTS.

#### Divine Purposes **and** their Mode of Fulfilment.

From Hamilton, Ont. —The Lord Jesus uttered things hidden from the foundation of the world, and unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom, making known the divine purposes of present and future dispensations. We see all God's purposes and promises centred in Christ.

Paul spoke also of the dispensation of the grace of God, which by revelation was made known to him. The mystery of Christ, which in other generations **was** hidden, is now revealed in the Spirit, and it was given to Paul to bring to light what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages had been hidden in God, even the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3. 1-3).

No doubt hidden in the parables under consideration is the mystery of Christ, the mystery of godliness, and also the mystery of iniquity or lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2. 7). Can it be said of us, " Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear " ?

While the parables deal primarily with Israel's history, yet there are many precious truths and lessons embodied in them for us. It may be that Matthew 13. compasses the period of time from and embracing the present day of grace to the appearing and presence of the " Son of Man " to take up His kingdom and reign.

In Mark 4. 26-29 we have the parable of the growth of the seed used as an illustration of the kingdom of God or the rule of God upon the earth, and here we see the mode of fulfilment of divine purposes.

In this parable also we have a beautiful example of spiritual growth, that which God desires should be manifest in our lives. There are various stages of growth, but no matter how advanced we may be, there is still room for further growth, " till we attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ " (Ephesians 4. 13).

*Thomas Ramage, Lewis Mercer.*

**From London, S. E.** —Historically, the Lord's parables may be divided into three distinct groups: —

- (a) The seven in Matthew 13. form, in themselves, a complete representation of the various relations of the kingdom.
- (b) Those in the second group are less theocratic and more peculiarly represent Christ's sympathy with all men, and their consequent duties toward God and men, *e. g.*, the two debtors, the good Samaritan, the friend at midnight.
- (c) Toward the close of His ministry, the Lord resumes the theocratic parables, dwelling on the final consummation of the kingdom, *e. g.*, the ten virgins, sheep and goats, talents.

Matthew, being the "kingdom evangelist" has the largest number of the first and third group, and Luke includes many of the second. Mark, the Gospel of Jesus' acts, has less parables than the other Synoptic Gospels, whilst John, "who soars highest, has no parable strictly so called, having reached that close communion with the Lord wherein parables have no place." [True, the word *parabole* is not used, but John 10. 6, 16, 25, 29 are significant, and there is much figurative teaching in John. —J. M.]

The parable of the sower represents the relations of different classes with regard to God's word, and in the perfect prophetic series, deals with the seedtime. Its universal message is stressed by its inclusion in all three Synoptic Gospels, being omitted only by John. The Lord's explanation gives a key for interpreting other parables; "there is one leading thought round which as centre the subordinate parts must group themselves." The varied details are accessories (birds, thorns, etc.) and they must fit in to the main line of truth.

The parable of the tares represents the position of mankind relatively to Satan's kingdom and emphasises the secret growth of corruptions. Being a typically kingdom parable, it is confined to Matthew. In scripture, wheat ("the good seed") is a figure of the righteous, "the sons of the kingdom." (Incidentally, "teben" or "crushed straw" is as uniformly a figure of the wicked. Psalm 1. 4.) The word translated "tares" or "darnel" seems to be what the Arabs call zowan, a tall strong-growing grass, which cannot be distinguished, so as to weed it out, till its ears are formed. Its root, too, so intertwines with that of the wheat that the farmer cannot separate them without plucking up both. Thus wheat and bearded darnel must grow together till the harvest; none but the Lord of the Harvest can distinguish the seeming from the real; His judgment is inexorable and final.

This mingled state of good and bad continues to the end, as is seen in the parable of the drag-net; in fact, there are so many similarities between the two parables that it leads one to suggest that in the parable of the tares we have evil in the organised human society (the settled earth) whilst in the parable of the drag-net we have evil in society in its restless, turbulent nature (the troubled sea). [In these parables we have evil persons, not evil things. —J. M.]

Mark, the especial record of Jesus' serving acts, has few parables, but alone has the parable of the corn's silent and mysterious growth. Seedtime and harvest remain in the spiritual sphere, as in the natural.

From these four parables, three fundamental principles emerge: —

- (a) God expects growth, progress and continuity.
- (b) He has very definite purposes for this world; these purposes reveal themselves in a process of growth and are uniquely bound up with His Son.
- (c) In their fulfilment, the divine purposes expect man to take a share, but it is the desire of the Adversary to frustrate God's plan by alienating him from God. For this alienation, both Satan and man are eternally accountable.

The following comparative table of the Parable of the Sower is interesting:

	Matthew.	Mark,	Luke,
1.	the word of the kingdom	the word	the word of God.
2.	wicked one	Satan	the devil,
8.	stony places	stony ground	on the rock,
4.	anon with joy	immediately with gladness.	with joy.
5.	tribulation or persecution	affliction or persecution	temptation,
6.	cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches	cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things.	cares and riches, and pleasures of this life.
7.	understandeth it	receive it	keep it.
8.	beareth fruit, and bringeth forth.	bring forth fruit	bring forth fruit with patience.

### Further Mysteries of the Kingdom.

**From Edinburgh.** —The parable of the mustard seed brings to **mind** several Old Testament prophecies which speak of the place Israel will occupy among the nations during the Millennium. Among these is Isaiah 60. 22: "The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in its time." In many of these prophecies the language used is similar to that used in this parable; e. g., Hosea 2. 22, 23, where we find the name "Jezebel," i. e., "whom God soweth," following which we find the words: "I will sow her unto me in the earth." In chapter 1. 10 we read that the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured nor numbered. See also Ezekiel 36. 9-11, Isaiah 26. 15. In Isaiah 61. 9, God says, "Their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed."

That which is spoken of in Isaiah 2. 2 appears to answer to the birds which lodge in the branches of the tree. "The mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths."

The leaven hidden in the three measures of meal till it was all leavened seems to show the effect God intends His kingdom to have upon the nations of the earth. It brings to mind God's words to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22. 18). These words are cited in Acts 3. 25, and in verse 26 the following statement is added, "Unto you first God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

In verse 44 an entirely different aspect of the kingdom is shown. The field we suggest, is the world, and the treasure the redeemed of the Lord whom He foreknew.

The parable in verses 45, 46, was thought to have a similar interpretation.

*John A. H. Robertson.*

**From Southport.** —It was noticed that in Matthew 13. the seed was sown in the field, but in Luke's Gospel the seed was sown in the garden. God has made a difference between the field and the garden. In Genesis it is written of the "beast of the field" and also of "any tree of the garden" (Genesis 3. 1). If field has the same interpretation in this as in the previous parable, then it is the world. It is understood that the kingdom of heaven extends throughout all the earth. The kingdom of God includes the Churches of God and Paul says, "Ye are God's husbandry" or God's tilled land (1 Corinthians 3. 9). This illustrates the difference between the two kingdoms. The kingdom of heaven will grow from the work of John the Baptist (Matthew 3. 2), the Lord Jesus Christ and others to a mighty kingdom.

Leaven is usually considered to be evil; in this parable all is leavened. Now the kingdom of heaven is certainly not totally evil. Hence it would appear as if leaven stands in this case for something which is not evil. The kingdom of heaven fills the whole earth. It will be remembered that the stone cut without hands, spoken of by Daniel, "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2. 35).

Again it is understood that the field is the world, in the parable of the treasure. The field was bought in order that the treasure hidden therein might be purchased. He left His glory and came down to the cross to save all. The redemptive power of the Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient to save all, for He gave "Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2. 6). Not all received Him, but the few, His treasure, did not reject Him. These we take to mean the Old Testament saints, the saints of this dispensation and those that worship not the beast, for He died for all. It was suggested that the saints of this dispensation might not be included in His treasure as they were dealt with in the next parable, as the pearl of great price, but no satisfactory reason was found. Help on this point would be appreciated. [See suggestion in answer to question from Yeovil.]

The merchant **was** seeking goodly pearls and he sold all to obtain the one. The pearl **is** formed **by** the presence of **a** grain of sand in the shell of the oyster. This pains the creature, so it coats the sand with **a** substance, which forms **a** protective covering of layer after layer of beautiful pearl. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered pain and anguish on the cross, in order that the Church the Body of Christ might **be made** beautiful, through His pain and agony. [If the merchant typifies the Lord Jesus and the pearl the Church, this analogy from the formation of the pearl can hardly obtain. —G. P., Jr. ] *M. A. Sands, W. S. Holden.*

### EXTRACTS.

From Liverpool. —It seemed to **us** that there can **be** so many fanciful and strained interpretations of the details of the parables that it is **better** to **keep** to broad outlines. The disciples were simple folk (" **babes**," Matthew 11. 25) and it is doubtful if more than **a** broad meaning **was** understood by them.

Regarding the parable of the mustard seed, **we** thought there **was** adequate ground for regarding " the man " **as** the Lord Himself. There **was** first the Lord's explanation of the sower going forth to sow, and then such scriptures **as** Hebrews 1. 2\*; also in Hebrews 2. 3, the **message** of salvation " having **at** the first been spoken through the Lord. " **He** sowed the nucleus of **His** kingdom (disciples **subject** in heart to heavenly rule) in the field which **was** the world, and **as** the full-grown tree bears no resemblance in **size** to the grain of mustard seed, so the kingdom of heaven in its consummation is **a** marvellous outcome of that small and seemingly weak and frustrated effort of the Sower of Galilee.

**We** noted that similar imagery is given in Ezekiel 3. and Daniel 4., and that in Daniel's interpretation no meaning is developed from the detail that " the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the branches thereof. " **We** therefore thought that in the parable under notice it would **be better** not to seek any further meaning in this phrase than that it indicates the **size** and permanence of the\* tree in question.

In the next parable **we** believe " leaven " is **used** in **a** good and beneficial sense, somewhat corresponding, **we** take it, to the sense in which **we** find it **used** on the **day** of Pentecost (Leviticus 23. 17). On this occasion " leavened loaves " were **used** for firstfruits unto the Lord. Leaven is **used** **as** typifying evil in the Passover (see 1 Corinthians 5. 8), where it is **a** symbol of malice and wickedness, **but** **we** cannot think that the influence of the kingdom of heaven could **be** anything else **but** good. **We** gather that the outworking of the kingdom should **permeate** the sphere in which God has **set** it up; that **we** should, individually and collectively, influence those around for good. And finally the whole becomes leavened, **by** which, **we** judge the parable points **us** on to the Millennium when the whole earth shall **be** full of **His** glory.

From Manchester. —In the parable of Matthew 13. 31, 32, the grain of mustard seed is likened unto the kingdom of heaven. The **mustard** seed is very small, and is described in the Scriptures **as** the least of all seeds. When **a** mustard seed is taken and sown in good soil, by some mysterious working it gradually springs up into quite **a** large tree. This is **a** picture of **a** small, even negligible thing, being taken and by some mysterious working becoming great. It is **suggested** that this **is** the working of the Holy Spirit, and that if God chooses, **He** can take **a** person and by the Holy Spirit working in that person, the **same** can **be** made great and mighty for the **use** and to the glory of God, *e. g.*, Abraham **was** taken by God and through him arose the great people Israel, while David **was** once **a** shepherd boy, **but** **became** king of Israel. The **greatest** example of all is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who **became** **as** a little **Babe**, was poor and despised by many **but** through His work has arisen the Church the Body.

In the parable of the leaven\* some seemed to think that the leaven speaks of the evil which has marred the -development of God's rule on earth and will in time spread throughout the whole world. They gather this from the **fact** that wherever leaven is spoken of in the Scriptures, it is always **a** symbol of evil. The general opinion is that the leaven mentioned in this parable speaks of the work of God in the beginning of this dispensation. Leaven, **as** is generally known, spreads in **a** quiet, unnoticeable, **but** sure and steady manner. It also penetrates or permeates throughout the whole, so that all becomes leavened. Now, the Holy Spirit's work

in the beginning is likened unto the leaven, and by some mysterious but sure means the number of believers has been multiplied down the ages. Thus, in the early churches it spread from Jerusalem to Judaea, Samaria, Syria, Asia Minor and Europe. In modern times the Gospel has been preached in most parts of the world, but the whole will not be leavened until Christ's kingdom is established.

*S. Hardman.*

From **Cardiff**. —What mystery of the kingdom does the mustard seed represent? Assyria in Ezekiel 31. 3, and Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. 20-22, are compared to great spreading trees, but the growth of the mustard seed is quite unusual. Its fruit, a little pungent seed, is not nourishing, but very attractive to birds of the air. In the parable of the sower the birds of the air are represented as the "evil one" in Matthew, "Satan" in Mark, "the devil" in Luke, and it is probable that they have the same significance in this parable. [It seems to me there is a clear parallel between what is said of the tree which grew from the mustard seed, in whose branches the birds lodged, and what is said of Nebuchadnezzar, who is figuratively seen as a great tree, in whose branches the fowls of the heaven dwelt. I cannot see that there is in the parable any representation in the birds of Satan, or that the birds came to feed on the seed of the mustard tree. Whatever is made out by the beasts and birds in Daniel 4. 12, 14, 21 the same must, I judge, be true of the birds in the parable of the mustard seed. These I judge are the peoples who come under the rule of the kingdom of heaven. —J. M. ]

It is thought that the parable of the leavened meal represents the spread of evil. [It should be carefully noted that the kingdom of God is likened unto leaven as is the kingdom of heaven (see Luke 13. 20, 21). Surely the kingdom of God is not evil. The leaven permeates all the three measures of meal indicating the spreading of the kingdom of God. I cannot see that leaven in these parables symbolizes evil. —J. M. ] Leaven was to the Jews a symbol of evil and as such had to be put out of their homes at the time of the Passover, that they might keep the feast of unleavened bread. The Lord emphasised the evil significance of leaven by warning His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians and Paul used the same simile to denote evil doctrine (Galatians 5. 9) and evil walk (1 Corinthians 5. 6). It is, moreover, interesting to note that our Lord named the quantity of meal as "three measures." A "measure" was the third part of an ephah and therefore three measures were equal to an ephah. This amount was offered as a meal offering by Gideon (Judges 6. 18, 19) and by Hannah (1 Samuel 1. 24), and God distinctly commanded, "No meal offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven" (Leviticus 2. 11). In this parable therefore the woman is doing something which God prohibits, and we have a picture of the Jews, who added to the law many of their own doctrines and principles. [We might almost think from what our friends say that for a woman to put leaven in meal was an evil thing, which it, of course, was not. The Israelites ate unleavened bread once in the year, in the feast of the unleavened bread, which commenced with the Passover. All the rest of the year the Israelites ate leavened bread. Indeed, the two loaves of the new harvest which were offered at Pentecost were baked with leaven, specifically so by divine command. Moreover the Jews adding to the law the traditions of the elders has nothing whatever to do, according to my judgment, with the parable of a woman putting leaven in the three measures of meal. She was doing a perfectly lawful thing. —J. M. ] This interpretation is supported by the fact that a woman, in Scripture, speaks often of a system or people (see Revelation 17. ), and it should be remembered that the kingdom is not likened unto leaven only, - but to the whole incident of the parable. The parable of the mustard seed describes the abnormal outward growth of the branches; and the parable of the leavened meal the inward permeating of evil that finally exterminates all presence of any good.

*Martin D. Follett.*

From **Ilford**. —The growth of the mustard seed is used to show the remarkable growth of the kingdom of heaven since the time of the early disciples. In actual fact, the seed is the message concerning Christ, and from this has sprung the whole of the effect of the gospel in all countries in all ages. The significance of the birds was doubtful, it being suggested on the one hand that they symbolized all those who found shelter in the spheres of the kingdom.

The mode of leaven affecting the whole loaf into which it is introduced is used to illustrate another aspect of the growth of the kingdom of heaven. The effect of leaven is essentially hidden and powerful. So with the kingdom of heaven its growth is internal, hidden and of considerable force and effect. The simile of a small quantity affecting a large amount also shows the small beginnings of the kingdom at first in Palestine and its eventual world-wide effect in the future.

*A. S. Glover.*

From Yeovil. —The grain of mustard seed is remarkably small, in fact, the smallest of all seeds man planted in his field. But when it had grown it was greater than all herbs, and became a tree, so that birds could lodge in its branches. This implies that the kingdom of heaven may be small (or is small) at the beginning. The man planted the mustard seed in his field, suggesting that the place in which Christ plants His kingdom is His own (see Psalm 24. 1, 2; Ezekiel 21. 27; Revelation 11. 15), and although having a small beginning it will fill the whole earth. "For He shall have dominion from the river unto the" ends of the earth, and all nations shall serve Him" (see also Psalm 2. 8 and Daniel 7. 13, 14); but there will be in it evil men as represented by the birds of the air. These Christ will gather out from His kingdom even all things that offend (see Matthew 25. 31-34, 41). [See note in paper from Cardiff. ]

The parable of the treasure hidden in the field implies that the kingdom of heaven is hidden, and is also of great value, and of great advantage to those who make it their own. But it needs enlightened eyes to find, as the Lord said in verse 16 of Matthew 13., "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." As the man who found the treasure in the field, sold all that he had, and bought the field, it suggests that those who know the truth of the kingdom of heaven will relinquish the things which the world values; for the treasure he has found is worth more than one can possess in the world. The parable of the merchant is to the same purpose as the parable of the hidden treasure. As one has said, "The parable is thus doubled for the things are certain."

*S. J. Jarvis.*

**From London.** —The two parables included in this subject are closely connected, the one being the parable of the grain of mustard seed and the other the parable of the leaven. The Lord said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Peter was the one who opened the door of the gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles in Acts 10.

Seeing the Lord spake of faith as a grain of mustard seed, a person must exercise faith in the gospel before he forms part of the kingdom of heaven. [There is no necessary connexion between faith and the kingdom of heaven because both are shown under the same figure of the mustard seed. If only such as have believed are in the kingdom of heaven, what of the parable of the tares of the field? What indeed is the kingdom of heaven? Can it be defined? To attempt to do this will prove a corrective to the many specious interpretations of the parables of the kingdom of heaven. —J. M. J.] The grain of mustard seed which is small when sown shows that the Gospel began in a humble way with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, then with twelve men as His disciples in Palestine. It will grow until in heaven there will be a great multitude which no man could number out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the Lamb.

The second parable of the leaven expresses something that starts working in small degree and will ultimately permeate the whole.. Although leaven in the Scriptures often speaks of evil, it does not follow because leaven is used parabolically it infers that which is evil. The leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal speaks of the extension of the kingdom of heaven by the proclamation of the gospel of Christ in three periods of time. Firstly the gospel to the Jewish nation during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to the time of the cross. "Secondly the gospel to Jew and Gentile until the Lord's coming to the air for His saints.. Thirdly the gospel proclaimed during the great tribulation until, the Millennium, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; as the parable says until it is all leavened. The growth of the

kingdom of heaven **is** due to the work of the Holy Spirit who **is in** the world convicting **men** of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; and **as** the leaven leavened the whole three measures of meal, so the light of the gospel will shine **in** all the dark places of the earth until God's vast creation will raise one harmonious song of praise in the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Wm. F. Shulver.*

**From Hereford.** —The first thing that one notices in considering the four parables before us **is** that the scene changes after the first two; the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are spoken to the multitude; the hidden treasure and the pearl to the disciples (Matthew 13. 36).

The first two show the development and final greatness of the kingdom as contrasted with its minute beginning. The parable of the mustard seed seems to show the extensiveness, and the leaven the intensiveness of its power. The fact that the seed of the mustard plant was the smallest of seeds was well known. Likewise the fact that " \* when it **is** grown, it **is** greater than the herbs. " A tree with wide-spreading branches, affording a lodging place for the birds of the heaven, was a familiar Old Testament figure for a mighty kingdom that gave shelter to the nations. (Ezekiel 31. 6, 12; Daniel 4. 12, 14, 21, 22).

The parable of the leaven **is** one where the interpreter should guard against losing sight of the main object. The picture conveyed is that of the common process of everyday life. **We** would suggest that the paramount feature **is** not the significance of three measures, or leaven, but the intensive working of the leaven.

After hearing the interpretation of the parables of the sower and the tares, the disciples had brought before them the priceless value of the kingdom, **in** the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl. The points that are common to these two parables are the supreme value of the kingdom, the consequent desire to acquire it, and the necessity of parting with all else for this purpose (see Philipians 3. 7-9).

*Robert Tidmas.*

**From Leicester.** —" Mysteries " are the result of direct revelation to the heart from God, because naturally we cannot understand spiritual truths. Whilst, therefore, these things take place in the kingdom of heaven, they only become real and are understood by those who yield to the divine claims and are thereby brought into the kingdom of God.

The mustard tree is known to attain considerable height in Palestine and sub-tropical countries, and it **is** not to be confused with the mustard plant with which we are familiar. The pungency of the seed pervades the whole plant and suggests the thought of " zeal " and calls to mind **Him** who said, " The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up. " Also the seed derived from one mustard tree **is** sufficient to sow a whole field, and perhaps this emphasises the truth that the resources of the kingdom are more than abundant to supply the need of the world (the field).

The teaching of the parable of the leaven we found difficult to interpret. It was noted that the word says, " like unto leaven, " and we tend to the view that it points to the secret workings of God rather than, **as** usual in scripture, typifying evil. The action of leaven **is** internal and not external, and so the work of the kingdom continues unseen by the world yet kept alive by the inner workings of the Spirit of God.

The key to the parables of verses 44 to 46, we believe, **is** contained in the statement, " **He** sold all that he had, " and we feel that this speaks of the Lord (the purchase price, 1 Peter 1. 18, 19). In the first of the two parables, we are told the treasure was found and hidden and remained so until the price had been paid. Another suggestion was that the treasure speaks of Israel and the pearl typifies the Church the Body of Christ. Israel was found by God in the early history of men, **is** now hidden, but yet will be revealed and associated with the glory of the millennial kingdom of heaven, but the pearl has been purchased and possessed. [**We** should remember " they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, " and, " it **is** not the children of the flesh that are children of God. " I do not think this explanation of Israel as the treasure **is** correct. —J. M. ], *D. McC., L. C. S.*

**From Kilmarnock.** —Acts 20, 29, 30 and 2 Timothy 2, 17, 18 both show that the Apostle saw, even in his day, the working of the leaven (evil doctrine) which will culminate in "Babylon the Great" of Revelation 17. and 18. [see note in Cardiff's paper. ] While Christ refused Satan's offer of the " kingdoms of the world, " these shall yet be His as part of the " hidden treasure in the field " purchased by His blood (Revelation 11. 15).

The " pearl of great price" beautifully illustrates the " Church which is His Body " of this dispensation, which He will present to Himself, a " glorious Church " as Ephesians 5. sets forth.

It is significant that the Lord used the figure of a pearl, which is extremely valuable, and illustrates the preciousness of the Church to Him. A. G. S.

**From Glasgow.** —In discussing the parable of the mustard seed we first of all were reminded of Israel in a past day being the smallest of all nations, yet God chose them to be a kingdom for a testimony unto the nations round about them. Although the parable has its present-day aspect, we think it has its fuller meaning in Israel in a later day, even as the Lord could say, " Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. " The kingdom of heaven in that day will be established on earth when the kingdom will be restored to Israel as a nation. The kingdom will be so enlarged that the Gentile nations will partake of the blessing. The tree therefore speaks of Israel and it may be that we could say that its origin is traced back to Abraham when we compare such a scripture as Luke 13. 18, 19. [Note, it is not Israel that is like a mustard seed, but the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed. What is the kingdom of heaven ?—J. M. ]

When we come to the parable of the hidden treasure we find that this also is seen in Israel, for God found them in Egypt and they became a peculiar treasure unto Himself, but to-day because of their rejection of their Messiah they are seen again as a hidden treasure in the world. [See note in paper from Leicester. ] In a day to come they will be found again when God shall deliver the remnant from the great tribulation (see Revelation 7. 4-8).

Some thought that the pearl of great price spoke of the vast company of 144 thousand who are redeemed from the great tribulation, when Isaiah 53. 4 will have its fulfilment. Others thought that the primary meaning was of the Church which is His body. *Jas: Gartshore, Fred Harvey.*

**From Windermere.** —One of the salient points of the parable of the mustard seed is the comparison of the smallness of the seed with the largeness of the tree that grew therefrom. If consideration is given to the smallness of the kingdom of heaven when the King was present upon the earth, and then we remember the words of the angel in Luke 1. 32, 33, we see how gloriously this truth is illustrated. Matthew 12. 18-21 speaks of a victory achieved by a glorious Victor, who shall not strive nor cry aloud, until the victory is accomplished and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2. 14).

From the parable of the treasure we learned that the kingdom of God will not be discovered by observation. Its importance and value are discovered by searching the Scriptures. The Lord has promised that those who seek shall find, and the finder, in the great joy of his discovery, esteems the kingdom of heaven so highly that everything he has is disposed of that he may obtain the treasure. In the words of the Master, he seeks first the kingdom of God and all things will be added (Matthew 6. 33). [The subject in Matthew 13. is the kingdom of heaven not the kingdom of God. —J. M. ]

The man seeking goodly pearls speaks of a person who findeth one of great price, and in contrast to certain of Israel who priced the Son of Man at thirty pieces of silver, he sells all that he has and buys it. Like Paul he counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord (Philippians 3. 8). *D. B., T. B.*

**From Atherton.**—**We may ask,** " What is the kingdom of heaven ? " The simple explanation was ventured that whereas the kingdom of God demands subjection to God's will, the kingdom of heaven in contrast shews God performing and carrying out His will upon men upon the earth. In this latter connection we are reminded that the " earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein " (Psalm 24. 1). The reigns of Gentile monarchs (*e. g.*, Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar) through whom God's will was accomplished come readily to our minds. Thus the kingdom of heaven has **aspects past as well as present and future.** John announced that the kingdom of heaven **is at hand.** This was associated with the coming of the King to earth. In the **future** aspect of the kingdom, Christ will again **be** on the earth to take up **His** power and reign, **but** in the present **aspect** we view **Him** the rejected One. As to the last two parables suggestions were varied. Firstly, that the treasure hidden in the field **is** typical of Old Testament saints from Adam onwards, and particularly has the redeemed of Israel in mind.

The Lord **came** seeking goodly pearls. These we **suggest** He found **as** distinct from the one pearl. **We** thought those who are redeemed after the Church **is** caught up, might **be** included in parabolic language **as** among the goodly pearls.

It was suggested that the kingdom of heaven in **its** present aspect **is a** composition of all believers in the Lord **Jesus** Christ, people of every tribe and tongue being included. The parable of the mustard seed would infer this: " The birds of the heaven **came** and lodged in the branches thereof. " None are excluded, **its** extent covering the whole world. Others considered that this could not **be** the case, **as** in certain kingdom of heaven parables we observe that which **is** good, and that which **is** bad, *e. g.*, the parables of the tares and the drag-net (Matthew 13. 36-43, and 47-50).

*G. A. Jones.*

#### Questions and Answers.

Question **from** Glasgow. —What **is** the drag-net ? Is **it** the Gospel of the kingdom or **is** there anything else **it** speaks of ?

Answer. —My understanding **is** that **it** speaks of the judgment of the Son of Man when He will separate the wicked from the righteous, such **as is** shown in the separation of chaff from wheat, wheat from tares, sheep from goats. —J. M.

Questions **from** Birkenhead. —Is the " kingdom of their Father " of Matthew 13. 43 a term synonymous with the " kingdom of heaven " ? The **same** verse indicates that all the sons **are** gathered into the kingdom. Would you please explain the paradox presented in Matthew 8. 12: " **But** the sons of the kingdom shall **be cast** forth into the outer darkness " ?

Answer. —**We** are told that " the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, " in Matthew 13. 38, and in Matthew 8. 12 we are told that " the sons of the kingdom shall **be cast** into the outer darkness ": **it is** clearly evident in these passages that the sons of the kingdom refer to two different classes—righteous and wicked. Why are the wicked called the sons of the kingdom ? These **are** people who should, by reason of privilege, have been in the kingdom, **but because** of their rejection of the Messiah failed to enter and are **cast** forth. These, I understand, to **be** of the sons of Israel. The other sons of the kingdom are true believers in Christ. The kingdom of heaven has, in my judgment, ever existed and **is** heaven's rule over the earth, in which, **as** the parable of the tares shows, both righteous and wicked may **be, but** the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13. 43), or " My Father's kingdom " (Matthew 26. 29) **is a** kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25. 34), and according to my understanding, though I **am** open to correction, **is** that phase of the kingdom of God which will obtain during the Millennium. (See Luke 22. 18 and compare Matthew 26. 29). —J. M.

Questions **from** Glasgow. (1). —Would **it be** right to **suggest** that the two **aspects** (that is, good and evil) are seen in the parable of the mustard seed, and that of the leaven hid in **3 measures** of meal ?

Answer. —I personally do not think that the kingdom of heaven **is** an evil thing, hence I cannot view the leaven **as a figure** of evil. It shows that just **as** leaven hid in meal **is a** power which will in **time** permeate all, so the kingdom of

heaven will in due time bring all down before **its** irresistible power of working. Nothing will be exempt. The mustard seed shows that from small beginnings it is destined to grow till it becomes great, a lodging place and shelter. If Christ is in time to rule men manifestly, then He will as manifestly shelter and provide for them. —J. M.

(2). —Is **it** not possible that the kingdom of heaven and **the** kingdom of God are synonymous terms when we compare such scriptures as Matthew 19. 23, 24; 16. 19; 4. 7; Mark 1. 15; John 3. 5 ?

Answer. —If we take the parable of the tares of the field as explanatory of the kingdom of heaven, we learn that " his field " and " thy field " of Matthew 13. 24, 27, are explained in verse 38 as " the field is the world. " From, this we learn that the realm of the kingdom of heaven is as wide as the world, and that amongst the good seed in the world, not in church fellowship, the evil one sows his tares, his own sons. Often in the world the sons of the evil one pass for the children of God. This has been helpful to me to distinguish the difference between this realm and the kingdom of God in its present expression, which very manifestly is limited to born again ones who must be together in the will of God to do the things that the Lord commands, " the things concerning the kingdom of God " (Acts 1. 3; 19. 8).

That there are two purposes of God running concurrently to-day no one who has a little understanding of God's will can doubt, the one connected with the field, the world, in connexion with the universal message of the gospel, the other connected with God's will being done by a separated and divinely gathered people. Certain principles are true of both, hence the use of the same parables to set both forth. It is true that riches are a hindrance in connexion with both kingdoms, as in Matthew 19. 23, 24. The same devil as hinders the progress of the gospel, hinders the progress of the truth applicable to God's saints. Space forbids to go into the matter in detail, but the foregoing may provide food for further thought. —J. M.

Question from Yeovil. —Is **it** possible to infer from the parable of the hidden treasure that the kingdom of heaven implies the Church which is His Body, of which the scripture records, that Christ loved the church and gave **Himself** for it ?

Answer. —It **is** to be observed that the man who found the treasure did not allow it to remain in its original place of hiding, but it says, " Which **a** man found, and hid. " What **is** this treasure, and who **is** the finder ? Without doubt **we** may conclude that the finder and buyer **is** Christ. What did **He** buy ? Revelation 5. 9 tells **us** that **He** purchased or bought men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. These, I judge, **are** the treasure hid in the field—and **are** God's redeemed and hidden ones outside the Church, the Body. The latter **is** seen as the pearl of great price, I judge. —J. M. ]

### ON SCRIPTURAL MYSTERIES.

In modern English usage the word "mystery" **is** usually associated with something which cannot be understood, often something weird or supernatural. But the Greek word translated "mystery" in our New Testament **is** *musterion*, " from a derivative of *muo* (to shut the mouth); hence a secret, through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites " [Strong]. Its **real** meaning in the New Testament **is** therefore a secret known only to the initiated.

The Lord's reference to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13. 11 provides a helpful illustration. **He** was about to unfold wondrous truths regarding God's ways with men. The disciples enjoyed the divine enlightenment of the Holy Spirit **as** a result of their willingness to receive Christ's words, so to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom. In other words they were among those initiated into the secrets of divine purpose. **On** the other hand, though expressed through the medium of simple parables, these truths were incomprehensible to the majority of the Lord's hearers. To the multitudes they remained an unsolved puzzle to which their unregenerate hearts could not supply the key. For " the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him. "

Indeed the rejection of Messiah by Israel nationally resulted in a hardening of heart and blindness of their spiritual understanding which is described in Romans 11. 25 as a mystery: "I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, . . . that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel " (compare 2 Corinthians 3. 14, 15). How prone men are to argue about this mystery ! The natural mind, with its low standard of holiness and warped conception of justice, quibbles at this principle of God's dealings with men, but the Holy Spirit frequently brings to our notice this reaction in the hearts of those who deliberately despise their privileges. Of men whose consciences spurned the testimony of creation it is written, " God gave them up "; Esau found no place of repentance though he sought it diligently with tears; Israel under her later kings so sinned that there was no remedy, and Ichabod was writ large over God's former dwelling among them.

As students of Scripture let us not only heed these warnings, but learn well the secret of understanding the deep things of God. " Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, . . . But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit. " So wrote the Apostle as he contrasted the wisdom of this world with God's wisdom which he was given to speak in a mystery. The new birth, with its accompanying gift of the Holy Spirit, makes possible an understanding of these things, but we need on our part to add all diligence that we may grow in our appreciation of the mysteries of God. " Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. "

A concordance study suggests that apart from those mentioned above, and the mystery of lawlessness, seven spiritual mysteries are referred to in Paul's letters:—

### 1. The Mystery of His will. (Ephesians 1. 9).

This expression seems from the context to embrace the whole of God's great purpose, culminating in a dispensation of the fulness of the times when the summing up of all things in Christ will be evidenced by His manifestation in glory. The Holy Spirit in this passage spans the vast aeons of the ages from " before the foundation of the world " right on to the " fulness of the times, " emphasising that it was the good pleasure of the divine will to foreordain us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, and that throughout all times God worketh all things after the counsel of His will. To many this seems impossible in view of permitted evil in the world, but individuals of every dispensation have been privileged to understand in some measure the mystery of God's will. For instance, the divine purpose of world judgment was revealed to Noah; Abraham's intimacy with God led him into the secret of world blessing through his posterity; to Daniel were imparted secrets of developments which even to-day have found only partial fulfilment. To-day the Scriptures give us a revelation of His will which transcends by far that given to Old Testament believers; let us not cease to pray that we may be " filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. "

### 2. The Mystery of God (Colossians 2. 2).

From the foregoing we see that the will of God centres round the Person of Christ. It is not therefore surprising to read in Colossians 2. 2, 3 of " the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. " How utterly inexhaustible is this " great everlasting mystery " ! The more we apprehend of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Him, the more fully we realise how far they surpass mortal comprehension, even as every further investigation of natural science into His handiwork only reveals heights and depths still unexplored. The object of our study should be a progressive appreciation of " the mystery of God, even Christ, " so that we may be like the householder " which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. "

### 3. The Mystery of Godliness (1 Timothy 3. 16).

The mystery of godliness is shown by 1 Timothy 3. 16 to refer also to Christ Himself, but this expression brings our thoughts to His manifestation in the flesh, when He displayed in the sinlessness of His life what perfect godliness (*i. e.*, God-likeness) should be. The revelation of Christ, the Mystery of Godliness, has a practical application that we may manifest godliness as we are like Him. Human standards of righteous living are relatively low, for in measuring themselves by themselves men tend to excuse sin in one another, and so fail to appreciate the necessity for a higher ideal. In contrast to this, the Christian has set before him

nothing less than the Mystery of Godliness. The more we enter into Christ's perfect godliness the more conscious we shall be that with our sinful natures still active we shall never on earth fully attain a similar standard of godliness. Nevertheless, it is towards that ideal we are continually to strive, and godliness of this calibre should be a characteristic of our behaviour in the House of God.

#### 4. The Mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3. 1-9).

I suggest that Old Testament prophets had " in divers portions and in divers manners " some appreciation of the mystery of His will, and the mystery of God (1 Peter 1. 10-12). But when we come to the mystery of Christ, of which the Apostle speaks in Ephesians 3., he emphasises that this " in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. " The mystery of Christ is the glorious truth that Jew and Gentile should be " fellow-heirs " and " of the same Body. " Colossians 1. 26, 27 refers to the same subject, again stressing that this mystery " hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to the saints, " and declaring " the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. " Well might the Apostle add in Ephesians 5. 32, " This mystery is great; but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church. " Elsewhere Paul points out that he was in bonds for the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4. 8). Persecution by his brethren according to the flesh was largely because he proclaimed the equality of Jew and Gentile as is illustrated by Acts 22. 21, 22.

#### 5. The Mystery of the Gospel (Ephesians 6. 19).

This expression occurs only once, although Romans 16. 25, 26 may relate to the same mystery. Clearly the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the gospel have close affinity, for the truth that Christ died to unite all believers in one Body is the very crux of the gospel message, and because of it also the Apostle was an ambassador in bonds.

#### 6. The Mystery of the Faith (1 Timothy 3. 9).

The mystery of the faith is associated with human responsibility to hold fast and tell to others divine truth which has been revealed to us. The truths about the Person of Christ are of central importance, but " the faith once for all delivered to the saints " embraces all fundamental doctrine about which there should be no diversion of opinion. The brethren referred to in 1 Timothy 3. had not only grasped the realities of salvation, but the whole counsel of God in relation to the believer's individual walk and his collective associations for divine service. A readiness to subject our will to God's word is a condition, of the new birth, but the same spirit must obtain if we are to take upon us the yoke of Christ. The " mystery of the faith " is a little-explored realm of truth to many of God's children.

#### 7. The Mystery of Christ's return for His saints (1 Corinthians 15. 51).

" Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep. " Here the word mystery is used to describe the resurrection or translation of believers at Christ's coming to the air. To the world this hope of the believer is foolishness; many Christians are apathetic because they have failed to enter into the reality of the secret revealed to the Apostle; to all who have grasped its implication this mystery is pregnant with encouragement to zeal and restraint from wrong.

From this brief review of the Holy Spirit's use of the word *mystery* in Paul's writings, we can see that in many respects these further revelations are the complement of the Lord's unfolding of the mysteries of the kingdom by parables. The mystery of the will of God is illustrated in the parable of the tares, for He chose that evil should be allowed to continue side by side with righteousness. The mystery of the gospel is seen in the parable of the mustard seed, for the glad tidings were first heralded in Jerusalem, but have spread all over the world. Again the parable of the pearl of great price delightfully sums up the mystery of Christ. Other examples will occur to every reader, and may we be stimulated to lay hold on our unique privilege of knowing the mysteries of the kingdom more fully than our spiritual forebears in earlier dispensations. " For to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required. "

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

" The kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man. "

**From** Cardiff. —Christ came into the world to save sinners. When the angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds, he said, " There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. " Jesus Himself taught His disciples that He came " not to destroy men's lives but to save them. " Paul testified that the grace of God bringeth salvation, and he counted it a faithful saying " and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. " It is this fact of God having provided a Saviour for sinners that so richly manifests divine love. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we are shown that such divine love was so great as to bring our Saviour down to where we were in want and shame, and to bring us nigh through Him.

The thieves had robbed and stripped the man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and wounded him, leaving him half dead, and he thus represents man's condition since the fall. The priest and Levite pass by on the other side: they can do nothing for him, any more than the law can avail to save a lost sinner. "**But** a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. " We are reminded of how Paul could say, "**But** God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ " (Ephesians 2. 4, 5); and again, "**But** God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us " (Romans 5. 8). At the moment of the man's greatest need the Good Samaritan appeared. He was not going on the downward road to Jericho, we suggest, the place of the curse, as the others were, but it simply says that " he journeyed. " And what a journey it was that the Lord took ! " He saw that there was no man, " He " looked, and there was none to help. " The Lord had compassion on the sinner in his helpless condition, and stooped even to his lowest need.

The parable in Luke 15., for it is one and not three, beautifully portrays the love of Christ for lost and perishing sinners. It shows " the Friend of publicans and sinners " in three aspects: —

- (1) in painful toil (the lost sheep);
- (2) in diligent search (the piece of silver);
- (3) in yearning desire (the prodigal);

for that which was lost. It is observed on the other hand, however, that the Lord's joy in receiving back the lost is very prominently brought out. The whole of this chapter abounds with joy, a joy which is so great that it must be shared by friends, neighbours and servants. **Martin D. Follett.**

**From** Kilmarnock. During the Lord's ministry on earth He often encountered persons who asked questions and in His answers He always revealed more of God's purposes with men. In this case (Luke 10. 25) a lawyer asked, " What shall

I do to inherit eternal life ? " Whether he sincerely wished to know or he tried to tempt the Lord, we **are** not quite sure [It says, "A certain lawyer stood up and tempted **Him**]; however, the Lord referred him to what was written in the law. He was evidently well acquainted with the letter of the law for he answered correctly, but the Lord pointed out that **if** he would inherit life he must do what the law required. Not satisfied apparently, he then asked, "And who **is** my neighbour?" In His reply the Lord tells the story of the " Good Samaritan, " which beautifully illustrates how one may become **a** neighbour, not compulsorily as under the law, but by the grace of God in the heart. Need often makes neighbours, and the poor man lying robbed and half-dead was indeed a needy object, but although the priest and Levite, who were expected to care for others in need, saw the man yet their hearts were unmoved.

In contrast to them, the Samaritan, who naturally was at enmity with the Jews, had compassion and came to where he was. This **is** the first thing required **in** one who would be a neighbour, **as** 1 Corinthians 13. 3 shows. No amount of sacrifice profiteth anything **if** love **is** not the motive. Then love will manifest itself in acts of kindness and care towards the one in need.

We are not told what effect the parable had on the lawyer, but the Lord's final words to him, " Go, and do thou likewise, " should be **a** message to **us** who have received God's free gift of eternal life, that we may imitate **Him** who has proved **a** true neighbour to us **in** our deep need. Thus by our acts of kindness and good works we may " lay hold on the life which **is** life indeed " (1 Timothy 6. 19).

A. G. S.

**From** London, S. E. From the use of the word " certain " **in** Luke 10. 30 I judge the Lord was narrating an actual occurrence of which **He** knew. **He** was, too, undoubtedly drawing **a** portrait of Himself as the Good Samaritan, and teaching **the** great need of mercy and kindness.

Notice **the** words " stood up " in verse 35, the attitude one of pride; notice also the word " tempt. " This very strong word occurs only twice more—chapter 4. 12, the Lord's reply to Satan, and 1 Corinthians 10. 9. \*1 neither let **us** tempt the Lord."

The lawyer wanted to inherit—this was wrong. An inheritance should come naturally to **the** heir and no doing was required, though some suggested it could be earned (Genesis 48. 22) or forfeited (Numbers 36. 6). **He** was, I judge, one who thought **he** had kept the law and so wanted to know about his inheritance. The answer of **the** Lord **is** clear and plain, Love to God and neighbour, this do and thou shalt live. **He** had not thought much about his neighbour and asked who **was** his neighbour. **He** wanted to justify himself.

The Lord's answer **is** **this** lovely parable, or **as** I think **a** true occurrence. " A certain **man** was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, " from the city of God to the place of the curse. Robbers beset him, first stripping him, then beating him, and leaving him half dead. Then we are told of: —

- (1) A priest who passes callously by. Religion **is** often very heartless.
- (2) A Levite who also looks and passes by.
- (3) **A-** despised Samaritan **came** and showed mercy and practical help. Notice that the Samaritan had **a** definite purpose **in** view. It was **he** journeyed and his journey took **him** to **where he was**. **He** too looked on him **as** did the priest **and** Levite, but oh ! how-different! **He** was moved with compassion.

**Here was** the kindness of God our Saviour, and **His** love towards **men**. The oil **may** speak of healing, and **the** wine of sustenance. Some thought the oil signified **the** Holy Spirit, and that the wine was applied externally. Verse 34 could read, " pouring on oil and wine, " for " them " **is in** italics. **His** own beast speaks of **the** prophecies which sustained the Lord, the **inn** an assembly of God, the host the members of that assembly, particularly the overseers, the two pence, the commending to God and the Word of **His** grace, and the promise, " Behold, I come quickly; and My reward **is** with Me. "

Many harsh things were said of the Lord, but though said in scorn and contempt it was verily true that He did and He does receive sinners **and** eat with them. In His reply the Lord speaks of three things: —

- (1) A lost sheep. Something alive but lost.
- (2) A piece of silver. Something lifeless, but also lost.
- (3) A son. A combination of both dead and lost, but alive and found.

Notice how He Himself personally rejoices at finding the lost sheep, laying it on His shoulders—a place of strength—and so great is His joy that He must communicate it to His friends and neighbours. A joy shared is a joy doubled. Notice there is joy in heaven, a general joy. Surely this speaks of the work of the Good Shepherd ! Notice the one in a hundred.

The piece of silver lost would probably bear an impression denoting ownership. Notice it was diligent sweeping until she found it. No obstacles are allowed to hinder. This surely speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, the lamp speaking of the word of God and the sweeping the work of the Holy Spirit convicting of sin. There is joy which cannot be hidden, but must out. Then notice the joy is in the presence of the angels of God. Surely this speaks of the joy of God Himself and the angels see it.

Now we come to the son and notice the facts. Again a certain man, something actually happening. Two sons, one restless, fractious, tired of home life, wants his inheritance before the proper time. The younger left home and got as far as possible from his father. Then he had his fling, and wasted all his substance riotously. He spent all, and then God began to work. First a famine, and he who was rich now knows poverty. Work being the only remedy he hires himself out. Result, sent to feed swine, a thing of abhorrence to a Jew. Hunger sets in to such an extent that swine's food was attractive to him. The work of grace is effectual. He comes to himself, and thinks of what he has lost through his folly. His father's house looms large in his memory. There was bread and to spare. Why not go back ? There was courage and humility. A decision is taken, " I will. " Confession is made, " I have sinned. " His only prayer is to be made a hired servant, as his sonship was forfeited by unworthiness.

Notice from verse 20 the wonderful kindness of God our Saviour. The son was seen a great way off. What wonderful eyesight love has ! Seen of the father who is moved with compassion. His love leads him to run in his eagerness and he falls on his neck and kisses him, or " kisses him much. "

All this takes place in the outside place and where he was in all his rags, dirt and distress. Out comes the penitent confession, which is unfinished. Confession of sin is enough. The rest lies with the father.

The best robe: only the best is good enough for God and for His presence. Christ was made unto us righteousness from God !

The ring: surely a mark of honour and authority ! His father's son, not a hired servant.

Shoes: to enable him to walk properly.

Thus he was given the kiss of reconciliation outside and as he was. Then he was clothed in a manner befitting his father's house. They two went in, provision was found and eaten, and there was merriment and joy. They began to be merry. Our joy commences down here and goes on into an endless eternity.

The elder son was in the field. Is this field the world ? He is angered and jealous. He has no brotherly feeling, being self-righteous and proud. Notice his repudiation of his erring brother in verse 30: " This thy son, " not " My brother " !

Notice the father's reply, " This thy brother, " not " My son. "

*H. J. Owles.*

#### **EXTRACTS.**

**From Atherton.** —Certain features of divine movement are specially emphasised in Luke 10. and Luke 15.

(1) That love, compassion, kindness, goodness, longsuffering, forbearance, and forgiveness, are attributes belonging to each Person of the Godhead. Note the compassion of the Good Samaritan, the kindness of the shepherd, the longsuffering and forbearance of **the** woman with the lamp, and the delightful compassion and forgiveness of the father.

(2) Irrespective of merit, response or desire, the Trinity **has man's** best interests at heart, and we **see** persistent effort until the object **is** achieved. The great concern of the shepherd for the lost sheep, **his** self-sacrificing efforts to reach and save it, and his determination to accomplish and complete **the** work, beautifully illustrate the Lord's work. Similarly the Holy Spirit **is** portrayed **in** incessant unflagging effort to recover the lost, seen in **figure in** the lost piece of silver. The lost son was never given up by the father, who with unremitting watchfulness looked and hoped for his return.

(3) There **is** always in view not only the uplifting of man, but **that man** should know and appreciate here and now the position into which **he has** been placed by divine grace. This should cause deep joy in the heart of the individual, **as** it undoubtedly does to the heart of God.

(4) There **is** a glorious reward for every one in an Assembly **of** God who manifests and practices similar kindness, goodness, love, forbearance, and forgiveness, even **though** imperfectly.

Concerning the three parables recorded in Luke 15., some thought that there **is** a distinction between the first two and the third, the former referring to a repentant sinner and the latter to a child of God who had gone astray. For in verses 7 and 10 we have the words, " Joy over one sinner that repenteth, " but this expression **is** not found in the third parable. Then again the sinner before he **is** found, has never known the joy and security of the Father's house, whereas the son who returned had known this before. Against this it was pointed out that **the** sheep before it was lost, had known security in the fold. [It should be noted that Adam, in Luke 3. 38, **is** called " the son of God. " It was from **such** sonship that man fell through sin, losing all resemblance to God his Creator in **such** a fall. Luke 15. does not tell of the restoration of an erring child of God, but **is** a parable which illustrates that the Lord " receiveth sinners and eateth with them. " A son who was dead through sin, became alive through repentance and forgiveness. Lost sonship in Adam **is** restored in Christ, " for ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus " (Galatians 3. 26). —J. M. J.]

But whether we think of it **as** the sinner or **the** backsliding saint **the** grace **is** there just the **same**, **m** all its fulness. G. Sankey,

From Leicester. —The question **of** the lawyer suggests that he, **at** any rate, realised that eternal life had to be procured and that **it** was not latent in man in his natural state. There **is** a contrast between the genuine and the sham, when we link Luke 10. 25 with Luke 18. 18. The **case** of the young rich ruler would represent one who of sincerity inquired of the Lord, whereas of the lawyer we are told that " he stood up and tempted him. "

The story of the Good Samaritan **seems** to illustrate in detail **the** truth of Paul's words, " Faithful **is** the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus **came** into the world to save sinners " (1 Timothy 1. 15). " The Jews have no dealings with Samaritans " so this parable would teach **that** God's ways are ways that men despise. In tones of contempt the Jews had once called the Lord **a** Samaritan, yet **He** Himself was not ashamed to take **up** that name in illustrating the love of God to men.

Son and sheep (illustrative of the animate creation), and silver (*i. e.*, inanimate creation) would testify to the corrupting influence of sin upon all creation, for " the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. " [ " The whole creation " must be animate creation, for things inanimate cannot groan and travail in pain. Again, this must be creation exclusive of the human race, many of whom, alas, at the manifestation of the sons of God, will begin their travail of weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. —J. M. J. Not only man but God has been the great loser, longing ever to welcome **the** true repentance of the sinner.

There **is** a parallel between the prodigal and the victim on **the** Jerusalem—Jericho road, one stripped and bruised, the other poverty stricken, and following **a** despicable and degrading occupation, albeit eventually " coming to Himself " and seeking by way of repentance the forgiveness of **his** father. L. C. S.

From Windermere. —If we apply the story of Luke 10. 25-37 to the sinners of the Gentiles, it shows at once how **far** short we have come of the law of God, in our relationship to our fellow men. When the grace of God reached us, by the gospel, it found us hateful and hating one another, but that **same** grace instructs us to fulfil the law we had hitherto so outraged, and the following scriptures point out the importance of showing love to our neighbour (Romans 13. 10, Galatians 5. 14, James 2. 8). This love **is** also emphasised **in** the first epistle of John, *e. g.*, 1 John 4. 7.

The story also graphically depicts where **sin** put and left **us**—robbed and wounded and ready to perish. The law, **as** represented by the priest **and** the Levite, could only leave **us** as it found **us**, but what the law could not do, God did by sending **His** own Son, and **in** the good Samaritan we **see** depicted our blessed Lord, upon whom we had no claim, coming to where we were in our deep need. In grace, **He** lifted **us**, raising and seating **us** in heavenly places (Ephesians 2. 16), made **us** every whit whole, so that we are holy and without spot before **Him**, perfect **in** comeliness, and without condemnation. Furthermore, we are destined for the Father's home, to which the Lord **has** promised to bring us, making abundant provision until **He** come again (verse 35).

These parables throb with life to-day. **We** still have murmurers with us. **We** still fail to rejoice as we should. Experience teaches that although these words had a special bearing in relation to the Lord's sojourn down here, all of them are applicable to-day, and illustrate God's ways with men. The Good Shepherd is set forth in the first parable, the Holy Spirit now in the world, by the illumination of the word seeking and finding those who are lost, is portrayed by the second parable.

The third parable tells of the love and longing of " the Father " toward those who wander in paths of sin and shame, and of the loving welcome given to returning ones. Eternity alone will reveal the rich harvest of these ever living words, for each succeeding generation of the sons of men has had its countless witnesses, to the power of the glorious story of a certain man who had two sons. **T. B.**

From Glasgow. —Whatever may have been the motive of the lawyer in tempting the Lord, we are glad of the record of this interview between one who was instructed **in** the Mosaic law, and the " Man Christ Jesus, " the former appealing to the law, and the latter showing that love is the fulfilment of law.

The lawyer may have thought that he had presented a difficult problem to the Master. **He** little knew that his own thoughts were being scrutinized ! How revealing is the Lord's reply to the lawyer's question ! Under the Old Covenant, Israel's blessings were temporal and conditioned by their obedience to the law. While seeking to observe the letter of the law, there was no inward response from them to its spiritual and divine requirements. Eternal life is revealed and manifested in Christ. **He** is the Eternal Life who was with the Father (1 John 1. 2). **He** is also the Giver of life to the believer (John 17. 2; 1 John 5. 13). This life will yet have a fuller manifestation (1 John 2. 25; 3. 2). **We** have in this parable a contrast between love and grace. Love to God, and to one's neighbour, was the divine standard. How humiliating for a Jew to receive mercy from the hands of a Samaritan ! The religious leaders in our Lord's day were noted for their national exclusiveness and their religious zeal, yet lacked the things that really mattered. So wrapped up were they in self-righteousness, that they forgot mercy. The Lord (who magnified the law, and made it honourable) came not only in the way of righteousness, but in the way of mercy, *i. e.*, loving-kindness. The priest and the Levite were indifferent to the **man** lying helpless on the roadside. The law killed, but could not make alive. It discovered sin, but could not remove it. The Samaritan came to where he was, not only meeting his need, but having an ample provision for his safe journey home. **John McIlvenna.**

From Hereford. —The Pharisees were a sect who made it their life-work to put into practice the traditions of the elders, and sought to distinguish themselves from others by outward signs of religion. Such people could exclaim. " God, I thank Thee that I **am** not **as** the rest of men, " yet their callousness allowed them to criticise the healing of the blind by the Lord, because it **was** done on the sabbath.

The scribes and Pharisees claimed that they kept the law of Moses, yet they did not carry out the law. Through this weakness on their part their dignity **must** have suffered on hearing the parable of the prodigal son. The attitude of the elder son in being so bitter against his father's loving-kindness was typical of the hard and callous nature of the Pharisees, who, instead of seeking to know the true Word of God, and giving effect to it in their lives by loving their neighbour **as** themselves, were satisfied with traditions and sought to keep themselves apart from **the** unlearned by outward show.

How very marked **is** the contrast between the behaviour of the elder son and the One who, at **His** Father's side in eternity past, was content to lay aside **His** glory, to become lower than the angels that He might mingle among mankind! Thus those who sought to trap **Him** in speech, who spat in **His** face, and nailed **Him** to the cross, might enjoy for eternity to come, the knowledge of **His** Father's forgiveness and loving-kindness.

*J. O. Tidmas.*

**From Broxburn.**—In the man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho we can each discern a picture of ourselves when on the downward road, and the statement that " he fell among robbers which both stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead, " only emphasises the state of wretchedness which **is** the portion of every one of Adam's race **as** a consequence of the fall in Eden's garden, the work of the great adversary. Robbed of innocence, happiness, and fellowship with God our plight was indeed wretched **in** the extreme. If help and succour **is** now to reach the poor man ere life and hope are extinguished, surely it should come from those who were nearest to him both by nature and also by the ties of a common faith, and his expectation appeared to be realised when by chance a certain priest came down that way. As we consider that mysterious interweaving of the lives of individuals, appearing to some mere chance, but in reality the ordering of the hand of God, sometimes bringing one man's fulness into contact with another man's poverty and giving opportunity to all to discharge the office of a neighbour, what a golden opportunity both priest and Levite had that day! **It is** written in the law, " Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again " (Deuteronomy 22. 4). Here it was not a case of a brother's ox or his ass, but a brother himself fallen down by the wayside, sad commentary indeed upon those who refused **all** needed succour, while claiming to be the custodians and expositors of the word of God. It was left to a stranger, and **he** a despised Samaritan, to shew what kindness was, for " when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, " type of **Him** who out of love and pity for the lost left the throne on high and came down to where we were. Having revived the **suffering** one by pouring **in** oil and wine he did not leave him, but brought him to **an inn** where **he** could be cared for. Perhaps the churches of God would answer to the inn, for there **is** the divinely appointed place where those whom the Lord has rescued can be succoured and tended till **He Himself** returns.

In Luke 15. we find an ever narrowing circle—one out of a hundred, one out of ten, and lastly one out of two, thus proportionately the thing that **is** last increases in value till we arrive at the centre and kernel of the whole matter revealing **a** father's love for **a** lost son.

*Henry Dyer.*

**From Edinburgh.**—What the kindness of God our Saviour, and **His** love toward man have done, **is** shewn in Titus 3. From verse 3 **we see** what we were, according to this world, foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers **lusts** and pleasures, living **in** malice and envy, hateful, hating one another; and from verse 7 **we see** that we have been made hers according to the hope of eternal life. Having been **in** such a condition ourselves, and having been saved from it through the love and kindness of God our Saviour, we ought to be able to enter into the feelings of **men**, and to deal with them accordingly; following the example of the Lord **Jesus** Christ, who was **in al** points tempted like **as** we are, and of the Good Samaritan who **is an** excellent example of **a man** who was ready unto every good work.

How frequently when questioned, the Lord did not give a direct answer ! In the case recorded in Luke 10. He answered the lawyer by asking him another question. Taking him on his own ground the Lord asked, " What is written in the law ? how readest thou ? " The Lord takes everyone on his own ground, thus displaying His righteousness, and His love and kindness. Did not the apostle Paul say concerning **Him**, " How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out ! " ?

*Kenneth Robertson.*

**From Yeovil.** Luke 10. 25-37 illustrates the failure of man under the law. No one had perfectly fulfilled the duties mentioned in verse 27. Consequently man was condemned by the law and in need of a Saviour. " The law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ " (Galatians 3. 24).

The traveller represents humanity on the downward grade. He was left half dead but the sinner is wholly dead to God spiritually. The priest and the Levite represent the Jewish priesthood and law which failed either to pity or to save ruined man. The Samaritan represents the Lord. It is worthy of note that the priest and Levite came down that way "by chance," but a certain Samaritan as he " journeyed " **came** where he was. We are reminded of the incident at Sychar's well; our Lord " must needs go through Samaria. " He journeyed with a definite object, even that of seeking the lost. Here we have illustrated the kindness of God. He proved man in innocence and man failed. He likewise failed under " conscience " and then under the law. God in His mercy now provides a Saviour and man is now saved by grace through faith. The love of God is not so limited and restrained as to redeem man and then leave the matter there. " He brought him to an inn and took care of him. " The Lord brings us to God's house where we are cared for spiritually. Our Lord's work of redemption and provision for spiritual need completed, He departs with the injunction to the host to care for us, and the promise of His return with reward for the faithful shepherding of the flock.

The parables of the lost sheep, lost silver and prodigal son are in reply to the murmuring of the Pharisees. The sheep is lost through a natural tendency to stray. Thus man is lost through original or inherent sin. The silver is lost and that by which it is hid shows the sad influence of environment. The Lord not only seeks and searches diligently, but in the parable of the prodigal the sinner is restored to a privileged position. The prodigal son's want illustrates the truth that sin and vice have a natural sequence in suffering and poverty (cp. Jeremiah 2. 19).

*Clifford Shattock.*

**From Southport.** —The man of Luke 10. 30 had his back to Jerusalem, the city of blessing, and was going to the city of the curse (see Joshua 6. 26). How true this was, for in the days of Ahab did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho, with the loss of Abiram his firstborn and Segub his youngest son ! (1 Kings 16. 34).

Who were the Samaritans ? After the kingdom of Israel had been divided, the kings of Israel were men who sought not to do God's will. Eventually the Lord was so angry with the children of Israel, that He allowed Shalmaneser king of Assyria to remove them to Assyria and to replace them by men from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim (2 Kings 17. 24). The inhabitants of the land were then given a teacher by the king of Assyria, to instruct them in the manner of the God of the land. So the people feared the Lord, yet they served their own gods (2 Kings 17. 33). In the time of the Lord Jesus Christ they looked for the coming of the Messiah, as did the Jews (John 4. 25), but the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4. 9).

The Samaritan took the poor man to an inn, leaving money to provide for his needs. It was suggested that the pennies spoke of the gifts which God has given to men, " first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles " (1 Corinthians 12. 28). " But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal " (1 Corinthians 12. 7). [It seems to me that 1 Peter 3. 8-11 would provide a more correct answer as to what is meant by the two pence. —J. M. ]

It is a help if it is remembered to whom the Lord was speaking. Among **His** audience were scribes and Pharisees, men who made futile attempts to keep God's law. They were strict Jews. What advantage had the Jew? He was " intrusted with the oracles of God " (Romans 3. 2). Yet the Jew brought forth no good fruit, but became a wild vine (Isaiah 5. 4). This class would seek to

justify themselves **and** would not repent. There were also publicans and sinners, standing around to hear the words of the Lord **Jesus** Christ (Luke 15. 1). Their attitude was shown by the publican in the temple when he said " God, be merciful to **me** a sinner " (Luke 18. 13). They realized they were sinners and were prepared to, receive the Lord **Jesus** Christ.

**From** Liverpool. —The parable of the Good Samaritan gives a striking picture of our Lord **as** Teacher. It is interesting to compare the various questions put to the Lord **as** recorded in the Gospels (more than a hundred in number), and His methods of answering. Some were the questions of sincere enquirers; some were prompted by unconcealed enmity and malice. The lawyer was not one of the former and though apparently he was not malicious, yet he put the question to the Lord tempting Him. The Lord seemed to keep him at a distance by making him quote the law, for he meets the question with one of **His** own. The lawyer's reply **is** remarkable, in that he goes to the heart of the matter and gives the two great commandments exactly **as** the Lord Himself afterwards gave them in the temple (Mark 12. 29-31).

Luke 15. begins with the complaint of the Pharisees, " This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. " Thereupon the Lord **Jesus** spake a parable to them. **He** told the story of the lost sheep, the lost silver, and the lost son. The shepherd doubtless knows how far the sheep may stray and likewise the woman knows the limit to which the lost coin could have rolled, but God alone knows how far away each one of **us** may get, or how **far** the sinner **is** from God.

" This thy brother, " exclaims the happy father, " **was** dead, and **is** alive again. " It was this that the Pharisees did not relish. The elder son did not dispute the relationship of the prodigal to his father, but he could not bring himself to say, " my brother, " even in complaining of him. It **is** in fact **easier** to look upon all prodigals **as** God's lost sons than **as** our lost brethren. But what an example we have in the Lord **Jesus** Christ, for of the sinners **He** saves, it **is** recorded, " **He is** not ashamed to call them brethren " (Hebrews 2. 11). **A. Carson.**

**From** Manchester. —The Lord's teaching by parables **was** so comprehensive in scope that cardinal **features** of divine dealings with men could not but find frequent and delightful expression. The parables selected from Luke 10. and Luke 15. for special consideration are outstanding in their touching and lucid presentation of the undeserved favour bestowed by God, but heavenly love and kindness shine out in many others. For instance the two debtors of Luke 7. **41-43**, the importunate friend of Luke 11. **5-13**, and the Good Shepherd of John 10., illustrate the mercy of God to the sinner, **His** responsive bounty to the plea of **His** saints, and the surpassing **sacrifice** for mankind of the Saviour Himself. Again the longsuffering of God towards Israel **is** brought out both by the parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen, and that of the unfruitful **fig** tree.

It **is** striking that Luke's Gospel contains so many of the parables which tell of the kindness of God our Saviour. Several have already been referred to, and of course the parables of the Good Samaritan, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son are not recorded in the other Gospels. This emphasis on the love of God **is** in harmony with Luke's presentation of the Lord **Jesus** **as** Son of Man. This point **is** further illustrated by comparing similar parables in Matthew and Luke. For instance **if** we consider the marriage feast in Matthew **22**. and the great supper in Luke 14., **it is** significant that the former tells of judgment on the man who appeared without his wedding garment, and on those who first refused the invitation; but in the parable of the great supper there **is** no mention of judgment, except in the sense that those who first refused were prohibited from the feast. There **is** a similar contrast in the parables of the talents (Matthew 25. ) and the pounds (Luke 19. ). In the former, the slothful servant was cast into the outer darkness, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth, but in the latter the only punishment recorded **was** the taking away of the pound from the unprofitable servant. **G. Prasher, Jun.**

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## ORDER.

" God is not a God of confusion, but of peace " (1 Corinthians' 14. 33). To avoid confusion, and to maintain peace, order is necessary. This scripture, therefore, implies that God is a God of order. An examination of His word will prove that this is so, and will show that God desires order in the lives of His children and of His people.

God's word contains an account of a vast, eternal plan especially in relation to mankind. Yet we read of, and see in our own times, much disorder, caused by the work of Satan and by the disobedience of man; but, in spite of all this, God proceeds with His plan, and when this earth has passed away and all opposition has been brought to an end, He will continue His work eternally in a scene of perfect order.

That we might understand something of His design, we must have a wide knowledge of God's word. We should give attention to systematic reading of the word of God and search every nook and corner of it. By doing so we shall be enabled to take a comprehensive view of God's purposes, to follow them through their different stages, to find out in which stage He has placed us, and thus to learn His will for us in our time.

A brief survey of what God has revealed might be helpful. In His word He reveals something of what was before the foundation of the world. He tells of the creation of the heaven and earth and of His earthly creatures, He tells of man's fall, and of His dealings with men thereafter, until He destroyed the earth and the creatures thereon with a flood, saving only Noah and them that were with him in the ark. Some time after the flood, when men had multiplied again upon the earth, God, by confounding their language (hitherto they had spoken but one language) scattered them over the face of the earth that His purpose might be fulfilled. Thus families of men speaking different languages settled in different parts and were the seed out of which the nations grew.

In due time God called Abram out from his country and kindred and from his father's house and formed of him a nation for His own possession—Israel. Through Abraham all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. In the Old Testament God speaks mainly of this chosen people, and other nations are mentioned as they come into the history of Israel. God tells of the covenant He made with Israel, with its ordinances of divine service. Many are the messages of warning and entreaty sent to the people of Israel through His prophets at different stages of their history. Throughout the Old Testament are types and foreshadowings of Christ, and prophecies concerning Him who is the Divine Deliverer whom God promised to Israel.

In the New Testament we have the story of Christ's coming to earth, His life and His teaching, His rejection by Israel and the Gentiles (Acts 4. 27), His death, resurrection and ascension. Here too God tells of the sending of the Holy Spirit, and how He formed, in the present dispensation, a nation for His own possession, among whom He dwelt (for when Israel rejected Christ, God ceased to dwell among them). God relates some of the early history of His nation in this dispensation, and gives instruction with regard to its divine service, its government, and its purpose upon the earth. In the New Testament God reveals the fact that His Son will come to the air for His saints of this dispensation, and that they will be caught up to meet Him and to be for ever with Him. Both Old and New Testaments, show that later, after a time of tribulation such as the earth has never known, Christ will return to earth as Son of Man to execute judgment. At this coming, saints of other dispensations than the present will be raised. At this time He will also restore the kingdom to Israel, who will acknowledge Him, and He will reign for a thousand years over all the earth. When the millennial reign is completed, and when the judgment of the dead before the great white throne has taken place, at which time the heaven and the earth will pass away, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (Revelation 21. 1; 2 Peter 3. 13). Christ shall then have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all (1 Corinthians 15. 24-28).

The perfect order of God's workmanship is clearly shown in the story of creation in Genesis 1., "The earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Thereafter, day by day, in perfect order, He carried out the work. "And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." His works declare that He is a God of order, He who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span (Isaiah 40. 12 and 26).

Having considered something of God's work in creation, let us now review with brevity His dealings with mankind through the ages. God is the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (Ephesians 3. 14, 15). "His dominion is from generation to generation" (Daniel 4. 3). He has "made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17. 26, 27). Again and again, God has brought forth men at the right time to fulfil His purposes (e. g., Abraham, Joseph, Moses, etc.). This is true, not only of those whose genealogies are given in detail, and not only of leaders, but of all men. That God rules the nations, and the generations of mankind, and orders the lives of individuals so that they might fulfil His purpose, may be seen from God's words to Abram in Genesis 15. 13-16.

"The upright, he ordereth his ways" (Proverbs 21. 29). "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37. 23 A. V.). "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 Thessalonians 3. 6-7).

The ordering of a person's ways begins in childhood, and during that time the responsibility is upon his parents. Before Samson was born, Manoah, his father, enquired of the angel of the Lord, "What shall be the manner (or ordering) of the child, and what shall be his work?" (Judges 13. 12). So parents to-day should seek wisdom and guidance from God in the upbringing of children, remembering that the way in which a child is brought up may have a great effect for good or ill on his ways when he grows up. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22. 6).

Having grown to manhood, it is the responsibility of each one of us to order his own ways. Considering the greatness of this responsibility, we shall do well to imitate the Psalmist who prayed, "Order my footsteps in Thy word; and let not

iniquity have dominion over me " (Psalm 119. 133). Each one of us has a part to fulfil in God's eternal plan, and must seek to fulfil it worthily. He has given us gifts according to His will, for the use of which He will hold us responsible. We must ascertain the work God would have us do, even as Paul said, " What shall I do, Lord ? " (Acts 22. 10). Each part of the service we perform must be carried out in order, whether it pertains to private life, family life, assembly life, or to our daily occupation. Our reading, meditation, and conversation should all be ordered. " To him that ordereth his conversation (or way) aright will I shew the salvation of God " (Psalm 50. 23. See also Job 13. 18; 33. 5). Prayer, both private and public, should be ordered. " In the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee, and will keep watch " (Psalm 5. 3). All our spiritual sacrifices should be carefully prepared and set in order, as were the sacrifices of Israel. (See Leviticus 1. 7, 8, etc.). Similarly, ministry of God's word should be set in order, whether it be to the old or to the young, whether in preaching or in teaching, whether by word of mouth or by writing. In Acts 11. 4, we read that Peter expounded in order to them of the circumcision, the matter of how God had sent him to the Gentiles. Luke wrote at the beginning of his gospel, " It seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed " (Luke 1. 3, 4). Thoughts arranged and spoken in order, and lessons taught step by step, are easily followed, easily understood, and easily retained. We do well to follow the example of the Preacher who, because he was wise, still taught the people knowledge; yea he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth (Ecclesiastes 12. 9-10).

The thought of order is extended to the method of spreading God's word in Acts 18. 23, where we read that Paul went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, stablishing all the disciples.

God's house must be built according to the pattern laid down in the Scriptures (see Acts 2. 41, 42; Ephesians 2. 19-22), and we must do all things decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14. 40. See also 1 Chronicles 24. 19; Exodus 39. 37; 40. 4; 2 Chronicles 29. 35), and as a nation, and one which has a warfare to wage, order is a vital necessity. " Who shall order the battle ? " (1 Kings 20. 14, A. V. ). That there might be order, leaders and overseers are required (see Titus 1. 5), but above all things it is necessary that all be led by the Holy Spirit.

There will be order in the resurrection, for each will be raised in his own order. When ordered government is restored and death, the last enemy, has been abolished, " Then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all. " (1 Corinthians 15. 22-20 and 28). God will be all in all in a scene of perfect and eternal order (Revelation 21. 22).

*John A. H. Robertson.*

## THE PARABLES.

"The kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man. "

From Brantford. —Sheep occupy our attention in Luke 15, and Matthew 18. 12-14. Much is said about sheep in the Scriptures, but we can draw two main lessons from them. The first is: "All we like sheep have gone astray, " referring to our sinful position before God, astray like lost sheep. Then the Lamb of God was led as a lamb to the slaughter for us, and now instead of being astray we can rest upon the powerful words of John as to our eternal security and hiding-place. In the passage before us about sheep it is a lost condition which the Lord brings out. The finding brings joy to those in heaven, to God the Father, and to the sheep.

In Luke 15. we have a three fold cord which is not easily broken. The first parable shows our condition, the second our value (for one piece of silver would be most valuable to that woman as she only had ten), the third our broken relationship through Adam's transgression, but its renewal on a greater basis through repentance on our part to God. The Lord was eating with publicans and sinners and this

brought amazement to the scribes and Pharisees. Well it was for us that the Lord did not indignantly draw up His skirts and withdraw from these sinners, 'otherwise we' should never be where we are now. Peter, **in** Galatians, **as** Paul tells it, was not following the example **the** Lord set. God's Son **is** now **a** faithful and merciful **High** Priest. Let us also have compassion on our fellows thus showing forth **His** character daily.

The parable of the prodigal son **is** a well-studied portion by gospel preachers. First of all **we** notice it was the younger son that **went** astray. Jacob and Ephraim were two younger sons who came **in** for blessing beyond those who were older, and **as** we believe the younger son typifies the Gentiles [I do not believe that the younger son **is** a type of the Gentiles. **He** simply speaks of those sinners whom the Lord was receiving then, and all such **as** **He** would receive later. —J. M. ], **we** see that **again** the younger comes **in** for blessing over the first-born, especially to-day when very few Jews accept Christ. **We** were without God and alienated from Israel even **as** the younger son was away from the father and his domain. The father never went to the far country, but waited for his dead sinful son to come home. So will God to-day, but the Holy Spirit works with the heart **in** conviction.

**We** would suggest that the younger son was not truly **a** son when **in** the far country. [**He** was a son who by sin had forfeited all right to sonship, even **as** Adam, who is called "the son of God" had; and all his posterity fell from that relationship to God in him. —J. M. ] **We** know that **as** many **as** are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Romans 8. \* 14). While we were in the far country we were not sons either. What were we? **We** were dead **in** our trespasses and **sins**. So the prodigal son was dead, **and** his father himself says this—"This my son was **dead**, and is alive again" (Luke 15. 24).

The other brother comes into the picture. Leaving him out would not harm the parable **a** bit [Surely it would harm the parable, for the story would **be** incomplete. —J. M. ] but he **is** brought in, we suggest, to show Israel's position of nearness to God and possessing inheritance with Him, for we know that Israel has yet to feel the full effects of God's ownership of this earth and the fulfilling of His promises. The older brother still has his portion coming. [This is just the perversity that such an interpretation of the elder son being typical of the Jew and the younger son the Gentile leads one into. The elder son **is** a true type of the scribes and Pharisees in the Lord's time who rejected Christ and perished, **as** all Christ rejecters will. —J. M. j. The gospel was to the Jew first and this **is** God's order. **We** Gentiles had no claim upon God. Neither had the prodigal on his father. The Jews have **a** claim upon God in the promises He made to Abraham.

*Alex. Sproul.*

From Hamilton, Canada. —Some who believe in salvation by works may take the parable of the Good Samaritan **as** an example for us to-day, but the Lord was only showing to the Jewish lawyer (who would naturally have nothing to do with Samaritans), the futility of obtaining eternal life by the law, —"for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Romans 3. 20).

Why then was the parable spoken to the lawyer? **We** suggest the answer **is** found **in** Galatians 3. 24. The law **is** become our tutor to bring **us** to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. True, the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law and the prophets were until John, **but** Christ **is** the end of the law unto righteousness. Yes, the end of the law stood before the lawyer, but he was not willing to have grace shown to him. The two definite points against him were that he stood up to tempt the Lord, and sought to justify himself.

The parable on the other hand, is **a** beautiful picture of **One** who came down to where the lowest sinner was, not half dead, but dead **in** trespasses and sins. **We** suggest that **in** this particular parable we find the full gospel **set** forth even to the assuring words spoken by the Samaritan, "When I come again, I will repay thee.

*J.*

*Young.*

From Vancouver, B. C. —The kindness of God **is** shared by those heavenly beings, **which** wait upon **His** word—see Luke 15. 7, " There shall be joy, " and verse 10, " There **is** joy in heaven. " It **is** a great event in heaven when another **name is** added to the Book of Life, and as the Lord says also for us, " Rejoice that your **names** are written **in** heaven " (Luke 10. 20).

God **is** kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke 6. 35). Even in God's dealings with Satan we see a delayed sentence of judgment, or at least a part of it (Revelation 20. 10).

There may be times when the kindness of God seems hidden. The words to Israel speak loudly of a yearning heart. " In overflowing wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. " Also in James 5. 11, " The end of the L o r d . . . **is** full of pity, and merciful. "

God **is** love and love **is** kind. In Revelation 15. 4 we have the words, " Thou only art holy. " The word " holy " here means, " kind and gracious, " the same **as** in Acts 2. 27 and 13. 35 speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same word **is** also used concerning bishops in 1 Timothy 2. 8 and Titus 1. 8. [The word *Hosios*, according to my Gk. lexicon, means pure, incorrupt, holy, just toward God, as *Dikaios* means just toward men, and this is the sense in which the word is used in Acts 2. 27, 13. 35, where the Lord is God's Holy One in all the duties of piety towards God. The words *Ta Hosia* are rendered " the mercies " in the Englishman's Gk. New Testament, **as** describing the sure mercies or favours which God promised to David with reference to the Messiah. Kindness is not the root thought in the word *Hosios*. —J. M. J. The word in Revelation 15. **is** spoken by those who come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name. The beast will set forth his apparent kindness and goodwill to men to seek to gain their hearts, and yet at the same time he will be speaking against the God of heaven and earth. So those who are victorious in their stand for God against the beast gladly sing the song of Moses giving glory to the kindnesses of their God.

H. McL.

#### Principles of Divine Judgment **as** seen in the Parables.

From Hereford. —The thought of judgment presupposes a relationship between two parties, and responsibility consequent upon that relationship. Thus, the basic principles of divine judgment are, first, that man as man has a duty toward God as God, and, secondly, that man's responsibility is in proportion to the extent of the revelation given by God. The four parables under consideration illustrate these principles, and may be arranged in the following order to indicate the above development: —

- (1) Luke 12 . . . The rich man and his barns.
- (2) Matthew 7 . . . The house built on sand.
- (3) Luke 7. . . The children in the market place.
- (4) Matthew 18 . . . The unmerciful servant.

Luke's Gospel has been described as presenting somewhat of the Gentile aspect of the Lord's ministry, and the parable of the rich man is certainly universal in its teaching. Although it was in God he " lived and moved and had his being, " he " glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks " to Him who gave him " all things richly to enjoy. " God received nothing from his life, and for his foolish ignorance swift judgment fell upon him; he had no more of this life's pleasure, and nothing in the world to come. What a contrast with the fruits of godliness ! (1 Timothy 4. 8).

The first parable concerns the duty of every man toward God. The second and third illustrate the principle that " to whom much hath been given, of him will much be required. " Responsibility increases with revelation: no one can be indifferent when God reveals Himself. The word of God must be accepted as such, and obeyed, or rejected and disobeyed, and each one will give account of himself to God. " The word that I spake, the same shall judge. " Judgment, so often represented in Scripture by a flood, will break upon each house, and the one built and occupied in disobedience to the word of God will bring disaster to its builder.

The condemnation of the third parable belongs to a later date in the Lord's dealings with the Jews, 'to a time when the rulers especially had definitely rejected the counsel of God through both John and the Lord Himself. The whole generation are here condemned for their rejection of the kingdom because its preachers did not conform to the popular expectation. They looked for Messiah to come with a joyful manifestation of Israel's glory and power *as a nation* (we piped unto y o u . . .) and also to save them from their *national* distress under the Gentiles (we wailed unto y o u . . .). But neither in John nor in the Lord Jesus were their hopes realised.

The last parable—of the "unmerciful servant"—illustrates various proverbial sayings of Scripture in connection with God's dealing with His own: see Mark 4. 24, James 2. 13, etc. The first servant is a striking picture of an undone, hopeless sinner, whose sins are forgiven solely by reason of God's compassion and mercy. It is then expected of him that he shall display something of God's grace in his dealings with his fellows, "forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Unlimited forgiveness was entirely new to Jewish disciples, for Rabbinic law laid down a maximum of three times, and then only when forgiveness was begged by the offender. Peter probably thought it generous to reach to seven times, but whether the Lord's reply is seventy times seven the meaning is the same—unlimited, not to be reckoned; "love . . . taketh not *account* of evil." The moral of this parable, which must be distinguished from its incidental details, clearly demonstrates the responsibility of the child of God (it was spoken to the disciples) to forgive an offending brother, whose offence is paltry compared with his own sins against God—millions of pounds. Linked with Matthew 18. 15, this teaching transcends the empty religion of the times. [See paper from London.]

*E. H. Merchant.*

**From Atherton.**—This important attribute of the character of God is prominent throughout all the Scriptures. The word "judgment" itself is mentioned at least **800** times in Scripture, and this factor alone unquestionably indicates to us that in the mind of God the subject is of vital importance. "The LORD is a God of judgement" (Isaiah 30. 18), the LORD loves judgement (Isaiah 61. 8, and Psalm 33. 5), He delights in its exercise (Jeremiah 9. 23, 24). Even a cursory survey of the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ proves the weight of importance given to this aspect of God's dealings with men. Judgment is itself spoken of by the Lord as being a weightier matter of the law (Matthew 23. 23). Many there are who love to visualize a God apart from all judgment, a God of love only, but a person with any appreciable knowledge of the wondrous ways of God cannot fail to do other than acknowledge, admire, and glory in the God of judgment.

In the parables divine judgment may be viewed under three headings:—"

- (1) Judgment unto condemnation.
- (2) Judgment unto vindication.
- (3) Judgment unto reward.

(1) *Judgment unto condemnation.* Time and again the Lord seeks to bring home to His hearers the intensely solemn truth that judgment involving eternal wrath and punishment must inevitably be the lot of those who reject His word. "Building on sand" is an example of this. God cannot countenance rejection of His word, and in the day when judgment is finally meted out the very word **that** God has spoken will rise up to judge the disobedient one (John 12. 48). In connection too with the believer, when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ evil works will be condemned, and he himself shall suffer loss if he **has** refused to obey the revealed word of God to Him.

This is the great lesson which we rightly deduce from the parable of the unmerciful steward. **We** stood condemned, unable to meet God's claims, therefore judgment seemed inevitably our doom. [Do our friends apply the judgment of servants to the case of the unsaved **sinner**? Think of the words—"His Lord was wrath, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay **all** that was due," verse 34. Is this a kind of purgatory? It **seems** so from the application of our friends. But note verse **35** and **see** the force of the word "brother," and also

of " ye. " Our friends will require to recast their thoughts somewhat. Does God ever contemplate withdrawing the sinner's forgiveness for any cause whatever?—J. M. J. But compassion steps in, mercy reigns, glorying against judgment, so that now there is no condemnation, but absolute pardon and full forgiveness. **We** owed much, much consequently has been forgiven, for the ten thousand talents would speak of the great enormity of our debt. Newberry says in speaking of the talents, " A myriad of talents—Roman calculation in silver worth more than one million pounds sterling, Jewish calculation more than three millions, but if in gold upwards of fifty millions. " This high water mark of divine forgiveness should ever be before us in our dealings with each other.

(2) *Judgment unto vindication.* The antithesis of the righteous judgment of God is seen in the unrighteous judge, who instead of immediately upholding the cause of the widow does not for a while, but then ultimately does so on the score of her continual coming. God is the great Avenger. The person whoever **He** may be whom God judges to have been wronged will be avenged. Their cause in judgment will be righteously vindicated, and whatever suffering or persecution we are called upon to suffer for the sake of the Name we can depend upon it that our God is looking on and will repay. " Vengeance **is** mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. " May we, like our great Exemplar, commit our cause to Him who judgeth righteously, and thus take courage in **this** aspect of God's dealing with us.

(3) *Judgment unto reward.* Several parables introduce this precious truth (a) Servants and talents; (b) servants and pounds; (c) the faithful servant. Faithfulness in service the Lord certainly will reward. **We** do well to rejoice and to serve in the light of this knowledge.

The following contribution was given on the parable of the " children at play. " " Wisdom is justified of all her children. " Wisdom here **is** the wisdom of God. They (the publicans) acknowledged divine wisdom in the message of repentance; realising that divine judgment would follow rejection. The scribes and Pharisees refused to admit of this, rejecting for themselves the counsel of God in the which was divine wisdom, and in consequence stood condemned. They were taken up more in criticism of those whom God had sent than receiving them. Stephen denounced such in no uncertain way (Acts 7. 51-53). Further, to this was added this explanation of the passage. The righteous indictment of the Lord here on the Pharisees proves **His** divine powers of perception and discernment. **He** knew their hearts, and what **He** states was His judgment of them.

G. A. Jones.

From **Cardiff.**—Whatever the principle of divine judgment, it **is** simple and clear. It may be felt that the parable of the unmerciful steward has a difficult and profound interpretation, but the practical teaching **is** obvious. Here we **see** that God expects us to be mindful continuously of the great mercy **He** has shown us, for then we shall have mercy towards others. The principle **is** as Paul writes, " Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye " (Colossians 3. 13).

Again, Jesus says, " Whosoever cometh... and heareth... and doeth . . . . " It **is** by this threefold principle that God judges our obedience and devotion to **His** will. It is a simple principle, but wise and just.. If we grasp it and build aright the words in Proverbs 24. 3 will be fulfilled in us, " Through wisdom **is** an house builded; and by understanding it **is** established. "

The rich man in Luke 12. 16-21 did not use his wealth for others. The deceitfulness of riches had done its work. **He** had a large harvest, but his heart produced a crop of thorns. The harvest of his fields choked the harvest of his life. The first made him rich as to this world, but the lack of the other prevented him from being " rich toward God. " The parable teaches us to " beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, " and covetousness **is** idolatry. **We** should realise our all sufficiency in God and that it **is** unnecessary for us to be anxious for present-day needs, and worldly comfort. As the Lord went on to say, " Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn . . . Consider the

lilies... they toil not, neither do they spin. " Here **is** another principle of divine **judgment** and **if we** adhere to the practical teaching involved **we** shall give pleasure to God. Let us remember **that His** judgment. **is** severe and its experience always deserved.

*Martin D. Follett.*

### EXTRACTS.

**From Broxburn.**—God said to Israel **in** the past, " My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. " These words are particularly true of the generation that **was** privileged above all others **in** that they heard the ways of God expounded to them by the Lord Himself and **His** great forerunner; but alas, their words fell on deaf ears. John's mode of living was consistent with his **message**, and **as** became one who was " **a** voice, crying **in** the wilderness, " his manner of life was austere. Yet they said that he had **a** demon. There were but few who wailed through **a** realisation of their sinful condition before God, and brought forth fruit meet for repentance **as** the result of John's preaching. The Lord was no ascetic. **He** came eating and drinking and found pleasure **in** social intercourse with **men**, for it **was** written of **Him**, " **He** shall deal wisely, " and thus was opportunity given for speaking **a** word in season. Yet they failed also to respond to the glad tidings **He** brought to their ears. Thus while the men of that generation failed to apprehend God's will concerning them, and **His message** to them through His two great servants, yet the results of their work justified the means employed by God, as all who are born of God fully acknowledge.

While the Lord was addressing **His** disciples in the presence of **a** great multitude one out of the multitude was so unreceptive of the spiritual truths that were spoken that he broke in upon the Lord's discourse with the request, " Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with, me. " The Lord did not dispute his claim, for no doubt the portion that was justly his had been withheld, but **He** turned to profit the opportunity thus presented, by uttering **a** warning, not against unrighteousness as might have been expected, but against all covetousness; for covetousness may display itself in one setting his heart on what may be rightly his own **as** well **as** on that which belongs to another. And further to give emphasis to the warning **He** spake the parable of **a** certain rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully. The **same** covetous spirit that was manifesting itself **in** the one man **is** seen also, but in **a** fuller measure, in the other. It **is** worthy of note that the Lord Jesus employed two different words for " life " in the passage before us, **a** distinction which the ordinary translation fails to indicate. In verse 22 He said to the disciples, " Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat. " The Greek word here for life, according to Newberry, **is** *Psuche*, soul, life or breath. This **is** life **in** its lower aspect **as** associated with earthly things, eating and drinking and being clothed.. But in verse 15 **a** different word **is** found, " For **a** man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. " Here the Greek word **is** *Zoe*, life, animated existence. This **is** life **in** its higher aspect, life **as** from God. To sustain the one, the soul, the rich **farmer** had more than sufficient, but for the other he knew nothing of God's provision for its need, for he laid up treasure for himself on earth, but he was not rich towards God. *Zoe* in **His** case required the quickened power of the word of God, through faith.

*Henry Dyer.*

**From Edinburgh.**—Matthew 7. 26, 27, brings home to us forcibly the first judgment of all mankind; to believe, and build on **a** rock; to disbelieve, and build on sand. This can be carried forward to (1) salvation, (2) baptism, (3) adding, (4) continuing, and (5) the apostles' teaching. The primary application **is** to the sinner, the person **in** the separate place, but the principle of judgment **can** be carried forward to all walks of spiritual life. God works from the outside inwards **in matters** pertaining to **His** things.

Luke 7. 31-35 presented **a little** difficulty, but **it** was thought, generally, that the Lord was proving to all people that they would be justified **in** their own minds. " **We** piped unto you, and ye did not dance " (Israel's king had come and

they had reason to dance). " **We** wailed, and ye did not weep. " John came abstemiously, **the** Lord **came** eating and drinking, but they reasoned **all** away. **Yes**, man **is** **always** right in **his** own mind, but the children of **light** are **justified**: wisdom **is** justified of **all** her children. **It is assumed** that the children here are children of God, and that though the world rejects the truth, **we** are justified, who believe. As the world has **failed** to come at **His** call, let **us** see to **it** that **we** justify our stand in Him, that wisdom be not put to shame or grief.

*Thomas Hope.*

**From Yeovil.** —Judgment falls because of sin. Judgment **is** God's strange work. Righteousness' and judgment are the foundations of God's throne. Broadly speaking there are two classes of sin for which judgment **is** made: (1) sins of commission, (2) sins of omission. In the passages under consideration, judgment **fell** because of the sin of omission. God's word **is** the divine standard which **is** set. In Matthew 7. 26, 27, judgment fell on the house built on a shifting foundation. The foolish man thus illustrated ignored wise counsel and gave no heed. Perhaps this **is** the way in which the sin of omission affects the Christian most. Hearing and doing are linked together, and bring their own reward or condemnation.

The servant of the parable in Matthew 18. 21-35 was judged by being sent to prison for omitting to show mercy. This illustration seems to touch the matter of the responsibilities of fellow believers with reference to the action one should take in judgment. We are to deal wisely with those who are outside the Fellowship too. Judgment begins at God's House (compare Colossians 3. 13). " Prison " denies brotherly love, and also creates a barrier, but there **is** nothing here of outer darkness or eternal judgment, with gnashing of teeth. The Lord does not here say, " I know you not! " **He** refers to the forgiveness **as** a fact. Forgiveness **is** to lead to forgiveness **as** an evidence of grace. The servant was delivered " to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due " (verse 34). No reference **is** here made to the Lord Jesus Christ on the future judgment seat, pronouncing **as** to His people's works **in** the day of **His** coming. Here we have a present dealing, and the parallel of 1 Corinthians 5. shows that **a** believer may be delivered to tormentors " that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus " (1 Corinthians 5. 5). (cp. 1 Corinthians 11. 32 and 1 Timothy 1. 20).

*S. J. J.*

**From Southport.** —The attitude of the people of Israel towards God's prophets was such that the Lord Jesus Christ was caused to say, " . . . for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem " (Luke 13. 33). Jerusalem in the Old Testament days had killed or stoned God's prophets. Elijah could say to God, " . . . I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away " (1 Kings 19. 10). Prophets are mentioned in Hebrews 11. 32, and of such it says, " They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, . . . wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth " (Hebrews 11. 37 and 38). This parable was considered in the light of the parable of the vineyard and husbandmen. Israel was represented by the vineyard. God had sent many prophets to Israel, yet they were not respected, the last one being John the Baptist. Finally God sent **His** own Son and they slew Him saying, " **We** have no king but Caesar " (John 19. 15). What will the lord of the vineyard do ? " **He** will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others " (Luke 20. 16). The Lord Jesus Christ could say, " Behold, your house is left unto you desolate " (Matthew. 23. 38).

*M. A. Sands, W. S. Holden.*

**From Glasgow.** —In the short parable of Luke 7. 31-35 our Lord exposes the hardness of heart of the religious leaders, and the majority of those of **His** day and generation.

The ministry of John the Baptist was a stern ministry, calling for repentance, and conformity to the law. He came " in the spirit and power of Elijah. " John did not preach grace. He was the last of the prophets, albeit, the forerunner of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, whose ministry was characterised by grace. We could not conceive of a greater difference than that between our Lord Jesus and John, the one abstemious and ascetic, the other eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, though not to a riotous extent. Yet the one was as justified in his mode of living as was the other, and moreover they were justified in the results of their ministry.

Both the Lord Jesus and John were consumed with a holy zeal to further the kingdom. Their manners of life were simply different expressions of divine wisdom, which expresses itself in a diversity of ways, yet in all of these it is justified, and also in its results in the hearts of men. The Pharisees and lawyers, and many of the people, were occupied with the outward appearance of John and the Lord Jesus, and with that which was merely external in both of their lives. They rejected the wisdom and counsel of God, firstly by refusing to be baptised of John, and in rejecting the One whom John pointed to, the Lord Himself. It was right and fitting that the last of the prophets should be rugged and stern like the great Elijah, in whose spirit and power he came, and it was no less proper that the Lord Jesus should come in a different manner, befitting His own words (Luke 4. 18, 19). Most of their hearers were so hard of heart that they would not give heed, but the wisdom of God was justified in them that believed.

*A. McIlree.*

From Kilmarnock. In Matthew 5. 6, 7, the Lord is making known to the people the conditions necessary to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. In conclusion He uses a parable and likens His hearers to builders. Those who hear His words and do them are likened to a wise man who built his house on a rock, while those who do not are like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The main point is the doing of the will of God, the mere profession of loyalty with the lips being of no avail.

In God's dealing with His people Israel, they were to " learn His statutes and observe to do them. " and blessing would follow. Again Paul writing to the Romans concerning the Gentiles who were not under law, says, " Not the hearers of a law are righteous before God, but the doers of a law shall be accounted righteous " (Romans 2. 13 R. V. M. ). The same principle applies to disciples of the Lord Jesus now, as we see from John 13. 15. After the Lord had given the example in washing their feet, He said, " If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them. " See also James 1. 22. May we then not be as the foolish man, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5. 17) seek by His grace to carry it out.

*A. G. S.*

**From Leicester.**—There may have been no structural defects in the house built upon the sand; it may have been a sound example as to how a house should be designed and built. We rather imagine it was. The house built upon the rock may not have been such a fine example of careful planning and construction, but the Lord makes no reference to the house. He is concerned with the foundation. If this is unsound what hope is there for the structure in time of stress and strain?

The teaching contained in verses 24 to 27 of Matthew 7. cannot be confined to " justification by faith. " There is no thought other than for those who have acknowledged the authority of the kingdom. By accepting Christ we have acknowledged this authority. The basis of the Christian life must be adherence to the teaching of the Master. " If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments. " Failure in this means spiritual loss.

Forgiveness is a fundamental principle of Scripture. The case of the unjust servant is illustrative of one " building upon sand. " It also reveals the distinction between divine and human judgment. Ten thousand talents—the highest sum of money mentioned in Scripture—as symbolic of the great debt which

God has cancelled through the death of His Son. There is, nevertheless, the thought that we, as being the recipients of the great forgiveness of God, should also forgive everyone his brother; and this forgiveness must be from the heart. [But is this debt the debt of the sinner or of a servant? Please read the two last verses of the chapter. —J. M. ]

The market-place brings buyer and seller together. The Jews who were, and are masters in the art of obtaining sound bargains, refused even a respectful hearing to Him who came to give something for nothing. The Lord condemned the fickle attitude of the Jews to the things of God. The foolish and unstable character of men found nothing which could please either in the Baptist or in the Son of Man. Neither fasting nor "eating and drinking" were right in their perverted eyes, yet how foolish is this attitude. God expects us to have wisdom and for those who lack it there is no excuse, for "if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God . . . ."

A. McC, L. C. S.

From Ilford. —Divine judgment is the result of sin in one form or another. **Sins** can be divided into two sections, sins of omission and sins of commission. The sins of commission are those which are directly opposed to God's will, and are fairly easy to detect, but sins of omission are done often unwittingly. How easy it is for us to omit to do something God has commanded us, without even realising it! This is the sin which seems to occupy the four parables which are mentioned in the syllabus. Matthew 7. 26, 27 can perhaps be likened to the building of one's life. We have a choice of foundations, either on Christ's teaching or according to worldly knowledge. This parable brings a big responsibility on those who have received more light. The greater the light the greater the responsibility. There may be those who have never heard of God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, and therefore they cannot be judged for not accepting Him as their Saviour.

The man of Luke 12. 13-21 failed to render to God what was His due. God had blessed him in many ways, but he failed to trace it back to God, taking all the honour for the great bounty which he possessed. How, indeed, like Nebuchadnezzar, who too failed to acknowledge that God had given him the great kingdom which he ruled. This sin is one which can easily beset any of us. Let us realise that every good gift and every perfect boon cometh down from above, and it is only becoming that we should return God thanks for them. *E. II. Jarvis.*

From London, S. E. —The main principle of the parable of Matthew 18. 21-35 lies in the truth that the measure of mercy and forgiveness extended to our fellows will be the measure of the same which we shall obtain from God. This truth may be exemplified by the beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5. 7), and conversely can be viewed from the scripture in 1 John 4. 20, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." Furthermore mention might be made of the Lord's prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6. 12), where the same thought is extended.

It is fairly evident that the parable divides itself naturally, into two incidents.

1. The king and his servant.
2. The servant and his fellow.

The king can be compared to God the Father for at least four reasons: —

1. God is usually associated with the forgiveness of sins.
2. Worship from servant (verse 26).
3. The king's vast wealth.
4. The king's compassion.

The servant (taking everything into consideration) seems to be a believer who had fallen into debt to God (note verse 35). [I regard this to be the correct view. —J. M. J. A time comes when the king would "take account of his servants" (verse 23, A. V. ), and amongst these is found one who is in very great debt. In money value it would amount to something like two and half million pounds.

If it is a saved person here under consideration the question will immediately spring to the mind—is it possible for a saint to be in such vast debt? The following scriptures are suggestive in this connection:—

1. Those of Malachi's day are asked, "Will a man rob God? For ye rob me."
2. "We are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17. 10).
3. Parable of three servants with talents.
4. "So then, brethren we are debtors" (Romans 8. 12).

On being found unable to pay his debt the king commands:—

the servant,  
his wife,  
his children,  
and everything he has, to be sold.

But on hearing the worship (preceded by the falling down), and plea of the servant, the king is moved with compassion and grants a full release. May not the spiritual significance lie in the fact that the servant's heart was lifted up in pride and was riot thus giving the true worship which the king demanded? • So that by falling down and worshipping, he fulfilled the obligations required of his lord. It must not be overlooked, that the servant first confessed and admitted his debt.

If the supposition previously made, *i. e.*, "of a heart lifted up in pride being broken down," is the crux of this parable, it is sad to relate that this change of condition was only short lived. The good received was not passed on. By sheer callousness the servant despatches his fellow to the prison for a very paltry sum (£3). No wonder many who saw it were exceedingly sorry. He was only to be sold and thus become a slave, whereas he uses physical violence upon his fellow and ends by throwing him into prison. If it is not possible to understand all the importance of these closing phrases, yet the ominous note of the last verse cannot be ignored. "So also shall My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

*Reginald A. Wood.*

**From** Brantford, Ont. —Abraham truly said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Whether it be those who have walked closest to their Lord, or those who sink in the direst of sins, all alike can rest unreservedly on the judgments of God as being true and righteous altogether. There is no respect of persons with God and all will be judged according to the measure of their enlightenment. We suggest the judgments of God to be the decisions of God made according to His sovereign will either for the blessing or punishment of His creatures.

The longsuffering and mercy of God are seen in the king of whom we read in Matthew 18., who upon the confession of the erring one was willing to forgive. The greatness of the debt and the debtor's inability to pay speak plainly of poor fallen man, but upon repentance toward God and the confession of guilt a righteous merciful judge can pardon and forgive. [See paper from London]. Over against this we learn from the parable of Luke 12. that God can righteously descend in summary judgment upon any who despise His kindness and goodness, and refuse to have Him in their thoughts and decisions.

*James Bell.*

#### NOTICE TO CORNERS.

Owing to the difficulties in which the printers find themselves it is considered desirable to ask Corners in the British Isles to send monthly contributions about 10 days earlier than has been customary, viz., to be received by the 20th of the month (or about 6 weeks before issue) by:—

Mr. G. Prasher,

61., Delacourt Road,

Fallowfield, Manchester, 14.

Other correspondence should be sent to Dr. Doodson as hitherto.

Corners are asked to put this new arrangement into effect as quickly as possible.

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

Principles of divine judgment **as** illustrated in the parables.

**From** Vancouver. —" Every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall **be** likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand " (Matthew 7. 26). These words of the Lord comprehend all that goes before, from chapter 5. 3 onwards, and embody the universal law of the Lord, **as** it will go forth from Jerusalem in the Millennium.

This is undoubtedly the primary application of the truth set forth, **as** it deals with the kingdom, which was preached by the Lord, but held in abeyance " until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in " (Romans 11. 25).

Up to Matthew 7. and beyond it, the Lord was appealing to the nation of Israel, who were already closing the gates of the kingdom of heaven against themselves. [Matthew 5. 1 is important as to those who are primarily **in** view in the sermon on the mount. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain: and when He had sat down, **His** disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth and taught them. " Who are indicated in " Ye are the salt of the earth "; " Ye are the light of the world, " Israel or the Lord's disciples? Surely the latter. Note how frequently " Ye " **is** used in chapter 5. Note verse 48, " Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father **is** perfect. " This **is** certainly the disciples. Though the Lord was speaking to **His** disciples then, there are principles which apply to disciples not only then, but also now and **in** future times. —**J. M. J.** Gentiles are not embraced here (see verse 6; also Matthew. 15. 24) [Surely we must differentiate between Gentiles, as such, and those from amongst the Gentiles who believe. —**J. M. J.** yet much of the beautiful spiritual and moral teaching contained in the Lord's words, although not received by **His** own people generally, forms the basis of divine instruction and teaching **as** found **in** the epistles, and applying to both Jew and Gentile believers. **We** can discern the perfect harmony of God's principles **in** the Lord's words, because of their suitability to more than one dispensation.

Judgment **is** inevitable for all, and none shall escape its solemn issues, but **its** severity will be according to the measure of responsibility which comes by hearing the voice of God (see Matthew 11. 20-24). The people who heard the Lord's words were a mixed company. They were the most privileged people of **all time**, for they heard the message of God from the lips of the Incarnate Word. In spite of this, the Lord anticipated unbelief **in** those who professed to be **His** followers. **He** knew the hearts of all men, and their faith would be tested by Him, with whom actions are weighed (see John 6. 64-66).

**R. Armstrong.**

**From** Hamilton, Ontario. —In the parable of the children at play the Lord **Jesus** brings out the irresponsiveness of the Pharisees to comply with His word. It reminds us of Romans 10. 21: " All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. " They despised the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering because of their hardness and impenitence of heart, treasuring up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. A truly divine principle is borne out in the parable of the Unmerciful Steward. When he went out, and the opportunity was afforded, he failed to forgive his debtors, and so if we forgive not men their trespasses neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses, but we should forgive each other even as God also in Christ forgave us. **J. Ramage.**

Service: its responsibilities **and** recompense.

**From** Manchester. —The brief but telling parable of Luke 17. 7-10 exemplifies the true basis of our responsibilities **as** bondservants of the Lord Jesus. **He** has a right to our service by the claims of His death, for we were " bought with a price. " The utmost zeal about His business can ill repay the love which led **Him** to ransom us by the shedding of His own life's blood, so that when we have done all the things that are commanded we can but say, " **We** are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do. "

Yet other parables show the exceeding grace of God toward us, for not only are we honoured with the privilege of service, but encouraged with the promise of reward for diligence in His things.. The parables of the talents and the pounds both illustrate the close relation between privilege and responsibility in this connection. For instance the man whose pound made ten pounds was given also the pound of the sluggard, for " unto every one that hath shall be given, " while to those whose talents were multiplied by trading " many things " were committed.

It would seem that the unprofitable servant of Matthew 25. 30 must refer to an unsaved person who has squandered life's opportunities, " presenting his members **as** instruments of unrighteousness, " since he is cast into the outer darkness where there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. [Though the parable of Matthew 25. 14-30 contains moral teaching which we may apply to servants of Christ to-day, the primary application is to a day yet future, to the time after the Church has gone and prior to the Lord's return to earth. The unprofitable servant belongs to such a class as the foolish virgins of verses 1-13 and that of the sons of the kingdom of Matthew 8. 12, such as outwardly were professing to be what they inwardly and in reality were not. They had no oil in their vessels to keep the lamp of profession and testimony alight. No servant of Christ, however unprofitable to-day will be cast into outer darkness. —J. M. J. It is evident from verses 24, 25, that the slothful servant had no true conception of his Lord's character, and this would well reflect the tendency of many to harbour hard thoughts of God, making this an excuse for their being absorbed in carnal things. The parable generally illustrates the solemn truth applicable to all men that account must be given to God for the use made of life's opportunity. In the present day, of course, this will initially be dependent upon a right decision regarding the Saviour. It is noteworthy that the parable of the pounds does not include any judgment on the slothful servant, other than his being deprived of the pound committed to him. Moreover this parable emphasises that the ten servants were carrying out their lord's command in a hostile environment. We therefore suggest that it may more specifically apply to believers in the Lord Jesus, endeavouring to serve Him " until He come. "

It was thought that the story of the unjust steward contains several lessons, **as** summarised by the Lord Jesus in verses 8 to 13 of Luke 16., *e. g.* •

- (1) The need for astuteness and wisdom in God's things (verse 8). It was these qualities which won the lord's commendation. While the unjust steward was a true " son of this age, " and used his wisdom for wrong ends, the sons of light would do well to apply similar astuteness in a righteous sense.

- (2) That the right use of material things, and the cultivation of good relations with men by that means may often help to advance God's work (verse 9). We should take thought for things honourable before men, and not make ourselves obnoxious to them by eccentric behaviour. Being in the world we may use the world, though not to the full. How cleverly, for instance, did the Apostle Paul use the legal advantages of Roman citizenship for his personal protection!
- (3) That detailed fidelity<sup>1</sup> in service is highly valued by God (verses 10 to 13). This principle is stressed several times in the parables dealing with service; and its application to the detail of our lives should cause real exercise of heart. Certainly the extent to which responsibility will be committed to us in eternity is dependent on our fidelity on earth (c. f. David's promotion from shepherd boy to king—Psalm 78. 70-72).
- (4) That we can effectively serve only one master (verse 13). If the unjust steward's zeal and wisdom had been devoted entirely to the good of his master all would have been well. Instead his heart was divided between the desire for riches and the desire to serve his master, which resulted in disaster.

*G. Prasher, Jun.*

From **Edinburgh**. —The Lord Jesus Christ has committed unto us, **His** servants, a stewardship, and has given to each of us gifts or talents wherewith to fulfil it. **Of** this stewardship and of these talents, the goods and the talents respectively seem to speak, in Matthew 25. 14, 15. The same talents are not given to all men. They are given according to a man's ability, and may be increased by use. From him to whom much is given, much is required, and from him to whom little is given, little is required. God does not ask anyone to do more than he is able to do, but He expects everyone to do all he is able to do. It is possible that God may allow one person to do what another ought to have done, but failed to do. The apostle Paul said, "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4. 1, 2). In a coming day we shall give account of the use to which we have put our talents, and our Master will reward us according to our faithfulness. In eternity each of us will wear the garment he has woven in time.

The parable of the unrighteous steward teaches the necessity of faithfulness even in little matters, and in material things. We must not allow ourselves to become slaves of mammon, but in all our dealings with the unrighteous mammon, we must act righteously and faithfully, as servants of God who shall give account to God. If we are unfaithful in material things, the true riches, *i. e.*, the heavenly riches, will not be committed to us.

In Luke 17. 7-10, plowing suggests our responsibility with regard to the gospel, and keeping sheep, our responsibility to care for one another. When we have fulfilled these, however, we have a further responsibility, we must give God His portion. All these things are commanded us, and, having fulfilled them we have nothing wherein to glory. The apostle Paul said, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward; but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9. 16-18). If we give God His portion He will give us our portion.

The Lord Jesus spoke the parable which is recorded in Luke 19. 11-27, to the multitudes, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. This parable surely speaks of His own departure and return. The servants are His own followers and they have responsibilities to fulfil till He comes. The citizens are those who crucified Him, and those who reject Him to-day. Here again, the servants are judged, and positions of authority in the kingdom are given to those who have been faithful in lesser things. The unfaithful servant loses all to the servant who had been faithful. Then comes the judgment of the Lord's enemies. "These mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

The one who would become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ must be willing to pay the cost, to renounce all he has and to consecrate himself to Him. To him who does so Christ will supply all he needs throughout his life. He who begins and then turns back is like salt which has lost its savour, which is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill. Such a man is fit neither for the service of God nor for the world.

The parable of the lamp on the stand shews that we have responsibilities towards our fellow men. The person who has come to Christ and received the light must let his light shine unto others. The lampstand\* we suggest, has an application to our collective testimony.

*John A. H. Robertson.*

#### EXTRACTS.

**From Hereford.** —The parables of the "talents" and the "pounds" have many points in common. The parable of the pounds might be Luke's version of the parable of the talents with perhaps some further teaching of the Lord embodied therein. [Are not the differences between the parables too radical to admit of this suggestion?]. The three servants in Matthew 25. were given the talents in proportion to their several ability. Our responsibility is to be in readiness to serve, "for if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not" (2 Corinthians 8. 12). The first two went straightway and traded (*i. e.*, toiled, laboured), and the increase in both cases was 100 per cent, therefore the Lord spake exactly the same words to them both. What a sad picture we see in the third servant! When his lord came to make a reckoning with him, the servant did not so much as confess his utter worthlessness, but straightway sought to make excuse.

The parable in Luke 19. would probably convey much to the people who would be familiar with the history of the Herodian family. It is said that in the case of Archelaus the Jews had actually sent a deputation to Augustus to recount his cruelties and oppose his claims. Some of the thoughts indicated are: His near departure from the world; the uncertainty of His return; the condemnation of the slothful; the splendid reward of all who should serve Him well. We should note especially the clear indication of the individual reckoning.

In the parable in Luke 16., the Lord urged the disciples to the foresight of a spiritual wisdom by an example drawn from the foresight of a criminal cleverness. The salient feature is not the steward's injustice, but the foresight with which he anticipated and the skill with which he provided against a future day. The steward, having been a bad steward, showed diligence, steady purpose, and clear sagacity in his dishonest plan for extricating himself from the consequences of past dishonesty.

*Robert Tidmas.*

**From Yeovil.** —Matthew 25. 14-30 and Luke 19. 11-27, have much in common. There is but One to whom the servants are responsible. He is viewed in both cases as going away, but going away with the thought of returning. In Matthew the parable of the virgins is joined to the parable of the stewards. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." Individual cases are here brought before us, though He has more talents than eight and servants than three. It is not the size of the trusteeship, but the fact. It was not the size of the widow's gift that decided its true value. The responsibility is according to our ability, for some have greater ability! The recompense at the end when judgment is made upon His faithful servants is that they are brought into the very joy which belongs to their Lord, this joy being that of having accomplished the will of God. It is noticeable that whereas in Matthew 25., where the faithful servants gain in like proportion, there is the record of personal obedience, "I have gained"; in Luke 19., where the proportion of each is very different, and the gain much more, the servant says nothing at all as to Himself: "Lord, Thy pound hath made ten pounds more." The Lord's answer does not leave out the labourer: He, in entire contrast does not mention the pound. Note, too, He first uses the words "Well done," and then describes the servants as good, next refers to a becoming faithfulness, and then gives a reward. The words of recompense are, "Have thou authority." This will be more than compensation for all the rebuffs, and the losses and sufferings here.

*S. J. J.*

**From Cardiff.** —In Matthew 5., we have those words, "Ye are the salt of the earth" and "Ye are the light of the world." The salt **and** the light give aspects of witnessing for God. Light dispels darkness; salt prevents corruption. Darkness and corruption go together, and the double symbolism adds force to this picture of the world's need, and of our responsibility as the Lord's disciples.

Returning to the parable of the talents, it is seen that at the Lord's coming there will be a distribution of rewards on certain principles. The servants who traded were made rulers over many things, however varied their success had been. The same words of commendation were addressed to each of them, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." It should not be thought, however, that the "many things" were equal in both cases, and it is suggested that the reward is always closely allied in character to the service rendered.

*Martin D. Follett.*

**From Atherton.** —In 2 Kings 12. 15 we find the words, "For they dealt faithfully." Again, the Apostle reminds us that "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4. 1, 2), and this principle is shown by the parables to be most vital in connection with service, *e. g.*, Matthew 25. 23: "Well done, good and faithful servant"; "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much" (Luke 16. 10); "Who then is the faithful and wise steward?" (Luke 12. 42). In connection with service there is in each case a measure of responsibility devolving upon us, and we shall each be accountable as to that responsibility at the judgment seat of Christ.

Of the two narratives in Matthew 25. and Luke 19. the first brings before us the thought of differences in the talents given—five, two and one according to their several ability—while in the second each receives the same amount. Luke clearly indicates that we all receive some gift from the Lord. It is evident that the man who traded made ten pounds and put in more work than his fellow servants. In connection with Revelation 3. 11, it was asked whether the words, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown," are comparable to the unfaithful steward losing his talent. It was said in regard to the crown, that the thought in the word "take" is "seize," and the Lord would not countenance us seeking to do this with fellow-servants. It would rather seem to indicate the adversary's attacks upon us, thus causing us to lose it. On the contrary, it was thought that a man can forfeit his crown, because of unfaithful service, it being given to another, as in the case of the faithful steward who added five talents to those he possessed. We thus considered the possibility of a saint losing his or her talent in time; some thought that this was possible especially in the case of a total neglect of the gift given. John Mark was referred to, for at one time in his experience, he neglected his gift, but God did not take it from him, seeing that at a later date he is found ministering again. Taking the analogy of the parable, it would seem that the gift or talent is not taken away in time, but at the judgment seat, when it is passed on to the servant with five talents. [See note in Manchester's paper.] *G. Sankey.*

**From London, S. E.** —In Matthew 25. 14-30 it is to each one according to his several ability. Cannot these be looked on as (1) opportunity and uses made of the ability; (2) diligence in doing good *{e. g., "To do good and communicate, " "He went about doing good, " "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"}*; (3) increasing and developing what we have?

The expression, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," may mean that we are to use the things which the world uses for its prosperity and pleasure (money, riches, etc.) in such a way that they will become a source of blessing to others, and to ourselves; may we not also use our earthly means to those around in such a way as to kindle sympathy and love which would be of value if misfortune came as it may to each?

Luke 17. 7-10 depicts the pastoral life of Palestine in which the servant on leaving the field after an arduous day is expected by the master to wait on him at meals. **He is** in duty bound to do so. He does not complain. When this parable was written the master's control was far more absolute than it **is** these days in this country, yet Christ uses this as an illustration of what should be the attitude of the child of God **in** connection with service. When he has done his utmost he has done no more than he should and **is** still to look upon himself as an unprofitable servant; for after all he has only rendered to God what is already His by right.

*E. C. Leamy.*

**From** Hamilton, Ontario. —In the parable of the servants and talents of Matthew 25., possibly the most outstanding feature **is** that in the day of reckoning it **is** faithfulness that will be recompensed and slothfulness will be condemned. Three things are worthy of note in the parable and may have a counterpart in measure in the House of God: first the Lord was dealing with servants, second He delivered to them **His** goods, third He gave to each according to his several ability. Peter speaks of us as stewards or servants, and the goods delivered to us are the oracles of God ("I have given them Thy Word," said the Lord Jesus) and we should become teachers of the oracles of God (Hebrews 5. 12). Peter further says we should speak or minister according as each hath received a gift. Paul so speaks of himself in Ephesians 3. 7, 8. We are one body in Christ and severally members one of another, having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us. Somewhat similar teaching **is** borne out in Luke 19. in the parable of the servants and pounds. In the Master's absence we are left to serve **Him** and for **His** profit particularly. Said Paul, "Woe **is** unto me, **if** I preach not the gospel." May we so work that He shall indeed see of the travail of His soul when He comes. The word to the Colossians comes equally to us, "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense... ye serve the Lord Christ." Like the plowman or the shepherd of Luke 17. we are bondservants, we are not our own, having been bought with a price. In the parable of the unjust steward, a somewhat similar thought **is** seen, for in doing what he did he was looking to the future. He was not recommended for what he had done, but he was for the wisdom that prompted his unrighteous acts with his lord's debtors. He was like the ant, which is wise, looks to the future, and makes provision for the winter, by gathering in food in the summer and harvest. To what extent are we as God's children endowed with this wisdom? For us the present is inseparably linked with the future, and we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ that each may receive the things *done in the body*. Have we yet sat down and pondered the terms of discipleship? Like the king of Luke 14. let us consider well, and resign ourselves to the consequences of denying self and taking up the cross daily and following **Him**. Are we prepared to lay aside all incumbrance, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and have our gaze focussed upon Jesus, or shall our lives present the picture of the unfinished tower? We require to take earnest heed to the exhortation, that we lose not that we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

*W. Young.*

**From** Birkenhead. —Matthew 28. contains the National Service Act for the believer. Clause follows clause in the order of advancement towards the state in which God's faithful stewards are expected to be found by **Him** when the hope of their calling is fulfilled. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And when we have done all this we are yet unprofitable servants, having done only that which it was our duty to do. Physical disability provides no exemptions and the man with one talent must obey the law with the possessor of ten talents. Many follow the example of the man with one talent and deceive themselves with the same excuse with which they hope to deceive God. The present **is** very near and the future a long distance away **if** once the Cross becomes distant.

Each man who used his wealth gained an increase and only the man who did not seek to use his talent did not gain. So the Lord adds grace unto grace, and blessing unto blessing to those who are willing. No excuse was left to the servant, nothing was asked of him that exceeded his capabilities, for the Lord gave to each according to his several ability. Some believers are still willing to say, as the foolish steward said, "The fault is not in me but in you."

The Luke parable speaks differently in some aspects; for example, the men start off with an equal sum, and the rewards are in proportion to service. It was suggested that perhaps this basic possession of the Christian at his conversion is the opportunity which he receives because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The opportunity will end for the unfaithful steward with this life, but the opportunity of service continues into the future for the faithful. Of course the primary application of both these parables is to the Jewish nation, but the wisdom of the Lord is for us as truly as for them. [Note the difference between servants and citizens. Surely the servants are the Lord's disciples. —J. M.]

The figure of the servant is beautifully descriptive. It is summed up in the lines of the hymn—

" Now to watch, to work, to war  
And then to rest for ever. "

The promise goes hand in hand with the commandment and the future is placed on the golden horizon of life to make life sweeter and brighter. Unprofitable servants we are, for we have not even done that which it was our duty to do, but He knows the extent of our faithfulness and His heart is made glad by the willing servant, the servant who remembers that after the day's toil there will be ample recompense in the green pastures and still waters of "Emmanuel's land."

*R. McC, L. B. H.*

From Ilford. —As the subject implies, all service for God carries with it responsibilities as well as recompenses and the parables under consideration aptly illustrate this important divine truth. At the very outset it is important to understand that service needs servants and that the scriptural word for the latter, viz., bondservants, has a deeper meaning than its modern counterpart. We are not our own, we are bought with a price, and any gift, therefore, entrusted to us we hold in trust from the Giver. In Matthew 25, 14-30 and Luke 19, 11-27 we have two parables, very similar in character, which have this truth as a fundamental basis. In the first instance, each servant, according to his ability, is entrusted with a stewardship and he is required to give an account of his use or otherwise of that in his care. This is typified by the gifts that God has entrusted to us, maybe varying in character, but nevertheless all to be used as best possible in service for God. The greater our ability, the greater the responsibility. Nevertheless, we all have equal opportunity of serving Him in one way or another.

Buying up the opportunities that come our way should ever be our aim. Even the unjust steward of Luke 16, 1-13 used the little time at his disposal profitably, and on a higher plane we should be instant to use whatever opportunities we have to show our love for the Lord. It may entail present hardship and suffering as Luke 14, 27 clearly shows. We do well to count the cost. Many failing to do so have failed to finish the course. God desires whole-hearted discipleship. Christ spared not Himself and He has given us an example that we might follow His steps. Our lives should be pointers to Christ and He should so live in us that imbued with affection for Him we should be prepared to end our earthly pilgrimage as He did, assured that we have fought the good fight faithfully and well, and that there is a crown of righteousness awaiting us.

The parable of the lamp in Luke 8, 16 should further impress us with utilising our gift. It is our business as disciples of the great Light Giver to see that the darkness of this world is illuminated: "Ye are the light of the world." Our lights may be of varying candle-power, one giving only the glimmer of a single candle, but nevertheless shining brightly in a dark world; or of the intensity of a lighthouse and yet because the glass is blackened giving little or no illumination to those who are without.

*A. G. Jarvis, Jun.*

From Broxburn. —In Matthew 25. 14 the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man, going into another country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods, " to each according to his several ability. " It is worthy of note that the man apportioned the talents to his servants according as he perceived **in** them their ability to employ judiciously what had been committed to them. All men have natural ability of one sort or another, and when the grace of God reaches an individual it places a higher and worthier objective before him and diverts his talents into other channels, wherein they may be employed for the glory of God and the blessing of others. Diligence and faithfulness characterised the servant who received five talents, for straightway he went and traded with them and gained other five talents and so likewise he who received two talents; but alas, he who received but one, instead of imitating his fellow-servants and showing a proportionately greater zeal that he might utilise in fullest measure the little that he had, went and digged **in** the earth and hid his lord's money. How many of God's children are losing their talents to-day **in** a similar manner, by allowing the things of the world, its business, its pleasures, the pursuit of riches, so to encroach upon the time that should be spent in God's service, that eventually there **is** nothing in their lives for Him ! When the lord of those servants returned and made a reckoning with them, it became evident that the failure of the one was traceable to the fact that he had wrong thoughts about his master, and cited this **as** a pretext for his own negligence. His lord therefore took away the talent that he had and gave it to him that had ten, even according to the words of Proverbs 10. 4, " **He** becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. " It was written, " Seest thou a man diligent **in** his business ? **He** shall stand before kings " (proverbs 22. 29).

*Henry Dyer.*

From Leicester. —" Steward, " " household servant " and " slave " are viewed in the portions of scripture under review. The " small " talent is not to be despised for there needs to be a combination of small and great to further the work of the Lord.

The " burying " of the talent suggests the thought of hiding one's light under a bushel, and the " wrapping up " of the pound in a " napkin, " which was associated with grave clothes, points to one who is still clinging to the old nature instead of walking in newness of life. All have gifts and the use thereof is their responsibility. It is possible for every child of God to get the " well done " of the Master.

Mammon may be regarded as money, which is perfectly legitimate in this life, but may be used for self and not to the glory of the Lord. A Christian is a steward, *i. e.*, one who does not own, but handles and **uses** the things committed to him, and he is responsible to his Lord to fulfil his responsibilities faithfully. The steward of Luke 16. was commended for his wisdom yet he lacked faithfulness. He attempted to acquire by cunning what he had lost by faithfulness. *L. C. S.*

#### Question and Answer.

Question from London. —The parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16. 9). Please explain—

- (a) " the mammon of unrighteousness " ;
- (b) " the eternal tabernacles " ;
- (c) who " they " are that receive into the eternal tabernacles.

Answer—

(a) Worldly wealth or riches.  
 (b) " the eternal tabernacles " are contrasted with " houses, " of verse 4. They describe the eternal dwellings of disciples of the Lord, this parable being spoken to disciples (verse 1).

(c) "The y" of verse 9 are such as disciples have made friends of by helping them with the riches of this world. These friends are saved persons like the disciples, and such kind acts as have been shown on earth will be remembered when this brief earthly life is past. We shall be remembered by what we have done. This is a sobering consideration. —J. M.

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## EDITORIAL.

The subject of prayer, which **is** the theme in this month's issue, **is** one of **such** intense interest to us all that we would enter into the joy of sharing thoughts on **the** matter. Why should men pray seeing that God is all-knowing and knows man's need and is all-powerful to supply that need? The answer to this question will without doubt be found in many parts of the Scriptures, but early in the dawn of human history will be found an answer in **few** words. It is said of Seth that he called his son's name Enosh, and that " then began men to call upon **the name** of Jehovah. " The Hebrew word for call here, *Qara*, means both " to call " **and** " to name. " Though there may be in the calling upon the **name** of Jehovah the thought of a divine witness to men, this, **I** judge, **is** a secondary **sense** to **the** thought of men seeking the aid to be found **in** the Person who owned the **name** Jehovah.

There is no doubt an oracle in the name Enosh. It reveals the attitude of the human mind at the time to the state of man, in that man was **seen to** be a frail, mortal being, **as** the word Enosh means. Thus in their frailty men began to call upon God. This is the ground out of which the idea of prayer grew. It should be **as** natural for those that know God, who believe that **He** is, to cry out in their weakness and need to Him as it is for a child to cry for a mother's help and care. Human weakness needs the strength of the Almighty. Nothing is more natural to a saint than prayer and nothing hinders prayer so much **as** the stoutness of the flesh. It is when the flesh is weakest and we know that our name is " Enosh " that we are strongest, because we are leaning on a Divine arm. **We** borrow from the much better words of the Apostle, who said, " When **I am** weak then **am** I strong. "

**We** come to another man, Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who has another voice for us in this matter of prayer, even that of communion. The Apostle senses the import of his life when he says, " **He** that cometh to God must believe that **He** is, and that **He** is the rewarder of them that seek after Him " (Hebrews 11. 6). Enoch pleased God well in that he believed on Him and came to Him, sought after Him and was richly rewarded as a result. All this is summed up in few words in Genesis 5. " Enoch walked with God. " How can man walk with God but by communion? How did God walk in Eden? It is said that " they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day " (Genesis 3. 8). The voice of God meant that God was there, " for the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God: " **As** God walked so Enoch walked with God. God listened to the voice of Enoch and Enoch listened to the voice of God. **We** do believe that God is, and we must believe that **He** hears and **answers** prayer.

David's words in Psalm 28. 1 clearly set forth what is contained **in** Enoch's experience of walking with God. —

" Unto Thee, **O** Jehovah, will I call;  
My Rock, be not Thou deaf unto **me**. "

This **is** David's prayer **unto** God, **and** then follows his anticipation of God's answer—

" Lest, if Thou be silent unto **me**,  
I become like **them** that go down into the pit. "

This maintaining of a clear up and down line of communication kept David and also Enoch from becoming as men of the world, like those that go down to the pit. In idolatry, as for instance, in the worship of Baal, there is nothing like this, for whilst " they cried aloud... there was neither voice, nor any to answer " (1 Kings 16. 28, 29).

The condition of heart of the person that prays is an important factor as Proverbs 28. 9 shows. —

" He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law,  
Even his prayer is an abomination. "

Then Proverbs 15. 8 says. —

" The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD:

**But** the prayer of the upright is His delight. "

This is illustrated in the case of Job and his three friends. They were told to go to Job with their sacrifices and that he would pray for them.

" Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to **my** servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly; for **ye** have not spoken of **Me** the thing that is right as My servant Job hath " (Job. 41. 8). These words contain very sobering thought as to correctness of behaviour, even to our words, **if** we are to **be** heard by God in prayer both for ourselves and others.

Many are the exhortations to prayer in the Scriptures showing that God wants to hear us speak to Him. **He** will not deny us what is best for us, and to the spiritually minded believer even the bitter is sweet and the medicine is food, as the hymn says. **If He** delays His answer there is a cause. **It may be** that He is working in the unseen, quiet way **He** uses, and in due time **He** will answer when **He** has perfected His work. **We** can safely leave our matters to His **perfect** wisdom. \* J. M.

### THE PARABLES.

Service: its responsibilities **and** recompense.

**From** Brantford. —Throughout the various parables that the Lord spoke while here on earth referring to the great subject of service, **we** cannot help but notice that the type of steward or servant that is required is one who is willing and desirous of co-operating in all things pertaining to the will and interest of his Lord and Master. The servant will also realise that he cannot serve two masters and therefore his Lord will receive his undivided service.

The master, in the parable of Matthew 25. gave his own servants talents according to their individual ability. **He** was interested in his own servants and entrusted to them his own gifts, thereby placing confidence in them. **He** expected to receive the co-operation of their individual interest in his things. The story reveals how some traded and **did** well, and when their Lord returned they **were** enthusiastic over their labours and were not ashamed. They that had done well, had done what was required of them and more. The servant who only had one talent was not interested in the things of the Master, **but** was slothful and rather took the course of least resistance. **He** was unfaithful in his work and responsibility and, therefore, he earned only what was his reward. Those who were faithful received their reward and a beautiful commendation from the one whom they loved and served.

Not only **are** we to do what is justly required of us, **but** we are to **be** prepared to carry on beyond and above what is our lawful duty. This is a characteristic that will bring **great** rewards to a true servant. As described in Luke 17., the servant had completed all that was his duty, **but** let us endeavour to go on beyond **and** above the demands of duty. J. J. Thomas.

From Vancouver. —The prayer of Moses, the man of God was:

" Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants,  
And Thy glory upon their children.  
And let the beauty of the LORD our God **be** upon us;  
And establish Thou the work of our hands upon us;  
**Yea**, the work of our hands establish Thou it. "

It is recorded of Moses that he was faithful in all God's house **as a servant**; and the longings of his heart are uttered in Psalm **90**. One of the first things that an employer requires is that those who serve him should obey his instructions; so with God in His service. Faithfulness and complete obedience are necessary.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the pattern Servant. His was unconditional obedience. Well did He know the import of His own words, "**Ye** cannot serve God and mammon." Christian service is seen clearly in Colossians **3. 7**, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or **in** deed, do all in the **name** of the Lord Jesus. "

" I do nothing of Myself, " the Lord said, " but as the Father taught **Me**, I speak these things " (John **8. 28**). The true servant seeks to be lost sight of, and his master is the one that is magnified. The apostle Paul was appointed to the Lord's service, serving with all " lowliness of mind " (Acts **20. 19**). *H. M. L.*

### THE PARABLES.

#### Prayers, Supplications and Intercessions.

From Yeovil. —In Luke **11. we** have the request of the disciples to **be** taught *how* to pray. The answer of the Lord Jesus includes the relation of the parable of the importunate friend. In this parable **we** note the following things which are taught and should characterise our prayers.

First and most important, the fervency and earnestness of the **prayer** were such as **made** the unwilling friend **get up at** midnight and satisfy the desire of the one who asked. So with us, when praying to God **we** should do so with a real, burning intensity, such as will show that we mean what **we** say. This should encourage us to pray with genuine earnestness.

Secondly **we** notice how a natural father's care for his child's welfare is used to illustrate the wonderful care that God has for His children. This then should **beget** a full and absolute confidence in God our Father, just as a natural child would have in its father. **We** know a natural father provides good things for the child. Do we know that God will provide the good things **we** ask for to the same **degree**? If not, let us just consider quietly and carefully the wonderful truth here, and **we** will have our confidence in our God much strengthened.

These would seem to **be** the chief lessons in this parable and may **be** summed up in the words of Hebrews **11. 6**, "**He** that cometh to God must believe that **He** is, and that **He** is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him " (A. V. ).

In Luke **18. we** learn that the antidote for fainting is praying. God knows **we** are prone to faint and so gives us this parable.

The lesson here seems to **be** that of continuing in prayer. The woman **may** not have been fervent or earnest in her requests, **but** the constant repetition gained her the thing she sought. So **we** should not **be** dismayed **if we** do not **get** an **immediate** answer, **but** continue on in full confidence.

The parable of the Pharisee and publican seems to complete the conditions of successful prayer, the last being humility.

So **we** have these conditions and **we** should endeavour to fulfil them in our prayers; fervency, full confidence in God, consistency and humility.

*Austin S. Glover.*

From Birkenhead. —Men who are invited to speak with the kings of earth feel more privileged and thankful than **we** often feel **when we** speak with God. It is beyond the reach of the mind to appreciate the small space which a man occupies and his **effect** upon the world, and **yet** this tiny unit is granted the right to speak to his Creator.

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican shows the correct state of mind in which men should approach God. The satisfied, selfish Pharisee stands in the temple court and informs God of the terrible state of others, thanking Him also that there is one person who is on a higher, more righteous plane than his fellows. His foolishness is the foolishness of many men to-day and it may be ours unless we are careful. The opposite figure is bowed with shame and fear, because he knows the great insurmountable difference between God's standard and man's attainment, and because God delights to satisfy the seeker the need of the publican is met. It is not merely a present need, but a continuous one and it will bring the publican's feet to the temple many times and bring tears from his eyes night and day. He might leave his prayer until the bonds of old age hold him, or, like many men to-day, wait until calamity finds him and in the meantime, perhaps, he would forget how to pray.

The parable of Luke 11. 5 urges perseverance. Prayer is not to make God do something which He does not wish to do or to force His hand. Only a consciousness of need forces earnest prayer, and earnestness will persevere until the answer is received. Perseverance is not obstinacy, but requires faith. David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." Expectancy is often lacking in the saints. When God opened the prison gates for Peter, because of the knocking of His people, those who were gathered in prayer so little expected God to do so much to answer them that they would not believe the word of the maid. God does not always answer so immediately, but yet the order stands, "Pray without fainting."

Intercession seems to be the petition of one for others. The Lord intercedes before God's face and we are told in Romans 8. 26 that "the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." In 1 Timothy 2. 1 the Christian is intercessor, and the responsibility is laid upon him (in spite of all the hatred and dislike which he may be shown) to intercede for all men.

*J. Turner.*

From **Ilford**. —The parables contained in these two scriptures should be of great practical help to us. In the first parable the meaning seems quite clear. First of all the man who wanted the loaves realised his need, and that he could not meet what was required of him. But more than that he also had a friend to whom he could go, and whom he knew was able to meet the need. We too have a Friend, a Friend indeed, that sticketh closer than a brother. He is willing and able to meet our needs, but He wants us to come to Him and make them known. We should indeed remember that He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.

In the second parable, in Luke 18., we see the persistence of the woman in asking the judge to avenge her of her adversary. This is a lesson to us that we should not only pray once for something which may be desired, but should be persistent in our prayers. We recall to mind the scene of our Lord Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane.

The third parable indicates the manner in which we should approach God in prayer. We should not approach Him in a pompous way, full of our own righteousness, but in a humble and contrite spirit, realising that all our righteousnesses are before God as filthy rags.

Reverting back to the first parable we read, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Not only should we have the prayerful spirit, but seeking speaks of diligence, and knocking speaks of being prepared to wait. If we knock at a door it does not immediately open, so we must be prepared to await His will. When should we need to pray then? Ephesians 6. 18 tells us quite plainly, "at all seasons." As we read too in Philip-pians 4. 6, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." He not only hears prayer, but is also a God that answers prayer, and He wishes us to thank **Him** for past mercies.

*E. H. Jarvis.*

## EXTRACTS,

**From Hereford.** —In the parables of the unjust judge and the importunate friend, the Lord brought clearly before His hearers how, by constantly making request, a man is able, in natural affairs, to get his petitions granted. The subjects of the requests were of great urgency, and the petitioners were so wholehearted that nothing short of the gratification of their longings could bring about the cessation of their pleadings. Before God is approached in prayer with supplication and intercession, it is well that the subject of petition be carefully considered, so that any requests made might be lawful and needful, and then faith in the ability of God will find expression in our continuing in prayer until the request is fulfilled. Whilst man ignores requests, hoping the petitioner will tire in his efforts, God does not always grant immediate fulfilment of a request, to the end that one's faith might be exercised.

In the parable of the publican and the Pharisee the publican, after humbly supplicating the mercy of God, went to his house justified rather than the Pharisee who, whilst seeking to pray to God, could think of nothing save his self-sufficiency. Whilst approaching God in prayer our human frailty should be constantly before us\* causing us to confess our weakness so that we might enjoy forgiveness and resultant blessing.

In the Lord's discourse on the father not giving a stone and a scorpion to his son in answer to the son's request for bread and fish, we get further encouragement to pray. For if an evil father knows how to give good gifts, how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him ! [God, of course, does not give the Holy Spirit in this dispensation as the result of prayer, but on the ground of faith in Christ. ]

The attitude of the man of prayer can be summed up thus: —(1) Asking a petition. (2) Seeking or looking for its fulfilment. (3) Knocking or waiting for its fulfilment.

*C. Regan, J. O. Tidmas.*

**From Atherton.** —It is very clear that there are distinguishing features between these three aspects of our speaking to God.

(1) **Supplication.** Here we have the incessant, earnest, fervent speaking to God; the word conveys a realisation of our complete dependence on God, and an acknowledgment too of who God is. We see in the thrice repeated supplication of the Lord in the garden the highest example of supplication. There was complete prostration of soul before God. To this scene among others, we feel sure the Apostle makes reference in those words, " Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered " (Hebrews 5. 7, 8).

Elijah, the man, and Anna, the woman, were cited as powerful examples of supplication. Newberry gives for the word supplication, " The effectual operating prayer. " As to Anna, she worshipped " with fastings and supplications night and day " (Luke 2. 36-38).

(2) **Prayers.** These may be defined as our wishes solemnly addressed to God, with which *ye* express our adoration, in a spirit of confessing our unworthiness.

(3) **Intercessions.** This *seems* to bring us into a very high sphere, for it involves our speaking to God on behalf of others, implying that we must be right with God ourselves before we can so act. There are two powerful examples of intercessions, namely, the Lord Jesus in John 17., and Moses in Exodus when interceding on behalf of Israel. As to the former it was suggested that John 17. indicated the three aspects of our subject, supplication, prayers and intercessions. After discussion, however, it was realised that in this prayer of the Lord Jesus there was no evidence of the attitude of the prostrate suppliant, as has already been observed from the prayer *in* the garden. In 1 Timothy 4. 5 the word prayer

is really intercession, which indicates that intercession is not only on behalf of persons, **but** also of things, **as** illustrated in the food that **we eat**. This is to **be** received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified **by** the word of God and, prayer (intercession).

An important question **was** ventilated regarding personal matters for which **we** might pray. **We** are exhorted to pray continually, for this is the main teaching of the parables before **us**—consistent, frequent, and persevering prayer. How then are **we** to know **as** we pray that God has no intention of answering? How then are **we** to know when to **cease** praying in such a **case**? It **was** considered that oftentimes, providing the individual **is** in touch with God, the answer will **be** given through the word since this **is** God's way of speaking to us. Further, circumstances may arise that prove very clearly that there **is** no further need for **us** to pray for the **matter** laid to our hearts. What we **ask** for **is** not always good for us, **as** seen in the **case** of Israel, for in the wilderness He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls (Psalm 106. 15).

As to the supplication of Luke 11. 13 and 18. 8 a query **was** raised. In each **case** it **was** considered to **be** dispensational truth and primarily having to do with Israel. As proof of this it **was** stated in connection with the first verse (chapter 11. 13) that the Holy Spirit to-day **is** given without our asking—a free **gift** from God at the new birth. Our asking to-day for the filling power of the Holy Spirit (**as** apart from His indwelling) **was** referred to, but even so **it was** thought that **we** shall know **His** filling power without the asking **if** our condition **be** right.

**As** to the latter scripture, this has to do definitely with the Lord's coming **as** Son of Man. The word faith here, according to the original, **is** prefaced **by** the definite article, the faith. This presented a difficulty since **it was** thought by some that the faith **was** peculiar to this dispensation, but **it** was observed that there will **be** those standing in testimony for God in that day.

*G. A. Jones.*

From Manchester. —The parables of the importunate friend and the unjust **judge** both emphasise the readiness of the Lord to answer prayer **by** contrasting the frequent unwillingness of men to **meet** the needs of others. The **request** for bread at midnight might not have been granted merely for friendship's sake, **but** the special difficulty in which the suppliant found himself would move the heart of his neighbour. How much more will the Lord, out of pure, unreserved, divine love, answer the prayers of **His** own? Similarly, when even the evil give good gifts to their children, and when an unjust **judge** will hear the persistent widow for fear she wear him out, **we** need have no doubt about the willingness of our heavenly Father, the **Judge** of all the earth, to answer our pleadings.

If indeed the Lord **sees** fit to **defer** apparent response to our cries, it is **but** to **test** the earnestness of our desires, that **we may** ask and **seek** and knock, that **we** may always pray and not faint. Hence the injunction of Ephesians 6. 18: "With all prayer and supplication praying **at** all seasons in the **Spirit**, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication." *G. Prasher, Jun.*

From Kilmarnock. —It would **seem** that the parable of the unrighteous **judge was** spoken to the disciples after the Lord had been foretelling **His** coming **as** Son of Man (see Luke 17. 22 and 18. 1). It will **be** a **time** of great perplexity for those then living, **but** they will have the Lord's encouraging words, that "they ought always to pray, and not to faint" (or **be** faint-hearted). **Of** course this applies to God's people of all time. Prayer betokens a condition of need, and in this parable **we** have a picture of one in need and also one in a position to **meet** that need. The **judge seemed** to boast of his godless and careless condition, and thought only of his own comfort, **but because** of the widow's persistence he **at** last yielded to her request. As the Lord pointed out, this **is** not how God deals with His children who perseveringly come to **Him** in prayer. Many are **His** encouraging words to "call upon **Him** in the days of trouble," and although **He** may not answer when and how **we may expect**, **He** will do so in His own time and way.

While we are thus encouraged to pray for our individual needs, the parable of the importunate friend would seem to set forth prayer for the need of others. The one on a journey comes, in his need, to a friend, but he is unable to help him. He in turn applies to another friend who can help, but only because of his importunity does he supply the need. In contrast to this, the Lord tells how their heavenly Father gives to them that ask, seek and knock. While we may be unable to meet the need of others, we are exhorted to intercede with God on their behalf. It may be for loved ones who are unsaved or are far away from the House of God, or for saints in affliction, or the Lord's servants who need our special prayers. Again, those in the house of God are exhorted to make supplications, prayers, intercessions for kings and all that are in high place (1 Timothy 1. 2). This is our part in the world's politics and let us remember that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." James 5. 16 tells us, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." A. G. S.

From **Cardiff**. —The lesson contained in the story of the Pharisee and the publican is brought out by contrast. The prayer of the Pharisee was no prayer, but a proud boasting. The prayer of the publican was the right kind of prayer, a confession of humility. The publican's plea was one which God could not refuse, for "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." The publican humbled himself before God, and was exalted immediately, for he went down to his house justified. The Pharisee who "for pretence" made "long prayer" could never be justified while in that spirit. This story also provides us with a proof of our Lord's omniscience. He could read the heart of the Pharisee. He knew his thoughts as he prayed within himself, and moreover He could follow the two prayers, and tell the result of each. The Pharisee's was a prayer which never reached the throne. That of the publican was heard, accepted, and answered by the One to whom it was addressed. He could assert, therefore, that the publican was justified. Who but the Lord Himself could give this verdict? He prefaces it by the words of authority, "I tell you," and He alone can tell.

*Martin D. Follett.*

From **Edinburgh**. —The Lord Jesus, during His life on earth, was a Man of prayer, and in this matter, as in all other matters pertaining to the lives of His disciples, He has left us an example to follow. It was after He had been praying in a certain place that one of His disciples asked Him saying, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11. 1). After teaching them how they ought to speak to God (verses 2-4), He taught them further by means of parables (verses 5. 13). Later on, after He had told them of things yet to come, He spoke to them further parables in connection with prayer (chapter 18. 1-14).

We sought to define the meanings of the terms "supplication," "prayer," and "intercession" as follows. Supplication seems always to involve asking, the asking of something which is very much upon the heart of the supplicant, and it involves humility on his part. The attitude of the publican in chapter 18. is that of a supplicant. To pray is to address God, and while a prayer may include supplications and intercessions, it does not necessarily do so. In Luke 11. 1-4 certain things are asked in prayer, and in 18. 11, 12, thanksgiving and statements of fact are included in prayer. To intercede is to ask for the sake of another. Abraham interceded for the righteous in Sodom when God told him of the judgment that would come upon that place (Genesis 18. 24-32).

While these terms differ in meaning, the principles taught in the parables we are considering apply equally to supplication, prayer and intercession. The first principle taught in chapter 11. is the need for importunity on our part. Importunity is persistence or urgency. It was not because of friendship that the loaves were given, but because of the importunity of him who asked them. Moreover, as many were given as were required. The need was fully met. It was suggested that importunity on our part is dependent upon our devotion to God.

The Lord also taught His disciples that they should ask for the Holy Spirit, which is **the** greatest gift a child of God could ask. **He** knew how much they would need the Holy Spirit when **He** Himself had returned to the Father. The early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles show that the disciples gave effect to His words both before and after the Spirit descended and took up His dwelling within their hearts, for prayer had a very large place in their lives. **We** also, though **we** have **the** Spirit dwelling within **us**, **must** pray that we might be filled with the Spirit, and that His power may be manifested through us.

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican teaches the necessity of humility, not only actually in our speaking to God, but also in our lives and in our thoughts about ourselves. The Pharisee was proud and full of his own merit (see Revelation 3. 17, 18). The publican, on the other hand, with bowed head and humble heart made his supplication acknowledging his sinfulness and acknowledging God **as** the **One** who was able to meet his need. **He** went down to his house justified rather than the other.

*John A. H. Robertson.*

From Liverpool. —In the prayer which the Lord taught His disciples **we** see that they were to approach Him **as** a Father to **make** known their requests. Yet on the other hand they were not to forget the holiness of God. Hence the following words, "Hallowed be Thy name."

The parable of the man whose friend came to visit him would teach **us** to be persistent and definite in our requests. **We** might think it a strange thing to knock up a neighbour in the middle of the night in order to borrow something for a visitor; but the customs of the east may provide some explanation of this. **We** understand that hospitality **was** a very important thing in the lives of these people, and in this case the man was willing to risk the anger of his neighbour, in order to provide for his friend. It is in this respect that the story gives the thought of intercession. **We** are reminded of Abraham interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, and of Moses standing between God and the children of Israel, and pleading for his unworthy brethren.

In Luke 18. the Lord **was** nearing the end of His journey. **He** **was** on His way to Jerusalem, and **He** knew what things must befall Him there. With these things no doubt filling His mind **He** exhorted His disciples to pray always and not to faint. **He** knew the value of such regular and continual leaning upon the strength of God His Father. The **same** exhortation is made by the Apostle Paul on several occasions. Prayer should be an integral part of our lives—**as** Spurgeon has said, we should always be in the spirit of prayer.

*R. S.*

From London, S. E. —Prayers and intercessions are all prayers with a difference, **as** illustrated by our Lord in the parables we are considering. Intercessions are prayers made for others; supplications are strong cryings with importunity, **as** in the case of the widow in the parable of the unjust judge. The parable of the importunate friend gives **us** strong encouragement to intercede for others—our unsaved relatives, our neighbours and all men (1 Timothy 2. 1). for others—our unsaved relatives, our neighbours and all men (1 Timothy 2. 1).

While God in the Scriptures reproveth vain repetition, there **is** a radical difference between vain repetition and continual coming; we should pray repeatedly, daily, hourly, for the **same** things, if we have the assurance that they would be to the glory of God. Many a parent has prayed for long years for the salvation of an unsaved son or daughter, to be answered at last. The parable of Luke 18. 1-14 is different from the first one in that the suppliant pleaded for herself and not for another. This is an example of supplication, not one of intercession. **We** should pray for ourselves, to improve our lot, especially in spiritual things, and not be content with things **as** they are. God wants **us** to **use** our pound to gain others, thus being enriched ourselves we may enrich others.

The unrighteous judge gave in to the woman's pleadings because he feared she might weary him; but our God is never wearied of our crying to Him. **He** delights to hear and answer, although **He** may delay His answer for our good.

*J. D.*

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

### Supplications, Prayers and Intercessions.

From Hamilton, Ontario. —The value of prayer **was made** very clear by varied statements by the Lord Jesus. It should give **us** every encouragement to appear often **at** the throne of grace when the Sent One from the Father **states**, " If ye then, being evil, know how to give good **gifts** unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that **ask** Him ? " (He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God). The Lord **Jesus** has taught us through the parable (Luke 11. 5-8) what ensues from persistent solicitation. " **He** will arise and give him **as many as** he needeth "; then in applying the parable to the deep dependence of the child of God upon God Himself, **He** said, " Ask, and it shall **be** given you. " The child of God is told to be anxious in nothing, **but** in everything **by prayer** and supplication with thanksgiving to let his **requests be made** known to God; also, to **cast** all his anxiety upon Him. As to what **we** shall **eat** or drink or **be** clothed with, our Father knoweth we have need of these things, and furthermore our Father will give good things to them that **ask** Him. God giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, but we **must ask** in faith. Fervency and humility should always accompany prayer **as** shown in the parable of the Pharisee and publican. Paul in writing to the Colossians told them that Epaphras laboured fervently for them in his prayers (A. V. ). And **James** through the Spirit has written, that the effectual fervent prayer of **a** righteous man availeth much in its working. The Lord **Jesus** said, " All things whatsoever ye shall **ask** in prayer, believing ye shall receive. " This is governed, no doubt, **as we** ask according to the will of God, so let us continue stedfastly in prayer watching therein with perseverance. •  
*Alexander Davidson, Tom Davidson.*

From Broxburn. —In the Apostle's exhortation in 1 Timothy 2. 1, priority **is** given to prayer, thus indicating the paramount importance of the great privilege and responsibility of the people of God, in coming before **Him** to intercede for all men, for kings, and all that are in high place. The Lord Himself has given **us a** pattern in prayer **as** in other things, and in order to amplify the form of prayer given in Luke 11. 1-4, **He** further spake **a** parable to **stress** the necessity for importunity in prayer. The man who went to his friend **at** midnight was **a** suppliant, and although his **request** was **at** first refused, yet because he continued to ask and would take no denial, his friend arose and gave to him according to his desire. Both supplication and intercession find **a** fitting illustration here, for not only was the request characterised by intense earnestness and importunity, but the man **was** also an intercessor; that is, he was using whatever influence he had with his friend on behalf of another who was in need. What an incentive and stimulus this should be to us who are positionally nearer to God than others ! Like Abraham, we have an understanding of God's will and purposes, that we might be often before Him in earnest prayer and supplication on behalf of those who know Him not.  
*Henry Dyer.*

**From Brantford.**—James 5. 16 tells us that the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. How precious it is to\* have One taken from among men, and appointed for men in things pertaining to God, One who has told us that whatsoever we ask in His Name He will do ! (John 14. 13, 14). In Luke 18. we have a foundation verse that men ought always to pray and not faint. 1 Thessalonians 5. 17 tells us to pray without ceasing, and that is what is brought forth in this parable, even the woman's ceaseless efforts to get the unrighteous judge to avenge her of her adversary, and because of this success was hers. God says in verse 8 that He will avenge or do justice speedily. In Genesis 18. 22 we have a case similar to this concerning Abraham and the doom of Sodom, when he pleaded with God to spare the city if 10 righteous could be found therein. Jehovah said, " I will not destroy it for the ten's sake. " How precious is the privilege to continue to seek God's face on behalf of men and women in a sinful world ! How very encouraging to us to know of One in God's presence who intercedes for us, One who was tempted and tried and on whom we can always depend !

*Hiel Wood, Oliver Burbridge.*

**From Vancouver.**—The Apostle Paul, in his references to prayer, mentions it as no casual request, but in such expressions as: " Night and day praying exceedingly " (1 Thessalonians 3. 10); " Pray without ceasing " (1 Thessalonians 5. 17); " Do not cease to pray and make request for you " (Colossians 1. 9); " How greatly I strive for you " (Colossians 2. 1); " Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me " (Romans 15. 30). As we realise the forces of evil that are arrayed against us, it will beget in us such prayer as in the above examples. The more fervent the prayer the sooner the request is granted, as in Hebrews 13. 18: " Pray for us . . . and I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner "

The Lord revealed that prayer was to be made to the Father in His own name. No empty words were to be used, but coming often to the Father about a need is not vain repetition, but the repeated cry of an earnest heart, striving, pleading in prayer.

In Daniel 9. is an example of prevailing prayer: " To seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made confession. " How different from the Pharisee of Luke 18. !

Fasting also seems to give weight to prayer, as it was used by the early disciples (Acts 13. 3, etc. ). *H. McL.*

### Parables on the Lord's Return.

**From Broxburn.**—The Lord's coming as Son of Man will be preceded by certain signs that will clearly indicate the imminence of His advent, and of these the most marked will be a great spiritual revival of God's ancient people Israel. The fig tree, typifying the Jewish nation, has long remained barren and unfruitful, and we noted the significance of what is recorded in Mark 11. 13 in connection with the fig tree which the Lord saw afar off, and to which He came, " if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs. " But in fulfilment of the words of Isaiah 44. 3: " For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty (" the thirsty land, " R. V. M. ), and streams upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring, " the operation of the Spirit of God will cause the vital sap to rise again and reinvigorate the barren tree, so that according to the words of the Lord in Matthew 24. 32, " When her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh. " While there is a definite movement on the part of the Jews at the present time towards the land of Palestine, it would be wrong to assume that this has been occasioned by a spiritual awakening, but rather the reverse of this is true, and there is much yet to transpire of sorrow and woe in the experience of that people ere they are prepared to receive and acclaim the One whom they rejected as their Messiah,

No doubt God's elect in that day will be able, with the prophetic Scriptures to guide them, to determine **with a measure** of accuracy the **time** of the Lord's return, though not the **day** nor the hour. Hence the necessity of those servants to whom the Lord gave authority, and also of the porter, to watch, lest they should **be found sleeping**. Someone with a **greater measure** of responsibility than the servants, here designated the porter, that **is** one who keeps the door, **receives** also a special command to watch. The Lord **makes** mention of the four night watches, even, midnight, cock-crowing and morning, with the implication that **He** may come in any of them, so that those who watch may be alert and wakeful. May there not **be** something typical of what we are considering here in Matthew 14., when after the feeding of the five thousand, **Jesus** constrained the disciples to get into **a** ship, and go before **Him** unto the other side, while **He** went up into **a** mountain apart to pray ? And in the fourth watch of the night **Jesus** went unto them walking on the sea. The fourth watch would be the morning watch, that **is** the breaking of the day, and how suggestive this is when viewed in the light of the Lord's glorious appearing after the long dark night of sorrow and trial which **His** people will experience !

In the parable of the ten virgins there is the thought of genuine testimony-bearing and also of that which is false or counterfeit. The lamps **speak** of testimony borne to the truth of God, and we are shewn that what made a distinction between the five wise virgins and the five foolish was, that the wise carried **a** supply of oil with their lamps, while the foolish had none. When the cry arose, <sup>4\*</sup> Behold, the bridegroom ! Come ye forth to meet Him, " the foolish found that their lamps were going out, and they would have borrowed oil from the wise, but they were told to go and buy for themselves. Salvation must be a personal matter whether in the present or the future and neglected opportunity in this connection can only result in sorrow and shame in those who may be like the foolish virgins who sought to buy when it was too late. *Henry Dyer.*

**From Kilmarnock.** —It is well to note that the parables before **us** were spoken by the Lord with reference to **His** coming as Son of Man to the earth, in contrast to His coming to the air for **His** Church; and although there may be much teaching for the people of God now, they primarily apply to the Jewish nation.

In Matthew 24 in answer to the enquiry of the disciples, **He** tells them of the signs that will occur prior to His coming, which will be as " the beginning of travail, " and likens them to the **fig** tree putting forth its leaves, showing that **summer is nigh**. As the leaves take time to develop, so, we take it, the signs will be gradual and will cover some length of time. This will be during the great tribulation, and because of the rule of the antichrist, those who will be faithful to God shall suffer persecution, but they will be encouraged by the Lord's words of Luke 21. 28. While that day will come suddenly on all nations, those who take heed to the Lord's words of warning will be watching and ready for **His** coming.

It would appear from Matthew 24. 45 that some will have a place of authority, and if they are faithful in carrying out the Lord's will till **He** come, they will receive a place of honour in **His** kingdom. The evil servant, we think, illustrates those who obtained a place over others, not out of love to the Master, but for their own ends and pleasure, and will find their true place as hypocrites when the Lord comes. In heart they had not known the Master.

In Matthew 25. 1 we noted particularly the word " **Then** shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins. " We take it this visualizes the time immediately prior to the coming of the Son of Man, which will indeed be **as** the midnight hour. Matthew 24. tells of the terrible conditions that will then prevail under the rule of the antichrist, but amidst the " seething **mass** of lawlessness there will be a faithful remnant, which we think the five wise virgins illustrate. They had their lamps, speaking of testimony, and oil in their vessels, which we think tells of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. We note, they all "slumbered and slept, " perhaps owing to the spiritual dearth prevailing, but when the cry arose, " Behold the bridegroom ! " they were roused and were prepared and ready

for His coming, " and **went in with Him.** " **We had a difficulty with the five foolish virgins.** **Were** they merely professors (as the lamps would show), or had they been real to **begin** with, but their love had waxed cold ? (see chapter 24. 12). Their lamps apparently had been lit, for verse 8 says, " Our lamps are going out, " but their foolishness lay **in** not providing oil, illustrative of the many who disregard the leading of the Spirit. They were excluded from the joy of associating with the Bridegroom, but there **is** no indication of punishment, **as in** the **case** of the evil servant. The Lord's word, " I know you not, " **is in** the **sense** of \*' I acknowledge you not. " They had failed **in** their testimony for **Him** and they were losers. [**Re** the foolish virgins, we have thought for a long time that these are\* typical of hypocritical professors who had **an** outward profession, but no **inward** work of the Holy Spirit corresponding thereto. Daniel 11. 34, I judge, provides help on the point. In this passage **we** read of "the people" **in** verses 32 and 33, that **is** God's faithful remnant of that time, and then **in** verse 34 we read that " many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries. " These unreal, flattering individuals, I judge, **are** such **as** are called foolish virgins **in** Matthew 25. ' not true believers **in** the Messiah who **came** and who will at that time **be** about to be manifested. —J. M. J.]

A. G. S.

**From Glasgow.** —Whatever he Lord **Jesus** Christ told **His** disciples privately, concerning **His** second return, will be of the **greatest** importance to the future generation who shall **live** in the time of great tribulation. This great affliction which God's people shall be caused to **suffer** will be for their faith to be tried through the fire, that their hope might be **in** God and their comfort **in** the Scriptures which reveal to them their Deliverer. Parables from nature are **a** **means** of illustration often used by the Lord. The parable of the **fig** tree **is** concerning the ripening of the events connected with **His** return. As the trees put forth their leaves they knew that the summer was nigh, even so they would know that their Messiah's coming was very near, yea at the door. But **if** they were to appreciate the lesson given, it would require **a** waiting and watching attitude on their part, that **He** might not find them sleeping. Then shall be fulfilled the scripture which says: " Lo, this **is** our God; we have waited for Him, and **He** will save **us**: this **is** the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice **in** **His** salvation " (Isaiah 25. 9).

Matthew 24. 32, 33 and 25. 1-13 present before **us** the truth relative to the kingdom being set up on the earth. They, depict **a** **scene** in which **a** **remnant** of Israel shall be found waiting and longing for their Deliverer, and they shall hear that cry again, " Blessed **is** **He** that cometh **in** the **name** of the LORD. " The parable of the virgins, we judge, would speak of **a** divided kingdom, that **is** the wise representing the remnant who responded to the cry of the Bridegroom because they were prepared to go, while the foolish would speak to **us** of the rest of Israel. [**See** note **in** paper from Kilmarnock]. Like the Pharisees and scribes of **a** past day having the oracles of God beside them, holding **a** form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, they ultimately shall be ashamed at **His** coming and shall be left to reap what they have sown. " The disciples to whom the Lord spake of those happenings, we suggest, may be regarded **as** **a** type of the **remnant** **in** that coming day.

Coming to Mark's account of this subject, we **see** **a** very different standpoint from that of Matthew, because Mark speaks concerning the Lord and **His** servants. While the Lord **is** away for **a** while, **His** servants are left to occupy till **His** return, that they might serve **Him** faithfully. They have **a** watchword left to them that they might be on the alert, and not ashamed at their Lord's return. ' In the day of **His** return He will reward them according to their faithfulness.

The latter portion of Matthew 25. presents **a** judgment **scene** before **us** **in** which the Lord **is** **seen** **as** Son of Man, sitting on the throne of **His** glory, and executing judgment on the living nations. **In** **His** judgment **He** separates them **as** **a** shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, the one on the right hand and the other on the left. The sheep **in** this **case** are representative of those who receive blessing, having the joy of entering into the kingdom prepared for them by **His** Father, while the goats speak to **us** of those who shall receive eternal judgment for opposing and persecuting the Jews.

*Fred Harvey.*

## EXTRACTS.

**From Liverpool.** —While considering these parables concerning the coming of the Son of **Man**, it was observed that there were no such parables relating to the Lord's return for His saints. This latter event has to do with the Church which is His Body, and not with **the** nation of Israel. Although **we** do get reference to the broader application of the Gospel, to the bringing in of other sheep " which are not of **this** fold," yet His mission was primarily directed to the Jews. To **the** alien woman, **He** said, " I was not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In the parables, **as in** the prophecies of the Old Testament, no account seems to be taken of the dispensation we are living in to-day, the day of grace, which will end with the Lord's return for His saints. **We** need to be careful, therefore, to see that we do not become confused by trying to apply the details of these parables to events to which they are not applicable.

The coming of the " Son of Man," **is** used by the Lord in connection with His coming in judgment for the deliverance of Israel. **We** learn from Romans 11. that Israel has been put aside for the time being, and that **a** hardening in part hath befallen them. The Jews to-day are still looking for their Messiah; not for His return, but as One who has not yet come. The ten virgins represent those who, in that day, will be waiting for Him. But, as in days gone by, there were some who had their eyes opened to recognise and receive **Him**, so in that day there will be those of Israel who will have seen these things coming to pass, and maybe have read these very parables, which will teach them to be prepared for the arrival of the Bridegroom. [See note in paper from Kilmarnock. ]

While, as we have said, the details of these parables have to do only with the coming of the Son of Man, yet there is a general exhortation in them which very definitely applies to us, namely, that we should always be expecting the Lord's return. Perhaps this is what is meant by the Lord's words in Mark 13. 37, "And what I say unto you, I say unto **all**, Watch." **B. L. S.**

**From Edinburgh.** —While these parables speak primarily of Christ's return to earth as Son of Man, the lessons they teach with regard to readiness might well be laid hold of by saints of this dispensation, who await His coming to the air.

The fig tree puts forth its earliest fruit buds before its leaves. The former appear in February, the latter in April, by which time the fruit should be ripe. Thus by the time the leaves come forth, the summer is very nigh. How near, therefore, must be the coming of the Son of Man, when the signs of which the Lord spoke are seen ! He will then be " even at the doors."

When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all the nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. Is it that the nations, as nations, will be separated one from another because of their attitude as nations to God and His elect; or is it the individuals of the nations who will be separated because of their attitude as individuals towards God and His elect ? [I have never been able to see, nor do I now, that all persons belonging to a nation will be condemned to eternal punishment, because of the act of the rulers of a nation to such as have faithfully preached or kept the word of God. Surely if men are punished eternally it will be for their own acts as individuals. Nations may do certain things in time, for which they will be punished in time as nations by God; as, for instance, Nazi Germany may suffer yet for its crimes, but eternal punishment of Germans will result from the Germans' own individual acts. So also will it be with people in this country. I cannot therefore see that it is other than the separation of individuals, one from another, that is contemplated in Matthew 25. —**J. M. J.** The latter view seems to be in keeping with the principle taught throughout God's word, that the individual, by his response to or rejection of God's claims upon him, decides his eternal destiny; and the division and destination here are eternal (see verse 46). Other portions (e. g., Matthew 13. 36-43, 47-50) teach that angels will take part in the separation of the righteous from the wicked, and when the separation spoken of in this portion takes place the angels will be present (see verse 31). Will it not be at this great

gathering, then, that the angels do the separating, acting at the command of the Lord ? The parable of the drag-net **seems** to suggest such a gathering (i. e., a gathering of all the individuals of all the nations) before the separation takes place. [As I have said in a former issue of B. S. I regard the separating of chaff from wheat, wheat from tares, good fish from bad fish, and sheep from goats, all to be different parabolic views of the one and **same** event—the judgment of the world when the Son of Man returns. Undoubtedly the Lord plays **His** major part as Judge a. nd the angels also will play their part. J. M. J. *John A. II. Robertson.*

**From Ilford.** —The Lord's parables about His return were given shortly before **He** went to Calvary and it was important for the disciples to receive and understand their import. They knew that **He** was going, and they asked how they would know when **He** was about to return. **He** told them (Matthew 24. **32, 33**) that there would be definite signs, which are mentioned earlier in Matthew **24.**, and in **2 Timothy 3v** and other scriptures. In His parables the Lord **uses** common examples of well known facts which are self evident to all with eyes to see. **In** this case the natural sign of approaching summer **is** used **as** a simple yet forceful illustration of the divine truth of the return of our Lord. It should be evident to all with enlightened eyes that we are in the midst of the days of which Paul writes to Timothy. **One** evidence, among many, is most marked in these days: men shall be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Christ foresaw our weakness and emphasised strongly the need to watch, which is again marked in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. They, we suggest, all represent believers, for all were anticipating the arrival of the bridegroom. The difference is that some were filled with **the** Holy Spirit (oil usually denotes the Holy Spirit in Scripture), whereas the others were lacking **in** this respect—possibly half hearted or with divided interests, and were thus not fully prepared for the bridegroom's return. For this they are the immediate losers, though we suggest that eternally they are saved, yet so **as** by fire. The only\* stated difference between the wise and foolish virgins was the lack of oil reserve on the part of the foolish ones. Christ says of them, " I know you not, " but not, we would point out, " I never knew you, " as in another case. [Do not these statements imply the **same** thing ?] Watchfulness must have a place in the heart of each individual and we must not be relying upon others to supply us with our spiritual "oil. " Rather, guided by the Holy Spirit we should individually be building up a supply from the inexhaustible well of Scripture, that our light may be continually bright. [See note in paper from Kilmarnock. ]

*E. Morgan and A. G. J. (Jun. ).*

**From Southport.** —The parable of the virgins **is** found in a portion of the Scriptures dealing with the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth and hence it mainly concerns the Jews. It illustrates the two types of Jews immediately before His coming.. There will be persons who know for **an** historical fact that the Lord Jesus Christ will some day come to reign. Even the disciples asked the Lord when **He** was upon the earth, "Lord, dost Thou **at** this time restore the kingdom to Israel ? " (Acts 1. 6). The other type also know that the Lord Jesus Christ **is** coming to reign, but they are watching and longing for the event. Such are the people who have withstood the beast, have not received his mark, and have been persecuted.

It was also noticed that while they waited for the Bridegroom, both the wise and the foolish virgins slumbered and slept. Even the wise virgins will give way to the weaknesses of the flesh. Those who are waiting for Him to come are not shut out from Him, but are near to **Him**; such will live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20. 6).

The judgment of the nations **is** to take place **in** the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3. 12). There the Lord Jesus will sit and separate the sheep from the goats. The judgment **is** based on the kindness shown to those whom **He** calls " My brethren. " It **is** understood that " My brethren " are Jews. **We** were not able

to decide whether the judgment **is** to be on the nations as units or on individuals. But " **shall** not the Judge of all the earth do right ? " (Genesis 18. 25). [See note in paper from Edinburgh. ] **W. S. Holden.**

From Atherton. —There **are** certain events outlined by the Holy Spirit which precede the Lord's coming to the air for **His** saints, **as well as** the more pronounced **signs** of **His** coming to earth, which may be indicated **in** the parable of the **fig** tree. The sprouting leaf of the **fig** tree was a **sign** of the approach of summer, and grievous times, with their incomparable train of abomination and corruption, **as well as** the departure of a number of people from the Fellowship of God's Son, will announce the nearness of the coming of the Son of God (see 2 Timothy 3. 1-5; and 1 Timothy 4. 1). [I cannot follow our friends here when they speak of the sprouting leaf of the fig tree **as** having application to the Lord's coming to the air. The **sign** of the fig tree **is** associated with the Lord's coming to earth. Is there not a difference between " later " times and " last " days ? I have thought so. Again, **were** characteristics of last days not even **in** Timothy's time ? Note the force of verse 5, " from these **also** turn away " as containing instruction for Timothy, though not expending all their force at that time. —J. M. ]. One of the last utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ to **His** disciples ere **He** was taken from them and ascended into heaven was, " It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. \*"

Paul's word to the Thessalonians was, " For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night " (1 Thessalonians 5. 2). Whether it be the time when **He** comes to receive His Church, or when **He** comes to establish **His** kingdom, both are alike secrets kept in the divine mind, which even the angels know not, neither the Son, but the Father only. In Matthew 25. we have the figure of the marriage feast and the Bridegroom's approach with **His** retinue and procession. The eastern custom **is** that the bridegroom travels to the house of the bride for the feast, and prior to midnight, perhaps for two or three hours, his arrival is awaited by those invited to the feast. When the words are announced, " Behold, the Bridegroom ! " each one rights a lamp, runs to meet him, and joins the procession. Some may lose their lights, some may be sleeping or otherwise unprepared. The bridegroom is carried in the arms of a friend, and placed in the midst of the company who are seated upon mats. **He** later enters the bride's house, followed by the guests, and immediately the door **is** closed and guarded; others coming along later cannot obtain admission for the door is shut. This parable has its particular setting when the Son of Man comes to earth, and the laxity of the genuine saints, as well as those who are not genuine, is seen in the waiting period, when all slumbered and slept.

Another suggestion expressed was that this parable referred to **His** coming as Son of God. The lamps which the virgins took represent the profession of the true heart of the Christian, especially the truth connected with the Lord's return to receive **His** blood-bought church. The confession of Christ outwardly should follow the profession of Christ and of love to **Him** inwardly. [The parable of the ten virgins does not illustrate the Lord's coming for the Church. The virgins are not the Bride. —J. M. ]. The oil, it was suggested, **is** the emblem of the Holy Spirit, **it is** the manifestation of divine **love in** the Person and work of Christ, that love shed abroad **in** the heart by the Holy Spirit. Others thought that the oil mentioned here cannot refer to the Holy Spirit, since the five foolish virgins were told to go " to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. " The Holy Spirit **is** a gift given to us freely.

It was asked whether the five foolish virgins speak to us of those having received the mark of the beast. It was generally considered that this was the case, this being the primary thought **in** the parable. [See note **in** paper from Kilmarnock. The five foolish virgins are not such as have the mark of the beast, for they are such as outwardly profess a faith **in** the coming of the true Christ, and they could not do so and at the same time be worshippers of the antichrist. I take it " buy " **is** used **in** the same **sense** as " buy " in Isaiah 55. —" buy wine and milk without money and without price. " Joseph's brethren came and bought corn, but their money was put **in** their sacks again. —J. M. ].

*G. Sankey.*

**From.** Yeovil. —We have the simple parable of the opening and developing of a fig tree to illustrate a great truth. In all natural growth we get a change taking place with the change of seasons, and so a change in the growth of plants is indicative of an approaching change in the seasons. This example illustrates how God indicates an approaching change in dispensations by certain signs in the earth. We get these signs listed in Matthew 24. 3-3]. It appears that these signs primarily concern Jewish believers, and are written for their benefit in a future day when they are to look for the coming of the Son of Man. Just as the green shoots of the fig tree herald the coming of summer, so these signs will herald the coming of the Son of Man to reign upon the earth.

Christians, however, should not be guided by sight, but by faith, and these signs will be fulfilled in their entirety after the Church has gone from this scene, although some signs may be noticeable even before this time. It was suggested that as most of prophecy concerns God's earthly people, this passage, which is part of prophecy, concerns the Jewish believers and not those Christians who form the Body of Christ who are a heavenly people.

Two classes of people are seen in Matthew 25. 31-46. First, those who during the previous years of tribulation and persecution have shown kindness and consideration to believing Jews. The word "brethren" in verse 40 seems to identify the Jewish believers particularly. Secondly, those who have shown no consideration to the poor persecuted Jewish believers and have been indifferent to all their sufferings and privations. The treatment of the Jewish believers in this case will count for much for on it will depend whether the peoples of the nations are destined for eternal punishment or eternal life.

This is apparently a big issue depending on a small thing. But it is further explained that the way people treat the Jewish believers is taken as the way they treat the Lord Jesus Christ, and so it must indicate in some measure their faith in God and appreciation of His things.

*Austin G. Glover.*

### Questions and Answers.

Questions from Glasgow.

(1) Matthew 24. 36; Mark 13. 32: How is it that the Son of God is equal with God in all things, yet we read about a time of which the Father only has the knowledge?

(2) Matthew 25. 5: We read from this scripture that they all slumbered and slept, yet the wise responded to the cry. What have we to learn from this verse?

Answer (1). No attention need be paid to the R. V. marg. of Matthew 24., as the words "neither the Son" are not in doubt in Mark 13. None of us will doubt, I presume, the absolute equality of Father and Son in nature and knowledge, and all else besides. Some help may be derived in this difficult matter from what was said by the Lord, as recorded in Acts 1. 7. There are evidently things "set within the Father's authority," whatever may be implied in such a profound statement. I am disposed to the belief that what the Lord said as recorded in these two verses in Matthew 24. and Mark 13. has to do with the servant character of the Lord. He who had humbled Himself, and had become Man and also Jehovah's Servant, said that there was that which was within the Father's authority, and of such things was this matter that only the Father knew. Beyond this I do not care to go to enquire into the deep mystery of the Godhead and Manhood of Christ.

Answer (2). This is a sad description of the state of both saved and unsaved prior to the Lord coming to earth; there will be on the part of the many careless neglect of eternal things. Note what is said in Matthew 24. 12: "Because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold." Of saved people, both now and then, it is said, "Whether we wake (watch) or sleep (not, are dead), we should live together with Him" (1 Thessalonians 5. 10), so the wise (even though they slept) will go into the marriage feast, but the unsaved will be kept outside.—J. M.

# BIBLE STUDIES.

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scripture daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

### Parables on the Lord's Return.

#### EXTRACTS.

**From Hereford.** —From all three Synoptic Gospels the fig tree parable seems to await fulfilment in connection with the glorious advent of the Son of Man (Matthew and Mark) and the establishment of the kingdom of God (Luke). In view of this, a difficulty arises as to the application of the following words in Matthew 24. 34. If "this generation" means the actual generation of people alive at that time, "all these things" must refer only to the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. [I understand "this generation" to mean this *kind* of generation, rather than the actual people that composed the generation that then was. Note the difference between Matthew 24. 34 and Matthew 16. 28, "There be some of them that stand here." Matthew. 16. 28 had undoubtedly its fulfilment in the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. Surely no one will claim that the things of Matthew 24. were accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Son of Man did not come then to judge the world in righteousness. Matthew 24. does not refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, save verse 2. —J. M. ], **But** both Matthew and Mark have "all these things." Is it possible that the Jews, in their long history of unbelief from that time until they repent and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," are here spoken of as "this generation," in which case "all these things" would naturally include prophecies relating to both the first century and also the future tribulation? It is noticed that the Lord denounces the "evil and adulterous generation" which sought for signs, and the Jews were evidently of the same spirit when Paul wrote, "Jews ask for signs" (1 Corinthians 1. 22). Help on this point would be appreciated.

The first parable instructs and encourages the faithful who will experience the dread events which will precede the Lord's return to earth. They may then recognise the signs and know with certainty that He is coming, though not immediately: it "is nigh." If the "fig tree" here denotes Israel (see Joël 1. 7), does the parable indicate a repentance on a *national scale prior* to the Lord's advent? [Undoubtedly there will be a national movement in Israel on a considerable scale. First there will be the seed of Israel, who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12. 17) who will be scattered throughout the earth, the heralds of the gospel of the kingdom, I would judge. Then in the middle of Daniel's week and following the setting up of the image of the beast there will be the flight of the woman (Israel) into the wilderness from the face of the Serpent (Revelation 12. 6, 13. 4) where she will be nourished for three and a half years. Many Jews will abandon the Scriptures and will receive the • antichrist, as the Lord said in John 5. 43. —J. M. ]

The **last** parable denotes **an** event which follows His glorious coming, and in which the Lord sits **as** King and the nations appear before Him for judgment. Presumably this refers to **a** judgment at the beginning of the millennial age, for it is **a** judgment of the nations, and the wicked **dead are** not raised until after the Millennium—until the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20. 6, 11-12). It is evident that salvation here will depend on works (done in faith), however small; even **a** cup of cold water given to **a** disciple will not **pass** unrewarded. The arguing **attempt at** self-justification on the part of the **wicked seems** to indicate the extent to which universal rebellion and defiance of God will have progressed. Although in the time of the tribulation these had **persecuted** and slain the faithful, yet in defiance they stand before the Judge. "There **is** no fear of God before their eyes." *E. H. Merchant.*

**From Vancouver.**—The Lord **uses** the fig tree to illustrate His coming **as** Son of Man. There are certain things to **take** place before He comes, which will indicate that His coming **is** very near, **just as** the leaves of the **fig** tree, **as** they shoot forth, reveal that the **summer is at hand**. In the previous **verses** of chapter 24. the Lord tells them the things that will precede His coming **as** Son of Man.

The chapter pictures the Lord sitting somewhere on the Mount of Olives, with His chosen **few** gathered around Him. They were seeking an unveiling of the **future as** concerning the Lord's statement that not one stone of the buildings of the temple should remain standing. They **asked** Him when this would **take** place, and the sign of **His** coming and of the end of the world.

The Lord will come in that day with startling suddenness. There will **be** no previous warning **except as** indicated in the parable of the fig tree. Wars and rumours of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, such words are being partially fulfilled **at** the present time. The human heart **is** still seething with enmity and strife. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, its diagnosis by the Great Physician is still correct (Matt. 15. 19; Romans 1. 28-32; 3. 9-18). Sin and corruption are progressing—their **feet are** swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their **ways**; wars and rumours of wars with famines and earthquakes are **just** the beginning of sorrows.

In Luke's account of the fig tree he **says**, "When **ye see** these things **coming** to pass, know **ye** that the kingdom of God **is** nigh." The kingdom **is** intimately associated with the glorious Person of the Son of God, who brought it nigh, **as** He said to those **Jews** who heard Him in their cities, and will **be** brought nigh again when He comes **as** Son of Man. The Son of Man comes in power and great glory spelling **defeat** for His enemies. The kingdom of God **was** ushered in with the gentle breathings of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men subjecting them to the **King**. The kingdom of God **came** not with outward show; it is not, "Lo, here ! or, There !" (Luke 17. 20, 21).

It is remarkable that the kingdom of God is not spoken of **as** commencing, **but as** drawing nigh. For "appear" in Luke 19. 11, **it is** to "shine again" according to Dr. Young. If it has **a** commencing, surely **it is as** revealed in the parable of the sheep **and** goats, "Come, **ye** blessed of **My** Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25. 34).

The kingdom of God has shone to **a** more or less degree in the hearts of His chosen in the **past, and** in **a** measure in the present, and will also to a greater degree when the Lord reigns on earth and most of all in its fulness in the new creation (Revelation 21. and 22. ). *H. McL.*

**From Birkenhead.**—When **we see** nature beginning to **spring** into **life**, **we** are certain that **the** summer with its harvest **is** coming, **and so it is** that in **recognising** when they happen, those things which the Lord describes, disciples **will** know **they** are sure signs their Lord **is at** the door. **Even** though these **signs** ahull herald His return, they will not **be** observed by many **and some will grow weary** of waiting, **and** so the unexpectedness of **His** return **is** impressed in such parables **as** the thief in the night, **and** the lord **and** his servants, **all** showing **the need** for constant watchfulness for His return, **and** right behaviour **during** His absence.

We **had** difficulty in deciding **what** type of people corresponded with **the** wise and foolish virgins. Whilst all were invited to **the** marriage feast, the Lord's refusal to open to some of them, saying "I know you not," suggests they were the mere professors, desiring to participate in the good things to come, **but** had no foundation, and no part in the coming kingdom. *D. H., N. A.*

**From London.** —The important exhortations in these parables are "Watch and pray," "Be ye also ready": this should be true of those to whom the coming may apply, whether for the Church or for the Lord to take power and reign.

In Mark 13. 34-37 we get a twofold presentation of the Lord's answer to the disciples' questions and another parable added to intensify the exhortation to watch.

Let us note that the servants are left in the house by the Master in His absence. Each bondservant is given his work. Each of us has something to do for the Master who has gone away. While the porter is specially commanded to watch, yet none should sleep. Is not the Holy Spirit the One who watches at the door? [Surely not !].

Matthew 25. 31-46 —seems to answer to the third portion of the disciples' question regarding the end of the age. *G. A. Reeve.*

**From Hamilton, Canada.** —The parables for this month's study were given primarily in connection with the Lord's return to earth in judgment. We are waiting not for His return to earth, but to the air to take us to be for ever with Himself. We would do well to take heed to the exhortation in Mark 13. 34-37—"Watch therefore." For if we are like the porter and in a watchful attitude, then we will not be ashamed before Him at His coming. We remember the words of the Lord to His disciples whom He found sleeping, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" We would do well to ask ourselves this same question, for if John in his day could say, "Little children, it is the last hour," surely we are now in the last minutes. It is His desire that we should not be found "spiritually asleep," but rather actively engaged in His service, which is the outward manifestation of the watchful attitude within.

Again, in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25., only those who have taken advantage of God's grace and are indwelt by the Spirit of God will be ready for the cry, "Behold He cometh."

In the parable of the sheep and goats **it** is evident that the coming to earth is referred to. It is also noticeable that the righteous are likened to sheep.

Let us seek to follow more closely our great Shepherd so that we may redeem the time because the days are evil and hear from His own lips when He comes—"Well done, good and faithful servant." *Norman McKay.*

#### The Lord's exposure of those in Moses' Seat.

**From Atherton.** —In His exposure of those in Moses' seat the Lord was not slow to seize the opportunity of bringing to light the character of these supposedly strict adherents of the law. The mode of correction used by Him may sound severe, but His righteous indignation, with its consequent criticism, was absolutely necessary, since He was dealing with a class of men whose lives were moulded on arrogant and unscrupulous principles. Could we find anyone more capable than the Lord Himself, He who reads and understands the hearts of all? What He saw in them was no mere imagination, such as the words of Eliab concerning David: "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart" (1 Samuel 17. 28).

The parable in Luke 7. 41, 42 and its context, would indicate man's failure in estimating aright, or appreciating the grace of God. Simon invited the Lord, but there was nothing genuine about him. He was full of hypocrisy, and this the Lord clearly exposes. The character of his invitation is seen in the words, "Thou gavest Me no water for My feet," "Thou gavest Me no kiss," "My head with oil thou didst not anoint." The common courtesies that went along with a sincere invitation were missing.

Matthew 9. 14-17. Whether it **be** the Pharisees **or** John's disciples, it is evident they failed to **see** the joy and delight of **being in** the company of God's own Son. The parable itself **seems** to indicate the truth of regeneration. The **law** was ineffective. **We** wondered why John's disciples should be here linked **up** with the Pharisees. Some thought that John had failed, **in** that instead of directing his disciples to Christ, and going after the Lord himself, he had continued his own course. The work of John **was** finished when Christ commenced **His** public ministry; therefore John and his disciples should have turned to Christ **as** did two of his followers **in** John 1. 35-37. John's sending his disciples to Christ with the words, " Art Thou **He** that cometh, or look **we** for another ? " (Matthew 11. 3) were commented upon. All were agreed that John failed when **in** prison, but some were unable to reconcile any earlier failure **in** the light of John 3. 25-36.

In the parable of the two sons, the lesson we learn from the first son is one of self examination. The son may have shewn haste **in** saying, " No, " but a spirit of **repentance** arose within him. This God loves to **see**, but with the Pharisees repentance **was** uncommon. The Pharisees professed to be doing the will of God, but they refused **Him** whom God had sent, whereas the publicans and sinners, the ones who were disobedient, received not only John's message, but also **Him** of whom John testified, the Sent **One** from God (Luke 7. 29, 30).

John 10. 1-6. The Lord **Jesus**, having been baptized of John, would illustrate the Shepherd **entering** by the door, the way which the scribes and Pharisees refused (Luke 7. 30). They were rightly exposed **as** thieves and robbers, for they sought some other way, and **as** leaders they are **seen as** strangers and hirelings (verses 5-12). John **was** the porter, and he opened the door to the Lord, and when the Lord entered the fold, He called **His** own sheep by name and led them out. <sup>44</sup> **He** leadeth them out, " would illustrate the Lord **Jesus** taking out **His** own sheep, which find a place **in** **His** own fold. All of John's disciples did not respond to the claims of the Lord **Jesus** Christ.

A survey of Matthew 23. and other scriptures indicates the great **sin** of the Pharisees—hypocrisy. It is spoken of by the Lord **as** the leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12. 1). Reference **was** made to the possibility of this **sin** being among God's people. Peter exhorts thus, " Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and **hypocrisies**, and envies, and all evil speaking " (1 Peter 2. 1). The wisdom which **is** from above **is** without hypocrisy (James 3. 17). It was realised that this **sin** **can** have the gravest consequences **if** not put away from us. How necessary then that it should have no place **in** any aspect of our service, whether Godward or manward, nor be **seen in** our dealings one with another ! It was **seen** from 1 Peter 5. 5 that **if** we are to be free from the evil traits **seen in** the Pharisees **we** must possess a spirit of humility. There will be nothing but eternal loss if we attempt to obtain position and esteem **in an** ungodly manner, **if** by pretence and wrong actions we seek to be looked up to by fellow-saints. God will pass **us** by, and **as** those who sat **in** Moses' seat were indeed exposed, just **as** truly our inward condition will be revealed by the Lord Himself. The sad example of Diotrephes **was** referred to (3 John 9, 10).

*G. A. Jones.*

**From Southport.** —There **can** be no doubt **as** to who occupied Moses' seat, for **in** Matthew 23. 2 **we** read, " The scribes **and** the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. " [Green's Grammar says on this verse: " The scribes and Pharisees seated themselves in the chair of Moses (not " sit " simply). They found the **seat** virtually empty, and occupied it. " ].

Something of the **meaning** of the first parable **can** be gathered from the corresponding passage **in** Luke. Luke 5. 36 reads, " No **man** rendeth a piece from a new garment and putteth it upon **an** old garment. " The parable would teach **us** that the **New** Covenant was not to be used to patch up the Old Covenant. The opening question **was** asked by the disciples of John, who was the last of the prophets, and belonged to that which was about to end. In the parable of the wineskins, wine speaks of joy, the true joy which **can** only be experienced by the believer. It **was** suggested that the garment spoke of righteousness **in** Luke 5. 36.

From the second parable we see that the publicans and the harlots, who were deeply stained by sin, repented and were baptised by John. These were likened unto the son who said, " I will not, " but later repented and went to the vineyard. The Pharisees, on the other hand, who were self-righteous, were neither baptised by John, nor repented afterwards to believe on the Lord. These men had their parallel in the son who said, " I go, " but went not. This parable is a parable of a vineyard: " The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel " (Isaiah 5. 7).

The third parable was related by the Lord Jesus Christ when He sat at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Why the Pharisee should have desired Him to eat with him we know not. Perhaps it was in the spirit of, \*4 We know you are a great Teacher; I will hear that which you have to say. " There were two debtors, one who owed much and one who owed little. The woman owed much to God, and the Pharisee owed less to God, yet for all that, his own righteousness was not sufficient, for we read, " Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven " (Matthew 5. 20). Considering that the Lord said that the two debtors were forgiven, a question was asked: May we understand that both the woman and Simon were forgiven ? If Simon was forgiven, why were the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ not washed with water or His head anointed with oil ? [We cannot go beyond what is positively stated, of the woman only, as to forgiveness. —A. T. D. ].

The parable at the commencement of the tenth chapter of John follows a chapter in which is recorded the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath. In verse thirty-four the Pharisees cast him out; the Pharisees would not follow the Lord Jesus Christ, nor would they allow any other to follow Him (see Matthew 23. 13). It was the privilege of the Pharisees, the leaders of the people, to be the shepherds of Israel. Yet their condition was well described in Ezekiel 34. " Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves ! should not the shepherds feed the sheep ? " (Ezekiel 34. 2). The shepherds ate the fat, used the wool, killed the fatling and so on, but did not go out to find the sheep that were lost. Verse 23 says that a Shepherd will be set up over the sheep, to be a Prince among them, even God's servant David. In the passage in John it is clear that the sheep are the people of Israel. For in verse 16 we read of another flock (other sheep), who are the Gentiles. [This verse requires more attention than is usually given to it. What fold is " this fold " ? Is there another fold than that indicated in verse 1 in this chapter ? Are not the " other sheep " sheep other than those which the Lord called when He entered the fold consequent on the porter opening the door to Him ? I have thought so. " This fold " is certainly not Israel—J. M. J. John the Baptist, who witnessed upon the banks of the Jordan that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, was the porter of the fold. As the shepherd calleth his own sheep, so the Lord Jesus Christ called His disciples and they followed Him. Two of John's disciples followed the Lord (John 1. 37), but there were many who did not; to them the old wine was better than the new wine. The sheep would not follow the unknown voice of a stranger. Gamaliel, speaking to the council in Acts 5., said that prior to the time of the Lord 400 followed Theudas, and after this some followed Judas of Galilee, but these came to nought. Comparing this with the numbers who were disciples in the time of the Acts (the men came to be numbered about 5, 000), the voices of Theudas and Judas certainly were not recognised.

*W. S. Holden.*

From Hereford. —Many indeed were the opportunities for the scribes and Pharisees to repent, but in general their spiritual pride prevented them.

At the time of the incident recorded in Matthew 9., John was in prison (Matthew 4. 12), and it seems that the Pharisees, who would no doubt be eager to oppose the Lord at every opportunity, prompted the disciples of John to ask why the Lord's disciples fasted not like the Pharisees and themselves. The Pharisees apparently had instituted two fasts a week (Luke 18. 13) (on Thursday because Moses was believed to have ascended Mount Sinai; on Monday because on that day he was believed to have returned).

The Lord does not condemn fasting, **but** referring to the wonderful description of Himself by their beloved teacher (John 3. 29), **He** contented Himself to **ask**, "Can the sons of the bridechamber mourn, **as long as** the bridegroom is with them?" Then He tells them **in** words of deep significance, though expressed, **as** so often, in the homeliest metaphors, that His teaching **was** entirely new, **was** to **be** untrammelled by obsolete **and** long meaningless limitations, **and** sundered for ever from mere elaborate and external ceremonials.

The Lord, knowing what Simon **was** saying to himself, puts a straightforward question to him. Probably he had not the slightest conception that the question had any reference to himself; like David when he pronounced so frank a judgment on Nathan's parable. **As** the words **came** to David, "Thou art the **man**," so the words came to Simon—"Thou hast rightly judged"; **and** the Lord unfolds to him quite plainly the truth that "to whom little is forgiven, the **same** loveth little."

The Lord **in** the parable **in** John 10. seeks to show to the Pharisees that they had not submitted to the baptism of John, yet they sought to guide the people. **He** had been baptised by John "to fulfil all righteousness." **We** have here **His** wonderful shepherd character so beautifully portrayed. The Lord tells them plainly that they were thieves and robbers, but "they understood not what things they were which **He** spake unto them"; they failed to realize that they **were** blind.

**Of** the four parables, the one **in** Matthew 21. appears to **be** the last **in** point of time. There **is** some evidence of this **in** the **use** by the Lord of **sterner** words **in** **His** exposure of the scribes **and** Pharisees. The question **was** so pointed that they had to answer, "The first." **He** then pointed out to them the solemn **meaning** of their own answer. It was, that the publicans and harlots, despite the apparent open shamelessness of their disobedience, were showing the scrupulous, highly reputed legalists, the way into the kingdom of God. Moreover, when they **saw** the repentance of these sinners whom they despised **and** hated, they did not even then repent. For all their broad **fringes** and conspicuous phylacteries, they, the rabbis of these people, were worse **in** the sight of God than the sinners whom they would have scorned to touch with one of their fingers. *Robert Tidmas,*

**From London, S. E.**—The four passages of scripture under consideration, taken **in** chronological order, record the sad story of the rejection of the Lord **Jesus** Christ by the leaders of the Jewish nation.

Matthew 9. records events which took place **in** the Lord's earthly ministry. The teaching and scope of that ministry were so wide **and** free that the Pharisees and disciples of John, with their narrow and self **satisfied** outlook, could not understand it. It behoves **us** to take care not to allow ourselves to drop into this attitude of mind, for **it is** easy to do so.

The gospel of grace and truth could not **be used as a** patch to repair the outworn **garment** of tradition with which the teaching of the old covenant **was** clothed by the Pharisees, and there could **be** no union of the **new** with the old. The traditions of the Jews sought to impose constraint on the outflowing of God's love. With them there could **be** no healing on the Sabbath, no **sins** freely forgiven, and their disciples had to endure the fastings, etc., which their teaching required. The old and the **new** were pulling **in** opposite directions, **and an attempted** union would have **meant a** greater rent.

The parable of the new **wine and** wineskins compares things which differ, i. e., wine and that which contains it. The **new** wine would represent the **new** teaching or the gospel. The old wineskins would speak of the ordinances which held the teaching of the old covenant. The Lord did not wish to destroy the old thing. The old wineskin was to **be** preserved **intact**, having served **its** purpose. The gospel, full, free, and expanding, needed **new** forms of expression.

*E. W. P.*

From Yeovil. —In the parables of the **new cloth** and **new wineskins** we have deep spiritual truth foreshadowed. It appears the Lord is dealing here with the **subject** of the new life He **came** to bring and the inability of those who **kept** the **law** to live **up** to the new standard it required without being born again.

In the parable of the new cloth we see an attempt to patch **up** something old with something new, with disastrous result. So in spiritual things **it** is not possible to patch up the old, but this is what men try to do by **law** keeping, this being illustrated by the new cloth leaving a worse rent in the old garment. This parable **seems** to illustrate man's attempt to **make** things better.

In the parable of the wine skins we **get** God's means of improving things. **He** requires a completely new mode of living and in order to accommodate this **He** provides a new man in which this may be carried out. " If any man **is** in Christ, he is a new creature. " This **is** the truth foreshadowed in Matthew 9. 17, by the new wine in new skins.

That the Pharisees knew nothing of this is seen in the incident of Nicodemus who was a ruler of the **Jews** and a teacher. These two parables illustrate the futility of **law** keeping, for which the Pharisees were notorious, and the necessity of the new birth of which they were ignorant. *Austin Glover.*

From Ilford. —Before commencing the study of this subject, we should be clear **as** to who are referred to **as** those " on Moses' seat. " In the **times** previous to our Lord's coming, the Word of God was only owned by a few people, and **it was** the duty of the chief priests, elders, **scribes** and Pharisees, who had the written word and could read it, to teach it to the people. These men are referred to **as** " on Moses' seat. " They were, however, always seeking to find **fault** with the Lord Jesus and His disciples, and questioned Him often. In Matthew 9. 14 we have an example of this. The Pharisees fasted often **as** a matter of custom, and the disciples of John, who no doubt were repentant and sorrowful, could not understand the reason for the joy of His disciples, and why they did not fast. The Lord, however, shows in the form of parables why they were happy; **it was** because they had realised who He was and had accepted Him. Also, in the **examples** of the old garment being **made** worse by the addition of a new piece, or that of the wine skins, both of which bear a **similar** meaning, Jesus shows that His teaching is entirely new, and cannot be fused together with the traditions and formalities of the Pharisees.

It is interesting to notice how often Christ made the Pharisees condemn themselves by questions **He** put to them, **as well as** the examples **He uses** in which **He** points out their **failure**.

Since Christ's words to the Pharisees are so clear, about their formality and customs, **we** also should avoid doing things in a like manner, **but all** our actions should spring from a heart of love for Him who has done so much for **us**.

*F. Jarvis.*

From Edinburgh. —As the new creation involved repentance on the part of individual sinners, and **as** many of the common people had obeyed the teaching of John and of the Lord, **it was** distasteful to the priests and elders. The Lord spoke to them the parable in Matthew 21. 28-32 to shew that, while outwardly professing to obey the word of God, they were far in heart from God. They had refused the teaching of John, whereas the publicans and harlots had repented, acknowledging their sinfulness, and, by obedience to the teaching of John, entered the kingdom of God.

The Pharisee of whom **we** read in Luke 7. had questioned within himself concerning the Lord's ability to know the heart of the woman who had anointed His feet. The Lord, **by** His words to Simon, shewed, however, that **He** did know the heart of the woman and that He knew Simon's heart also. **He** knew, in **fact**, more than the Pharisee thought about. **He** knew the sinfulness of the woman,

but He knew also the measure of repentance in her heart. **He** knew the heart of the Pharisee, and how little repentance was in his heart. **He** pointed out the greatness of the love of **the** woman, and that it was **in** proportion to what she\* had been forgiven, whereas the Pharisee, unrepentant and unforgiven, had not sufficient love to shew Him the customary courtesy of that land **in that day**

In John 10. 1-6 reference again **is** made to the baptism of John and to the attitude of the Pharisees thereto. They sought to enter the kingdom of God by their own way, by means of their own righteousness, instead of by the way which John preached, i. e., by the baptism of repentance. "Thieves and robbers" was the way **in** which the Lord described them. He, the Shepherd of the sheep, had entered by the door, and was leading **His** sheep. But the Pharisees were rejecting **Him** as they had rejected John the Baptist.

*John A. H. Robertson.*

**From Glasgow.** —We consider the parable of the two sons and the vineyard **in** the light of **its** context. "By what authority doest Thou these things?" and who gave Thee this authority?" This **is** the acid test. How aptly the Lord turned the challenge of the religious leaders! The parable of the two sons reveals and exposes their inconsistency. John came, saying, "The kingdom of heaven **is** at hand" (Matthew 3. 1-16). **His** warning note, "Repent!" passed unheeded by the Pharisees who did not believe him, but the publicans and harlots accepted his testimony. The kingdom of God and the vineyard can only be entered by repentance, by the "way of righteousness."

We have a contrast **in** Luke 7. 36-50, between Simon the Pharisee and the woman who was a sinner. Her attitude, weeping prostrate at the Lord's feet, evoked the contempt of Simon. The story of the two debtors revealed how each stood **in** relation to the Lord. **He** showed the connection between love and forgiveness. Simon stands out as the religious bigot, blindly and obstinately clinging to his self-righteousness.

The last portion came **in** for much discussion. The opening words of chapter 10. have to be understood **in** relation to chapter 9., where the Lord exposes the blindness of the Pharisees. We would value help here. Does the "sheepfold" answer to Israel's covenant position? Is the "door" of John 10. 1 different from the "door" of verse 9? It was suggested that the former **is** John's baptism. [The sheepfold of John 10. 1 **is** not Israel, nor the Sinaitic covenant, but **is** a fold into which the lost sheep of the house of Israel had been gathered by John the Baptist, a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1. 17), there to await the manifestation of Christ. The door into **the** fold was baptism and by this means the Shepherd entered. When **He** had called out **His** own **He** went before them, and from thenceforth, **He** Himself was the Door of the sheep, and to enter the fold required a personal faith in Christ, who **is** both Shepherd and Door. —J. M. J. John prepared a people for the Lord. **He** brought a people together, and as the "porter," he opened the door. The Lord, as the Shepherd, was subject, and was baptised of him. The sheep within, who were John's disciples, responded to the Shepherd's voice, and these **He** led out.

*J. McIlvenna.*

**From Broxburn.** —Unlike John's disciples and the Pharisees, who had cause indeed to mourn and fast, the sons of **the** bridechamber, that is, the Lord's disciples, had the Bridegroom with them, and therefore **it** was **an** occasion for rejoicing. Not only had they **the** bridegroom with them, they had also **the** moral fitness to enjoy **His** presence, which was more than the so-called spiritual leaders of the nation possessed. Their righteousness was **an** old garment of shreds and patches, which all attempts to mend only revealed how incapable **it** was of improvement, and the utter futility of seeking to fill the rents. Moreover, they could not share **in** the joy of those who had received the Lord by faith, for the new wine which **He** dispensed required new containers to hold **it**, and of the new birth they had no knowledge. With them **it** was a case of **the** skins bursting and the wine

being spilled or lost, but there were others such as the ruler and his daughter, a woman with an issue of blood, and two blind men, and also a man possessed with a demon, to whom it was given, in response to the faith exercised in the Lord, to taste of the new wine and the joy which it brings. When man's provision fails, as exemplified at the marriage in Cana, the Lord supplies something new and something better, even according to the words of the ruler of the feast, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now."

John came in the way of righteousness, and the Lord Jesus, in obedience to the will of His Father, was baptised by John in the Jordan. "For thus," He said, "it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." "But He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the porter openeth" (John 10. 2, 3). John was the porter who opened the door to the Lord. The door was obedience to God's word, of which baptism was the symbol. When the Lord Jesus thus entered into the fold of Israel [Not of Israel, but of the lost sheep of the house of Israel which John had gathered together.—J. M.] he found some who occupied the seat of authority who had not entered by the door, but sought to climb up some other way and of these He said that they were thieves and robbers. But there were others whom He recognised as His own, who were His sheep, and He led them out. This finds a fitting illustration in the man of John 9, who was born blind, but coming into contact with the Lord he received sight. Because he bore testimony concerning Him who opened his eye?, he was put out of the synagogue, but the Lord found him and he became one of His sheep. *Henry Dyer.*

From Kilmarnock. —In Matthew 23. the Lord instructed the people to "observe and do" what the scribes and Pharisees bid them, as they were in the place of authority, but we find He often exposed their hypocrisy and sham.

While God oftentimes recognised "fasting" under the law as a sign of humbling and repentance, the Lord knew that the motive of the Pharisees was "that they might be seen of men" (Matthew 6. 16). It had become part of the traditions of men, and the Lord showed by His parables that it had no spiritual value in the new dispensation of grace. The old and the new could not agree together, the new wine of the Spirit required the new birth.

In Matthew 21. the leaders of the people were very anxious to know what authority the Lord had for what He did, but in the parable of the two sons the Lord exposes their hypocrisy in professing to be God's servants, while they refused to submit to John the Baptist's message of repentance, and even refused to change their minds when they saw the power it had over the lives of ungodly sinners.

It would seem the Pharisee in Luke 7. was interested to some extent when he asked the Lord to eat with him, but he evidently had the pharisaical mind of thinking he was righteous and despising others ("see Luke 18. 9). The Lord knew the thoughts that were passing through his mind regarding the woman who was a sinner, and so He spoke the parable of the two debtors, in reply to which Simon judged rightly. While there was a great difference in their social standing (like the "five hundred" and "fifty pence" debtors) they were alike in that they had nothing to pay, and were dependent on the forgiveness of the creditor. Apparently the woman had already been forgiven, as her actions showed the change in her heart, and the Lord only publicly made it known. The Lord thus exposed to Simon that if he had love for the Lord it was very much less than the woman's, who had been a sinner, but was now forgiven.

John 10. We understand the porter of the sheepfold to be John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus the "Good Shepherd." He entered the fold by the "door," when he submitted to John's baptism; He came "to fulfil all righteousness." On the other hand the scribes and Pharisees sought to enter the fold in a way of their own, not submitting to John's message, and the Lord exposes them as "thieves and robbers." They occupied a place of authority in the nation of Israel, but were far from being in a right condition before God. As God's people we may be in a right position, but how important that both leaders and people are in a right condition!

A.

G.

S.

**Prom Manchester.** —Proverbs 6. 16-19, describes seven things which are an abomination to the Lord, namely, haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth **wicked** imaginations, **feet** that are **swift** to run unto mischief, a false witness that uttereth lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. These characteristics were sadly apparent in the religious leaders of the Lord's **day**; despite their divinely ordained position as teachers of the law, a position which the Lord Himself recognised (Matthew 23. 2, 3), their hearts were far from the God of righteousness and equity whose law they professed to expound.

Many of the parables spoken by the Lord were occasioned by the persistent attempts of Pharisees and **scribes** to "sow discord." For example, when they criticised His healing of the woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, because it was the sabbath, the Master put them to shame with the brief **but** telling question, "Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his **ass** from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" Again, when they murmured **at His** association with publicans and sinners, the Lord exposed their alienation from the merciful purpose of God in grace, by telling of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver and the lost son. It **was** this very lack of mercy and love which lay at the root of the Pharisees' spiritual condition. Ostensibly zealous for the law, they had none of that balancing grace which Micah 6. 8 so delightfully describes: "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Then **as** now, all efforts to please the Lord apart from love, profited nothing.

"Feet that are **swift** to run into mischief, " a "heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, " and "hands that shed innocent blood, " are all too clearly evidenced in the Lord's parabolic picture of the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 21. 33-46. The Pharisees "perceived that **He** spake of them, " and sought the more to kill **Him**. "This is the heir; come, let **us** kill him, and take his inheritance." Such crafty counsels were typical of the schemes so often devised to accomplish the Lord's death, and imaginations led their **feet** swiftly to mischief, and their hands to the shedding of blood. The means **used** were equally hateful to God, for they that **sat** on Moses' **seat** did not halt at so breaking the great moral code with which they were entrusted, **as** to employ "false witnesses that uttered **lies**."

While **we** have already considered the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in relation to the subject of prayer, **we** do well to remember that **it was** spoken primarily unto "certain which **trusted** in themselves that they were righteous, and **set** all others at nought." How hateful to God were the "haughty eyes" of him who stood and "prayed with himself"!

The Lord **Jesus** also drew **special** attention to the covetousness of the Pharisees in Luke 16. 14, from which **we** learn that they scoffed at His teaching in the parable of the unjust steward. The solemn story of the rich man and Lazarus **was** recounted in this connection: while it is generally **agreed** that the Lord here related the **actual** history of the death of Dives and Lazarus, which **places it** outside the scope of our **study**, **we** do **well** to **remember** that those then in Moses' **seat** were ensnared **by** the deceitfulness of riches. *G. Prasher, Jun.*

**From Birkenhead.** —The parables concerning "those that **sat** on Moses' **seat**" contain a **direct** accusation and condemnation: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Matthew 23. is **filled** with divine judgments on many counts which the Pharisees **must face**, **yet** the Lord **said**, "How often would I have gathered thy children together... **but ye** would not."

John the Baptist had **left** no room for doubt to his disciples: "**He** **must** increase, **but I** **must** decrease," he had said. **He** had also **used** the very figure which the Lord **uses** in this **parable** to **illustrate** his point, **yet** the **disciples** of John

cannot have understood or they would have been among the sons of the bride-chamber. The Pharisees mourned and fasted, **but we** have the Bridegroom with **us**: " Lo, I **am** with you **always** "; there **is** no need for fasting **and** mourning. For a short time the disciples lost the Bridegroom, **but** their time of fasting **was** soon over.

John 10. may be either a mere figure **used** by the Lord, or it may be an allegory. If it is an allegory then the following verses from verse 7 are speaking of different persons with the **same** figure. Interpreted as an allegory the porter who opened to the Shepherd would be John the Baptist, the fold would **be** Israel [How did John open the door to the Lord entering Israel? Surely the fold is not Israel. —J. M. ] from which the Shepherd called forth **a few** to follow Him, and from verse 7 onwards an allegorical account of the establishment of new flock and **a new** fold. The thieves and robbers who sought to forestall the Shepherd would **be** the men of whom Gamaliel speaks in Acts 5., men like Theudas and Judas of Galilee, who sought to lead away the sheep. [Our friends are surely astray here. Are they not the sheep stealers of John 9. 13 onwards?—J. M. ], Still the condemnation against the nation, and especially the leaders, **is** that they rejected their King, and were so blinded with the blinkers of hypocrisy that they could not **see** anything outside the crooked limits of vision to which they had restricted themselves.

P. K., L. B. H.

### THE FOUR CENTURIES OF AFFLICTION OF ISRAEL.

On page 11, February issue, 1944, second paragraph, " the sojournings of Isaac and Jacob, and the four centuries when the children of Israel were in Egypt, " the words " four centuries " **are** incorrect, **and** should read **215** years. The sojournings in Canaan of Isaac (from his weaning **at** 5 years old when he **became** heir of Abraham) and Jacob are **185** years. These **two** figures **make** the **400** years of Genesis 15. 1. 3 and Acts 7. 6. The added **30** years of Exodus 12. 40, 41. and Galatians 3. 17 are from the call of Abraham (Genesis 12. ) and covenant (Genesis 15. ) to weaning of Isaac, i. e., they include Abram's sojournings of **30** years.

Re translation of Exodus 12. 40, 41, A. V. is correct and R. V. incorrect—and of Genesis 15. 13 (quoted Acts 7. 6) both A. V. and R. V. **are** incorrect—the **Hebrew** idiom of Genesis 15. 13 **is** correctly translated **as** follows:—" thy **seed** shall **be** a stranger in a land that is not theirs (and they shall serve them and they shall **afflict** them) four hundred years. "

Once again I would like to express my appreciation of the great work in the Fellowship God **is** using Bible Studies to do—it **is** a great incentive to **us** all not to be superficial like the terribly superficial **age** in which **we** live, **but** to be real students of the word, workmen that need not to be ashamed, handling aright the Word of truth.

Arnold F. Atkinson.

This statement regarding four centuries **was** allowed to remain in this contribution intentionally with a view to provoking criticism. Regarding the **matter** of the A. V. and R. V. I have a Jewish translation of the Old Testament (issued by " The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, " in 1917), and Exodus 12. 40 is rendered—" Now the **time** that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt **was** four hundred and thirty years. " The Septuagint gives this verse as follows:—" *He de katoikesis ton huion Israel hen katoikesan en ge Aigupto kai en ge Chanaan ete tetrakosia triakonta.* " This means that the **430** years covered the sojourning of the children of Israel in Egypt and in Canaan.

If we take the **suggested** translation of Genesis 15. 13, of our **esteemed** correspondent—" thy **seed** shall **be** a stranger in a land that is not theirs (and they shall serve them and **they** shall **afflict** them) four hundred years, " it **does** not help us, nor does **it** strengthen his contention. To insert the brackets makes **the** verse **say**—that Israel **were** to be strangers in the land of **Egypt 400 years, and this is** what our correspondent does not mean that the verse says. **Surly** the R. V. **and** A. V. are better—" and **they** shall afflict them four hundred years. " This also is the **way it is** translated **by** the Jewish translation referred **to** above.

If the generally **accepted** view of the chronology of Genesis **be** accepted, the persecution of Abraham's seed began with the persecution of Isaac **by** Ishmael (Ishmael **was** the son of an Egyptian woman and took his character from his mother). No doubt it is assumed that Isaac **was** about five years old **at** the time. If the **400** years began with the persecution of Isaac, **30** years before takes to the time that Abraham came into the land of Canaan. He was then **75** years of **age**. It was about that time that he went down into the land of **Egypt**, where he presumably got Hagar, the Egyptian servant. Having regard to the **400** years beginning with Isaac's persecution, is not the **430** years of Israel's sojourning in Egypt, as given in the R. V., dated by God from the time of Abraham's disobedience in going down into **Egypt**? **We** know that the immediate cause of Israel being in Egypt was because of Israel's sons' hatred of Joseph, surely **a** picture of the sons of Israel's hatred of Christ. Is not the disobedience of Abraham the root cause of Israel being in Egypt, as is the disobedience of Adam the root cause of the need for Divine redemption? I think that it is not **a** wild deduction to **date** the **430** years from Abraham's going down into Egypt, in view of the **fact** that the **400** years of the persecution has for long been dated from Isaac's persecution. I make the suggestion for further meditation. Note, too, that the sojourning is that of the sons of Israel; actually, in **a** sense, Abraham and Isaac **are** excluded. Such **a** consideration adds to our difficulties. **J. M.**

### Questions and Answers.

Question from **London**. —Luke 5. 39. This verse seems difficult to understand. The new wine, if it represents the gospel, is certainly not inferior to the old. The old wine could represent the old ways, traditions, etc., which many people, like the Pharisees, prefer to the new way of the gospel, which they find not to their taste. We would, however, like to receive the opinions of others on the typical meaning of this verse.

Answer. —This dispensation is " the dispensation of the grace of God. " Grace means joy, gladness; the word **Charts** comes from **Chairo** which means to rejoice, be glad, be joyful, hence it is different in character from that of the law with its working, striving, repenting and fasting. To attempt to join the new and the old together was impossible. God discarded the old when the new was introduced. We are not under law, but under grace. Alas, the Judaising teachers held that the old was better than the new. The Jews were loud in their profession of being " disciples of Moses " (John 9. 28), but we drink the new wine, we who have been regenerated, of **a** new harvest and dispensation. **J. M.**

Questions from London. —(1) Is Israel the fig tree ?

(2) Whom do you consider to be the Porter ? Some of our number do not think the porter is the Holy Spirit because of being commanded to watch.

Answer (1). Which fig tree ? that of Matthew 21. 19, or 24. 32 ? Israel has often been compared to the former. As to the latter, the fig tree is taken as an illustration of certain events that will transpire which will show the early return of the Lord to earth. I cannot see that Israel alone is this fig tree.

(2) Again we ask, which porter, that of Mark 13. 34 or John 10. 3 ? John the Baptist is the latter, but as to the former, it is part of a parable and it would be as foolish to literalise the porter as it would be to say that the porter opens a literal door. —J. M.

Question from Birkenhead. —Luke 5. 39: How are we to understand this verse in its relation to the preceding verses ?

Answer. —All men of their own natural inclination will drink the old. Only through God's grace have any drunk of the new wine. Did not the Jews always prefer Moses to Christ ? and they do so to this day. Do not men now prefer a gospel of human works to one of God's free grace ? Only by the Spirit's work in conviction do men drink of the new wine and the more we drink of this new wine the better, so that we may be filled with spiritual power. —J. M.

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

The Lord's exposure of those in Moses' seat.

From Hamilton, Ont. —The whole of Matthew 23. is most revealing in regard to this subject, for there the Lord utters those seven solemn woes against the leaders of the Jews. We notice, too, that this chapter comes in between " the triumphal entry " and the " delivering up, " also between the two statements with regard to the temple—"My house shall be called a house of prayer, " and "your house is left unto you desolate. " The Lord at this special time delivered His Father's message to the offspring of vipers. It is profitable and revealing to note some of the terms used of them—hypocrites, blind guides, sons of hell, full of hypocrisy and iniquity and offspring of vipers (which term also John the Baptist used). Surely Israel had fallen far to have such leaders as these ! We noted, however, "that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea were outstanding exceptions to the rule, so that some rulers at least had a measure of sincerity about them.

*Alex. Sproul.*

The falling away of Israel.

**From Edinburgh.** —Throughout the history of the children of Israel we can trace a gradual falling away from God's purposes in them, until, when the Messiah came, the leaders of that generation were so far from the mind of God that they rejected Him, with the result that the kingdom of God was taken from them.

Great was the privilege of that generation ! To them the Lord said, " The kingdom of God is come upon you " (Matthew 12. 28). A greater than Solomon, a greater than Jonah, was in their midst. Israel had passed through times of oppression, and even at that time were under the power of Rome: but Christ, their Deliverer, had come to fulfil God's promises to Israel, and they rejected Him. Before the parable in Luke 11. 24-26 was spoken, the Pharisees, although they had seen His signs, the manifestations of His Deity, had rejected Him, and had taken counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12. 14). This parable seems to show how great was the responsibility of that generation in view of its unique privilege. Because they had rejected Christ, their last state was worse than the first. " Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation, " said the Lord (Matthew 12. 45). Israel, as a nation, is found in a much worse state since refusing to own Christ as its Lord and King.

In the second parable (Luke 13. 6-9) Israel is likened to a fig tree which bore no fruit and whose owner commanded that it should be cut down. The words of the vinedresser, the dunging and the waiting, would speak of the long suffering of God, in that He sent His word to Israel through His prophets and through the Lord Himself, giving them opportunity to repent and to render the fruit He desired. Failure to grasp this opportunity would involve the removal of Israel from its privileged position.

The parable in Matthew 20, 1-15 shews the sovereign right of God to do as He will with His own; to bring believing and obedient Jews and Gentiles into a position similar to that which Israel once occupied, and from which Israel fell away. The householder made an agreement only with the first labourers. With those whom he sent into the vineyard later, he made no such agreement, but said, "Whatsoever is right I will give you." When the first labourers complained, that they received no more than the others, his answer was, "I do thee no wrong." He had paid them according to his agreement. It was his will graciously to give to the others, with whom he had made no agreement, what he had given to the first. Now God had made a covenant with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt, saying, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from among all peoples: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19. 5, 6). This covenant Israel failed to keep, wherefore God has set them aside arid, in sovereign grace, has brought in others to fill a place in this dispensation corresponding to the position occupied by Israel in the past dispensation. [Note the force of the words "went out" and "into his vineyard" of Matthew 20. 1. Israel was the vineyard of the Lord. I judge that the hiring of labourers for the work of the vineyard is what the Lord is doing to-day. He is out abroad in the world hiring men and sending them into His vineyard. In the evening of the day of grace He will pay them for their labour. He of His graciousness will act as He deems fitting in the day of recompense, and quite differently from men, for the last shall be first. —J. M. J.]

*Kenneth M. H. Robertson.*

**From Cardiff.** —The falling away of Israel, and the Lord's rejection by them, are clearly brought out in the parable of the wicked husbandmen. They said, <sup>44</sup> "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance." The father had said, <sup>44</sup> "They will reverence my son," but we are reminded of the words of Isaiah, <sup>44</sup> "When we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." So they cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him, and thus, as the Lord goes on to show, the builders rejected the Stone that was to become the head of the corner. It was the husbandmen themselves who pronounced their own judgment. This is shown in Matthew's account (21. 40) "When therefore the Lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men." Some of His hearers exclaimed, <sup>44</sup> "God forbid" (Luke 20. 16), but the parable had no real effect upon their hearts. Not long afterwards they hurried away to fulfil the prophecy, and when they had accomplished it, they cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, it seems to be suggested that His coming again will be a time of rest from earthly labour. Field labour will then be over and there will be no more weary toil, although His servants shall serve Him throughout eternity. Our services on earth will be rewarded according to sovereign grace, and such sovereignty is shown here from the fact that He gives to all alike, and replies to those who murmur, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" In this parable we also see that the first were discovered to be last and the last first, when the time of reckoning came. It is observed, however, (1) that the fact that the labourers were hired precludes the thought of grace [Was not the reward enjoyed by the eleventh hour labourers essentially an example of superabounding grace, or undeserved favour? Such principles are at the basis of this present dispensation. The emphasis in the parable is on this favoured treatment of the late comers. The fact that all were hired merely forms the background of the story, and would hardly preclude the thought of grace. —G. P. J.] (2) That to interpret this parable as indicative of the falling away of Israel is difficult. [The context of this parable is a guide to its primary application. The discussion between the Lord and His disciples in the last paragraph of chapter. 19. led to questions of relative reward, and the parable is a

salutary reminder that **human** estimates may often be **the** reverse of divine assessments. But there would appear to be some justification for applying the parable **in a national sense** to Israel's decline. It was this very spirit of self-complacent jealousy which caused the Jewish leaders to reject **a** message which would bring blessing to the despised publican and Gentile. In this sense, the first would be last, **and** the last first. —G. P. J.

The parable **of** the house swept and garnished would **seem** to point **us** to the corrective ministry which Israel received under John the Baptist and which had no effect **in so far as** Israel's attitude towards their Messiah **is** concerned. **At** the preaching of John the Baptist " there went out unto him **all** the land of Judaea and they of Jerusalem and were baptised of him **in** the river Jordan, confessing their sins. " But they did not believe John when he spoke to them of the One who was to come after him. They did not recognise that John was **only** the voice, the **messenger** preparing the way for **Him**. When their Messiah **came** they would not receive Him, so their house was empty and Satan returned. It was not sufficient for the house to be swept and garnished, for Satan to be cast out, another must come **in** to abide **in** his place, and that **One** Israel refused and rejected, " and the last state of that **man** becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation. " And how true ! Satan returned and entered once again into Israel, held **a** much **firmer** grip over them, and they finally crucified the **One** whom they should readily have received.

*Martin D. Follett.*

### EXTRACTS.

From Manchester. —" For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that **He** might have mercy upon all. **O** the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God ! " In considering the four parables selected for study **in** connection with the falling away of Israel, we cannot but be impressed with God's wondrous mercy despite repeated disobedience, and this leads **us** to triumph with the Apostle **in** the riches of divine wisdom. Through the very falling away of Israel He devised rich blessing, and how much more will blessing abound through their coming fulness ?

The parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen spans the centuries of Israel's chequered history. From the time of their constitution as a nation the Lord had been disappointed **in** the fruit they yielded. Moses, the first great servant to be sent seeking fruit, was tried with their manners in the wilderness, and the Lord was wroth with him for their sakes. Under the later rule of judges and kings there was **a** succession of divinely commissioned messengers who put forward the **claims** of God to **His** people's obedience. That the LORD bore with Israel so long **is** eloquent testimony to the quality of divine love. The last of the prophets was John the Baptist, and the progressive iniquity so tersely summed up **in** the parable led to its fulfilment in his case. They did to him whatsoever they would.

There followed the manifestation of the Son, unique in His credentials, whom Israel should have revered. He displayed that same loving forbearance and longsuffering which had characterised all God's dealings with Israel in the past. If Moses had stood in the breach and pleaded for the people, how much more did Messiah Himself yearn over erring Israel with strong crying and tears ? But they would not. The further tending of the fig tree for another year left it barren still: the axe had long been laid to the root of the tree. Now it must be cut down, now the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to another nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Yet **in** the very act of judgment fuller blessing will accrue to greater numbers hitherto unreached by **a** knowledge of the bounteous grace of God. " Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life " ? So asked the rich young law-keeper, typical of the Jewish nation with its outward profession and lack of response to Messiah's claims. From this incident arose the Master's statement that " Many shall be last that are first. " Hence the parable of the vineyard and the labourers, in which we see the broadening stream of the divine purpose in grace. Many whose works least deserve it are privileged to receive of the Lord's bounty through simple response to His word and confidence in His promise.

*G. Prasher, Jun.*

**From Brantford, Ont.** —Luke 11. 24-26. As we consider this parable we are reminded of the spiritual hosts of wickedness. They are antagonistic both to God and man. God did much for Israel as a nation. From being of small account amongst the nations they were made great by Jehovah. By their negligence and sin they forfeited many of their rights as God's chosen and were soon to know increasingly the presence and power of the unclean spirit, accompanied by the seven others more wicked than himself. Their last state is truly infinitely worse than their first.

Luke 13. 6-9. The fig tree is typical of Israel as a nation. Planted in God's vineyard, with every facility for fruit bearing, they proved to be barren. Despite all the care of the husbandman there was no fruit. The disappointed lord of the vineyard received nothing from the fig tree for three years. How patient was the husbandman as he pleaded for one more season to be afforded the unfruitful fig tree! We might suggest that Israel was having that last year as our Lord Jesus was there speaking to them. Alas ! how they failed and the axe was applied to them as a nation formerly favoured of God.

Matthew 21. 33-46. This parable indicates how much God did for His ancient people as His vineyard, with its hedges and tower (for protective purposes), its winepress to receive the essence of the fruits, and the care expended upon it. At the season for fruit the servants (the prophets and other messengers of God) were shamefully treated and killed by the husbandmen (the leaders of the nation). At last, when every mission had failed, God decided to send His Son, hoping that they might reverence Him. But alas ! they cast Him out of His own inheritance and slew Him ! This parable was directed at the scribes and Pharisees. They were told by the Lord that the kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. This has been fulfilled by the existence in this dispensation of the Holy Nation.

*W. Walker.*

From London, S. E. —Instead of dealing with the four suggested parables, it seemed fitting to examine in detail the parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen, which is contained in each of the synoptic Gospels. To facilitate comparison, the various words and phrases are tabulated in columns, with the suggested interpretation in the extreme right hand column. The falling away of Israel is expressly and explicitly set forth in the parable, the cause being Israel's attitude to God as expressed in their attitude to His well beloved Son. To us who believe He is the precious One.

			Interpretation and notes.
Matthew 21. 33-46.	<b>Mark</b> 12. 1-12.	Luke <b>20.</b> 9-18.	
Householder.	Man.	<b>Man.</b>	God the <b>Father.</b>
Planted	Planted	<b>Planted</b>	Arranged or <b>estab-</b> <b>lished</b>
Vineyard	Vineyard	<b>Vineyard</b>	<b>His</b> people-Israel.
Hedged <b>it</b> round about, <b>digged a</b> winepress, <b>built a</b> tower.	<b>Set an hedge</b> about <b>it</b> , <b>digged a</b> place for the winepress, <b>built a</b> tower.		Gave <b>them</b> rule, <b>laws</b> , promises, etc., to cause spiritual fruit.
Let it out.	Let <b>it</b> out.	Let <b>it</b> forth.	Committed or en- trusted.
Husbandmen.	Husbandmen.	Husbandmen.	Elders, rulers or governors.
<b>Went</b> into <b>a</b> far country.	<b>Went</b> into <b>a</b> far country.	<b>Went</b> into <b>a</b> far country for <b>a</b> long time.	God <b>left them</b> in the earthly sphere of responsibility.

Matthew 21. 33-46.	Mark 12. 1-12.	Luke 20. 9-18.	Interpretation and notes.
<b>When</b> the time of fruit drew near.	At the season.	At the season.	<b>When</b> God saw fit to expect fruition.
Servants. Other servants.	A servant. Another servant. Another. Many others.	A servant. Another servant. A third.	<b>His</b> servants the prophets.
Took, beat, killed, stoned.	Caught, beat, sent away empty. Cast stones, wounded in the head, <b>sent</b> away, shamefully handled, etc.	Beat, sent away empty, entreated shamefully, wounded, cast out.	Tortured, mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, slain (Hebrews 11. 33-38.)
Last of all.	Last.		Once at the end of the <b>ages</b> .
His son.	One son, his well beloved.	My beloved son.	Jesus Christ.
Reverence.	Reverence.	Reverence when they <b>see</b> him.	Worship, honour and adore.
Said among themselves.	Said among themselves.	Reasoned among themselves.	"Take counsel together" (Psalm 2.).
The heir.	The heir.	The heir.	Christ—the Anointed.
Come let <b>us</b> kill him.	Come let us kill <b>him</b> .	Come let us kill him.	"Let <b>Him</b> be crucified."
Seize on his inheritance.	The inheritance shall be ours.	The inheritance may be ours.	Appropriate to themselves, what was truly Christ's.
Caught, cast out, slew.	Took, killed, cast out.	Cast out, killed.	They took the Lord Jesus, <b>He</b> went out, they crucified <b>Him</b> (John 19.).
Miserably destroy those wicked men	Destroy the husbandmen.	Destroy those husbandmen.	Cast off Israel and ruined their commonwealth.
Let out—unto other husbandmen.	Will give—unto others.	Give—to others.	A people from Jews and Gentiles. <i>F. L. Evans.</i>

**From Glasgow.** —This parable, spoken by the Lord to the chief priests and elders of the people (see verse 23) is most comprehensive, taking in the whole history of the Jewish nation. It reminds us of Stephen's address, in Acts 7. We are reminded of a somewhat similar parable in Isaiah 5. It may be that the Lord was purposely enlarging upon that same parable, and that the minds of His hearers would go back to it, and see that He was using the recognised authority of written prophecy against them. There was sufficient written in the prophets concerning Him, to shew that He had authority for what He did and said.

In the version of this parable given by Matthew and Mark there seems to be great stress put upon the fact that there had been a great number of servants sent, speaking of the great number of servants God had sent to His rebellious people.

We have already referred to Stephen's address, and how He laid to this nation's charge, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which shewed before of the coming of the Righteous One, of whom ye have now become the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7. 51-53). We might think also of the Lord's words in this same connection (Matthew 23. 29-39).

Israel's leaders, and Israel as a nation, were like Joseph's brethren. When they saw Him, they said, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." They ought to have welcomed Him, for He had all the authority of the prophets behind Him, and above all, the voice of God through those prophets, but they rejected Him, and in so doing hindered the fulfilment of their own destiny, as the nation through which God would bring His purposes to fruition.

The Lord Jesus, in Matthew 21. 43, turns their own word back upon them by saying, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

We believe this has in view this present dispensation of grace in which we now live, when God is taking from among the nations, both Jew and Gentile, a people for Himself. [The kingdom of God requires a together people, not scattered children of God. See John 11. 52. The people of God must not be confused with the children of God nor yet with the Body of Christ. —J. M. ].

In Romans 9., 10. and 11., the apostle Paul shews that Israel has been set aside, until God's purposes have been fulfilled with regard to the Gentiles. Israel will be taken up again, but it will only be a remnant that shall be saved, and it will only be those who accept and embrace the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah, who will be the true Israel in a day to come.

Luke 11. 24-26 should be read along with the verses that go before, to shew the connection. How wicked these men were! The words they said were blasphemous: \*\* By Beelzebub the prince of the demons casteth He out demons. " They regarded His miracles as mere displays of power, and thought not of the wondrous spirit of mercy and grace which was behind them, and which prompted them. What evidence He had shewn that the kingdom of God had come upon them! He, the "stronger man," had entered into the strong man's house, and was disarming him, and spoiling his goods. Death, disease, demons, the work of Satan, and the brood of sin, these all flee before Him. How wicked to suggest that the Spirit which prompted these acts was the spirit of Beelzebub! In those words, they shewed the spirit by which they themselves were characterised. They were "an evil and adulterous generation." This word "adulterous" is very striking. How often they had been so described by their prophets, long, long before the advent of the Lord Jesus. (See Jeremiah 3., Hosea 1. and 2., and many other scriptures). They may have been swept and garnished of many things, and apparently clean, but they were empty. God was not received into their hearts, nor was His Christ. They were imbued with the spirit of the age; material things, secular things, and sensual things caused them to shut God out.

*A. McIlree.*

**From Southport.** —The second of our parables concerns a fig tree, and the fig tree speaks of sweetness (Judges 9. 11). To people unacquainted with the customs of the East, it appears strange that this fig tree should be growing in a vineyard. But we were told that fig trees are quite frequently to be seen in vineyards. The owner of the tree had been seeking fruit on the tree for three years

does this speak of the three years of the Lord's public ministry ? [I should judge so—G. P., Jun. ]. The vinedresser suggests to the owner of the vineyard that the tree be left for another year, giving it attention and food during the period. Now even after that; Lord Jesus Christ had been crucified, the Apostles were to preach **in** Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1. 8). The Jew still had the first place, and we read of Paul entering into the synagogues **in** various cities which he reached. But finally Paul and Barnabas said, " It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles " (Acts 13. 46).

The third parable also concerns the Jews [In what way ? Are they the vineyard ? or are they the hired workmen ? Also, the kingdom of heaven **is** not limited to the Jews. —**J. M. J.** It is a parable for the Jews because it describes the kingdom of heaven. This thought **is** further strengthened by the fact that the subject **is** a vineyard. The last verse of the nineteenth chapter and the sixteenth verse of the twentieth are almost identical, and from this we were led to make a connection between\* Matthew 19. 23-30 and Matthew 20. 1-16. The first passage mentions the " regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of **His** glory, " speaking of the Millennium. It was thought that the parable looked ahead to the time of the Millennium, when posts under the Lord Jesus Christ will be allotted to God's servants. Then it will be found that many who are the last are first, and many first are last.

*W. S. Holden.*

**From** Atherton. —The parable of the labourers **in** the vineyard would indicate the sovereign purpose of God. **He** can do according to **His** own will. Suggestively, the earlier labourers would speak of Israel bearing the burden of the day and the scorching heat, which might speak of the law with its much ritual and ceremony. Then the householder seeks out other labourers towards the end of the day, suggestive, possibly, of God's later dealings in grace with the present Holy Nation.

It was noted too, that Israel are taken up under the figure of trees. (1) By the Apostle in Romans 11. —the Olive. (2) Parable of unfruitful tree—the Fig. (3) Parable of vineyard and husbandmen—the Vine. These trees rank high amongst all the trees because of their abundant fruitfulness, and are mentioned in this order in Judges 9. 8-13.

Matthew 21. 42-46, directs our attention to Psalm 118. 22, Acts 4. 11, and 1 Peter 2. 7.

Questions were asked about the remnant in Romans 11. 5, and it was agreed that it was part of Israel. **We** have the nucleus of the Holy Nation in Acts 1. —the 120. The apostle Paul we note includes himself (Romans 11. 1); it could not possibly speak of the coming Remnant, but it indicates a " present time, " an " election of grace. " With regard to the olive tree of Romans 11., the thought was expressed that the olive tree could not be Christ, for branches were broken off; also the Gentiles are reminded that they would be cut off, **if** they continued not in God's goodness; this touches an important fundamental truth, since nothing can be severed from Christ. Israel then was the good olive tree, together with the root thereof. [Some care **is** needed in the reading of Romans 11. The people of Israel were, I judge, the branches of the good olive tree. Branches were broken off in judgment and saved Gentiles were cut out of a wild olive and grafted into the olive tree (which does not mean that they were grafted into Israel and became Judaized Christians) to partake of the same root as Israel grew from, namely, Abraham, and to partake of the Abrahamic promises and other promises which God made to the children of the stock of Abraham. Faith draws of the fatness of such promises. Very few natural branches, alas, draw of the olive's fatness to-day, largely those who partake of such fatness are saved folks of the Gentiles. —**J. M. J.**]

The question was raised regarding the Jew: Is his standing greater than the Gentile's to-day because of his nationality ? It **is** said that there **is** no difference (Romans 10. 12).

*G. Sankey.*

**From Hereford.** — " **He** that is not with Me is against Me: **he** that gathereth not with Me scattereth. " This saying of the Lord followed **His** reasoning that " every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, " and **was** prior to His warning with regard to the danger of not being indwelt by the Spirit of God **in** the absence of the unclean spirit.

The enterprising Jew would not **suffer** a barren **fig** tree in his vineyard, and the longsuffering of the vine dresser calls forth reproof from his **master**; nevertheless the dresser pleads for another opportunity to secure fruit from the barren tree. **We** see here Israel typified **as** the barren tree, and although the time was already past when they should have been utterly forsaken by their God, here was **an** opportunity for them to return to God and render unto **Him** the honour due to His name. This parable bears witness to the **manner in** which the Lord sought to " dig " about Israel, and heralds **Him as** the longsuffering Vinedresser.

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard **we** see typified Israel who sought, by laying claim to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to prove that they were God's chosen people, while the Lord sought to show that **God can** still raise **a** people who will give **Him** the honour which is **His** due, and that **in** the day of reward some of these latter will share the premier place.

*J. O. Tidmas.*

**From Ilford.** — Under the old economy the Jew had been, and still was at the time the Lord was speaking the parables before us, in a position of particularly close relationship to God. From earliest days they had been chosen to be **a** people for **His** own peculiar possession, with untold privileges as compared with the nations at large. To them had been committed that priceless treasure, the oracles of God, and despite continued waywardness and disobedience God had been exceedingly longsuffering towards them. The long awaited Messiah had come almost unheralded by men, and, by **all but a few**, unrecognised. The falling away of Israel was fast accelerating, but even **at this late** hour we have the **Sent One Himself** foretelling its **fearful** conclusion. Led by the Pharisees and scribes, the Jewish people had lost sight of many of God's wondrous promises in the **mists** of ritual and formalism, and **in** Luke 11. 24-26 we have **a** reminder and **a** warning given of what was to be the result. Thus, though **at** one time emptied of those idolatrous evil influences, they had remained swept and garnished, instead of being filled with **a** heart desire for God and **His** things. Thus the returning evil spirits found an empty dwelling place prepared for them and the logical sequence was complete domination thereby.

But even now God is still longsuffering and gracious, **full** of compassion, and so **we** find that one last chance is to be given to the fruitless **fig** tree (Luke 13. 6-9) denoting the Jewish race, before **it is** cast away and destroyed to make room for **a** more fruitful tree. God had been robbed of the fruit that should have been **His** and despite many years of **regular** constant attention **His** people were barren. Let **us** learn our lesson too—we have been brought into **a** wonderful relationship with God **as a** result of **His** dealings with us, and **He** seeks to have from us some return for **His** costly labours. Let **us** indeed **see** that **we** are not unprofitable servants, but that our great Husbandman has **a** rich harvest **as a** result of **His** labour and travail.

The motive behind the service **seems** to underlie the parable of Matthew 20. 1-16. It matters not at what juncture of God's dealings with **men we** are brought into relationship with Him. Those who were early **in** the vineyard worked for an agreed rate of pay, those who entered **at** later intervals were content to leave their reward to their Master. They had faith and confidence **in** Him, and how well this is repaid is shown by the unexpected and undeserved **treatment** they receive. Truly grace abounded, and we **in** our day have been the recipients of unmerited \* grace and favour. **We** who were once strangers to the commonwealth of Israel have been brought into close association with Christ through **His** atoning death and have been made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

*A. G. J.*

# BIBLE STUDIES.

*Editors:*

John Miller, James Martin, A. T. Doodson, S. Burrows, and G. Prasher, Jun.

## SYLLABUS 1945.

### THE MIRACLES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Comparison and contrast between the Lord's miracles and the main groups of Old Testament miracles (notably those wrought by (a) Moses and Joshua; (b) Elijah and Elisha).

January.

The divine purpose in the Lord's "mighty works, and wonders and signs."

February.

Matthew 8. 17; 11. 20-24; John 2. 11; 5. 36; 9. 3; 11. 4, 45; 20. 30-31.

March.

The beginning of His signs and other early miracles. John 2. 1-11; 4. 46-54; Luke 5. 1-11; 8. 40-42, 49-56.

April. \*

<sup>44</sup> Healing all that were oppressed of the Devil. " Matthew 8. 28-34; 17. 14-20; Mark 1. 21-28; 3. 11-12; Luke 4. 41.

May.

The resurrection of the dead. Matthew 11. 5; Luke 7. 11-17; John 11. 39-44.

June.

"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Matthew 12. 9-14; Luke 13. 10-17; 14. 1-6; John 5. 1-9.

July.

Further miracles linked with challenges of the Lord's divine authority.

August.

Matthew 9. 32-34; 12. 22-45; Mark 2. 1-12; John 9. 1-7. The feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand. Matthew 14. 13-21; 15. 32-39.

September.

"I will give Thee also for a light to the Gentiles." Matthew 8. 5-13; 15. 21-28; Luke 17. 11-19.

October.

Miracles wrought for the special instruction of "them that accompanied with Him." Matthew 8. 23-27; 14. 22-33; 17. 27; Mark 11. 12-14, 20-25; Luke 22. 50-51; John 21. 1-14.

November.

A study of the Lord's methods and the principles upon which blessing was bestowed, *e. g.*  
(a) The source of His power. Matthew 12. 28; Luke 5. 17; 8. 46; Acts 10. 38.  
(b) Various means used. Matthew 8. 3; Mark 7. 33; 8. 22-26.  
(c) The reward of faith. Matthew 8. 1-4; 9. 27-31; Luke 4. 38-39; 18. 35-43.  
(d) The fruitlessness of unbelief. Mark 6. 5-6; Luke 23. 8-9.

December.

Comparison and contrast between the Lord's miracles and those recorded in the Acts and the Revelation.

The scriptural references given are intended only as a lead, and many of the miracles may have a bearing on several of the subjects outlined in the syllabus. Contributions should be as concise as possible, mere repetition of the narrative being avoided except where strictly relevant to the point under discussion.

All papers should be forwarded to

Mr. G. Prasher, Jun., 61, Delacourt Road, Manchester, 14

to reach him by the 20th of the month, about 5 to 6 weeks before the date of issue

All other correspondence should be sent to

Dr. A. T. Doodson, The Observatory, Birkenhead.

# SYNOPSIS OF SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES.

<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark.</i>	<i>Luke.</i>	<i>John.</i>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF MIRACLE.</b>	<i>Phase of Lord's Ministry.</i> <b>(6)</b>	<i>Month referred to in Syllabus</i> <b>(7)</b>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
4. 23-4				Healings in Galilee	II.	
8. 1-4	1. 40-44	5. 12-16		A leper cleansed . . . . .	II.	Nov.
8. 5-13		7. 1-10		Centurion's servant healed . . . . .	II.	Sept.
8. 14-15	1. 29-31	4. 38-39		Peter's wife's mother healed of a fever	II.	Nov.
8. 16-17	1. 32-34	4. 40-41		Evening healings at Capernaum	II.	Feb.
8. 23-27	4. 36-41	8. 22-25		Calming of storm on way from Galilee to Gergesa . . . . .	II.	Oct.
8. 28-34	5. 1-20	8. 26-29		Healing of Gadarene Demoniaics	II.	Apr.
9. 1-8	2. 1-12	5. 18-26		"Healing of palsied man borne of four... Jairus" daughter raised . . . . .	II.	Jul. Mar.
9 / 18-19	/ 22-24	/ 40-42				
\ 23-26	5 \ 35-43	8 \ 49-56				
9. 20-22	5. 25-34	8. 43-48		Woman with issue of blood . . . . .	II.	Nov.
9. 27-31				Two blind men healed . . . . .	II.	Nov.
9. 32-34				Dumb demoniac healed . . . . .	II.	Jul.
9. 35				Manifold healings in Galilean cities and villages . . . . .	II.	
12. 9-13	3. 1-6	6. 6-11		Man in synagogue with withered hand... Many following Him were healed	II.	Jun.
12. 15-16				Blind, deaf, and dumb demoniac healed	II.	Jul.
12. 22-3		11. 14-15		Many sick healed in desert place	II.	
14. 14				Feeding of the five thousand . . . . .	III.	Aug.
14. 15-21	6. 30-44	9. 10-17	6. 1-14	The Lord walks on the sea and calms the wind . . . . .	III.	Oct.
14. 22-33	6. 45-51		6. 15-21	Healings at Gennesaret... Canaanitish woman's demoniac daughter healed . . . . .	III.	Sept.
15. 21-28	7. 24-30			Healings in Galilee	III.	
15. 29-31				Feeding of the four thousand . . . . .	III.	Aug.
15. 32-39	8. 1-10			Epileptic demoniac healed . . . . .	III.	Apr.
17. 14-20	9. 14-28	9. 37-42		Shekel in mouth of fish . . . . .	III.	Oct.
17. 27				Healings beyond Jordan . . . . .	IV.	
19. 1-2				Two blind men healed... The withered fig tree . . . . .	IV.	Nov. Oct.
20. 29-34	10. 46-52	18. 35-43				
21. 18-22	11 / 12-14 / 20-24					
	1. 21-28	4. 31-37		Demoniac healed in Capernaum Syna- gogue... Healings by Sea of Galilee	II.	Apr.
	3. 10-12			A few healings in Nazareth . . . . .	II.	Nov.
	6. 4-6			Healing of deaf man with impediment	III.	Nov.
	7. 31-37			Blind man healed at Bethsaida	III.	Nov.
	8. 22-26			The great draught of fishes . . . . .	II.	Mar.
		5. 1-11		Healings at foot of mount where apostles chosen . . . . .	II.	
		6. 17-19		Widow of Nain's son raised from dead... Many healed as testimony to John the Baptist . . . . .	II.	May.
		7. 11-17				
		7. 21				
		13. 10-17		Woman 18 years with spirit of infirmity	II.	Jun.
		14. 1-6		Man with dropsy healed . . . . .	III.	Jun.
		17. 11-19		Ten lepers cleansed . . . . .	III.	Sept.
		22. 50-51		Ear of Malchus restored... Water turned into wine . . . . .	IV.	Oct. Mar.
		2. 1-11		Nobleman's son healed . . . . .	I.	Mar.
		4. 46-54		Impotent man at Pool of Bethesda... Healing of man blind from birth	II.	Jun. Jul.
		5. 1-9		Lazarus raised from the dead . . . . .	III.	Jul.
		9. 1-7		The second great draught of fishes	IV.	<b>ST</b>
		11. 38-44				
		21. 1-14				

Note.— The exact order in which the miracles took place is very difficult to determine, but it is often helpful to know roughly in what phase of the Lord's ministry they occurred. The figures in col. (6) represent the following periods:—

I. While John the Baptist was still at liberty. II. During John's imprisonment. III. From John's murder, to the last journey. IV. The last journey to Jerusalem and afterwards.

(Adapted from " Bible Readings on the Gospels " by C. M. L., *vide* page 113. )

# BIBLE STUDIES.

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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## REMARKS.

Luke claims to write in order (Luke 1. 3) and this has been thought to be a moral rather than a chronological order. It is perhaps well that we should note that the parable of the unfruitful fig tree comes in after the account of certain who had **been** murdered by Pilate and certain others who had been accidentally killed by the falling of the tower of Siloam (Luke 13. 1-5). The morbid thoughts of people then and now seek a reason for such happenings and find it, they think, **in** the extreme wickedness of the sufferers. This conclusion the Lord clears out of the way **in** few words. Accidents will happen (and God **in** the past provided for such **in** the Cities of Refuge) and oppressors will arise who will cause people to **suffer** who are no worse, sometimes better, than their neighbours. Could **we** at all say that the civilian sufferers through bombing are sinners above all others? Surely not!

Then the Lord spake the parable of the fig tree. What **is** its lesson? **Is it** not this? Man **was** made by God for **His** own glory and pleasure. (We know, of course, that no one can give God pleasure till he has been born again). If man fails entirely to render any return to his Creator and Owner, **is** it not the most reasonable thing to expect that his Owner will contemplate his removal? Why should **he** continue to be a cumber of the ground? Yet there **is** someone who pleads before the axe falls, "Lord, let it alone this year also, " or to put it **in** the language of poetry—"O woodman, spare that tree!" The vinedresser will dig about it and dung it, and seek some return for his master. But **if** there **is** no return **then** the sentence of—"Cut it down" must be executed. This **is** a serious matter for all, and the parable must have fallen on the hearers' ears that day, such **as** sought a reason for divine displeasure **in** those that had been killed, with tremendous force. **When** would their day come **if** they failed **in** the matter of fruitfulness?—and when will ours come also? That the day came for Israel nationally we know, for the principle **is** one, whether it be a man or a nation.

The parable of the vineyard **in** Matthew 21. 33-46 presents few difficulties, for **we** have that explanatory verse (45)—"When the chief **priests** and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that **He** spake of them"; they were the wicked husbandmen. But the parable of the householder, his labourers and his vineyard

may not be quite so easy of interpretation. First of all, the vineyard cannot be the same as that of chapter 21., for there that vineyard is not to be continued, the kingdom of God is to be transferred to another nation. A new vineyard is contemplated.

The chief point in the parable of Matthew 20. is not the fruitfulness of the vineyard, nor that of the condition of the husbandmen, but that this householder goes out to the market place to seek labourers. Certain he found whom he employed. This is not the Lord employing labourers and sending them into Israel to labour and to seek fruit as in the past, but this is a new vineyard, and a new work entirely. It seems to me that throughout this day of grace, right on to the end of the age, the Lord, the Householder, is employing labourers. Then at the end of the age He will come, in the time of reward. Those who were in a position of disadvantage will *not* suffer through not having been employed earlier. He will be both good and just, good to those who were in the unfortunate position of not having been employed earlier, and just to those who agreed to work for Him at a penny a day. The Israel nation will not be replanted in their own land till after the close of the day contemplated in the parable of Matthew 20. J. M.

### TELE HIGH PRIEST.

This subject is of the greatest importance to every child of God. In Hebrews 3. 1 we are called on, in view of the Eternal Sonship of the One who became incarnate, who tasted death for every man, and through death brought to nought him that had the power of death, to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus.

1. What is a high priest? See Hebrews 5. 1-3.

He is one appointed to minister for men in things pertaining to God, his service is principally Godward. For men to have dealings with a God of holiness and righteousness, there must be an intermediary. He must be one who understands the things both of men and of God. He is taken from among men. He is like an interpreter and must have a knowledge of two languages, the language of God and that of men. He must be able to translate the feeble gifts and utterances, yea, even the inaudible, unexpressed worship of men, into a form that will be acceptable to God. He deals with gifts, because that is God's due from men. He also makes propitiation for sin, because this is necessary if men's gifts are to be accepted, and before men can approach God.

Hebrews deals with the high priest, making no reference to Aaron's sons. We can approach God only through Jesus Christ. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasised, especially in view of the unscriptural lies so widely believed to-day. See Ephesians 5. 20; Colossians 3. 17. At any one time in the past there was only one high priest though there were many priests.

2. Who can be a high priest?

The qualifications are that he must be a man, and he must be appointed. He is not self-chosen, nor chosen by men's vote, but called and appointed by God. In Exodus 28. 1 it was God that told Moses to bring Aaron near that he might minister. He was appointed *for* men, and from amongst men, but not *by* men. So it was with the Man Christ Jesus. In connection with His manhood, I would point out that Hebrews is unique, in that the Lord is referred to no less than nine times by His earthly name, Jesus, whereby the Spirit would in each instance draw attention to His qualifications as the glorified Man.

Christ Jesus was chosen, appointed and named long before He should appear in all the fulness of this holy office. Hebrews 5. 5, "So Christ also glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest, but He that spake unto Him, Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten Thee." "This day" refers to God's eternal day, and reminds us that in ages past God called Him "My Son," with all the infinite fulness that is involved in that Sonship.

" **Named** of God a High **Priest** after the order of Melchizedek, " takes us to Psalm **110**. The One to whom "the LORD (Jehovah) hath sworn and will not repent " is a King as well as a Priest. The remarkable prophecy in Zechariah **6. 12, 13**, concerning the Great Priest to come, repeats that He should be both King and Priest.

Christ sprang out of Judah, as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests (Hebrews **7. 14**). Yet Christ is named a **Priest** for ever, not after the Aaronic order, but after the order of Melchizedek. We may ask, why has the order of the priesthood changed? In Hebrews **7**, the writer gives the explanation of the necessity. The Levitical priesthood was imperfect, and the law which made nothing perfect appointed " men, having infirmity, " but the word of the oath which was after the law appointed " a Son, perfected for evermore. "

In Numbers **16**, and **17**, we have the demonstration of God's choice in Aaron's rod that budded, blossomed and bore fruit. This vividly reminds us of the Christ who was raised from the dead.

As King He is God's representative to men, as Priest He is man's representative before God. As King He should rule in our hearts, as our Great High Priest He is before God for us.

### 3. Over what priesthood is Christ High Priest?

He is Great Priest over the house of God (Hebrews **10. 21**); " as a Son, over God's house, whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end " (Hebrews **3. 6**). This house is built up of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and are coming unto Him: "a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. " The words, " if we hold fast, " and " unto whom coming, " indicate the conditional character of the house of God and of the priesthood. Christ is the chief Corner Stone of the foundation of this spiritual house (Ephesians **2. 20**, see also **1 Corinthians 3. 10**; **1 Peter 2. 6**), the Great High Priest over this Holy Priesthood. He who was rejected by the builders in Israel, unable to fit into their scheme, is appointed by God, as High Priest over His (God's) house.

### 4. His divine character as Great High Priest.

His greatness is evidenced by (a) His Person, and (b) His work.

There were many high priests of the Aaronic order, but there is only one Great High Priest. Christ is unique and beyond compare, standing alone. In Hebrews we find many points of comparison and contrast between Aaron and Christ, —?" But Christ, " and " So Christ. " The old order acts as a background, to make the perfections of the Object stand out; yet, being typical, blending and not clashing, for it was a copy of the things in the heavens.

With the divine, He also combines the human; with divine attributes He combines a perfect knowledge of human needs and ways (Hebrews **4. 14-16**). He knows and sees us both from God's view and from man's view (Hebrews **2. 17, 18**). This is quite unique.

The greatness of His work is summed up in the last four words of Hebrews **9. 12**. " But Christ having come a High Priest of the good things to come, . . . through (that is, by means of) His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. " A redemption not transitory or passing, but of infinite value and lasting; in virtue not of corruptible things, but in virtue of precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, —of Christ, " who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake " (**1 Peter 1. 19, 20**).

## THE 430 YEARS OF ISRAEL'S BONDAGE.

*Extract from " Bible Chronology " by Ivan Panin.*

" In Galatians 3. 17 Paul says: ' A covenant confirmed afore by God, the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul. ' This statement makes two demands upon the correctly locating of its dates upon the chart: (1) The 430 years must begin with a COVENANT, with nothing short thereof;... (2) The period from this Covenant to the Law must *be four hundred and thirty years*,... In spite, however, of these two explicit requirements, these 430 years are dated by chonologers with one accord, so far as is known to the writer, from what is designated as Abraham's Call, when he was seventy-five, in 2083 from Adam. This event is told in Genesis 12. 1-4, 7, 9, t h u s : . . .

Here is indeed Jehovah's call unto Abram, the date also is there: Abram is seventy-five; and he obtains additional promises in answer to his obedience. But *there is here no COVENANT* . . . . The **430** from the Covenant cannot therefore begin when Abram was 75 in 2083, when no covenant with him is recorded. . . . No covenant with Abram is mentioned till Genesis 15. 18, but this is some time after the Call. . . . A covenant, a most, important covenant, is thus indeed made here with Abram; but this covenant, which thus meets all the other requirements, fails in the one essential for Chronology: it is not *dated*. The time occupied by the events of Genesis 12. 10—15. 2 cannot be determined. The only event dated is the w a r . . . it began in year thirteen of Chedarlaomer (Genesis 14. 1-5). But when this king began to reign is not s t a t e d . . . . Far other is the case with Genesis 17. 1-27. . . . Of the several chimes with which this covenant is rung in, three are chronological. In verse 1 Abram is 99; in verse 20 Abraham, now circumcised, is 99; and in verse 25 Ishmael is 13, he having been born when Abraham was 86 (Genesis 16. 16) . . . . This is thus the only covenant from which Paul could date the 430 years to the Law: the one made with Abraham when he was 99, in 2107 from Adam."

*Communicated by Andrew B. Russell, Aberdeen.*

One is pleased to note the interest created in this matter of the time between Abraham and the Exodus or the giving of the Law. I am a little doubtful if this writer, Ivan Panin (or ourselves) understood the meaning of the Galatians 3. 17. This verse does not say that the 430 years is to be reckoned from the *making* of a covenant (and we know that there were two covenants, one in Genesis 15. and the other in chapter 17.): what it does say is—"A covenant confirmed beforehand by God," etc. What we shall have to settle is—Is the 430 dated from the making of a covenant or from the time that a covenant was confirmed beforehand? Much will depend I think on the meaning that is to be put on *Prokekupomenen*, which is translated " confirmed beforehand. " This, my Greek Lexicon says, means " to sanction and establish previously. " Or again, does it leave the matter of where the 430 years begins a matter of obscurity, without fixing a date for its exact commencement *Q* or does it take us back to Genesis 12? I am disposed to the latter view. Certainly if we were to accept this writer's dogmatic statement—" This is thus the only covenant, " etc., it would throw all chronology of the period out entirely and would conflict with the 430 years of Exodus 12.; at least I think so.

## THE PARABLES.

The **falling away** of Israel.

*EXTRACTS.*

From **Liverpool**. —We find that in the main there was little fruit for God from Israel. Sometimes maybe it was the fault of the leaders, the kings, priests and so on, as is portrayed in the parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen. At other times it was the fault of the people themselves, as portrayed by the parable of the fig tree which the husbandman was told to cut down. Over and over again He afflicted them through the nations round about in order to bring them back to Himself. He sent unto them prophets, but many of them were slain. And finally He sent the Son, to establish the kingdom of God among them.

John came as His forerunner, and there was a shew of repentance among the Jews. The evil spirit went out, the house was swept and garnished, so, when the evil spirit returned, he found his one-time house empty and soon found means to fill it. And the last state was worse than the first.

It was suggested in connection with the parable of the fig tree (Luke 13. 6-9) that the three years the man came looking for fruit represented the three years of the Lord's ministry among the Jews, while the fourth year represented the time up to Acts 13. where Paul declares that, the Jews having rejected for themselves the counsel of God, he now turned to the Gentiles. And now from Jew and Gentile God is gathering subjects for His kingdom, a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (See 1 Peter 2. 1-10). R. S.

From Yeovil. — Luke 11. 24-26. In this passage, we have the parable of the unclean spirit returning to an empty house. The Lord Himself here gives discourse on demons and evil spirits. At that time demon-possession was rife in Israel (see Deuteronomy 18. 10-15). The Lord came and cast out many. This constituted the kingdom of God, but they eventually rejected Him and His kingdom: "We will not have this man to *reign* over us." [We are not told that the casting out of demons was what constituted the kingdom of God, but what the Lord said was, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (Matthew 12. 28). The kingdom of God involved much more than the casting out of demons. Note that those whom He addressed were Pharisees (Matthew 12. 24), men who committed an unpardonable sin (verses 31, 32). What part could such men have in the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is the doing of what is right (righteousness) by a collective people, with the consequent blessing of peace and joy (Matthew 6. 33; Romans 14. 17, 18. — J. M. J.]

Then followed a time of persecution from A. D. 70, and the subsequent dispersal which continues until to-day. The parable itself teaches the following. — The unclean spirit which goes out represents the unclean spirit of Israel, the spirit of unbelief. The house swept and garnished, probably typifies Israel at the end of the Lord's ministry, when there were fewer demons and may be none at all. The spirit returning illustrates that Satan returns at the end when the Jews reject Christ. This opened the door for him and his spirits to return. The last state was worse than the first. The latter state, probably idolatry in the temple, was indeed worse, and resulted *in their house* being left unto them desolate, and prior to His coming again will be culminated in the worship of antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2. 7-12). [I do not follow that there was such a thing as the unclean spirit of Israel, the spirit of unbelief, that left Israel. When did this happen? Certainly not in the Lord's time. Note that the unclean spirit went out of the man of his own volition; he was not cast out. The picture should not in all its details be made to apply to Israel, but to the man to whom the Lord referred. Because the man's heart was unoccupied therefore the demon found ready access again, bringing in with him seven worse spirits than himself, hence his last state would be worse than the first. So would it be with any man and so it was to be with the evil generation in the Lord's time. The Lord visualised a worse time coming and this we know did come and will come; for if the Lord does not get His place in the heart and also in the midst of His people a worse time will come. — J. M. J.]

From Vancouver. — This subject is of great interest. The Lord Jesus Christ said to those of Israel who were listening to Him, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope" (John 5. 45). And as we turn back to Moses we read many things that not only condemn his own generation, but also many of following generations, parts of which *are* very pointed indeed (*e. g.*, Deuteronomy 32. ).

The parable of the fig tree in Luke 13. follows the Lord's warning that, if they did not repent, they would perish like those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, or those whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. The barrenness of the fig tree is suggestive of the lack of fruit that the Lord Jesus Christ found during

His ministry, and He pleads with the Father to spare them for a short time. Cultivating and fertilizing may be taken as the action for good **that the** Lord's ministry should have had on the nation of Israel. But there was no fruit that year also, and we **see** the ultimate rejection of Israel **as** a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Instead, **Go. d is** now taking out of both Jew and Gentile **a** people for Himself, redeeming them by the precious blood of Christ (Acts 15. 14-18).

*H. McL.*

The Blessing of the Gentiles **as** illustrated **by** the Marriage Feast **and** the Great Supper.

**From** Ilford. Matthew 22. 1-14. In the parables with which we dealt last month we saw the falling away of Israel. They were a chosen people, but **as** a result of their refusal to accept Christ **as** their Messiah, the door was opened to the Gentiles. In this first parable, the refusal of those who were bidden to the feast, **in** honour of the son, is **a** picture of the Jews who refused God's offer of salvation. Right down their chequered history we can trace time and **again** how they refused God's way, which ultimately led to their crucifixion of the Christ. **We see** God's long-suffering shown in this parable. Twice he sent his servants to try and induce those invited to come to the wedding feast. How often, too, Christ pleaded with them to accept **His** doctrine, but of no avail. The destruction which took place of their cities may speak of the fall of Jerusalem, when many thousands were killed. Thus we **see** how at last the Gentiles are brought into the centre of God's scheme, and they too have the offer of salvation which had been given to the Jews. (See Acts 13. 45-46). **We see** also in this parable how the servants which were sent to invite those bidden to come were killed. What **a** true picture this **is** of the Jews, who were responsible for **a** number of the deaths of **His** servants!

Christ's offer **is** to all, both good and bad. None are too bad to come, because the shedding of blood covers all who come in faith. The latter part of the parable, **seems** to indicate that we cannot come before God in any of our own righteousness. All our righteousnesses are before Him as filthy rags. **We** read that when this guest was questioned **as** to his not wearing a wedding garment, he was speechless, and so will all be before the Lord Jesus Christ who do not accept\* **Him** now **as** their Saviour.

Luke 14. 15-24. Again in this parable the Jews are portrayed. They were bidden to the supper, but because they had no love for Him who had made the invitation, they refused. Thus once again, the Gentiles, **as** it were, were brought in. The servants were sent out to bring all the needy ones in to the supper. How true it **is** and yet how sad that not many mighty and not many noble are called. There **is** **a** slight difference between the two parables under consideration. In the latter one, we see how he sent his servants out, with the orders that they should constrain them to come. God **is** urgent in the matter of accepting the offer which **He** has made in **His** Son, and we who are His servants, should too have that earnestness which might constrain people to come to Christ. *E. H. Jarvis.*

From London, S. E. —Matthew 22. 1-14. This parable was given after the Lord had told the scribes and Pharisees that the kingdom of God should **be** taken away from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

It has to do with the kingdom of heaven. He speaks of **a** king making **a** marriage feast for his son. Here we have the words " **a** certain king " showing it was **a** fact, I judge. [Would not the words, " **is** likened unto, " rather co-contradict our friends' suggestion. —G. P., Jr. ]. The king would be God the Father, the Son the Lord Himself, the feast the marriage supper of the Lamb; the servants would be the prophets, and later, perhaps, the **12** and the **70**. [Note the fact that the servants of verse 4 were sent to tell those that had been bidden that the time was come when all things were ready. All those servants are servants of the New Testament, not of the old. —**J. M. J.** The Lord Himself came too, and Mark 1. **15** shows that **He** came saying, " the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God **is** at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. "

Note the words, " They *would not* come, " constituting a definite refusal, and after **making light of it** they went their own ways (*e. g.*, to his *own* farm, to his merchandise, etc. ). They then entreated the messengers shamefully and killed them. The Apostle Paul said at Antioch, " Seeing *ye thrust* it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles " (Acts 13. 46). Thus the **king** was wrath and destroyed the people and burned their city. Would this be A. D. 70 ? [This *seems* a feasible interpretation. —Eds. ]

An alternative thought was **that** verses 8-10 represented the preaching of the everlasting gospel of Revelation 14. **6** and the **man** with no wedding garment, one who feigned obedience during the Millennium.

Verse 14 presented difficulties, but it was suggested that we **are** called in the gospel message, and chosen because the message **is** received (compare—" Chosen in Him, " " Elect according to foreknowledge of God " (1 Peter I. 1, 2).

But the supper was prepared, the wedding ready and no guests had come. The gospel invitation **is** taken out to the partings of the highways and a message given. Those who gathered **in** were both bad and good, and the wedding room was filled with guests. The man without a wedding garment gives food for thought. Was he one who came in his own righteousness, polishing up by his good works, or those of whom John the Baptist said that they had climbed up another way ? [It **is** evident that this parable covers a long period: I. Guests were bidden (in Old Testament times, I judge); II. then servants were sent (in New Testament times) to tell the bidden guests that all was ready and they were to come, but they made light of the invitation. Others took the servants and entreated them shamefully and killed some of them. III. Then came the destruction of the murderers and the burning of their city (by the Romans **in** 70 A. D. ) and the servants now go to the partings of the highways and give a general invitation to all. IV. Then the King came to behold (at the coming of the Son of Man) when one was found to have no wedding garment. This cannot apply to this age, for no one will ever be cast out who has believed and no unbeliever can come within (John 6. 37), but it must refer to the sons of the kingdom, of Matthew 8. 12, who will be cast forth into outer darkness. —J. M. J. A wedding garment speaks of the righteousness of Christ and we are clothed in **His** righteousness (2 Corinthians 5. 21, and Isaiah 61. 10). This one would **seem** to be a professor only.

Luke 14. 15-24. Here it **is** a great supper, and no son **is** mentioned. Many were bidden and at supper time a servant went round to say " all things are *now* ready. " Here again we have all the prophetic promises, and the great herald John, and finally the Lord Himself, saying, " The time **is** fulfilled. " Supper **is** the last meal of the day and the Lord was God's last message to men (Hebrews 1. 1, 2). It was also suggested that supper was the feast of good things prepared in the gospel as in Isaiah 55. 1-2.

Between the invitation and the announcement that supper was ready, it would seem that they had all agreed not to go (" with one consent ").

The scribes and Pharisees rejected the preaching of John for themselves. Note the definite refusals here—" I must needs "; " I go to prove "; " I cannot come. " **One** was held fast by his possessions, the second absorbed in his business, and the third in his pleasures. " I must needs " reveals that man **is** in bondage. **He is** no longer a free agent. His heart **is** in his treasure and men are bound by their heartstrings.

" I go to prove " shows a preoccupation which leaves a man no time for the serious things of eternity. " I cannot " shows a **man** a slave to his self-indulgence and carnal desire. It also shows carelessness and foolishness in buying before seeing or proving the purchase, and in presuming a wife was a bar to the acceptance of the invitation.

No wonder the king was angry ! Such trivial excuses show hearts ungrateful and unappreciative and **as** such unworthy. So again the message **is** carried out to all and sundry. The poor—cannot pay. The maimed—cannot work. The blind—cannot see. The lame—cannot walk; and the whole " cannot " family are brought to **Him**. The servant returns and says, " Yet there **is** room, " and again the universal call goes out. Here again Acts 13. **46** and 28. **28** are brought to mind.

Those found **in** highways and hedges, illustrating the **main** streams of **life**, and the outcasts, derelicts and beggars, **all** are constrained to come in. God **will have His** house **filled by the** unworthy Gentiles and the believing children of Israel, forming the Israel of God. *H. J. Owles.*

**From Yeovil.** —The first part of Matthew **22. 1-14** is fairly **simple** of interpretation. God sent the prophets and lastly John the Baptist to invite Israel. However, practically **all** were ignored and persecuted or killed. This brought eventual judgment on Jerusalem, the chief city of the Jews, in A. D. 70. But the invitation by the gospel **was** still extended to the Jews even after their first rejection. The gospel was to the "Jew first." It was suggested that the second invitation here was this appeal to the **Jews** by the apostles **as** they spoke the Word in Jerusalem and Judaea, and to the Jews in foreign **cities** [and to Gentiles too surely]. It was felt that Gentiles were not primarily meant here, **as** the casting out of the one who had not **a** wedding garment could hardly apply to **a** Gentile who was born again. It might apply to **a** Jewish Pharisee who tried to clothe himself with his own righteousness and not that righteousness which **is** by faith in Jesus Christ.

It was **felt**, however, that we could draw principles from the parable, among which were the principles that God took up others to do **His** work when the first had failed, and also that in the proclamation of the gospel, **a call** was made to the many, but only **a few** accepted the invitation and became the chosen ones of God.

Luke 14. 15-24. **We get a similar** process in this parable with certain important details that differ. It was noted that this time **it is** not **a** marriage, but **a** supper. This **is** the last meal of the day and may speak of the coming darkness of the world when the gospel of grace **is** withdrawn. [But were not marriage **feasts** then customarily held **at** night?—G. P., Jr.].

It was noted that after the first guests had declined to come, there were two further invitations to those who were not bidden first. The one invitation was to those of the city, the other to those of the highways and hedges. It was suggested that they may have been fulfilled in the proclamation of the gospel to the Jew first and also to the Greek (or Gentile). It was noted too that there was plenty of room in the house and that the servant was to constrain them to **come** in. This may speak of the abundance of God's grace that **is** available and the earnestness with which God desires people should have it. *A. S. Glover.*

### EXTRACTS.

**From Atherton.** —**We** may be inclined to **assume** that the Old Testament writings, promises, and prophecies were directed to Israel in particular **as a** nation, and while this **is** primarily true, we must gradually recognise that God having known **all** things from eternity past must sooner or later indicate **His** further purposes in the Gentiles. In the **life** of Abraham the Holy Spirit through the apostle **Paul** unveils the deeper meaning of the words of promise, "In thy seed shall **all** the nations of the earth be blest." The avenue of this blessing **is** later narrowed down to the seed of Abraham, which **is** Christ, which delightful consummation **is** visualised by the aged Simeon with the babe in his arms, "A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

In the parable of the marriage **feast** the lesson drawn from the first call **is seen** in the **message** of the Lord and **His** disciples prior to **His** death. **After** the **sacrifice** of Christ and the provision of the Holy Spirit **at** Pentecost **a** second invitation was sent to the Jew in **all** the plenitude of divine grace, **but** this again was rejected by the nation at large. The disciples were persecuted and Stephen and James were slain. Later **Paul** and Barnabas, by reason of the persistent rejection of the invitation, and the absolute defiance of the Lord's **claims** by the Jews, realised that they had now no alternative **but** to turn to the Gentiles, based upon God's promise in Isaiah 49. 6. This **left** the Jews without **excuse** and the final outcome is seen in the Roman armies absolutely devastating both them and their city, Jerusalem, about the year A. D. 70.

**Seeing** that these two parables refer to (1) the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 22. 2), **and** (2) the kingdom of God (Luke 14. 15, 16) [It does not say that the parable of Luke 14. 15-24 is a parable of the kingdom of God, but **is** a reply to one who spoke of the blessedness of **eating** bread **in** the kingdom of God. —J. M. ] we looked for distinguishing features **in** them. It was observed that in Matthew 22. we read of servants **in** each case, whereas **in** Luke 14. it is " servant " only. It was considered by some that the servant here **is** the Holy Spirit, and not men in particular. [This **is** very far-fetched to consider that the Holy Spirit **is** the bondservant in this parable. —J. M. ] **He is** the great constraining power of verse 23. Another distinction observed was the absence of condemnation in Luke 14. The **man** who **in** Matthew 22. came **in** without the Lord's wedding garment was condemned, this speaking to us of those who seek to come **in** their own righteousness, but for such there can be nothing but eternal doom (Matthew 22. 13). [None such can possibly be inside **in** this dispensation and be cast out. —J. M. ]

Suggestions were given regarding the terms " streets and lanes, " and " highways and hedges. " (1) That the streets and lanes of the city refer to the **message** to the few, " those who were near, " and the " highways and hedges, " to the Gentiles, " those afar off " (Ephesians 2. 13 to 17). (2) That those of the " streets and lanes " were such **as** had a measure of knowledge, but wanted guidance. Those in the " highways and hedges " were such as thought themselves without hope, but still were brought in.

*G. A. Jones.*

From Southport. —The parable of the marriage feast (Matthew 22. ), forms part of a passage which commences in the previous chapter. The parable **is** an answer (verse 1) to the desire on the part of the chief priests and the Pharisees to stone Him.

The subject **is** a marriage feast. The question was then asked whether it was the marriage supper mentioned **in** Revelation 19. or indeed was it any marriage feast in particular. It was decided that it was not the marriage supper of the Lamb as there **is** a wife mentioned **in** Revelation 19 and not in Matthew 22. [The marriage feast was made by a king for his son; could such a feast be possible **if** the son had no wife ? Does not the nature of the feast involve this ?—J. M. ] Also those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb are said to be blessed; surely this **is** not the case with one of the guests in Matthew 22! It was thought that the Lord Jesus Christ had no particular feast in His mind when **He** related the parable. [This can hardly be the case. Have we not to make a distinction between the marriage and the marriage feast ?—J. M. ]

It was taken that the period when the Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth corresponded with the time when the feast had been prepared, and the servants were sent forth. [This parable covers the entire period from the time of the sending of the servants to call the people of Israel to the feast, those who had previously been bidden, right on till the Lord, **as** Son of Man, returns to earth, when the King will enter, according to the language of the parable, to **see** the guests, both good and bad, that accepted the invitation to the feast. —J. M. ] John the Baptist was a servant, teaching the people that they should repent. The twelve disciples were servants too, and when they were first sent out it was to the " lost sheep of the house of Israel " (Matthew 10. 6). Not only was the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God and King of Israel, but **He** also was God's servant (Matthew 12. 18), a servant who did all God's will. It was thought that the servants would include Old Testament prophets [No !] for they told many tilings concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The question was then asked whether the destruction of the city in verse 7 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans ? This verse **is** very similar to Matthew 21. 41, and the following verse to Acts 13. 46. At that time the Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and because of this the Gentiles can now come to the knowledge of the Saviour. " For there **is** no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the **same** Lord **is** Lord of all " (Romans 10. 12). This invitation **is** offered even to those in the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1. 8).

*W. S. Holden.*

**From Cardiff.** —In the parables of the Marriage Feast and the Great Supper we have the falling away of Israel **and** the blessing of the Gentile clearly illustrated. It **is** noteworthy that the parable **in** Luke **is** spoken almost immediately after the Lord's solemn words, " Behold, your house **is** left unto you desolate, " and we can perceive in this parable God's final turning away from Israel. Two offers of mercy, so to speak, are given, for in Matthew 22. 4 after the first invitation has been rejected, we read, "Again he sent forth other servants... " and in Luke the servant goes into the city, before passing on to the highways and hedges.

" Many are called, but few are chosen. " In the two parables, we have two different types of call. In Matthew 22. many are called to the feast, but some do not respond, whereas in Luke the call to the feast **is** a compelling call (Luke 14. 23). The one was **a** call that could be rejected, the other **is** a call which **is** the earnest and guarantee of glory; for " whom **He** called, them **He** also justified, and whom **He** justified, them **He** also glorified. " In Luke, the banqueting house was filled with those who needed to be led in or carried, for the guests were blind and lame. In Matthew, there **is** no mention of the blind and lame and the guests are merely " bidden " (Matthew 22. 9). In Matthew there **are** the servants who only bid—evidently speaking of God's servants on earth; in Luke there **is** *one* servant who " constrains, " speaking we suggest, of the work of the Holy Spirit. Many are called to the feast, but some refuse—others are called, and also brought and these are the chosen ones, " chosen in Him, before the foundation of the world, " " called according to His purpose. " This distinction between the two parables **is** worth noting.

*Martin D. Follett.*

**From Kilmarnock.** —The parable of Matthew 22. 1-14 brings before **us** what we read in Matthew 28. 19, also Acts 10. 34, etc., where Peter is, for the first time, delivering the gospel **message** to the Gentiles. Acts 15. 14 again tells of God's purpose " to visit the Gentiles to take out of them **a** people for **His** name, " thus bringing the Gentiles into a place of blessing and **Jews** and Gentiles made " all one in Christ Jesus. " **We** note that **at** the marriage **feast** there was **a** condition necessary for the **guests**, viz., that all should have on **a** wedding garment provided by the host. This would illustrate that it **is** only those who discard their own righteousness and accept of Christ, who **is** made unto the believer, " wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, " who will be acceptable with God.

In Luke 14. the Lord was invited to eat bread in **a** Pharisee's house and one of the guests who reclined with **Him** **seems** to have been interested in **His** teaching, as he expressed himself by saying, " Blessed (or happy) **is** he who shall **eat** bread in the kingdom of God. " This led to the parable of the " great supper. " When the supper was ready the intimation was sent to the invited **guests** to come, but they preferred to attend to their own affairs and despised the invitation. **We** thought of this **as** illustrative of the joyful **message** of the grace of God which so many despise at the present time. The messenger was again sent out to " bring in " the needy ones; we likened this to the gospel or joyful **message** of the kingdom, which shall yet be proclaimed to all nations (Matthew 24. 14). Again the messenger was sent to compel (or impress) them to come in; this might illustrate the everlasting gospel which shall **be** proclaimed by **a** flying angel to all that dwell on the earth (Revelation 14. 6).

*A. G. S.*

**From Edinburgh.** —The statement, " The kingdom of God shall **be** taken away from you *fi. e.*, the Jews) and shall be given to **a** nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, " provides, as it were, an introduction to the present subject. [This statement relates to the kingdom of God, but Matthew 22. **is** a parable of the kingdom of heaven, quite another matter. —J. M. ]

In chapter 22. we read of **a** **feast** prepared, and of servants sent out to call those that were bidden. These servants, we suggest, speak of John the Baptist, who was sent with **a** message to Israel, but whose **message** met with indifference on the part of the rulers of Israel. The Lord **Jesus** Himself was treated not only with indifference, but also with irreverence, **as** **is** shown by the parable of the vineyard and husbandmen. The husbandmen said, " This **is** the heir; come, let **us** kill

him. " This speaks of the Lord's rejection by His own people, and of His death. <sup>44</sup> He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God " (John 1. 11-12). Through His death, the invitation and blessing come to the Gentiles, to whosoever will accept them. " Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to **the** marriage feast. "

The custom in the days in which this parable was spoken was to provide the guests with wedding-garments. In verse 11 we read of a man who was not wearing the garment provided. The garment, we suggest, speaks of the righteousness which is of God by faith in which every true believer in Christ is clothed the moment he believes (see Philippians 3. 9). The man, we suggest, speaks of one who outwardly professes to be a Christian, but who in truth has not placed faith in Christ, and is depending upon his own righteousness, which is in God's sight as a polluted garment.

*James Paterson.*

**From Glasgow.** —The parable of the great supper seems to have been spoken in the house of the Pharisee, as given in Luke 14. 1. It was spoken in answer to one of the guests at the table, when he said, " Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. " This is no doubt a blessed portion for any to look forward to, as the Lord said unto His disciples, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and ye shall sit on thrones " . . . (Luke 22. 29).

In Matthew 22. the king made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the feast. Note the force of the words that follow, " They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise: and the rest laid hold of his servants, and entreated them shamefully, and killed them. " Do these words not speak of the pleadings of God to Israel from early times in sending His servants the prophets and righteous shamefully, and killed them. " Do these words not speak of the pleadings of God to Israel from early times in sending His servants the prophets and righteous men unto them to turn them from their evil way ? Israel received the invitation to better things, things that were eternal in character, but they chose their own way, yea their rulers had rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptised of John, whilst the publicans and harlots accepted the invitation and went into the kingdom of God before them. [See note in paper from London. ]. So the invitation to eternal happiness and feasting that Israel as a nation refused, goes out now to the Gentiles. We would suggest that the streets and lanes of the city as spoken of in Luke 14. 21, are a picture of the gospel message being heralded from Jerusalem to the Jew first, and reaching out unto the parting of the highways, thus embracing the Gentiles. The man without the wedding garment would be expressive of those Pharisees and rulers who with their feeble excuses made light of the invitation. They never repented and were never clothed with the righteousness of God. For those who accept the invitation that has gone forth are better arrayed than Solomon in all his glory. Those rulers to whom the Lord directed His teaching in these parables will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sitting down in the kingdom and themselves cast out, for they were the called ones of Matthew 22. 14, but they refused; they had not been chosen.

*J. Rae.*

#### Questions and Answers.

Questions **from Glasgow.** —(1) Who are the eleventh hour labourers in the parable, Matthew 20. ? Are they Gentiles ?

(2) What is meant by the seven spirits more wicked (Luke 11. ) ? Could you please explain this parable ?

Answer (1) It is not necessary to turn all the Lord's teaching into the channels of Jews and Gentiles. The Lord **in** the kingdom of heaven is employing servants to work in **His** vineyard and will do so till the last hour. The householder did not allow anyone to **suffer** loss through not being employed earlier. This shows how the Lord in wisdom and **grace** will deal with all. The Lord has ever a special place in **His** heart for the last and least.

Answer (2). The Lord here uses two men to show different dangers—(1) the strong man with his house and goods, and (2) the man with an empty heart. In (1) the strong man is in danger of the coming of a stranger (often used of the devil and the Lord). (2) Here the unclean spirit is not cast out, but goes out of his own volition in the hope of finding a better house, but not finding a better, he returns to his old home and on the way takes with him seven worse spirits than himself. All spirits are evidently not of the same state of badness. He finds the house unoccupied and the last state of the man is worse than the first. Christ in you the Hope of Glory is the remedy for this state of human emptiness. —J. M..

Questions **from** Yeovil. —Arising out of these two parables, could it be said—

- (1) that the marriage feast with its one calling to the outside referred to the gospel call to the " Jew first " ?
- (2) and that the great supper with its two callings to those outside referred to the gospel call to the Jew first and also to the Greek (or Gentile) ?

Answer (1). —The fact is that in Matthew 22. 1-14 there are three sendings, those who were sent to invite such as were bidden; these who were bidden were the children of Israel. Then the servants were told to go to the highways and they gathered good and bad. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in time to come to the whole world (Matthew 24. 14), not simply to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10. 5-7). As a result of this world-wide testimony we read of a multitude which no man could number, of all tribes and peoples and tongues, who came out of the great Tribulation (Revelation 7. 14). These are some of the good and bad from the highways who will be gathered.

Answer (2). —In Luke 14. 15-24 we have three sendings contemplated, that is, if we be willing to make a difference between those who are in the streets and lanes of the city and those in the highways and hedges. First we have those that were previously bidden, the privileged Jewish people, who turned down the invitation to come, for all things were now ready. Then comes the nondescript people. Personally I make no distinction between those in streets and lanes and those in highways and hedges. These were *not* such as had been bidden. —J. M.

Questions **from** London. —(1) How could the guests be the Church? If this wedding is that of Christ and the Church, guests would surely be saints of another dispensation.

Answer. —In most parables we must not expect that the story is exact in detail with that which it illustrates. Those that were bidden, were bidden by the prophets in the Old Testament; then servants were sent to invite such as had been bidden, these servants were sent during the Lord's lifetime. They continued their work till they were shamefully entreated and some were killed, such as Stephen, James, and no doubt many others. These servants, Stephen, James, etc., were members of the Church the Body of Christ, the wife of the Lamb. Then comes the destruction of Jerusalem (verse 7) which took place in A. D. 70, which was in this dispensation. The inviting goes on beyond this dispensation, for the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations, and many will come from the east and the west and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, whilst many of the sons of the kingdom will be cast out (Matthew 8. 11, 12). —J. M.

(2) The marriage supper of the Lamb would surely include all covered by the blood of the Lamb.

Answer. —" Bidden " in Matthew 22. 4 cannot have the same force as <sup>44</sup> Bidden " in Revelation 19. 7, 8. The former includes persons who refused the invitation, and can in consequence in no sense be " blessed " or happy. The latter, I judge, were not only bidden, but accepted the invitation, and as a result are called " blessed " or happy. All such are saved people. I judge we must not confuse the marriage of the Lamb with the marriage supper of the Lamb; the former takes place in heaven, but the latter on earth (Matthew 22.; 25. 10) —J. M.

# BIBLE STUDIES.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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## THE PARABLES.

### The Blessing of the Gentiles as illustrated by the Parables of the Marriage Feast and the Great Supper.

From Liverpool. —The blessing of the Gentiles envisaged in these two parables seems to be that which is enjoyed by them in the place of Israel and not the blessing which they will enjoy through Israel. The primary object of the parables was to point out to the Jews the nature of the folly they were committing in refusing the Lord, and the consequences of that folly. In Psalm 72., and elsewhere, we have a picture of the blessing the Gentiles were to enjoy (and will yet enjoy) through Israel, with the Messiah as their King. But when the Messiah came and God invited Israel to the feast of good things He had provided, they made light of His invitation and would have none of what He offered. He sent His servants—John the Baptist, the twelve and the seventy. The Lord Himself lifted up His voice and sent out the invitation in Jerusalem on the great day of the feast of tabernacles (John 7. 37), and after His death the apostles again proclaimed the message to the Jews. When they failed to respond, the apostles turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13. 46) and now the invitation has gone out into the highways and lanes of the world to those who are alienated from God, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, to come and enjoy the good things that were prepared for Israel.

It was thought that, although the figure of a wedding feast was used in the parable, it had no connection with the bridal feast of Revelation 19., for in the parable there is no mention of the bride, the guests being the ones who are blessed and the feast, the sum and substance of their joy. [But is it possible to have a marriage feast without both a bridegroom and a bride?—J. M. ]

With regard to the man who entered without a wedding garment it was said that it was the custom for the king to view the guests in an ante-chamber before they entered the banquet hall. It was here that the man was discovered. Although men may deceive us and seek to enter the kingdom apart from the righteousness of Christ, yet they cannot deceive God and are turned away empty from the feast. [This could not happen to-day for one inside to be cast out.—J. M. ] R. S.

From Brantford, Ont. We find, as the time draws nigh when Israel would reject their Messiah, and God would place Jew and Gentile on an equal level, that parables were given by the Lord to foreshadow this. In both the parables of Matthew 22. and Luke 14. we find one with the means at his disposal provides a feast of fat things, having previously given invitations to those whom he

deemed worthy to attend. However, **we** find that other things had absorbed the attention of the **guests** and when the hour **came** to accept the invitation they considered the other things more important.

The Lord **said**—" **Ye** are My friends, if ye do the things which I command you " (John 15. 14). Israel declared their friendship by promising to **keep** God's commandments. However, when the day **came** they proved to be, like the **guests** of the parable, no friends **at** all. How **sad**, that after blessing His people with such spiritual blessings, when God desired the friendship of those who were His own, **we** read in John 1. —" **He came** unto **His** own, and they that were **His** own received **Him** not. " Truly Israel **was** taken **up** with material things and **esteemed** them above God's invitation to partake of **His** good things.

In both parables **we** find that the host was angry on hearing that his invitation was slighted and **uttered** a solemn declaration that none of those that were bidden should **taste** of **His** supper. At this juncture **we** do well to remind ourselves that God's invitation in this present day **is** to the **Jew** first and also to the Greek. The Gentile may partake of the blessings on the **same** footing **as** the Jew. In the light of the statement of the angry host **we** would ask, Is God more gracious than the angry host in that **He** offered **His** salvation and blessings to the people whose words "Away with **Him** " revealed their estimation of the One whom God sent to **be**. their Saviour ? Or is the answer to be found in the **fact** that none will enter into the blessings of the Lord on the grounds of the original invitation of Mt. Sinai ? In like manner if one of the bidden **guests** repented of his stand, he needed **but** to allow himself to **be** found among those in the highways and byways, then he would receive the new invitation and be welcomed in.

**We** Gentiles understand in some measure the feelings of those poor folk who were gathered in and clothed by their host to be **made fit** to partake of the good things to come. For **we** were once **as** they in the outside place and were **at** that **time** separate from Christ (Ephesians 2. 12, 13). *James Bell.*

From Hamilton, Ontario. —In the parable of the marriage **feast** **we** see what a wide application the Kingdom of Heaven has, **as** **we** learn in the parables something of the purposes of God, not **as** limited to Israel, **but** reaching out to all mankind. The king referred **to** in the parable no doubt **is** God the Father, and the Son, the Son of God. The servants sent forth would also speak to **us** of God's servants sent forth with the Divine message. **We** see Israel pictured **as** those that were invited, **but** refused the invitation. In the call of God **we** see their indifference to the message. God's entreating attitude toward Israel is shown in a second call to repentance, **as is** seen in the other servants who were sent forth, **but** they rejected **it**, they did not repent, and laid hold on his servants and **treated** them shamefully and killed them. This caused **us** to think of how they treated God's servants in the past, **as** the Lord **Jesus** Himself said: " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her " (Matthew 23. 37). **We** also thought of those who were shamefully treated in the **time** of the Lord Himself. John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord, **was** beheaded, and later illustrations are the stoning of Stephen, and the slaying of James, whom Herod killed with the sword. All down through Israel's history **we** see God's love to them expressed in the words, "All the day long did I spread out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10. 21). No doubt God dealt judgment on Israel on this account, **as is** indicated in verse 7. **We** may also derive by induction God's attitude in that coming **time** of which the Apostle says: "And to you that are afflicted rest with **us**, **at** the revelation of the Lord **Jesus** from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord **Jesus** " (2 Thessalonians 1. 7, 8).

The invitation **was** no longer confined to those who were originally bidden (*i. e.*, Israel). God has in view the bringing in of the Gentiles, the salvation of God reached to those who were outside of Israel, and to-day God's call of salvation is not confined to any one country or people; **it is** universal to whosoever will. This **is** the day of visitation to the Gentiles, God **is** calling them to repentance,

and He is taking from them a people for His name. God in His abounding grace has taken us in, He did not shut us out, He has opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles (Acts 14. 27).  
*T. Ramage, R. Dryburgh, Jun.*

The Excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ as illustrated by the Parables.

From Birkenhead. —The excellencies of the Lord Jesus are the attributes of God, for He was here to show forth His Father: "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." [One of the Lord's excellencies is His obedience. Is that an attribute of God?—J. M. J. They are all an outcome of the fundamental attribute of God, which is love. God is Love. Love is only one of His primary attributes. Righteousness and wisdom are His; righteousness because He is Truth, and wisdom because in Him alone is true knowledge and understanding. In the parables the Lord Jesus is seen showing these attributes in many and varied forms.

The king to whom the servant owed so much in Matthew 18. was a merciful ruler, merciful and yet just. He who was forgiven much should have been ready to forgive much. This is an example of the recurring paradox of love and justice working together from the same source, which men, because they cannot understand, disbelieve.

Compassion is another out-working of love, pity for a wanderer that brought the Lord so far to endure so much. Ninety-nine in the fold, and somewhere in the wilderness, wandering with the prowling killers, was the lone, frightened, missing one. We do know that He found His sheep and carried it on His shoulders in mercy and pity back to home and safety.

All the great qualities of a friend belong to the Lord. A man lay dying by the roadside, bleeding and torn, helpless to aid himself; but the friend whom he had never met found him and tended him and took him to a place of peace and comfort where he would recover from his wounds. Why should the Samaritan have tended an unknown Jew? It was because of his love for his neighbour. It was because of the Lord's great love and pity for all the wretched victims of sin that He died for them. His friendship did not end in saving from imminent death; it went beyond. Continuing the parable from our knowledge of the Saviour we realise that the Lord would be an abiding Friend of the man He had saved.

*K. H., L. B. H.*

From Hamilton, Ontario. —The example in Matthew 18. we considered to show the excellent majesty of the King as He takes His great power and reigns, for all authority hath been given unto Him. He is the Judge from whom there is no appeal, for all judgment hath been committed to the Son (John 5. 22).

This reckoning we judge will take place when the Lord returns to reign on the earth, and in this connection we noted the incident recorded in Luke 4. 19, where the Lord stopped at the words, "the acceptable year of the Lord." The remainder of the verse quoted from Isaiah 61. 2 belongs to the time of His second coming when He will reign with a rod of iron.

Some thought this portion should have included the whole parable from verses 23 to 35. This would bring before us the grace and mercy of the King, having compassion on whom He will (Romans 9. 13), and it also shows His forgiveness as in Ephesians 1. 7. For a practical example we are to forgive others because we ourselves have been forgiven (Ephesians 4. 32). However, in Revelation 19. 11-16, where we have brought before us the King assuming His kingdom, we do not read of mercy being extended to wrong-doers.

As the Physician in Matthew 9. we see in Him the One who is able to heal both body and soul. The quotation from Hosea 6. 6 also brings before us the smiting in verse 1 of the same chapter: "He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." As the Lord had occasion to smite His ancient people, so to-day we may experience His chastening as in Hebrews 12. 7. All this may be necessary to cleanse away evil, as in Proverbs 20. 30. As the Great Physician He both cleanses and removes that which offends, as well as healing the damage caused by sin.

The parable of the Good Samaritan also presents **Him as the Physician** who goes forth seeking the injured on life's highway, but the surpassing excellencies of our Lord are shown forth as **He is** able to raise the dead and to **save** to the uttermost, none being beyond **His** help. **He is** also able to keep the hearts and minds of those who **seek** to walk in fellowship with **Him** (Philippians 4. 7).

In John 10. 16 we noted there were other sheep to be added, and compared a similar thought in Isaiah 56. 8. Having entered the fold and called forth **His** own sheep the Shepherd became the Door of the sheep (John 10. 9). We considered the hirelings mentioned in verse 9 to be the scribes and Pharisees. In verse 14 we noted that **His** sheep knew Him, so also we must know **Him** whom we have believed (2 Timothy 1. 12). A knowledge of **Him** and a love for **Him** will keep us from going astray in our own ways. To experience **His** shepherd care, **we must** hear **His** voice, and we can only do this as we have **Him** enthroned in our hearts. **He** should be dwelling in **our** hearts richly through faith (Ephesians 3. 17-19).

*Jas. M. Weaver.*

### EXTRACTS.

**From Cardiff.** —The parables give us a very complete picture of the Lord's character and work, and together, are a wonderful revelation of Himself. Each parable illustrates one or another of **His** divine attributes. **His** Deity and humanity are very fully depicted. **He is** not only the humble Sower, the Shepherd, the Seeker for goodly pearls and treasure, but **He is** the Master, the Judge, the King, the Son. As we ponder prayerfully these seemingly plain and simple stories, we shall discern more and more the wonderful unfoldings of Himself contained therein.

In John 10. the Lord says about **His** sheep: " I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, which hath given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. " These words were said in reference to the parable which is at the commencement of the chapter and in answer to the ever critical and hypocritical Jews. Here we see the unity of Father and Son, their joint concern for the safety of the sheep. The Father gives them and holds them. They are doubly **secure** through the will of the Father and the work of the Son.

In the story of the prodigal son we have a glimpse of God's yearning love over the wanderer, and in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, we are told something of the great love which existed from all eternity between the Father and **His** " one Son, His Wellbeloved, " while **His** eternal sonship is portrayed.

In the parable of the tares **He** showed that as Son of Man **He** not only sowed the field, but commanded the angels to reap it. And in the various revelations of **His** power in this parable and in others, **He** gives further proof that **He is** indeed one with the Father, the Son of God, and **He is** also the Son of Man.

**We** cannot go through each parable in this way, although that would be very beneficial, but here is something of a synopsis. **We** have: —

- (1) **His** Omniscience in the parable of the Pharisee and publican for He knew the hearts of each;
  - (2) **His** grace and mercy in the parable of the debtors;
  - (3) **His** patience, tenderness and pity, in the parable of the lost sheep;
  - (4) **His** great compassion in the parable of the good Samaritan;
  - (5) **His** love in the parable of the prodigal son;
  - (6) His longsuffering in the parable of the husbandmen;
  - (7) His sovereignty in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard;
  - (8) His faithfulness and care in the parable of the Good Shepherd;
- all of which reveal **His** divine attributes.

The above, of course, does not embrace every parable. The Lord shows Himself in more than one parable as King, Bridegroom, Judge, Master, Sower and Shepherd, and **it is** extremely interesting to observe how the parables naturally group themselves under these various headings.

*Martin D. Follett.*

**From** Kilmarnock. —In Isaiah 11. **we** have some of the attributes which characterise the Lord **as** Messiah, King of Israel. "The Spirit of **the** Lord shall rest upon Him, **the** Spirit of wisdom... understanding... counsel... **might**... knowledge and the fear of the Lord, " **while** " righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. " Although this prophecy refers to the time, yet future, when **He** shall sit on the throne of **His** father David, yet these excellencies are to be **seen** during **His** sojourn among men on earth. In the parable of Matthew 18. **we** have **an** example of a king **acting** in righteousness **in** demanding his rights, but also acting **in** mercy towards one **in** need. **It is** the prerogative of a sovereign to show mercy, and how often **we** have examples of the Lord showing mercy to those who acknowledged **Him** **as** Lord or Son of David !

The Gospel by Matthew presents **Him** **as** King, and in chapters 5. to 7. **He** makes known what **is** required of those who would enter the kingdom of heaven. Here **He** speaks with the authority of King and the multitudes were astonished. There was power behind **His** words which was recognised not only by the people, but also by the evil spirits. (See Luke 4. 32-36).

In Matthew 22. **a** king makes **a** marriage feast for his son, and latterly **in** grace calls all classes to the **feast** and provides wedding garments. How this illustrates the " grace of our Lord Jesus Christ " ! Again in Matthew 12. 38 the scribes and Pharisees requested a sign from **Him**, but **He** referred them to the Queen of Sheba who marvelled at the wisdom of Solomon, and they were listening to **a** greater than Solomon. Yet they believed not in Him, and the multitude also asked, " Whence hath this man this wisdom ? " **A. G. S.**

**From** Hereford. —The excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ are illustrated beautifully in the parables, not the least being that of Shepherd. The comparison and contrast between the Good Shepherd and the hirelings follow on the discourse of the Lord with the Pharisees concerning their blindness. To those who only stumbled **in** the blindness of wilful error, **a** claim to the possession of sight was **a** self-condemnation.

He, the Good Shepherd, layeth down **His** life for the sheep; while the hirelings, flying from danger, betray the flock. A true shepherd has to be prepared to sacrifice his own self for the safety of his sheep. David, while keeping his father's sheep, rescued the lamb from the lion and the bear and then had to face the fierceness of these animals which had been robbed of their prey. The Good Shepherd was not only willing and ready to sacrifice Himself—**He** laid down **His**' life voluntarily ! The prophetic scripture in the Lamentations of Jeremiah tells us something about the sufferings that **He** endured: " Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? Behold, and **see** **if** there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which **is** done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of **His** fierce anger " (Lamentations 1. 12).

The Lord Jesus Christ says, " I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish. " The sheep for whom the Lord Jesus cares **are** **His** own. **We** **His** sheep are not our own; for we were bought with a price. The hireling has care of sheep which **are** not his own. What **a** glorious fact **it is** too, that the Lord knows **His** own, and **His** own know **Him** ! (John 10. 14). **Robert Tidmas.**

From London, S. E. —The Person of Christ **is** given in scripture many varied lights, viewed from countless angles and showing forth some individual feature. These may **assume** the proportions of: —

- |              |    |                |
|--------------|----|----------------|
| 1. Type      | or | Direct truth   |
| 2. Shadow    | ,, | Indirect truth |
| 3. Antitype  | ,, | Allusion       |
| 4. Prototype | ,, | Comparison.    |

The excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ are, however, more confined in number (though not in scope). For do they not seek to show the superiority He has over His creatures and human devices? Take for example the Epistle to the Hebrews, where He is proved to be: —

1. Superior to a n g e l s . . . .	Chapter 1. 4-14.
2. " " M o s e s . . . .	" 3. 1-6.
3. " " J o s h u a . . . .	" 4. 8. 10.
4. " " A a r o n . . . .	" 4. 14.
5. " " M e l c h i z e d e c . .	" 6. 13—7. 8.
6. " " t h e S a c r i f i c e . .	" 9. 23—10. 18.

Similarly in the parables Christ is seen as the perfect Physician, capable and willing to heal everyone who comes to claim His aid—unlike the failing human medical profession who can only "heal" a small minority and the vast majority they send empty away.

Yet it is possible to turn from the failure of human physicians to the divine Physician, a Person none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. An examination of the Scriptures will show how he claims this title. This one can deal completely and exhaustively with the human being both physically and spiritually. Every earthly physician has a "case book" wherein is placed on record the symptoms from which diagnosis can be obtained. The Lord Jesus has graced this world with many actual examples from His, besides a complete treatise on the causes of disease and death.

R.

D. Wood,

From Atherton. —In the verses specified, a very important but logical truth is emphasised: "They that are whole have no need of a physician." In natural things a patient must be prepared to hear certain unpleasant facts about himself, and so it is in spiritual things. This seems to be what the Lord was trying to impress upon the minds of the Pharisees, who thought themselves good enough, and were not prepared to accept that they were in reality no better than the publicans and sinners. This type of person the Lord is unable to heal, not because the remedy is ineffective, but because they refuse to take it.

The thought was expressed concerning Christ as Physician, that there seems to be a dual application of this truth, physical and spiritual. The question was raised, "Did spiritual restoration go along with physical restoration in each miracle of the Lord Jesus Christ"? It was indicated that the Lord dealt with some cases in grace and goodness, as for instance the "widow of Nain." But others first approached Christ Jesus, as for example the woman who touched the hem of His garment. Showing a measure of faith, this latter brought spiritual blessing. "Did spiritual blessing attend the former? [It seems evident from such a case as that of the palsied man (Luke 5. 17-26) that both bodily healing and the healing of the soul were involved, for, "seeing their faith, He said, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." In his case it evidently was equivalent to saying—"Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house." But in such a case as that of the blind man of John 9., the blind man believed the Lord's word and went and washed in the pool of Siloam, but at that time he did not believe in Him as the Son of God; for when the Lord asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God"? he answered and said, "And who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" Then the man of John 5. is a somewhat strange case; he was healed by the Lord's word, but evidently did not know who the Healer was. His attitude to the Lord in acquainting the Jews with the information they sought, when the Lord found him in the temple, shows, I think, that His faith in the Lord was a very doubtful matter. — J. M. ]

It was suggested that there were two sides to the import of the Lord's words in Matthew 9. 13. (1) The Lord said, "I desire mercy." This the Pharisees passed over, as indicated in Matthew 23. 23. They "left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith." Their dealings with the publicans were fundamentally wrong. The principle outlined in Micah 6. 7, 8, is again seen in the narrative of the Good Samaritan. "Who is my neighbour?" "He that showed mercy unto him" (Luke 10. 29-37). (2) The mercy of God in Christ they would not have, their own righteousness being their standard.

Another aspect to this subject was under consideration, *i. e.*, Christ as Physician to us to-day, as our merciful and faithful **High Priest**, who **is able** to give **true succour** (Hebrews 2. 17, 18). This **same One** " **is** touched with the feeling of our infirmities. " Together with this, 1 John 2. 1 **was** mentioned, and the solemn matter of confessing our sins was considered in the light of the place that the Lord **Jesus** occupies for us before His Father, and of the provision **He** has made for each of us. **G. Sankey.**

From Edinburgh. —What a picture the word " King " inspires ! The Lord **is** the embodiment of all that **is** regal, of love, power, greatness and compassion; in all things **He is** excellent. When we consider the majesty of the King of kings, our hearts are melted within us at the thought that **He** can call **us** brethren and fellow-heirs. In the parable in Matthew 18. all kingly attributes are manifested: power to demand, power to enforce, love and compassion to restrain, and wrath for deliberate disobedience. Truly righteousness **is** the sceptre of **His** kingdom. As obedience **is** demanded, let us **see** that in all things **we** walk according to **His** mind and to His will. Whether **it** be **as** a holy priesthood or **as** a royal priesthood, let our lives show forth the rule and the excellencies of the King of kings.

" The good Shepherd " : this very title speaks of tenderness and compassion. The shepherd has always illustrated kindness to the wayward; love surpassing the love of women in all seasons; thought and comfort for **His** flock, shelter and protection from all danger, peace and security to all within the fold. Not only is **His** title, " Shepherd, " but also **it is** strengthened by the adjective, " good. " How well **He** has merited that title ! " The good Shepherd layeth down **His** life for the sheep. " On Calvary we **see** the fulfilment of **His** words, but to-day the words **are** true in all spiritual things. " **I am** the Door "; **He** is the One who suffered for the lost sheep; **He** provides a fold; **He** leads out and in to find pasture; **He** protects from all harm; **He** presents us to **His** God and Father, those that the Father hath given Him. **Thomas Hope.**

**From** Yeovil. The Lord Jesus in Luke 4. 18, 19, **is** shown to be sent for the healing of both physical and spiritual sickness. " **He** went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. " The Pharisees in John 9., **as** in this parable, were ever eager to discredit the Lord Jesus **as** having no power to heal, but the words of this parable show how the Lord viewed the goodness which they had in their own eyes.

Tracing the shepherd character of the Lord, we **see** in Genesis 49. 24, **He is** called the Shepherd of Israel. Similarly, in Psalm 80. 1. In Psalm 100. 3 **His** people are spoken of **as His** sheep. In Jeremiah 50. 6 we have a sad picture, but in John 11. 50-52, the purpose of **His** becoming the sacrifice, the Lamb of God was to gather together into one **His** Sheep. (See also John 10. 11).

In verse 16 we have " other sheep " mentioned; this refers to the Gentiles, as distinct from the Israel nation (cp. Isaiah 49. 6 and Ephesians 2. 11-18). [Many hold that the sheep of " this fold " were saved Jews, and that the " other sheep " were Gentiles who did not belong to the Jewish fold, and the further conclusion arrived at by such teachers **is**—that all saved Jews and all saved Gentiles form one flock, whether they are gathered together in any visible fellowship or not. Is this what the Lord "means ? I humbly submit **it is** not. " The fold of the sheep, " of John 10. 1 was not Israel, for every Israelite entered that by birth and circumcision. But the fold here is that of which John was the porter and the way thereinto was by John's baptism. The Lord, who was the Shepherd, did not enter that fold till **He** was about thirty years of **age**. **He** led certain sheep from that fold. " When **He** hath put forth all **His** own, **He** goeth before them " (verse 4). But **He** had other sheep besides these, not simply Gentiles, but Jews also. —J. M. J.]

In the three parables considered, it was suggested that the Lord **Jesus was** in each case the King, the Physician, or Healer and Shepherd *of Israel* primarily.

Further to the above, it was thought that in Matthew 25. 1-10, the Bridegroom here mentioned was another office of the Lord Jesus. **E. J. Jarvis.**

**From Glasgow.** —As we look at the Lord Jesus as Physician, we see the attitude of those to whom He spoke. The scribes and Pharisees thought they were righteous because they kept the law and offered sacrifices. They felt no need of a physician, and we see from Matthew 9. 6 that they were carrying out the letter of the law, but had not caught the spirit thereof. For if they had looked into the law more closely they would have learned that, although its demands were rigorous, there were love and mercy enshrined in its precepts.

When we come to John 10. the Lord Jesus is giving an answer to the scribes and Pharisees who were trying to prove He was not a true prophet, but an impostor. The Lord brings before them the illustration of a sheepfold in an eastern country where a shepherd knows his sheep by name and his sheep know him, and will only follow him. There are those who would like to lead them, but they do not go in by the door, but climb up some other way. The Lord says they are thieves and robbers and likens them to the scribes and Pharisees who were leaders in Israel, and although they were looking for their Messiah, they did not accept Christ as the coming One.

The Lord enters the fold by the door, proving that He is the true Shepherd of the sheep, and to Him the porter openeth. We thought the porter was John the Baptist, as we considered his message in John 1. 7.

The Lord Jesus declared Himself to be the Door of the sheep, and those who follow Him are His sheep. He is the Good Shepherd, for when danger cometh He not only protects them, but layeth down His life for them, when those who are hirelings flee. When we come to verse 16, where the Lord said there were other sheep which were not of this fold, there were different thoughts as to who the other sheep were and when they would become one flock. [See note in paper from Yeovil.] We know that in a past day, God had only one flock, for He called Israel "My people," and we were reminded of Psalm 77. 20 and Psalm 78. 52, 53. So we see with all their failure God could look upon them as His flock, and we know to-day it is God's desire that His people should be as one flock under the care of under-shepherds who are responsible to the Great Shepherd for the care of the flock, as the Apostle could write to those who had the care of the flock in Acts 20. 28, 29.

We know to-day there are many who profess faith in Christ, but we could not look upon them as one flock in the sense that they are obeying the voice of the Shepherd.

*Jas. Gartshore.*

### Questions and Answers.

Question from Kilmarnock. —Matthew 10. 5, 6. The Apostles were not to go in the way of the Gentiles or Samaritans, but rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Would the lost sheep be those who received them and their message and who were worthy?

Answer. —I would judge that all were lost, as Isaiah 53. 6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray," not that only such as received the messengers and the message were deemed to be lost. 'All were lost, but alas, not all were saved. —J. M.

Question from Liverpool. —Who are those who are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb? (Revelations 19. 9).

Answer. Believing as I do that the Church which is Christ's Body is the Lamb's wife, those that are bidden to the Marriage Supper do not include any of the saints of this present dispensation. The marriage of the Lamb, I judge, takes place in heaven. The Greek verbs for "is come" and "hath made ready" are in the aorist tense. The Englishman's Greek New Testament says "did make ready herself." The Marriage Supper, from what is said in Matthew 22. and 25. takes place on earth, and those who are invited to such a supper are all such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the prophets, the saints, the great and the small, even all who will be counted worthy to attain unto that age (the Millennial age of the reign of Christ). Those who are bidden are not simply those to whom the invitation came, but such as accepted it and came. —J. M.