

MATTHEW

1:1-17 *What significance is to be drawn from the genealogy of Jesus here?*

This proves that Jesus is Messiah – King of Israel, fulfilling God’s covenant with David that his kingdom would be everlasting (CP 2Sam 7:8-16, 18-19, 25-29 with Psa 89:3-4, 34-37). Not all Christ’s generations are listed in Matthew, but those that are will suffice for the purpose of this study. His genealogy from David is the royal line through King Solomon to Joseph, reckoned by law to be Jesus’ father (CP Mt 1:16). In Luke’s gospel Christ’s genealogy is through another of David’s sons, Nathan, to Mary, Jesus’ mother (CP Lu 3:23, 31). Heli in V23 is Mary’s father, Joseph’s father-in-law. Joseph was his legal son, or son-in-law, and thus legally Jesus’ father.

It is interesting to note in Jesus’ genealogy in Mt 1 that four women are mentioned in V3, 5 and 6: **Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba** (“... *her that had been the wife of Uriah.*”) Both Tamar and Bathsheba committed adultery (CP Gen 38; 2 Sam 11:1-5); Rahab was a harlot (CP Josh 2; Jas 2:25); only Ruth was pure (CP Ruth 3:10-11). Tamar and Bathsheba were Jews; Rahab and Ruth were Gentiles. Thus Jesus descended from both Jews and Gentiles. Of interest too is a king named **Jeconias** in Mt 1:1, also called Coniah, upon whom God pronounced a curse (CP Jer 22:24-30). Had Jesus been the real son of Joseph He would have come under the curse, but being Mary’s son only, it could not affect Him.

1:18-21 *How are we to understand this?*

This is more easily understood in the light of Lu 1:26-35 (CP Lu 1:26-35). This describes the virgin birth of Jesus - one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith. Many professing Christians however deny the virgin birth, and thus are denying the plain truth of scripture (CP Mt 1:22-23 with Isa 7:14). Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth in Isa 7:14 here, nearly eight hundred years before the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to interpret the prophecy as applying to the virgin birth of Jesus, in Mt 1:22-23. All these scriptures are meaningless if there was no virgin birth.

Mary was a virgin in the strictest sense. She had never had a sexual relationship with any man when Jesus was conceived in her womb. But she was not a perpetual virgin either, as so many other Christians believe (CP Mt 1:24-25). “...and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son”, means that Joseph did consummate his marriage with Mary after the birth of Jesus. Mary had at least seven children with Joseph after Jesus was born (CP Mt 12:46-47; 13:53-56; Mk 3:20-21; 6:1-3). *Friends* in Mk 3:20-21 (KJV), means immediate family members. This is confirmed in V31-32 (CP V31-32; Lu 8:19-20 (see also comments on Mt 12:46-47 and Mk 3:20-21)).

Immanuel in Isa 7:14 and Mt 1:23, which means “God with us”, confirms the Deity of Jesus; that He has always existed as God (CP Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-3; 3:13; Php 2:5-8; 1 Ti 3:16; He 1:1-13; Rev 22:13). For a more detailed study on the Deity of Jesus see also comments on Mt 3:16-17, Lu 1:35 (B), Jn 1:1,

5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, Col 2:9, 1Ti 3:16, He 1:5, 5:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8, and author’s studies *Jesus – Eternally God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *Names and Titles of Jesus, the Doctrine of the Trinity, and Jesus* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

2:1 *Who were the wise men and how many were there?*

Scriptures do not say who the wise men were, where they came from, or how many there were. All that is known of them is that they brought gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, for the baby Jesus (CP V11-12).

2:3-5 *Who prophesied Christ's birthplace?*

The Old Testament prophet Micah prophesied that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (CP V6 with Mic 5:2). Bethlehem means “house of bread”. It is not without significance that Jesus, the bread of life, was born in the house of bread (CP Jn 6:31-35).

2:13-15 *What do we learn from this?*

We learn from this that the threat of death hung over Jesus from infancy. He was born to die, but only in God’s appointed time (CP Ac 2:22-23). The prophet quoted in V15 is Hosea (CP Hos 11:1).

2:16-18 *What is the meaning of this prophecy?*

When the wise men did not return to King Herod to report the baby Jesus’ whereabouts as arranged in V7-8, Herod had all male children under two years old in Bethlehem and surrounding areas killed. He was afraid this new-born King – Jesus – would eventually take his throne (CP V1-3, 7-8, 11-13, 16). The death of these children fulfilled Jeremiah’s prophecy in the Old Testament (CP Jer 31:15). Rachel was the second wife of Jacob, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. She died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried in Ramah (CP Gen 35:1, 10, 16-19). In Jer 31:15 Rachel represents Israel weeping for the Israelites who were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon (CP 2Chr 36:10-20 with Jer 26:1-6). Matthew saw Rachel’s weeping in Jer 31:15 as having a prophetic application to the Jewish mothers weeping over their children slain by Herod.

2:23 *Where in scripture is this recorded?*

This was spoken by the prophets, not written. There is no record of it anywhere in scripture.

3:1 *Who was John the Baptist?*

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, sent by God to prepare the way for the coming of Messiah (CP Isa 40:3-5; Mal 3:1 with Mt 3:3; 11:7-15; Mk 1:1-8; Lu 3:1-6; Jn 1:6-9). John was the son of Zechariah, a priest in the temple, and Elizabeth, Jesus’ mother Mary’s cousin (CP Lu 1:5-17, 36-44; 57). Although Jesus was John’s second cousin, John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until God

told him prior to Jesus being baptized by John ([CP Jn 1:29-34](#)). John was beheaded by King Herod ([CP Mt 14:1-11](#)). See also comments on Mt 3:1-6, 3:13-15.

3:1-3 *What is the Kingdom of Heaven?*

The Kingdom of Heaven refers to the realm of God's rule both present and future. When John proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand he was announcing that Divine judgement as a reality had come; that God's rule over the earth had drawn near and was about to be instituted through Jesus, for whom John was preparing the way ([CP V4:12; 11:7-10](#)). Jesus ushered the kingdom in when He began His earthly ministry ([CP 4:13-17; 10:1-8; 12:22-28; Lu 17:20-21](#)). *Kingdom of Heaven* and *Kingdom of God* mean the same – the terms are interchangeable ([CP Mt 19:23-24](#)). The Kingdom of Heaven is both present and future. The professing church is the visible manifestation of the kingdom in its present earthly aspect. The kingdom works in the world through the church, bringing to all who will receive it the blessings of God's rule. However, the church only represents those who belong to Christ, whereas the kingdom is the whole of God's redeeming activity in Christ in the world. It takes in the whole of human society. The requirements for entrance into the kingdom is repentance from sin and being born again ([CP Mt 3:2; Mk 1:14-15; Jn 3:3-5](#)). The kingdom will continue in its present earthly aspect until Christ's second coming, when the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire and the righteous will rule and reign with Christ in the future eternal kingdom ([CP Mt 13:47-50; 2Ti 2:11; 2Pe 1:11](#)). See also comments on Lu 17:20-21, and author's studies *The Kingdom of God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *The Sermon on the Mount* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

3:1-6 *What is the difference between John's baptism and the baptism commanded by Jesus?*

([CP Mt 28:19](#)). The difference between John's baptism and the baptism commanded by Jesus lies in Jesus Himself and how God's redemptive plan is fulfilled in Him. Neither John nor those he baptized knew anything of this. John only knew that in his baptism he was preparing the way for the one from God ([CP Mt 3:2-5 with Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; Mk 1:1-5; Lu 3:1-6; 7:24-29; Jn 1:19-28](#)). John did not even know that the one from God was Jesus until Jesus came to him to be baptized ([CP Mt 3:13-17; Jn 1:19-34](#)). In the baptism Jesus commanded repentant sinners identify with Jesus. Being baptized is their pledge of a good conscience toward God – a conscience reconciled to God by their new-found faith in the resurrected Christ who died for them, and the salvation benefits He has purchased for them with His blood ([CP 1Pe 3:18-22](#)). Those who John baptized had no one to identify with – they knew nothing of God's plan of redemption or the Saviour in whom it was fulfilled. That is why they all had to be baptized again after they heard how God's plan was fulfilled in Christ, and they had received Him as their Saviour ([CP Ac 2:22-24, 29-33, 36-39; 19:1-5](#)). See

also comments on Mt 3:1, 1Pe 3:20-21, and author's study *Water Baptism* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

3:10 *What is John referring to here?*

Here John warns of Divine judgment in the earth with the coming of Christ. Christ's coming would test all men. Those who do not bear fruit for God's Eternal Kingdom will be cast into Hell, just as a tree that does not bear fruit is cut down and cast into the fire to be burnt up. This points to the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of Christ's Millennial – one thousand years – reign, when the ungodly will all be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire ([CP Mt 3:8, 12 also 13:24-30, 36-43 and 47-50 with Rev 20:11-15](#)). See also comments on Mt 7:21, 10:32-33, 13:24-30, 13:47-50, 25:14-30; Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16; Rev 20:15, and author's study *Coming Judgments of God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

3:11 *What does being baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire mean?*

Firstly, being baptized with, in, into and unto, all refer to the same thing. It is the element one is baptized with, in, into and unto that determines what type of baptism it is. Many sincere Christians believe that all repentant sinners are baptized with the Holy Spirit when they receive Christ as their Saviour, but that is not correct. At that time they are baptized into Christ and into His body, the church ([CP Ro 6:1-10; 1Cor 12:12-14; Ga 3:26-28; Eph 4:1-6; Col 2:8-13; 3:1-3](#)). All these scriptures refer to the work of the Holy Spirit. He unites repentant sinners with Christ as members of His church upon their conversion to Christ. This is how the church is constituted, but it is not what is meant by being baptized with the Holy Ghost. Being baptized with the Holy Ghost refers to the empowering of the Holy Spirit for service, which Jesus has promised to every believer ([CP Lu 11:9-13; Jn 7:37-39; 14:12, 16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Ac 1:1-8; 2:36-39](#)). It is Jesus Himself who does this baptizing ([CP Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lu 3:16, 24:49; Jn 1:33-34; 16:7-15; Ac 2:32-33](#)). The baptism with the Holy Spirit is generally received subsequent to salvation ([CP Ac 8:14-17; 19:1-6](#)). However, it can also be received concurrently with salvation ([CP 10:44-46](#)). Here, while Peter was still sharing the gospel with Cornelius, he and all his kinsmen and friends who were with him got saved and were immediately baptized with the Holy Spirit – God did a sovereign work in their midst ([CP 11:1-18 esp V14](#)). The evidence that one is baptized with the Holy Spirit is that he or she will talk in tongues. This is confirmed many times in scripture ([CP Joel 2:28-29 with Mk 16:17; Ac 2:1-4, 14-18; 8:18-21; 10:45-46; 19:6](#)).

The word *matter* in Ac 8:21 is from the Greek word **logos** which means something said, utterance, word, speech, Divine expression. Simon heard those believers talking in tongues as they were baptized with the Holy Spirit – that is why he wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. These scriptures all teach that speaking in tongues is the sure evidence of

being baptized with the Spirit. If there are no tongues spoken, then there has been no baptism with the Spirit. It is as simple as that, otherwise those scriptures are all meaningless. Now to see what the baptism with “fire” which John the Baptist also refers to in Mt 3:11 is about (CP Mt 3:11). There are many contrasting views among Christians as to what this fire is. Some believe it refers to God’s judgement those who reject Jesus will receive in contrast to the baptism with the Holy Ghost given to the righteous. They use Mt 3:10, 12 and Lu 3:8-9, 17 to support this view (CP Mt 3:10, 12; Lu 3:8-9, 17). Others believe it refers to the purifying and refining work of the Holy Spirit, convicting believers of sin and righteousness. They use Jn 16:7-11 to support this view (CP Zech 13:9, Mal 3:2-3; Jn 16:7-11). Still others believe that it is an extended reference to the empowering of believers by the Holy Spirit for service. They use Jn 7:37-39 to support this view (CP Jn 7:37-39). The analogy of “rivers of living water” in V38 teaches us that believers will have unlimited power to do the work of God through the empowering of the Holy spirit; which is what Jesus promises believers right throughout scripture (CP Mk 16:16-18; Jn 14:12-14; Ac 1:8; 1Cor 2:1-4). The third view is preferred in light of the *cloven tongues like as of fire* on the day of Pentecost that sat upon each of the disciples signifying their empowering for service. This also conforms to what Jesus told the disciples would happen in Lu 24 and Ac 1 (CP Lu 12:49; 24:49; Ac 1:1-8). See also comments on Lu 12:49, Jn 16:7-15; Ac 1:8, 2:1-4(a), 2:1-4(b) and author’s studies *Baptism in the Spirit* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, *Signs and Wonders in God’s Redemptive Plan* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

3:13-15 Why did Jesus who knew no sin get baptized by John?

John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, signifying confession of sin by those who took part in it, and commitment to a holy life in anticipation of the coming Messiah for whom John was preparing the way (CP 3:1-11; Ac 19:1-5). John only knew that Jesus was the Messiah after God told him (CP Jn 1:19-34). John knew that Jesus did not need to be baptized for the remission of sins, as Mt 3:14 clearly shows (CP 3:14). Jesus was sinless (CP 2Cor 5:21; He 4:15; 7:26; 1Jn 3:5), but He insisted that John baptize Him “to fulfill all righteousness” (CP Mt 3:15). Jesus got baptized to be identified with sinners – “He was numbered with the transgressors” (CP Isa 53:12). Jesus was to fulfill all righteousness by bearing the curse of the law for those who did sin, and He took His place with sinners in John’s baptism as the pledge that He was ready to go down into death for them (CP Ro 5:8-10; Ga 3:13). John’s baptism unto repentance is not the same as the baptism instituted by Jesus (CP Mt 28:19). This baptism is the repentant sinners’ pledge of a good conscience toward God – a conscience reconciled to God by their new found faith in the resurrected Christ and the salvation benefits He has purchased for them with

His blood (CP 1Pe 3:18-21). See also comments on Mt 3:1, 3:1-6; 1Pe 3:20-21, and author’s study *Water Baptism* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

3:16-17 What is the significance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being represented here?

(CP also Mk 1:9-11; Lu 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34). Here we see clearly represented for the first time in scripture the three distinct and separate co-equal members of the Godhead of Christianity. God the Father is represented by the voice from heaven, God the Son is Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit is represented by the dove. This teaching of a triune God or three-in-one Godhead, is called the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a core truth of the Christian faith, and is central to an understanding of biblical revelation and the message of the gospel. It should be noted here before proceeding any further that although there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead (CP 1Cor 12:4-6; 2Cor 13:14; Eph 2:17-18; 4:4-6; 2Th 2:13-14), they all function as one (CP 1Jn 5:6-7). *One* here means one in unity, not in number (CP Jn 17:5, 21-24). This oneness, while clearly emphasizing the plurality of persons in the Godhead, is plainly expressed in the baptismal formula Jesus gave to the church before being taken up to heaven (CP Mt 28:19). *Name* here is singular, proving the oneness in unity of all three members of the Godhead it includes, even though each one individually is God. The Father is God (CP Ro 1:7; 1Cor 8:6). The Son is God (CP Isa 7:14 and 9:6 with Mt 1:23; Jn 1:1-2; 10:30; 20:26-28; 1Cor 15:45-47; Php 2:5-8; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; He 1:8; 1Jn 5:20). The Holy Spirit is God (CP Isa 6:8-11 with Ac 28:25-28; Ac 5:3-4; 1Cor 2:10-12; 3:16; 2Cor 3:17-18; He 9:14). Clearly those scriptures all establish the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Although the word *Trinity* is not found in scripture, it is not crucial to sound Christian doctrine that the word defining it is not scriptural. What is crucial is that the doctrine itself stresses its authority in scripture. The doctrine of the Trinity does this perfectly. In fact the New Testament church was founded on this teaching (CP Ac 2:32-33; 1Pe 1:2).

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a new revelation found only in the New Testament. It is a progressive revelation which underlies the whole teaching of scripture from the very first verse in the bible (CP Gen 1:1). The very first verse in the bible indicates that a plurality of persons exist in the Godhead because *God* is the Hebrew word **elohim**, which is a plural noun. Its significance becomes more evident as we read further (CP V26: 3:22; 11:6-7; Isa 6:8). These all stress a plurality of persons in the Godhead (CP also Jn 14:23). **Elohim** is used over two thousand, seven hundred times in the Old Testament proving that many times that there is more than one person in the Godhead (CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9; Psa 45:6-7 with He 1:8-12; Isa 6:1-5 with Jn 12:37-41; Mic 5:2; Zech 12:8-10; Jn 1:1-2; 3:13; 8:56-58; 17:5, 21-24; Ac 20:28; Ro 9:5; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:8-10; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; 2Pe 1:1-2; 1Jn 1:1-

2; 3:16; Rev 1:1, 8, 11, 17-18; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13, 16).

Every one of those scriptures teaches that the pre-incarnate Jesus always existed as God. He was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity. He is also seen in His pre-incarnate state many times in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. In most of the Old Testament scriptures the Angel of (from) the Lord (Jehovah) is regarded as Deity, yet is distinguished from Jehovah, proving that the members of the Godhead are separate and distinct persons (CP Ex 23:20-23). The Angel of Jehovah is one person in the Godhead, and Jehovah who sent Him is another. As the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Jesus spoke to Hagar, after Sarah cast her out (CP Gen 16:7-13; 21:17-18). The pre-incarnate Jesus was one of the three angels who visited Abraham and rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah (CP Gen 18:1-5, 9-22; 19:24). Both the Angel of the Lord and the Lord in heaven here are Jehovah (God). One Jehovah on earth rained down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah from the other Jehovah in heaven. The pre-incarnate Jesus as the Angel of the Lord also wrestled with Jacob (CP Gen 32:24-30 with Hos 12:2-5). He spoke to Moses out of the burning bush (CP Ex 3:1-14 with Lu 20:37 and Ac 7:30-38). He was the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that guided the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan (CP Ex 13:21-22 with 14:19-20, 24). He stood in the way of Balaam and made his donkey speak (CP Nu 22:22-35, 38). He was the Captain of the Host of the Lord who instructed Joshua how to destroy Jericho (CP Josh 5:13-6:5). He enlisted Gideon to free the Israelites from the Midianites (CP Judg 6:11-24). He was the fourth man with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace (CP Dan 3:8-28). The pre-incarnate Jesus was also the Angel of the Lord on the red horse in Zechariah (CP Zech 1:7-21; 2:1-13; 3:1-10; 4:5-6; 13:7). In 13:7 the Lord of Hosts calls the Angel of the Lord “my fellow”, which means fellow-God, which proves that the pre-incarnate Jesus was a fellow-God, co-equal in the Godhead with Jehovah.

Lesser known as an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity is the Holy Spirit. His works are not as visibly prominent in scripture as that of Jesus and the Father, and therefore He is the least understood member of the Godhead by Christians. It is vitally important though that we be very clear in our minds of His Deity and co-equality with both Jesus and the Father in the Godhead. In New Testament teaching the work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus (CP Jn 14:15-18; 16:7-15). Nevertheless He is still God as we saw earlier in the study in Isa 6:8, Ac 28:25-26 and 5:3-4 for instance. Let us look at those scriptures again (CP in Isa 6:8-11 with Ac 28:25-28; Ac 5:3-4). God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all had a role in creation (CP Gen 1:1-2; Ps 90:2; 102:25-27; Jn 1:2, 8-12; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:2, 8-12; 11:3; Rev 3:14; 4:11). The three-in-one Godhead is plainly evident in all those scriptures: creation is from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. Salvation also portrays the work of the Trinity: the Father sent the Son to accomplish His redemptive plan, and the Father and the Son sent the

Holy Spirit to convict sinners of their need of redemption (CP Jn 14:15-18, 26; 15:26-27; 16:5, 7-11, 13-15, 28; 17:1-8, 18, 20-26). The gifts of the Spirit and administrations of the church also portray the work of the Trinity (CP 1Cor 12:1-6). Other scriptures proving the Deity of the Holy Spirit and His co-equality with both the Father and the Son in the Godhead are as follows (CP Isa 11:1-5; 42:1-7; 48:16-17; 59:20-21; 61:1-2; 63:1-14; 1Cor 6:11).

We need now to look at some scriptures used by those who reject the doctrine of the Trinity and deny the Deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit both (CP De 6:4; Isa 44:6-8; 45:21-22; Hos 13:4; Mk 12:29; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; Jas 2:19). The emphasis on all these scriptures is that God is one. Those who use these scriptures to deny the Deity of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit believe that because a singular pronoun – *one* – has been used here with the word *God* that it means there is only one member in the Godhead – God the Father. They have completely ignored all the other scriptures that prove Jesus and the Holy Spirit are co-equal with the Father in the Godhead. Here again one means one in unity, not in number, because the word *God* is still a plural noun. God is merely contrasting Himself with idols in the Old Testament scriptures and He is still the same God in the New Testament (CP De 6:14-15; Isa 44:9-11; 46:1-4; Hos 13:1-3). If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead in the Old Testament, so too there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead in the New Testament, as this study clearly shows. The doctrine of the Trinity is irrefutable and those who reject it will forfeit their salvation (CP Jn 5:22-23; 14:6; 1Jn 2:22-23; 5:10-12). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, Lu 1:35 (B), Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, Col 2:9, 1Ti 3:16, He 1:5, 5:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8. See also author's study *The Doctrine of the Trinity* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

4:1-11 *What do we learn from what Christ did here?*

We learn from this that it is only by being completely submitted to the authority of God's word as Jesus was, that we will be able to overcome the temptations encountered in our own Christian walk (CP Ps 119:9-16; 2Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-18 with Jas 4:7; 1Pe 5:8-9). We must strive to emulate Christ. Commit God's word to memory and speak it out over all circumstances of life (CP Rev 12:11). *The word of their testimony* here refers to the authority of God's word outworked in their lives – it was the key to their overcoming.

It does not refer as many Christians think, to sharing their salvation experience, or how God has so bountifully blessed them – although it is good for Christians to share with each other all experiences which glorify God. In the context of Rev 12:11 though, it refers to the authority of God's Word outworking in the lives of those Christians. Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil and He has delegated His authority to Christians throughout all ages to do the same (CP Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:16-18; Lu 10:19; 24:29; Jn 14:12-14; Ac 1:8).

See also author's studies *Confessing God's Word* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, *Romans 6 – a study of God's Empowering of Believers through Jesus Christ to overcome Sin, and Signs and Wonders in God's Redemptive Plan* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament Church, The Power of God in Christians to overcome the Devil, and Making the Impossible Possible* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

4:17 *See comments on Mt 3:1-3*

5:1-12 *What are these declarations of blessedness Jesus pronounces here?*

These are what is commonly known in Christendom as the beatitudes. When citing the beatitudes in His sermon on the Mount, Jesus was laying down the principles of the kingdom of God, and it is incumbent upon Christians to live out those principles in their daily walk (CP Mt 5:1-12). The first principle of the kingdom is the first beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven". The poor in spirit are those who recognise their spiritual helplessness without Christ and forego their own identities as individuals in order to possess the kingdom. They see the kingdom as the ultimate, to be possessed (CP Mt 11:12). The *violent* here are those Christians who vigorously seek the kingdom in all its power no matter what it costs them. It is the responsibility of every professing Christian to seek unceasingly, in all its manifestations, the kingdom of God. The second principle of the kingdom of God is the second beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted". They that mourn are those who are grieved over their own weaknesses in relation to God's standard of righteousness and kingdom power, and are grieved in their spirit over the sin and immorality manifested in the world. They take upon themselves the burden for the souls of sinners and cry out to God for their salvation. They are comforted by receiving from God righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (CP Ro 14:17).

The "meek" in the third kingdom principle are those who find their refuge in God and commit their way entirely to Him. Meek is not weak, but controlled strength in gentleness and forbearance. The meek shall inherit the earth (CP Ga 5:22-23). The fourth principle of the kingdom is to hunger and thirst after righteousness. The spiritual condition of Christians right throughout their lives will depend on how much they hunger and thirst after righteousness. The Christian's hunger for the things of God is destroyed by worldly anxiety, deceitfulness of riches (CP Mt 13:22), desire for things (CP Mk 4:19), worldly pleasures (CP Lu 8:14) and failure to abide in Christ (CP Jn 15:4). When the hunger for God and his righteousness is destroyed those affected will forfeit their salvation, whereas those who continually hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. The fifth principle of the kingdom: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" means that Christians are to be not simply possessed of pity but are to be actively compassionate toward those who are suffering from sin

or sorrow. They mercifully desire to make such suffering less by bringing those people to the grace and help of God through Jesus Christ (CP Mt 18:21-35; Lu 10:30-37; 1Pe 3:8-9).

The sixth principle of the kingdom of God is the sixth beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The pure in heart are those who have been cleansed from the pollution and the guilt of sin by the grace of God, and now strive to please and glorify God. They seek to have the same attitude of heart that God has – a love for righteousness and a hatred of evil. Only the pure in heart shall see God. That means they shall be His children and will dwell in His presence now and in eternity (CP Rev 21:7; 22:4). The seventh principle of God's kingdom is to be a peacemaker. Peacemakers are those who strive by their witness and life to bring lost sinners to be reconciled to God. Peacemakers are not simply ones who make peace between two parties, but ones who spread the good news of the peace of God which they themselves have experienced in His salvation (CP 2Cor 5:17-20). The eighth kingdom principle is to suffer persecution for Jesus' sake. Persecutions have been promised as a portion for Christians (CP Mk 10:29-30; 2Ti 3:12). Christians will suffer unpopularity, rejection and criticism, but they are to rejoice when they do. We must beware of the temptation to compromise God's word in order to avoid these experiences, for the principles of God's kingdom never change. All that live Godly in Christ shall suffer, but those who endure it will have eternal life (CP Mt 5:10-12; 2Cor 4:7-11). The kingdom of God is established in the hearts of men and the beatitudes are the principles upon which the kingdom is based. See also author's studies *The Kingdom of God* and *The Beatitudes* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *The Sermon on the Mount* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:13-16 *What do we learn from what Jesus says here?*

This is a stern warning to Christians to not only be hearers of God's word, but doers also. In V13 Jesus likens Christians to salt, which seasons and preserves. Christians are to be seasoning agents in society to counteract the corrupt world system. If they no longer contain the characteristics to withstand the corrupt world system, Christians are like salt that has lost its "saltiness" – they no longer fulfill God's purpose in the earth. Like salt that has lost its flavor no longer has any value, they too are no longer of any value (CP Mk 9:50; Lu 14:34-35).

In Mt 5:14 we learn that as a city built on top of a hill cannot be hid, but its glory is reflected for all to see, so too God's glory is reflected for the world to see in the good works performed by Christians (CP V15-16 with Jn 14:12-13; 15:7-8). The purpose of all good works among men is to glorify God (CP Mk 4:21-25). Jesus admonishes His followers here to put into practice what they hear. Knowing that the gospel saves is not something believers can keep to themselves – it has to be shared with those who are not saved (CP Lu 8:16-17). Christians have not been given the light of Divine

truth to hide it from others – it must be shared with them. What we do with the truth we receive will determine whether or not we will be given more or lose that which we already have, and forfeit our salvation as well (CP Mt 25:29-30; Mk 4:24-25; Lu 8:18). See also comments on Mt 8:18-22, 10:37-38, Mk 4:21-25, Lu 14:28-35, and author's studies *The Cost of Discipleship: Forsaking All for Jesus, The Significance of the Seven Churches in Revelation, Conditions of Entry into Heaven, and Haggai – the Significance of his Messages for Today* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *Christians – Flee from Idolatry, Christians, Love not the World, and Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:17-19 *What exactly does Jesus mean by what He says here?*

This passage is used by many in the church to prove that the Old Covenant has not been completely abolished. That is not correct however, as scriptures clearly teach. Jesus abrogated the Old Covenant by fulfilling it (CP Ro 3:21-22; 10:4; 2Cor 3:6-13; Ga 4:21-31; Eph 2:15-16; Col 2:13-17; He 7:12, 18-25; 8:6-13; 9:11-15; 10:1-10). These scriptures all teach the same thing: the Old Covenant in its entirety has been abolished and replaced with the New Covenant. In 2Cor 3:13 we learn that as far back in time as when God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt Sinai, the Old Covenant was being prepared for abolition. Moses put the veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the fading reflection of God's glory in it, which represented the fading glory of the Old Covenant.

Many in the church do not believe that the Old Covenant in its entirety has been abolished in Christ. They argue that only the ceremonial law has been done away with, not the moral law as well, but as scriptures clearly teach, the entire Old Covenant has been abolished and replaced with the New Covenant. Nine of the Ten Commandments have been reaffirmed under the New Covenant. The only commandment excluded is the fourth commandment – to keep the Sabbath – because its sole purpose was to commemorate God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (CP De 5:15). The Old Covenant was for Israel only, whereas the New Covenant is for all peoples (CP Ex 31:12-18 and Eze 20:9-13 with Hos 2:23; Ro 2:14, 9:22-26, 30-33). See also comments on Ro 3:19-23, 3:24-26 (B), 10:4, 2Cor 3:6, 3:12-16, Ga 4:21-31, Eph 2:15-16(A), Col 2:14, He 7:18-19, 8:6, 8:10-11, and author's study *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

5:23-24 *Who does "brother" refer to, and what exactly is Jesus telling Christians here?*

Brother here refers to one of the same nature; fellow man, whether biologically related or not, or whether in Christ or not. It denotes another member of the human race (CP Mt 7:3; Lu 10:25-37; Ac 17:26).

Jesus is telling Christians here that before they can commit any sacrificial gift to God they must first make good anything outstanding against them by anyone else. This is God's law on restitution. God does not want Christians' gifts until they have resolved all matters that are outstanding against them. *Gift* refers to anything offered to God (CP Mt 8:4; 23:18-19; He 5:1; 8:3-4; 9:9; 11:4).

5:25-26 *See comments on Lu 12:58-59.*

5:29 *What does "if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee," mean?*

Opinions are divided among Christians as to whether Jesus is speaking literally or figuratively here, but nothing is to be gained by changing the literal meaning. It would be more profitable to do this literally and enter into eternal life with one eye if our eyes caused us to sin, than to be cast down to hell as a result of that sin, with two eyes. And to further emphasize the seriousness of sin Jesus went on in V30 to include the right hand, and in chapter 18 and Mark 9, He also included the foot (CP 5:30; 18:8-9; Mk 9:43-48). Jesus spoke like this to impress upon us the fact that sin is so serious, and hell so terrible, that sin must be dealt with in a radical way if need be, to save us from hell. Every influence of sin in our lives must be opposed and rejected, whatever the cost (CP Psa 101:3; 119:101; Pr 4:27; Isa 33:14-16; 56:1-2; Lu 11:34). Mt 5:29 is a continuation of Christ's teaching against lusting with our eyes and committing adultery in our heart in V27-28, which provides a ready example of how a man's eye can lead him into sin (CP Mt 5:27-28).

The most notable example of a believer's eyes causing him to sin is King David in the Old Testament (CP 2Sam 11:2-4). Note here the progress of sin: at first David simply glanced down and saw Bathsheba bathing herself, but he continued to look upon her and saw that she was very beautiful; then he lusted after her – he made enquiries as to who she was and arranged for her to visit him; this gave birth to sin – he then committed adultery with her. And this is exactly how the Bible says it will happen (CP Jas 1:13-16). There is no sin in being tempted – the sin is in yielding to temptation. When inner lusts respond to outward enticement, sin is spawned (CP Mt 15:19). Christians must be particularly careful always to abstain from taking pleasure in scenes of immorality such as those shown in films, television or pornographic literature (CP Col 3:5; 2Ti 2:22; Jas 1:12; 1Pe 2:11). See also comments on Ro 6:12-14; Jas 1:13-15.

5:31-32 *What does the Bible teach about divorce and remarriage between Christians?*

Here we see that the only ground for divorce between Christians sanctioned by Jesus, is fornication. *Fornication* refers to any kind of sexual immorality. It includes adultery, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, etc. The only other ground for divorce sanctioned in scripture is desertion by an unbelieving

spouse (CP 1Cor 7:12-15). This did not arise as a ground for divorce during Jesus' ministry, so He did not have to address it. It was left to Paul to do so because it only became evident as the church expanded. These are the only two grounds for divorce sanctioned in scripture, and it is only on these two grounds that the right to divorce is also a right to remarry. Whoever divorces and remarries for any other reason causes everyone involved in the divorce and subsequent remarriage to commit the sin of adultery. Everyone is affected – the one who initiates the divorce, the one divorced, and the ones they remarry (CP Mt 5:31-32; 19:9; Mk 10:10-12; Lu 16:18). Here we see the consequences of divorce and remarriage for reasons other than what is permitted in scripture. Divorce and remarriage for any reason other than fornication or desertion by an unbelieving spouse is sin. That may seem harsh to some, but it is what the Bible teaches. It is not the unpardonable sin though – it can be forgiven, and God will forgive it, if it is confessed and repented of (CP 1Jn 1:9).

That is why God commands Christians who divorce for other reasons to remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to their spouses (CP 1Cor 7:10-11). This is a directive to married Christians, and while Paul addresses it from the wife's perspective, the principle applies to both husbands and wives. The only other ground permitted in scripture for remarriage by Christians is the death of a marriage partner. The surviving partner is then free to remarry (CP Ro 7:2-3; 1Cor 7:8-9, 39; 1Ti 5:14). In all marriages however – not only when a marriage partner dies – Christians must marry other Christians. They cannot marry an unbeliever (CP 2Cor 6:14-16). The reason there has to be restrictions on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in God's order, is because in the first instance divorce and remarriage were not options God considered in His eternal purpose for marriage. God intended marriage to be a permanent, monogamous relationship between a husband and a wife. There was no provision for divorce and remarriage whatever (CP Gen 2:18, 21-25; Mal 2:13-16; Mt 19:3-8; Mk 10:2-9). God did not institute divorce and remarriage – man did. God only tolerated it because Moses permitted it, but Moses only permitted it because of the people's hardness of heart, and that is why Jesus would only sanction divorce for fornication, and not for any other reason. Divorce and remarriage was never mentioned in scripture until De 24 where it is presented as a *fait accompli* – something already established (CP De 24:1-4). None of this is teaching that divorced Christians who have entered into new marriages have to divorce their present spouse and remarry the one they previously divorced, even though the previous divorce may not have conformed to God's eternal purpose. Marriage is in God's perfect order and He will bless the present marriage. See also comments on 1Cor 7:3-6, 7:12-15, 6:14-16, 7:39.

5:33-37 *See comments on Jas 5:12.*

5:38-42 *How are we to understand this?*

This is the code of conduct Jesus stipulates that Christians follow when anyone infringes on their

personal rights (CP Lu 6:27-30). Christians are to surrender their personal rights and offer no retaliations to affronts against their dignity. Rather than retaliate, we are to adopt God's approach and love even those who are our enemies (CP Mt 5:43-48 with Pr 25:21-22 and Ro 12:19-21). See also comments on Ro 12:20.

6:1-4 *What is the lesson for Christians here?*

Christians are warned here against making their charitable gifts or deeds of piety public knowledge. If the motive behind any gift or good deed is merely public acclamation then that will be the only reward the Christians involved will receive. But if done with true humility they will be openly rewarded by God. This does not mean that every charitable gift or good deed done by Christians has to be anonymous, but that Christians must not blatantly draw attention to what they do (CP Psa 112:9 with Lu 14:11-14; Ro 12:8). See also comments on Lu 14:7-11 and 14:12-14.

6:7-8 *If God knows the things we have need of even before we ask Him, why pray at all?*

By praying we are acknowledging our need of the things we ask for and our dependence on God to provide them. We need to pray for our needs to be met (CP Php 4:6-7 with Jas 4:2). To ensure the disciples knew how to pray properly in Mt 6, Jesus then gave them a model prayer (CP Mt 6:9-13). This is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer". It is also found in Luke's gospel (CP Lu 11:1-4). After teaching the disciples here how to pray, Jesus then told the parable of the friend at midnight to assure them of the certainty of their prayers being answered (CP Lu 11:5-10). Although it was midnight the man in the parable got what he asked for because he boldly and unashamedly went to his friend, knocked on his door, and asked for it. There was never any doubt in his mind that he would get what he asked for. Jesus assures us in V9-10 that we can do the same with God. All we have to do is expect God to respond as the householder in the parable responded.

The word *importunity* in V8 means shamelessness, boldness, impudence, audacity. It does not mean persistence as many in the church think – that we have to keep praying the same prayer – asking for the same thing – until God gives it. Its simple meaning is that as the man who shamelessly dared to ask his friend at midnight to meet his needs, and got what he asked for, so too believers who shamelessly through prayer ask, seek, and knock, will also get what they ask for from God (CP Mt 7:7-11; 21:17-22; with Mk 11:12-14, 20-24; Jn 14:12-14; 15:7; 2Cor 1:19-20; Php 4:6-7; 1Jn 3:16-22; 5:14-15). God's word is His will, and if we abide in Him and His word abides in us, we will never ask for anything outside of His will. On this basis believers can always pray, confidently believing that they will receive from God that which they pray for without having to continuously ask Him for it. (See also comments on Mt 21:17-22, Lu 11:5-10, Jn 14:12-14, 15:7, 2 Cor 1:19-20, 1 Jn 3:19-22, 5:14-15).

Now let us study more closely the model prayer Jesus gave to the disciples, and see what it teaches (CP Mt 6:9-10). In V9 here we learn that all our prayers should be directed to God the Father – not to Jesus, nor the Holy Spirit (CP Jn 16:23-24). Up until His death on the cross the disciples had all their needs met by Jesus, but after the cross they were to pray to the Father, and whatever they asked of Him in Jesus' name, He would give them (CP Jn 15:7-8, 16). In Mt 6:10 we learn that we are to also pray for the second advent of Christ and the setting up of God's eternal kingdom in the earth (CP Lu 17:20 – 18:8). Lu 18:1-8 is called the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow. It too, like the parable of the friend at midnight, is used by many in the church to teach that when we bring a petition before God we should persist in praying for it like the widow persisted with the judge until God answers us, like the judge eventually answered the widow. But that is not correct. If it were, then we are putting a just and Holy God in the same category as an unjust and unholy judge. The parable does not compare the two, it contrasts them.

Furthermore, this is not about prayer in general, but intercessory prayer – prayer pertaining to Christ's Second Advent and the coming kingdom. It is a call to believers to persevere in prayer against the works of the devil until Christ comes again and sets up God's eternal kingdom. The widow's adversary in the lawsuit before the judge in the parable, is the equivalent of our adversary, the devil, in the earth. The parable teaches us that we are not to be passive spectators in God's kingdom, but that we are to persist in faith and persevere in prayer for God's will to be done on earth in spite of continued opposition and rejection, which is what the unjust judge portrays in the parable (see also comments on Lu 18:1-8).

This is what Jesus means in Lu 18:1 when He says that men ought always to pray and not faint. He wants believers to pray the kingdom in and not give up, even though His second coming may not be immediate. That is why He questions whether the Christians then remaining when He does come back will still be faithfully pressing in for the things of the kingdom and persevering in prayer, as portrayed by the widow in the parable, or will they have given up hope and lost their faith. Jesus then contrasts the unwilling and uncaring judge's tardiness in vindicating the widow, to God's willingness and readiness to vindicate His children. When Jesus comes back God will vindicate His righteous cause and therewith the cause of His children, but they must trust Him and not lose heart in the meantime. They must here and now continue faithfully in the work He has assigned to them (CP Mt 6:11).

This teaches us that we are to totally rely on God's providence each day for both our spiritual and physical sustenance. We learn from this also that a Christian's way of life has to be without the desire for more than that which will satisfy their everyday needs (CP He 13:5-6). Christians do not have to set aside reserves for their family's future needs as some teach. This is totally unscriptural, and in fact

contradicts what both Jesus and Paul teach (CP Mt 6:19-21, 24-34; Lu 12:16-34; 1Ti 6:6-8). This is not teaching though, that Christians are prohibited from owning a family home and providing the necessities of life for their family (CP Pr 13:11; 21:20; Ecc 5:18-20; 1Ti 5:8 (See also comments on Lu 12:16-21, 2Cor 12:14 and 1Ti 6:6-10)). Christians are obliged to work to provide for their families but we should only work to meet our everyday needs, not to accumulate wealth (CP Mt 6:12).

Here we petition God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. If we are unwilling to forgive those who trespass against us, neither will God forgive our trespasses. Forgiveness is the key to answered prayer. God's forgiveness of our trespasses is conditional upon our forgiveness of those who trespass against us (CP Mt 18:23-35).

This is called the parable of the unmerciful servant. It is only found here and was spoken by Jesus in response to Peter's question concerning forgiveness in V21-22 (CP V21-22). What Jesus is teaching us here is that forgiveness must be a constant attitude with believers. When Jesus told Peter that he had to forgive someone who sinned against him 490 times Jesus was simply underlining the fact that believers cannot ever afford not to forgive others, irrespective of how many times they sin against them. We are to forgive others as God has forgiven us (CP Psalms 103:10-12; Mt 6:14-15). Forgiving also means forgetting (CP He 8:12). We are to behave toward others as God behaves towards us. If we claim to be His then we must have His disposition to forgive, even our enemies (CP Mt 5:7; Lu 6:35-36).

Forgiveness is a matter of life or death for believers. If we do not forgive others neither will God forgive us. Jesus teaches us in the parable of the unmerciful servant that the forgiveness of God, though freely given to repentant sinners, nevertheless remains conditional according to their willingness to forgive others (CP Mk 11:25-26). The judgement the king pronounced on the unforgiving servant in the parable of the unmerciful servant is the equivalent of eternal damnation upon unforgiving believers, because just as the servant could never repay his debt to the king, believers can never repay their debt to God. Forgiveness is a kingdom principle, and it is incumbent upon Christians to live out this principle in their Christian life. Christians have had all their sins forgiven by God, so they must forgive others in return. See also comments on Mt 18:23-35 (CP Mt 6:13).

It seems incongruous that here we are to petition God not to lead us into temptation when scriptures elsewhere teach that God tempts no man (CP Jas 1:13). Opinions are divided among bible scholars as to what exactly Jesus means in Mt 6:13. One thing is certain: He does not mean that we are to ask God not to allow us to be tempted, when again, elsewhere in scripture we are told to count it all joy when we are tempted (CP Jas 1:2-4, 12; 1Pe 1:6-9). Jesus allowed Himself to be tempted (CP Mt 4:1; Mk 1:12-13). God promises that no Christian will ever be tempted above that which they can endure, but that with the

temptation He will also make a way of escape (CP 1Cor 10:13). *Temptation* here means a state of trial in which God brings His children through adversity and affliction in order to encourage and prove their faith and confidence in Him (CP 2Pe 2:9). In light of this, and the second part of the petition in Mt 6:13, "... *but deliver us from evil*", it seems more likely that Jesus means that we are to pray that we would not be led into such temptations as would destroy our faith, but for God to deliver us from them. Amen! (See also comments on Mt 4:1-11, 1Cor 10:13, Jas 1:2-4 and author's studies *Prayer* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and *Forgiveness – A Matter of Life or Death for Christians* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

6:9-13 *See comments on Lu 11:5-10.*

6:16-18 *What does it mean to fast and is it obligatory upon New Testament Christians to do so?*

To fast means to voluntarily abstain from eating food for a certain period of time. Fasting was an Old Testament practice but Jesus did not stress it for New Testament Christians, although He sanctioned it (CP Mt 9:14-17). Jesus told a parable of old and new cloth and wineskins in V16-17 here in response to questioning by John the baptist's disciples in V14-15 as to why Jesus' disciples did not follow the Old Testament religious practice of fasting. In His response Jesus includes fasting as part of the old Judaistic religious system which kept people under its law in bondage to sin. Jesus' dynamic new teaching was not compatible with the teaching of the Law under the Old Covenant. His reference to new cloth and new wine was a way of saying the He did not come as a reformer to patch up an old worn-out religious system, but to replace it completely with a dynamic new teaching.

This is not teaching against fasting by New Testament Christians. Fasting was observed by the first century church (CP Ac 13:1-3; 14:21-23). But other than this, there is little to say about fasting in the New Testament. The only other fastings recorded are what Paul describes as part of his sufferings for Christ (CP 2Cor 6:5; 11:27). These fastings refer to lack of food, not voluntary abstinence from food. The object of fasting in the Old Testament was to humble the soul before God (CP Psalms 35:13); to crucify the appetite and deny it in order to enhance prayer, and to receive from God (CP 2Sam 12:15-17; Ezra 8:21-23). Fasting by voluntary abstinence from food is not obligatory upon New Testament Christians. Jesus sanctions it in Mt 6:16-18, but does not commend it. But there is a fast chosen by God that is obligatory upon New Testament Christians, and they must always be ready to do it (CP Isa 58:6-8 with Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-18). See also comments on Mt 9:14-15 and 9:16-17.

6:24 *To what does the word mammon refer?*

Mammon refers to earthly riches – material possessions and wealth (CP V19-34). Jesus teaches us here that Christians cannot allow the acquisition of material possessions and wealth to become their life-goal because it will eventually estrange them from God. Christians must ever be alert to the danger of being seduced from their allegiance to God by the allurements of riches and material possessions. We must guard against any preoccupation at all with material things lest they become more important to us than the things of God (CP Mt 13:3-9, 18-23). This is called the parable of the sower. It perfectly describes what the end is for Christians serving *mammon* – caught up in the pursuit of wealth. The teaching in the parable centres on the different soils, which represents those who receive God's word, and how they respond to it. The term *deceitfulness of riches* in V22 means that wealth gives a false impression – a false sense of security – whether by appearance, statement or influence. *Choke*, in the same verse means figuratively to overpower. What this teaches is that the false sense of security emanating from material possessions and wealth overpowers the word of God in Christians and prevents them bearing fruit for the kingdom. They have been seduced by their wealth from continuing in God's service. Paul also teaches this (CP 1Ti 6:9-10).

Erred here also means seduced. Those who coveted after wealth erred from the faith. They were seduced by their wealth away from God. Paul's perspective on wealth is the same as Jesus'. He teaches that the pursuit of wealth debases the mind, destroys Godly traits, and makes Christians selfish, proud, and avaricious, which all lead to destruction and perdition. *Perdition* refers to the state after death wherein exclusion from salvation is a realized fact, wherein man, instead of becoming what he might have been in God, is lost and ruined forever. This is a warning for those inside the church, not those outside it – for believers, not unbelievers. *Perdition* here is the final destiny of Christians who determine to be rich. This is a grim warning to Christians against focusing upon earthly riches and serving *mammon* in this life, as opposed to serving God and storing up treasure for ourselves in heaven that will guarantee our eternal security in the next life (CP Lu 12:13-15). The word *abundance* here means more than is needed, surplus to needs. See also comments on Mt 19:23-26; Lu 12:13-15; 12:16-21; 1Ti 6:6-10, and author's studies *Christians and Wealth* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and *Christians – Flee from Idolatry* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

7:1-5 *What does Christ's admonition, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" really mean?*

A great many believers interpret this scripture to be a stern warning to Christians that they are not to make any sort of judgement at all. But that is not what Jesus is teaching. Jesus is admonishing us here not to judge others self-righteously or hypocritically. Christians are not to find faults in others while blinded to their own (CP Lu 6:37; Jn 8:1-11; Ro 2:1-

3). Both Jesus and Paul teach us here that being blinded to one's own faults results in an attitude of superiority and causes hardness toward the faults of others. In Jn 8:1-11 Jesus exposes the evil hearts of the Pharisees who were quite prepared to put to death one found sinning publicly, yet they themselves were all sinning privately. In Ro 2:1-3 Paul declares that there is a Pharisee in the heart of every Christian who esteems his or her own morality above others (CP Ga 6:1-3). When Christians judge, they must judge only as *fellow sinners*. To think that they are anything other than that, or that they are exempt from the faults which they see in others, is to judge self-righteously and hypocritically which is forbidden (CP 1 Cor 4:3-7; Jas 4:11-12). Paul and James both teach in these passages that Christians are not to criticize or condemn each other. None of us are above criticism, and it is God who will judge us all. This is a rebuke to self appointed judges in the church. Not only must Christians not criticize or condemn others, or judge them in a self-righteous manner, but we must also not judge another's holiness by our own personal convictions (CP Ro 14:1-13, 22). Paul admonishes Christians here, both strong and weak in the faith, not to judge each other. Everyone of us is God's servant and is personally responsible to God for what we do aside from what is specifically forbidden. No one will fall who conscientiously follows God in the light of the knowledge they have received. Christians can fellowship with each other in spite of differences of opinion if we do not despise or criticize each other because of them. The strong are to bear with the weak and be tolerant of their doubtful practices. We must live in unity with one another (CP Ro 15:1-7 with 1 Cor 13:1-7 and Ga 5:22-23).

Jesus is the only one who is capable of judging Christians because He is the only one who paid the supreme sacrifice for their salvation, so none of us should presume to criticize or condemn another for whom Christ also died (CP Ro 14:10-12). "Setting at naught" other Christians means despising them, holding them in contempt. That does not mean that we have to agree with what other Christians believe or teach, or that we must like what they do, but we are not to criticize or despise them because of it. We had better be looking at our own works rather than judge another's, because every single one of us will have to stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ one day to give an account of our own faithfulness. The Judgement Seat of Christ is not to be confused with the Great White Throne Judgement. The Judgement Seat of Christ is for those who go to heaven, whereas the Great White Throne Judgement is for those being cast down to hell (CP Rev 20:11-15). None of this is teaching that Christians cannot exercise discernment regarding spiritual things (CP 1 Cor 14:29). Christians can also examine, convince, and reprove those in the world of their evil ways (CP 1 Cor 2:15). This in no way is judging sinners, but simply witnessing to them the gospel of light. Neither does it mean that we cannot judge false teaching, and who false teachers are in the church. It is obligatory upon Christians to do this (CP Mt 7:15-20; 1 Th 5:21; 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:1-2). Nor does it mean that we cannot make value judgements with respect to sin in other Christians (CP 1 Cor 5:1-5, 9-13). The fornicators,

covetous, idolaters, railers (foul tongued abusers), drunkards and extortioners here are professing Christians, and Paul warns other Christians not to fellowship with them. They are to be put out of the church – excommunicated from that assembly – so that God can deal with them outside the church. Christian judgements are only limited to those inside the church. God judges those outside. Christians must always remember that the same measure of judgement with which we judge others will be measured back to us – doubled (CP Lu 6:36-38). The word *again* in V38 means *repetitive* – it is repeated, so we get double judgement, just as we get doubly blessed in return for our giving. See also comments on Ro 2:1-4, 14:1-9; 1 Cor 3:12-15, 4:2-5, and author's study *Christians – On Judging Others* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

7:6 *What does Jesus mean by, "Do not give holy things to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine"?*

In the general sense it means that objects of value or sacred things should not be offered to those who are incapable of appreciating them. However, the context of this saying centres on Christians judging others by their own standards, and it must be kept in that context (CP V1-6). The point Jesus makes in V6 is that as "dogs" are incapable of recognizing something sacred, and "pigs" have no regard for pearls, so believers cannot impose God's standards of morality upon those who are morally corrupt. Christians cannot expect those who have no relationship with God to adopt His standards of morality. Rather, the morally corrupt are more likely to turn on Christians trying to impose their morality on them, and attack them. Jesus is not teaching here as a great many Christians believe, that Christians are not to share the gospel with unrepentant sinners in case they reject it and attack the one preaching it, because He teaches everywhere else that Christians must be prepared to die for the gospel's sake if need be (CP Mt 10:38-39; Mk 8:34-37; Lu 9:23-25; Jn 12:24-26).

7:7-11 *See comments on Mt 6:7-8.*

7:13-14 *What does it mean to enter in at the strait gate?*

Here Jesus is warning Christians that the only way to enter into eternal life is through the narrow confines of a Christian walk totally consecrated to the service of God and completely surrendered to the authority of Jesus (CP 6:24; 7:21-27). No one merely professing faith in Christ and not doing the work of God's word will be saved (CP Lu 13:23-27; Jas 1:22-25; 2:14-26; Rev 3:14-16). The word *strive* in Lu 13:24 means to labour fervently; to wrestle as in an award contest, straining every nerve to the uttermost toward the goal (CP 1 Cor 9:24-27; Php 2:12; 3:8-14; He 4:1). Christians must order their lives to do the work of God's word See also comments on Mt 3:10, 7:21, 12:30, 25:14-30; Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:22-25, 2:14-26 and author's studies *Conditions of Entry into Heaven* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume**

1), and *Christian – Beware of Failing God’s Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

7:21 *What does Jesus mean when He says that not everyone who calls Him Lord, Lord, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?*

Jesus is passing sentence here upon those who do not bear fruit for God’s eternal kingdom (CP V20-27). Jesus makes it quite clear here that no one merely professing to be a Christian will be saved – only those who hear God’s word and do it will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (CP Psa 119:9; Pr 4:4; Lu 11:27-28; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:22-25; Rev 1:3). These scriptures all teach the same thing: the only way to heaven is by doing the work of God’s word – no one can be saved by merely believing in Jesus (CP Jas 2:14-26). Demons also believe in Jesus, but they are not going to heaven. This is a warning for believers, not unbelievers. Those who profess faith in Christ must conform strictly to His word. There can be no compromise – believers not doing the work of God’s word for Christ, are doing the work of the devil against Christ (CP Mt 12:30). Professing Christians who are not bearing fruit for God’s eternal kingdom will not be part of the kingdom, and it is folly for them to think they will. See also comments on Mt 3:10, 7:13-14, 12:30, 25:14-30; Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16; Ro 2:11-13; Jas 1:22-25, 2:14-16 and author’s studies *Conditions of Entry into Heaven* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Christian – Beware of Failing God’s Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

8:1-4 *Why did Jesus charge the leper not to tell anyone about Him?*

Jesus charged these people not to tell anyone about Him, because He was yet to suffer and He did not want it publicly known that early in His earthly ministry that He was the Messiah – the one sent from God – knowing the controversy it would cause (CP also Mt 9:27-30; 12:15-16; 16:13-31; Mk 3:11-12; 5:21-24; 7:32-36; 8:22-26; 9:9).

8:11-12 *Who is Jesus referring to here and what is outer darkness?*

In V 11 Jesus is referring especially to Gentiles who will readily accept Him as Saviour, while He is rejected by the Jews (CP Isa 2:2-3; 11:10-12; 65:1 with Mt 21:43; Lu 2:30-32; Ro 15:8-12). In Mt 8:12 the *children of the kingdom* refers to Jews who professed to believe in God and His Eternal Kingdom, but rejected Christ (CP Lu 13:28-30; Ro 9:22-33). *Outer darkness* in Mt 8:12 means obscurity. In this context it refers to Hell (CP also Mt 22:13; 25:30). See also comments on Mt 21:42-45; Lu 2:33, 2:34-35; Ro 9:22-24, 9:25-29, 9:30-33 and author’s studies *Hell*, and *Israel in God’s Eternal Purpose* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

8:16-17 *What was Isaiah’s prophecy that Jesus fulfilled here?*

(CP Isa 53:4-5). This is Isaiah’s prophecy that Mt 8:16-17 speaks of. It teaches us that there is healing for our bodies in Christ’s atoning death as well as salvation for our souls. *Griefs* and *sorrows* in V4 (KJV) mean sicknesses and pains. Jesus bore our sicknesses and our pains so that we could be healed of them the same as He became a sin offering that we could be forgiven our sins. This teaching is reinforced as we study the scriptures in detail. In Mt 8:17 the *griefs* and *sorrows* of Isaiah 53:4 are correctly translated as infirmities and sicknesses. Matthew asserts here that Isaiah’s prophesy was being fulfilled in the healings Jesus rendered to the sick, "...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." That is not teaching that Jesus completely fulfilled Isaiah’s prophesy before the cross and therefore there is no bodily healing in the atonement, as many believe. It teaches that by contemporaneously healing the sick and forgiving their sins during His earthly ministry Jesus was demonstrating that bodily healing is an integral part of the atonement (CP Mk 2:1-12). These people were amazed to learn that as sin and sickness go hand in hand at one end of the spectrum, so too do healing and forgiveness at the opposite end of the spectrum (see also comments on Mt 9:1-8). There are a great many Christians today who still do not know this truth and cannot obtain their healing as a result (CP Jn 5:1-14). All these scriptures are irrefutable proof that God’s redemptive plan is all-inclusive. It provides for our physical healing as well as our spiritual healing. Jesus’ healings in His earthly ministry simply foreshadowed the healing in His atonement on the cross (CP 1Pe 2:24-25). Peter affirms here that Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross so that our bodies are healed as our souls are saved from hell. Peter is attesting to this as being an established fact, accomplished by Jesus’ stripes. All we have to do is believe what the scriptures teach and claim our healing by faith. Christ bore our sins and our sicknesses on the cross so we do not have to bear them ourselves. He did not bear our sicknesses to merely enter into the fellowship of our sufferings as some teach, but to deliver us from them altogether (CP Jn 19:28-30). When Jesus said "it is finished", just before He died here, that signified that the complete redemptive plan of God was fulfilled in Christ on the cross (CP Ga 3:13-14, 28-29).

There can be no confusion over what this scripture means. It confirms everything the other scriptures in this study teach. Jesus died on the cross so that all who believe on Him can be partakers of the salvation benefits He bought for us with His blood. What is the curse He died to redeem us from? (CP De 28:15-68). There are 54 verses relating to all the curses here and everything listed is what Christ died to save us from but for the purpose of this study we will only look at the different sicknesses that are listed. These include deafness, blindness, lameness, barrenness, mental illness, fear, consumption, fever, emaciation, cancer, ulcers, boils, haemorrhoids, rheumatism, arthritis, dermatitis, etc, etc. Verse 61 even takes into account

sicknesses and plagues not listed. No doubt we could include herpes, aids, emphysema, heart disease and many others among them but praise God, Jesus has redeemed us from them all and healing is ours if we will but believe and comply with the conditions (CP Ro 5:17). This scripture clearly teaches that the abundant life Jesus promised believers applies to this life, not the next as many would have us believe, and sickness and disease have no place in it (CP 3Jn 2). This is still further evidence that it is still in God's eternal purpose to heal us. The word *wish* here means pray. The verse should read, "beloved I pray above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." There are three blessings of God involved in John's prayer here: material prosperity, bodily healing and health, and the saving of Gaius' soul. If any one of those blessings was not the will of God, John would have known and he would not have prayed for them. If such blessings are the will of God for one man, they are for all men alike who will have faith for them, because in the gospel of Christ there is no respect of persons.

It is plainly evident from scripture that God still heals, that He always heals and that it is His will to heal everyone who meets the conditions. God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. It is also plain in scripture that sickness is not God's chastening of His children; it is not a blessing in disguise, and God is not glorified in sickness. Only good gifts and perfect gifts come down from God. Now we need to know what we must do to be healed, and what are some of the hindrances to healing (CP Mk 9:23). First, we must dispel any doubt that God will heal us. We have the assurance of His word. His promises are right throughout scripture as we have found in this study, but for the promises to work we must meet the conditions (CP Psalms 66:18). If there is any unconfessed or unrepented sin in our life the Lord will not hear any prayer we pray, whether it be for healing or anything else. We must bring the sin before God and confess it before our fellowship can be restored with Him (CP 1Jn 1:7-10). Any sin not confessed and repented of puts a wall up between us and God and because of this we can no longer experience God's favour, or His salvation.

(See also comments on Mt 9:1-8, 13:53-58; Mk 1:40-41, 8:22-26, 10:46-52, 16:9-20; Lu 4:38-39; Jn 3:14-15, 9:3; Ac 4:4; Php 2:25-30; 1Pe 2:24, and author's studies *Confessing God's Word and Healing* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, *Signs and Wonders in God's Redemptive Plan* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *A Daily Confession for Christians* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

8:18-22 *What is meant by "Let the dead bury their dead"?*

This teaching is also found in Luke's gospel where it expands upon V22 and includes a third candidate for salvation in addition to the two men recorded here (CP Lu 9:57-62). Jesus is testing those who would follow Him in these passages. There are three

seemingly sincere candidates for salvation here, but all failed to measure up to the standards Jesus has set for His followers. Jesus is teaching us that anything less than total commitment to God eliminates one from the future eternal kingdom. The first incident teaches that an emotional enthusiasm that has not considered the cost of abandoning material security to follow Him is insufficient by Christ's standards. The second teaches that loyalty to Christ must take precedence over all other loyalties – following after Christ must be our highest priority. Jesus is not being insensitive to the propriety of funerals here, but is teaching against putting off the work of God "...but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (CP Lu 9:60). Followers of Christ have the urgent task of proclaiming the life that is in Him to them that are lost. This is more important work than burying spiritually dead people who have physically died. Jesus said let their own spiritually dead bury them. The third incident, which is only recorded by Luke, teaches that once we start in God's service we cannot turn away. Service to God commands our undivided attention, and if we are not prepared to singlemindedly serve God, then we will forfeit our place in His kingdom. (See also comments on Mt 5:13-16, 10:37-38, Mk 4:21-25, Lu 14:28-35).

8:23-27 *See comments on Mk 4:35-39.*

8:28-34 *Why did Jesus allow the demons to go into the pigs, causing them to drown?*

To better understand why Jesus allowed the demons to go into the pigs, causing them to drown, we need first to study Mark's and Luke's account of this incident. In Matthew's account there are two demoniacs mentioned, whereas both Mark and Luke only mention one. That is not to say that there were not two demoniacs involved, but that only the most prominent one was mentioned (CP Mk 5:1-20; Lu 8:26-39). Jesus' purpose was to save the man. His wellbeing is the issue here, not the pigs. What happened to the pigs was incidental to a human life being saved, which is more precious to God than a whole herd of animals. Jesus simply consented to the demons entering into the pigs because their eternal punishment was not yet due. He did not tell the demons to kill the pigs. They just did to the pigs what they eventually would have done to the man. He was already in the place of the dead – the tombs – and would have surely died but for Jesus delivering him from death and enabling him to re-enter life and become a witness to God's saving grace. The townspeople also missed the point here – the pigs were more important to them than the fact that a human life was saved, and that the Saviour of the world was in their midst. The whole town turned on Jesus – preferring pigs to salvation.

9:1-8 *What was the point of Jesus' question, "which is easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee, or arise, take up thy bed and walk"?*

(CP also Mk 2:1-12; Lu 5:17-26) Jesus asked this question when He perceived that the scribes were

reasoning in themselves what authority He had to forgive sins, which only God could do, so to prove that He was empowered to grant both forgiveness of the man's sins and heal his body, Jesus healed him. The man's healing authenticated Jesus' right to forgive His sins. But there is another teaching here as well, and that is that bodily healing and forgiveness of sins go hand in hand – they are mutually inclusive benefits in Christ's atoning death (CP Isa 53:4-5). Every time Jesus contemporaneously healed someone and forgave their sins He was demonstrating that bodily healing is an integral part of the atonement (CP Mt 9:22; Mk 10:46-52; Lu 17:13-19; Jn 4:46-53). Sadly though, a great many Christians in the contemporary church do not believe there is bodily healing in the atonement – only salvation, and as a result cannot receive healing for their bodies. They believe that Isa 53:4-5 and 1Pe 2:24 only refers to spiritual healing, and that physical healing is not included, but if that were so, not only are those scriptures meaningless, but so is Ga 3:13 (CP Ga 3:13). This very clearly teaches that Christ died for our sicknesses as well as our sins. The curse that Jesus died to redeem us from includes every sickness and disease imaginable (CP De 28:15, 22, 27-28, 35, 58-61). Jesus' atoning death was not only for Christians to be contemporaneously forgiven and healed in Bible times, but throughout every dispensation since then too, until He comes again. This is the ongoing ministry of the church (CP Jas 5:14-16).

9:14-15 *Who is the bridegroom Jesus refers to here?*

This passage of scripture refers to any bridegroom (CP also Mk 2:18-20; Lu 5:33-35). Jesus simply used the analogy of a wedding party to answer John's disciples' questions as to why Jesus' disciples did not fast as they and the Pharisees' disciples did. Jesus' point was that as long as He was with the disciples, like the bridegroom with his friends, there was too much joy for fasting. Fasting in the Old Testament was always associated with mourning or times of great spiritual need. This did not befit a marriage scene, where much festivity took place (CP Lev 16:29-31; 2Sam 12:15-23).

9:16-17 *What does Jesus mean by, "no man putteth a new cloth into an old garment...nor new wine in old bottles"?*

This is called the parable of old and new cloth, and wineskins. (The bottles Jesus refers to are wineskins.) This parable is also found in Mk 2:21-22 and Lu 5:36-39. Jesus told the parable in response to questioning by John the Baptist's disciples as to why Jesus' disciples did not follow the accepted religious practice of fasting (CP Mt 9:14-15). The old worn-out garment and wineskin represents the Old Testament Judaistic religious system which kept people under its law in bondage to sin (CP Ro 7:14-23; 1Cor 15:56-57). Jesus' reference to new cloth and new wine was a way of saying that He did not come as a reformer to patch up an old worn-out religious system, but to replace it completely with a

dynamic new teaching (CP Lu 4:17-21; Ga 3:22-26). Jesus' dynamic new teaching was salvation by grace through faith in Him, which was incompatible with the teaching of the law under the Old Testament. This new teaching could not be mixed with the old because of the new life and freedom impossible with the old (CP Ro 7:24-8:4). A good biblical example of how the old and the new could not be mixed is found in Ac 15 (CP Ac 15:1-29). See also comments on Ac 15:1-29; 2Cor 3:6, 3:12-16 and author's studies *The Sabbath and the New Testament Church, The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *The Doctrine of Grace* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

9:23-24 *What did Jesus mean when He said, "The maid is not dead, but sleeping"?*

(CP V18-19) This event is also recorded in Mk 5:21-24, 35-43 and Lu 8:40-42, 49-56. Jesus was not denying that the girl was actually dead. He was simply comparing her dead condition to sleep, because her death, like sleep, as far as Jesus was concerned, was only temporary. He would raise her up from it (CP V25). Jesus also said Lazarus was only sleeping too before He raised him up from the dead (CP Jn 11:1-4, 11-15, 20-26, 32-44). In both these instances Jesus proved that He had power over death, and many came to believe on Him as a result (CP Mt 9:26; Jn 11:45). See also comments on Jn 11:33 and Ac 7:60.

9:27-30 *See comments on Mt 8:1-4.*

9:32-34 *What was the sin of the Pharisees here in what they said?*

(CP also Lu 11:14-15). The Pharisees attributed the miracle of the demon being cast out of the dumb man by Jesus, enabling him to speak, to Satan, thus blaspheming the Holy Spirit, to whom they should have ascribed the miracle. This is the only sin in God's order for which there is no forgiveness (CP Mt 12:31-32; Mk 3:22-30; Lu 12:10). See also comments on Mt 12:31-32 and author's studies *Baptism in the Spirit* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Signs and Wonders in God's Redemptive Plan** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *the Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

10:1-4 *Who are the twelve disciples Jesus called – what do scriptures teach about them?*

The first disciple named is Simon called Peter. Peter was the brother of Andrew who was the first to follow Jesus (CP Jn 1:35-42). Jesus also called Peter *Cephas* (CP 1Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Ga 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). Both *Peter* and *Cephas* mean a stone, a rock. He was also called Simeon (CP Ac 15:14). Peter and Andrew, both natives of Bethsaida, were Galilean fishermen in partnership with James and John – the

sons of Zebedee – also disciples of Jesus (CP Mk 1:16-20; Lu 5:1-11). Peter was married and lived with his wife in Capernaum (CP Mk 1:21, 29-31). His wife accompanied him on missionary journeys (CP 1Cor 9:5). Peter was mentioned first in all four lists of the apostles (CP Mk 3:14-19; Lu 6:13-16; Ac 1:13). But that did not mean that Peter had precedence in authority over the other disciples as so many think (CP Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45; Lu 22:24-27). Peter had no precedence over the other disciples in authority, only in time – he was the first to confess his faith in Jesus as the Messiah (CP Mt 16:13-19). On the ground of his confession of faith in Jesus as Messiah, the Lord simply designated Peter as the first one to open the door of the Kingdom of Heaven – to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (CP Ac 2:14-41), and later to the Gentiles, through Cornelius and his household (CP Ac 10:1-8, 21-48). Later in his ministry Peter wrote the two epistles that bear his name – 1 and 2 Peter.

Together with James and John, Peter enjoyed special favour and intimacy with Jesus (CP Mt 17:1-9; 26:37-46; Mk 5:22-24, 35-43; Jn 21:15-19). In Jn 21:18-19 Jesus is foretelling that the death by which Peter would die – also crucifixion – would glorify God. It is not known where Peter died. Tradition has it that it was in Rome, but Paul made no mention of him being there in any of his epistles. Therefore, if it was in Rome, it had to be after the martyrdom of Paul there. There is much more recorded in scripture concerning Peter than what is noted here, but this will suffice for the purpose of this exercise (see also comments on Mt 16:13-18, Mt 16:19, Eph 4:11-12, 1Pe 5:1-3, 2Pe 1:16-19).

The second disciple named is Andrew, Peter's brother. Andrew was the first to follow Jesus after John declared Him to be the Lamb of God (CP Jn 1:34-37). Andrew told Peter who Jesus was and then Peter followed Him too. Soon after, Jesus ordained them both apostles (CP Mk 3:13-19; Lu 6:13-16). Andrew doubted that so many could be fed from just five loaves and two fishes when Jesus fed the five thousand (CP Jn 6:1-11). It was Andrew and Philip that Jesus first told of His impending death (CP Jn 12:20-24, 32-33). Andrew was also one of the four with whom Jesus discussed the destruction of the temple and the time of His second advent (CP Mk 13:1-4). Andrew is never mentioned again in scripture after the disciples came together in the upper room to await the baptism in the Holy Spirit (CP Ac 1:12-13).

The third disciple is James, the son of Zebedee. James and John his brother were fishermen partners of Peter and Andrew. Jesus called them the sons of thunder (CP Mk 3:17). Together with Peter they enjoyed special favour and intimacy with Jesus. They accompanied Jesus when He raised up Jairus' daughter from the dead (CP Mk 5:22-24, 35-43); they were eyewitnesses to the glory of Christ's transfiguration (CP Mt 17:1-9), and they were in the garden of Gethsemane with Jesus before His arrest (CP Mt 26:37-46). Jesus rebuked them for expecting Him to sanction their calling down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans who refused to receive

Jesus on His way to Jerusalem (CP Lu 9:51-56). James and John also caused trouble among the other disciples when they asked Jesus if they could sit on either side of Him in the heavenly kingdom (CP Mk 10:35-45). James did drink the cup Jesus drank and was baptized with the baptism Jesus was baptized with when he was killed with the sword by King Herod (CP Ac 12:1-2). James was the first martyr among the apostles.

There are four men called James in the New Testament. The others are James, the son of Alphaeus, another one of the twelve disciples (CP Mt 10:3). He is always referred to in scripture as the son of Alphaeus, which distinguishes him from James, the brother of John (CP Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lu 6:15; Ac 1:13). James, the father/brother of Judas, also one of the twelve (CP Lu 6:16 (KJV calls him brother; NKJV, RSV, NIV and other s all call him father)), and James, the brother of Jesus (CP Mt 13:54-55; Mk 6:1-3; Ga 1:19).

The next disciple named is the other son of Zebedee, James' brother, John. John is referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved (CP Jn 13:23; 19:25-27; 20:1-3; 21:7, 20-24). Jesus entrusted his mother, Mary, to John's care before he died (CP Jn 19:25-27). As noted in our studies on both Peter and James, John also enjoyed special favour and intimacy with Jesus, accompanying Him when He raised up Jairus' daughter from the dead; being an eyewitness to the glory of Christ's transfiguration, and being present with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane prior to his arrest (CP Mk 5:22-24, 35-43; Mt 17:1-9; 26:37-46). Together with Peter and James, the Lord's brother, John met with Paul and Barnabas on Paul's second visit to the Jerusalem church after his conversion to Christ to settle the question of circumcision (CP Ac 15:1-2, 4 with Ga 2:1-2, 9). John was the author of the gospel that bears his name and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd epistles of John.

John also wrote the book of Revelation. Advanced in age, he was living in exile on the isle of Patmos when he received the revelation of Jesus Christ, who sent it with an angel to John to give to the church (CP Rev 1:1, 4-5, 9-19).

The fifth disciple named is Philip. He is also from Bethsaida, like Peter and Andrew. Philip led Nathanael to the Lord (CP Jn 1:43-51). But he failed Jesus' test of faith in Him to feed the five thousand (CP Jn 6:5-7). Philip only saw the financial cost involved. It never occurred to him that Christ could meet the people's need supernaturally. Jesus also chided Philip for asking him to show the disciples the Father. This led to Jesus' teaching that He and the Father were one (CP Jn 14:8-10). This Philip is not to be confused with Philip the evangelist (CP Ac 6:1-7; 8:5-8; 21:8). He was known as Philip, the evangelist, presumably to distinguish him from Philip, the apostle. The last word on Philip the apostle in scripture is when the disciples all came together in the upper room to await the baptism in the Holy Spirit (CP Ac 1:12-13).

The sixth disciple named is Bartholomew, who is only named in all four lists of the apostles. He is never mentioned elsewhere in scripture (CP Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lu 6:14; Ac 1:13). Bartholomew is believed by many in the church to be the same as Nathanael, who Philip led to the Lord (CP Jn 1:45-51 with 21:2).

The seventh disciple named is Thomas, also called Didymus, meaning twin (CP Jn 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). Thomas was commonly known among Christians as doubting Thomas because he did not believe in the resurrection (CP Jn 20:24-25). Thomas' doubts turned into a marvellous confession of faith in Christ's Deity when he did meet and touch the resurrected Lord soon after (CP V26-29).

The eighth disciple named is Matthew the publican, or tax collector. Matthew was also called Levi (CP Mt 9:9 with Mk 2:14; Lu 5:27-28). Matthew's name, like that of both Simon (Peter), and Saul (Paul), was changed on being called to apostleship. Matthew wrote this gospel specifically for Jewish Christians. Apart from being named in the lists of the apostles, no further record of Matthew is found in the New Testament (CP Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Ac 1:13).

The ninth disciple named is James the son of Alphaeus (CP Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lu 6:15; Ac 1:13). This James is not to be confused with James, the brother of John, the sons of Zebedee. Apart from being named in the lists of apostles here, nothing more is known of this James. Some in the church believe he is referred to elsewhere in scripture as James the less, or James the younger (CP Mt 27:56 with Mk 15:40). Some also believe that because Matthew was called Levi the son of Alphaeus in Mk 2:14, it is conceivable that he and this James are brothers (CP Mk 2:14).

The tenth disciple is called Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddeus by Matthew in the KJV (CP Mt 10:3). Mark calls him Thaddeus (CP Mk 3:18), whereas Luke calls him Judas, the brother of James (CP Lu 6:16; Ac 1:13). They are without doubt the same person. However, most modern translations and paraphrased versions including NKJV, NIV, NASB, RSV and Jerusalem bible etc, all refer to Judas as the son of James. It is not fundamental to salvation to know which is correct, suffice to say that this disciple's only recorded words were spoken to Jesus at the last supper (CP Jn 14:22).

The eleventh disciple named is Simon the Canaanite, also called Simon Zelotes or Simon the Zealot (CP Mt 10:4; Mk 3:18; Lu 6:15; Ac 1:13). This is the only record of this disciple. He is not to be confused with any other Simon named in the New Testament.

The twelfth and last disciple named is Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus (CP Mt 26:14-16, 20-25, 47-50). As an apostle Judas was a bishop in the church Jesus is building, but in betraying Jesus, Judas forfeited his apostleship, his bishoprick, and his salvation (CP Psa 69:22-28; 109:6-20; Ac 1:15-25). In Ac 1:20 Peter quoted Psa 109:8 as being fulfilled in Judas. Psa 69:22-25 applies to both Judas and those who killed

Jesus. We learn also in Psa 109:9-10 that Judas had a wife and children. His wife became a widow, and his children vagabonds – wanderers – who had to beg all the rest of their days. We also learn in V13 that Judas' family name died out in that generation. No one was left to carry it on – it was lost to posterity forever. (See also comments on Mt 26:14-16).

10:5-7 *Why did Jesus forbid the disciples going to the Gentiles here?*

The Gospel message was initially limited to the Jews – *the house of Israel* – but they rejected Jesus and ultimately had Him killed, so it was then given to the Gentiles (CP Jn 1:11; Ro 1:16 with Ac 2:22-23; Ro 9:1-33; 1Th 2:14-15). See also comments on Ac 2:22-23; Ro 9:1-3, 9:14-18, 9:22-24, 9:25-29, 9:30-33; 1Th 2:14-15 and author's study *Israel in God's Eternal Purpose* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

10:8 *What does "freely ye have received, freely give" mean?*

Christians have been freely empowered by Christ to impart spiritual gifts, to heal the sick, to cast out demons, to raise the dead etc, but they must not charge for their services. They have received these blessings at no cost to themselves and must dispense them on the same basis (CP V1; Mk 6:7; Lu 10:19 with Ac 8:14-23).

10:9-14 *What do we learn here?*

(CP Mk 6:7-12; Lu 9:1-5). We learn from these scriptures that the disciples were to trust in God's provision through the generosity of the people for their needs to be met, not in their own resources. They are not to worry about not having sufficient cash reserves or not having made provision for their future well-being before venturing into the field of service. If they trust God, they will lack for nothing (CP Lu 22:35). Some Christians have a problem with the fact that in both Mt 10 and Lu 9 Jesus forbids the disciples carrying a staff, whereas in Mk 6 He permits it. This is explained by the word *provide* in Mt 10 – it means to procure or acquire by purchase or otherwise. The disciples were to take only what they already had; they were not to buy anything new for their journey. (See also comments on Mk 6:7).

10:14-15 *What teaching underlies what Jesus says here.*

the teaching underlying what Jesus says here is that just as there are degrees of rewards for believers in Heaven (CP 1Cor 3:12-15), so too there are degrees of punishment for unbelievers in Hell (CP Mt 11:20-24; Mk 6:13-15; Lu 10:10-15; 12:45-48; He 10:29-31; Jas 3:1). The degrees of punishment in Hell are conditional on the privileges spurned and the sins indulged. Capernaum had become the centre of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and He had performed that many miracles there, its people should have acknowledged Him as Messiah and repented. But they did not, so He condemned it to Hell in judgment, where its punishment will be even greater than that of

Sodom in the Old testament, which had been completely obliterated from the face of the earth by God with fire and brimstone, for its homosexual sins and vices (CP Gen 19:24-25 with Lu 17:28-29). Sodom's perversions were bad but not as bad as Capernaum's rejection of Jesus despite the miracles He performed in the midst of its people (CP He 10:29-31). See also comments on Lu 12:45-48 and 1Cor 3:12-15.

10:23 *What did Jesus mean when He said, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man comes"?*

This saying is only found in Matthew's gospel. It comes at the end of Jesus' empowering of the twelve disciples to go and preach the gospel and heal the sick, etc (CP V1-22). The general consensus among Bible scholars is that Jesus means that the evangelization of the whole of Israel will not be completed before His second coming, at the end of this present church age. All the cities of Israel were not evangelized by the first century church because of the persecution of early Christians and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (CP Lu 21:20-24; Ac 8:1-4; 9:1-4; 11:19-21; 12:1). All the cities have not been fully evangelized as yet, and will not be until Christ comes again to set up His millennial reign on earth (CP Isa 2:1-4; 11:9; Zech 12:10-13:1; Ro 11:25-29).

10:28 *Who is He who can destroy both soul and body in hell?*

A great many Christians believe the devil is referred to here, but that is not correct. God is the only one who can destroy both soul and body in hell (CP Rev 20:11-15). In Mt 10:28 Jesus is contrasting the fear of man which might lead Christians to deny Christ for fear of persecution, and the fear of God whose power is infinite in extent, and whom we should dread to displease (CP Mt 10:1-33, 39).

10:32-33 *What teaching underlies what Jesus says here?*

The underlying teaching here is that there is no such thing in God's economy as a "silent witness". Christians must never be found wanting in their witness to Christ (CP Psa 119:46; Mk 8:38; Lu 9:26; 12:8-9; Ro 10:9; 2Ti 2:12). To confess means to acknowledge. Christians must openly and boldly acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Saviour (CP also Rev 3:5).

10:34-36 *What does Jesus mean that He never came to send peace but a sword?*

This is simply a figure of speech Jesus used here to illustrate how the gospel will divide families. Conflict and disagreement in families will arise between those who do and those who do not follow Jesus. We must not let that come between us and Jesus though. Superficial harmony with one's family cannot come before one's commitment to Christ (CP V37; Lu 14:26). One of the costs of discipleship is

the potential for the alienation of one's family. (See also comments on Mt 10:37-38, 10:39 and Lu 14:26).

10:37-38 *What does it mean that whoever wants to follow Jesus must deny themselves and take up their cross?*

(CP also 16:24). These are the conditions of discipleship Jesus has laid down and no one can come to Him any other way. This teaching is also found in Mark's and Luke's gospels (CP Mk 8:34; Lu 9:23). *Taking up our cross* means being self-sacrificially committed to the service of God, and taking it up daily as directed in Luke 9:23 means that we must continue willing to self-sacrificially serve God daily to the end of our life, not only when it suits us, or when it is convenient or popular, but also when it does not suit us, and it is inconvenient and unpopular (CP Lu 14:26-27). The cross is a symbol of suffering, ridicule, self-denial and rejection, and Christians must be prepared to suffer the reproach, hatred and ridicule of the world for the sake of the gospel, exactly as Jesus did (CP He 13:11-14). "Deny himself" means that a follower of Christ has to put the interests of God's kingdom above all else and renounce all self-interests and ambitions which are contrary to God's word (CP Col 3:1-4).

10:39 *How can one find his life by losing it?*

(CP also 16:25-27; Mk 8:35-38; Lu 9:24-26) These passages enable us to better understand what Jesus is saying in Mt 10:39: what Jesus says here has a two-fold application for Christians. One is that whoever lives a life of self-gratification will lose it; whoever puts to death the sinful deeds of the body will gain it (CP Mk 8:34; Lu 9:23; Ro 8:12-13; 1Cor 6:9-11; Col 3:5-10). *Deny himself* in Mk 8:34 and Lu 9:23 means to put the interests of God's kingdom above all else and renounce all self-interests and ambitions which are contrary to God's word (CP Col 3:1-4). The other application is that if Christians are put to death for the gospel's sake, they have the sure hope of eternal life (CP Ac 6:8-7; 60; Rev 3:5); if through fear of physical death they deny Jesus, God will punish them (CP Mk 8:38 (also Lu 9:26); 2Ti 2:11-12; Rev 21:8). The *fearful* in Rev 21:8 are professing Christians whose fear of man overrides their loyalty to Christ. This explains the paradox of discipleship – to lose life is to find it: to die is to live (CP Mt 10:24-28; Mk 8:35-37; Lu 9:24-25; Jn 12:25-26).

10:40-42 *What is the underlying teaching here for Christians?*

(CP also Mk 9:41-42; Lu 9:48). The underlying teaching here for Christians is that how much they love God is measured by how well they treat others of God's children (CP Jn 13:34-35; Ga 6:7-10; He 6:10; Jas 2:14-16; 1Jn 2:9-11; 3:10-19; 4:7-21; 5:1-2). See also comments on Jn 13:34-35; 1Cor 12:31; Ga 5:1-8, 5:13; 1Th 3:12; 1Jn 2:7, 3:15, 3:16-18, 3:19-22, 4:7-21; Rev 3:7-13 and author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and *Christians' Obligations to One Another Financially*

in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

11:2-3 *Why did John the Baptist who knew who Jesus was, send his disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the Messiah?*

The general consensus among Bible scholars is that John could not understand that if Jesus could raise the dead and do so many other miracles, why he (John) had to languish in prison (CP 4:12; 14:1-4). In the light of his circumstances, John's faith that Jesus was the Messiah began to wane and he needed Jesus to reassure him that He was indeed the one sent from God. This happens to many Christians when they are being persecuted for their faith – their faith wanes too. But Jesus was able to reassure John by sending John's disciples back to him with first-hand accounts of the miracles Jesus was performing, which proved who He was (CP 11:4-6).

11:11 *What does Jesus mean that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist?*

This is not about stature or importance in the kingdom, or devotion, or service. It has to do with the privileges of the gospel that has been given to the lowliest Christians under the New Covenant through the atoning death of Christ. John did not live under the New Covenant so the privileges of the gospel were not available to him. As the forerunner of Christ he lived under the Old Covenant. He foresaw and foretold the coming of Christ who would usher in the kingdom and its attendant gospel privileges, but he could not partake of them. John was in the same position as Moses and all the other faith-worthies of the Old Testament who did not receive the promise of the New Covenant themselves, but foresaw it in shadowy form (CP He 11:39-40).

John only had a measure of the Spirit, whereas under the New Covenant every believer has the fullness (CP Mt 3:11-15 with Jn 7:37-39; 14:12-14 with Ac 1:4-5, 8). *The least in the Kingdom of Heaven* is the most insignificant person who enjoys the blessings of the new age of grace which Jesus was ushering in during John's ministry.

11:12 *Who are the "violent" that take the Kingdom of Heaven by force?*

(CP also Lu 16:16) This enables us to better understand Mt 11:12. In both these passages Jesus is referring to those who, in spite of violent opposition, press in with ardent zeal and intense exertion to secure their place in God's eternal kingdom. It expresses the earnestness believers must have in getting rid of sin and walking in complete obedience to God's word (CP Lu 13:23-24). *Strive* means to contend for; to compete for a prize; to labour fervently; to take pains; to wrestle as in an award contest, straining every nerve to the uttermost towards the goal. This typifies the force required to take hold of the kingdom, and is presented as the life-task of every Christian in the New Testament church (CP Mt 7:13-14; Jn 6:27; 12:25-26;

Ro 8:1-13; 1Cor 9:24-27; Ga 2:20; Eph 4:17-32; Php 2:12; 3:8-16; Col 3:1-10; 1Ti 6:12; 2 Pe 1:10-11; 2Jn 8). It is the responsibility of everyone who professes to believe in Christ for their salvation to seek ceaselessly in all its manifestations the Kingdom of Heaven; to strenuously contend for the things of God, and to reject the things that cause enmity with God. The *violent* are those who will allow nothing to hinder them from ensuring their place in the eternal kingdom of God.

11:16-19 *Why did Jesus liken the Pharisees to children in the market place?*

This is called the parable of the children in the market place. It is also found in Lu 7 (CP Lu 7:30-35). Jesus confronts His and John the Baptist's critics in this parable and exposes their inconsistency. The Pharisees criticized John, saying that he was demon-possessed because he did not socialize, while at the same time they criticized Jesus, calling Him a glutton and a wine-bibber, because He did socialize. Jesus compared them to a group of children in the market place who obstinately refused to take part in anything the other children did. Nothing the other children did could please them. The Pharisees were the same. They criticized John the Baptist for being austere, and they criticized Jesus for not being austere. Jesus' closing statement in the parable, "...but wisdom is justified of her children", was telling the Pharisees that notwithstanding that His and John's lifestyle were different, they were both correct in their purpose, and would both be proved correct by the results - people being saved.

11:20-24 *See comments on 10:14-15.*

11:28-30 *What is the yoke Jesus refers to here?*

The yoke referred to here is metaphorical. It signifies entering into a personal relationship with Jesus, being submitted to His authority, and becoming His disciple. In contrast to the yoke of the Mosaic law which kept men under it in bondage, Christ's yoke is easy – His precepts are easy to follow. The call to take Christ's yoke goes out to every living soul – it is a universal call to salvation. No one is excluded from accepting the invitation, but sadly, most who hear the call will reject it (CP Mt 13:3-11, 18-23). See also comments on Mt 13:10-11, 20:16; Jn 1:12-13, 3:14-15, 3:36, 6:37, 10:27-29, 15:16; Ac 2:37-38, 3:22-23, 13:48, 28:23-29; Ro 1:16-17, 3:9, 3:24-26a, 8:28-30, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 11:2, 11:4, 11:7-10; Eph 1:3-6, 1:11-14, 2:8-10; 1Th 1:4; 2Ti 1:8-9; He 3:7-11, 4:11-12, 6:4-6, 10:26-31; 1Pe 1:2; 2Pe 2:20-22; 1Jn 1:10. Refer also author's study *Salvation – A Free Will Choice or Predestinated?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

12:1-8 *What does Jesus mean here when He says that He is Lord even of the Sabbath day?*

Jesus is teaching here that the Old Testament Sabbath was merely a type or shadow of which He is the New Testament fulfillment (CP Col 2:16-17). The Old Testament Sabbath was instituted by God for the

Israelites as a memorial of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt by Moses. It was a day of rest, a cessation from labour (CP De 5:12-15). The example for the Sabbath rest was set by God when He ceased from His labour on the seventh day of His work of creation (CP Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11). In the New Testament, *Sabbath* is used only of an eternal rest with God (CP He 4:9). *Rest* here is **sabbatismos**, the Greek word for Sabbath. It means the repose of Christianity (as a type of heaven): rest. This is the rest that God promised to the Israelites in the land of Canaan – the promised land – but He would not let that generation enter in because of their unbelief and disobedience (CP He 3:7-4:10).

We learn here that although God's rest in the Old Testament remains in the sphere of promise, it is fulfilled for New Testament Christians by faith in Christ (CP He 12:22-26). Christ gives rest to all who come to Him (CP Mt 11:28-30). The rest that Christ gives may be viewed as both a present possession and a future blessing – the eternal rest that is in God, which is promised in He 4:9 for all who believe in Christ, after the toils and trials of life on earth are finished, in contrast to the Old Testament day of rest – the Sabbath – every seventh day for the Israelites. That is why Jesus said in Mt 12:8 that He was Lord even of the Sabbath day. (See also comments on Mt 5:17-19, Col 2:16-23, He 4:1-3 and 4:7-10).

12:15-21 *Where in Scripture is this prophecy and has it yet been completely fulfilled?*

(CP Isa 42:1-7). V 1a, 2-3 and 6-7 were fulfilled in Christ at His first advent, as the chosen Servant of God who loved and delighted in Him and put His Spirit upon Him to accomplish His mission as a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (CP 1a with Mt 12:15-21; Lu 2:30-32). V 4 in Isa 42 will be fulfilled at Christ's Second Advent. He will not fail nor be discouraged, but will bring forth judgment upon the Gentiles and set judgment in the earth (CP Isa 42:1b, 4-5 with Psa 2:8-9; Rev 2:27, 20:1-15).

12:25 *What does Jesus mean by "...a house divided against itself shall not stand"?*

(CP V22-29). This teaching is also found in Mk 3:22-27 and Lu 11:14-22 (CP Lu 11:14-22). In all these passages Jesus shows the absurdity of the Pharisees' charge that He was casting out demons by the power of Satan. Firstly, Satan would not be a party to the destruction of His own kingdom, and secondly, only those who were stronger than Satan could enter his house and spoil his goods – cast demons out of people, etc. Jesus was able to enter Satan's house and spoil his goods because he was empowered by God to do so, which proved that the kingdom of God - the realm of God's rule – was now manifest in the earth (CP Mt 3:1-3; 4:13-17; 10:1-8; Lu 17:20-21; Ac 10:38).

12:30 *What exactly is Jesus teaching here?*

Jesus is teaching here that there is no neutrality in Christianity. There is no such person in God's order of things as a silent witness. Everyone who is saved must bear witness to their Saviour. Jesus is teaching here that if Christians are not actively involved in doing the work of the gospel for Christ, then they are actively involved in doing the work of the devil in opposition to Christ (CP Mt 28:19-20). The word *teach* here means literally *make disciples* (CP Lu 8:16-18). Knowing that the gospel saves is not something Christians can keep to themselves. Jesus warns us here to heed what He says. We have not been given the light of Divine truth to keep it to ourselves. We are to proclaim it to all who will listen. Those who do this will be given more light, while those who do not will lose even what little light they have. Only those who hear God's word and do it will be a part of His eternal kingdom (CP Psa 119:9; Mt 7:21-27; Lu 6:46-49; 11:27-28; 13:22-30; Jn 15:5-6,10; Ro 2:7-13; Ga 6:7-8; Jas 1:22-25; 2:14-26; Rev 1:3). See also comments on Mt 3:10, 7:13-14, 25:14-30; Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:22-25, 2:14-16 and author's studies *Conditions of Entry into Heaven in his book Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)*, and *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book *Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)*.

12:31-32 *What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?*

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is called the unpardonable sin in Christendom. It can only be committed by those who have deliberately shut their eyes to the light and call good evil, or who, after having been saved have spurned the Spirit of Grace and declared the blood of Christ that set them apart as unfit to redeem (CP Mk 3:28-29; Lu 12:10). Jesus charged the Pharisees with blaspheming the Holy Spirit because they knowledgeably attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. They said Jesus performed His miracles by Satan's power, instead of acknowledging it was by the Holy Spirit's power. This was the worst type of slander against the Holy Spirit (CP Mt 9:32-34; 12:22-24; Mk 3:22, 30; Lu 11:14-15). No practicing Christian should fear that they are blaspheming the Holy Spirit just because they do not agree with some of the teachings and ensuing spiritual manifestations in the contemporary church (CP Ac 17:11; 1Cor 4:6; Ga 1:8-9; 1Th 5:21; 2Ti 3:14-17; 2Pe 1:16-19; 1Jn 4:1; Rev 2:2). Christians are scripturally bound to test all things and if they cannot find a scriptural basis for whatever is being taught in the church they are obliged to reject it without fear of blaspheming the Holy Spirit (CP He 10:26-31). Here we see the Holy Spirit blasphemed by apostates – those who have defected from the faith. Doing *despite* to the Holy Spirit refers to the apostate, who after the Holy Spirit imparted His grace, spurns and insults Him by turning his back on Christ and counting His blood unfit to redeem. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is the sin unto death which Christians are warned against praying for (1Jn 5:16). The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the

only sin in scripture that will never be forgiven – it is a sin unto death.

12:36-37 *What are the idle words that men will have to give an account thereof in the day of judgement?*

The word *idle* is used here metaphorically of the insincere, false, and worthless words spoken by the Pharisees who had just blasphemed the Holy Spirit by knowledgeably attributing the miracles Jesus performed to Satan's power, instead of acknowledging it was the Holy Spirit's power (CP V22-24, 31-32). The Pharisees could never say anything good because their hearts were evil (CP V33-35). But Jesus' warning in V36-37 is directed to Christians too – everyone will be justified by their words (CP Eph 4:29-30; 5:3-4; Col 3:8-9). *Corrupt communication* in Eph 4:29 refers to the spoken word. *Corrupt* means evil, rotten, unfit for use, worthless, bad. V30 teaches that the utterance of evil or worthless words offends (grieves) the Holy Spirit. *Foolish Talking* in 5:4 refers to talk that is both foolish and sinful. *Jesting* here means polished and witty speech as the instrument of sin – ribaldry (vulgar humour). *Blasphemy* in Col 3:8 means slander, detraction, speech injurious to another's good name. *Filthy communication* refers to shameful words; foul, obscene speech; vile, filthy or improper conversation. A Christian's speech must always be edifying, ministering grace to the hearer; kind, not blasphemous or slanderous; pure, not filthy or obscene; truthful, not deceptive; gentle, not reviling (CP Eph 4:31; Tit 3:1-2; Jas 3:1-13; 4:11; 1Pe 3:8-10).

12:38-40 *Did Jonah die in the belly of the whale?*

(CP also Lu 11:29-30) Jonah, being in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights and then being vomited up on the shore in the Old Testament, was a type of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection in the New Testament. A *type* is someone or something that God has preordained in the Old Testament to represent someone or something in the New Testament. Jesus said that what happened to Jonah in the belly of the whale was the sign of what was to happen to Him - He was going to die, be buried and spend three days and three nights in the grave and then be resurrected. Clearly this implies that Jonah died too before the whale vomited him up, which typified Christ's resurrection. In order to be resurrected one must first die, and it is clear from scripture that Jonah did die before the whale vomited him up (CP Jon 1:17-2:10). In Jon 2:1 Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale, whereas in V2 he prayed from the belly of hell, meaning literally *sheol* – the unseen world, the place of departed souls. In V1 Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale while he was still alive (CP V1), and in V2 he prayed from hell where his soul and spirit went between the times he died and when he was vomited up (CP V2-5). This is proved by V6-7: Jonah's statement (KJV), "The earth with her bars - (was is not in the original manuscript) – about me forever", refers to Sheol where his soul was (CP V6-7). *Corruption*, also in V6, refers to the body - it means destruction.

Jonah's soul was saved from hell and his body from corruption in the grave through being resurrected the same as Jesus was (CP Psa 16:10; 49:15).

12:41-42 *See also comments on Lu 11:31-32*

12:43-45 *What does Jesus mean by His saying that when an unclean spirit returns to his house and finds it empty he will re-enter the house with seven other spirits more wicked than himself etc...?*

Here Jesus predicts and illustrates the fact that the Jews would become more wicked after their rejection of Him than they were before, but this also applies to once-saved believers who go back into sin (CP 2Pe 2:20-22).

12:46-47 *Are Jesus' "brethren" here other children of Mary and Joseph - Jesus' half-brothers - or cousins and kinsfolk as some teach?*

(CP also Mk 3:31-32; Lu 8:19-20; Jn 2:12; 7:3-10; Ac 1:13-14; 1Cor 9:5). *Brethren* in all these scriptures are Jesus' half-brothers. *Brethren* is from the Greek word **adelphos**, which in the context of those scriptures refers to male children of the same mother – from the same womb. Jesus was Mary's "firstborn" child as scriptures clearly teach, not her only child as many erroneously believe (CP Mt 1:24-25; Lu 2:7). *Firstborn* is **prototokos** in the Greek, which means *first begotten*, not *only begotten*. Jesus was God's *only begotten* son, but Mary's *first begotten* son. Had Jesus been Mary's only child the Greek word used in Mt 1:25 and Lu 2:7 would not have been **prototokos**, but **monogenes**, which is used in scripture of an *only* son, *only* daughter and *only* child of human parentage, and of Jesus as the *only begotten of the Father*. **Monogenes** means unique, one of a kind, one and only (CP Lu 7:12; 8:42 and 9:38 with Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1Jn 4:9). The phrase *His brethren* when applied to Jesus, always refers to His half-brothers. Had they just been cousins or kinsfolk the Greek word used for them would not have been **adelphos**, but **suggenes**. Scriptures clearly distinguish *brethren* and *brother* from *cousin* and *kinsfolk* (CP Lu 1:36, 58; 2:44 with 14:12; 21:16 and Ga 1:19). Scriptures teach that Mary had four sons and at least three daughters to Joseph after the virgin birth of Jesus (CP Mt 13:53-56; Mk 6:1-3). *Sisters* in the Greek is **adelphē**, the feminine form of **adelphos**. This is irrefutable proof that Jesus had four half-brothers and at least three half-sisters (CP Mk 3:20-21). *Friends* in Mk 3:21 (KJV) also refers to Jesus' half-brothers and Mary. *Friends* here is derived from the Greek phrase **hoi par autou**, which means *those from the side of him*. That this refers to Mary and Jesus' half-brothers is confirmed in V31-32 (CP V31-32). They had come to lay hold of Jesus and take Him away because they had heard that He was out of His mind, being completely fanatical about religion, but they could not get to Him because of the crowd. *Beside himself* in V21 is from the Greek word **existemi**, which means to be out of one's senses, insane. Jesus' mother and brothers thought He was insane. God predicted this in the Old Testament (CP

Psa 69:8-9). As we saw earlier on, none of Jesus' brothers believed in His Deity until after the resurrection (CP Jn 7:1-5; Ac 1:13-14; 1Cor 15:7). James is one of Jesus' half-brothers (CP Ga 1:19; Jas 1:1). Jude is also another half-brother (Jude 1). The other two half-brothers, Joses and Simon are never directly mentioned again in scripture after being named in Mt 13:55 and Mk 6:3 (see also comments on Mt 1:18-21, Mk 3:20-21, Jn 19:25-27).

13:3 *What are parables?*

Parables are sayings that teach truth by comparison. The word *parable* means a placing alongside of; a parallel, comparison or similitude. In scripture it is a story drawn from nature or human circumstances to teach a moral or spiritual truth. The meaning of the parable has to be studied – it is not the story that is of value but the lesson it teaches. There is a comparison being made and the hearer has to perceive the likeness of the things compared to learn the lesson. Much of Jesus' teaching was in parables because parables have a double use – they reveal the truth to those who want it, and conceal it from those who do not (CP V10-17). V11-15 does not teach as some claim that Jesus deliberately withheld the truth from the Pharisees so that they could not get saved. The Pharisees wilfully rejected the truth, causing it to be veiled from them because they had hardened their hearts to it. They did not want to be converted to Christ. (See comments on Mt 13:10-11). To be interpreted correctly parables must be studied strictly within their context and attendant circumstances – what precedes them and what follows them; the conversations of which they formed a part; the questions and objections to which they were the explanations.

13:3-9 *What is this parable called and what does it teach?*

This is called the parable of the sower. It is also found in Mk 4:1-13 and Lu 8:4-15. Jesus explains what it means in Mt 13:18-23 (CP Mt 13:18-23). The whole course of this age of grace portraying how God's word is received and acted upon is pictured in this parable – the emphasis is on the hearts of men and how they respond to the gospel. It is how they respond to the gospel that determines their eternal destiny. The core teaching of this parable is that most people who hear the gospel will reject it. (See also comments on Mk 4:13).

13:10-11 *Did Jesus deliberately speak in parables so that the Pharisees could not understand the truth to get saved?*

No. The Pharisees had hardened their hearts and wilfully rejected the truth, causing it to be veiled from them. They did not want to be converted to Christ, which is what Isaiah prophesied in the Old Testament would happen (CP Isa 6:9-10 with Mt 13:12-17, Mk 4:11-12; Jn 12:37-41; Ac 28:23-28). Isa 6:9-10 does not mean as some in the church teach, that God had made it impossible for the Jews to believe in Christ because He had already determined not to save them. This is clearly refuted in Ac 28:23-

28 which as we saw, teaches that the Jews rejected the gospel of their own volition, and it is for this reason alone that God took the gospel from them and gave it to the Gentiles (CP Ac 13:44-49; 28:23-28; Ro 9:30-33; 11:1, 7-10, 13-24). See also comments on Mt 11:28-30, 20:16; Jn 3:14-15, 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40; Ac 2:37-38, 13:48, 28:23-29; Ro 1:16-17, 3:24-26(A), 8:28-30, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 9:19-21, 10:14-17, 11:2, 11:4, 11:7-10; Eph 1:3-6, 1:11-14, 2:8-10; 1Th 1:4; 2Ti 1:8-9; 1Pe 1:2.

13:12 *What does Jesus mean by His saying, "whoever hath, to him shall be given...but whoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath"?*

This saying is also found in Mt 25, Mk 4 and Lu 8 and 19, and to better understand what Jesus means by it we need to study each of the contexts in which He said it (CP Mt 13:10-16; Mk 4:21-25; Lu 8:16-18). The core teaching in those passages is that God will reward or condemn everyone according to how they respond to His word; some will receive more light; others – Christians included – will lose even what little light they have. In fact, the saying has a double application for Christians – present and future – which is highlighted in both Mt 25 and Lu 19 (CP Mt 25:14-30). This is called the parable of the talents. In this context Jesus teaches that what Christians receive in the future eternal kingdom will be in proportion to their dedication and consecration to the service of God in the present earthly aspect of the kingdom. The basic teaching of the parable of the talents is that God has given every believer spiritual gifts and graces according to each believer's ability, and that these gifts and graces must be put to use in God's service (CP Ro 12:3-8; 1Cor 12:1-31; 2Cor 5:17-19; Eph 4:7-16; 1Pe 4:7-11). God means us to use these gifts and graces for the extension of His kingdom. They are not given to us for our profit, but for His. The believer who does not use his gift or grace for God's glory is the same as the servant in the parable who hid his talent in the ground (CP Lu 19:11-27). This is called the parable of the pounds, and while it differs from the parable of the talents in many respects, its core teaching is the same: worthy Christians will be rewarded while unworthy Christians will be punished. Many Bible commentators downplay the punishment the slothful servants in these parables received. They teach that symbolically it compares only to loss of rewards in heaven, but that is not correct. The slothful servants were not punished simply because they failed to return a profit to their masters, but because underlying their failure to return a profit was their prior intention not to even invest their masters' money (CP Mt 25:24-25; Lu 19:20-21). They wilfully disobeyed their masters' commands, and disobedience does not merely merit loss of rewards in heaven, but condemnation to hell (CP Mt 7:21-27; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:22-25; 2:14-26 also Jn 14:15 with 1Jn 2:3-5). The slothful servants had no intention of putting their masters' money to work and then justified themselves for not doing so by finding fault with their masters. Their own words condemned them (CP Lu 19:22).

13:24-30 ***What does the parable of the tares of the field teach?***

Jesus explains what the parable of the tares of the field teaches in V36-43 ([CP V36-43](#)). The theme of Jesus' teaching here is that evil will always be present in the world in opposition to the good, and that the Kingdom of Heaven will always be befouled by the presence and the plots of Satan. The children of the kingdom and the emissaries of Satan must exist side by side with each other in the world throughout the kingdom age until Christ's second coming, when they will be separated. The children of the kingdom will be taken up to heaven and the emissaries of Satan will be cast down to hell. (See also comments on Mt 13:47-50).

13:31-32 ***What does the parable of the mustard seed teach?***

This parable is also found in Mk 4:30-32 and Lu 13:18-19. Jesus did not interpret this parable, nor the ones that follow in Mt 13 as He did with the previous two parables, and consequently there are many contrasting views among Christians as to what they teach. Every view must be respected, but they cannot all be right, and we can only agree with those that are strictly grounded in scripture and conform to the principles of interpretation Jesus outlined for us in the previous two parables. We learned earlier that in order to correctly interpret the parables of Jesus, we must study them in the context in which they are spoken, taking into account the teaching which precedes them, and that which follows (see comments on 13:3).

In the parable of the sower Jesus showed us that as well as faithfulness and godliness among those who profess Christ, there will also be apostasy and worldliness, and in the parable of the tares of the field, He showed us that the emissaries of Satan will always be present in the world in opposition to the children of the kingdom, throughout the kingdom age. It is in the light of this teaching that the parable of the mustard seed must be interpreted. The parable of the mustard seed illustrates the abnormal growth of the kingdom in its present earthly aspect from a small beginning to a vast sphere of operation for demon powers, represented by the birds of the air who lodge in the branches of the tree. Jesus used the figure of birds, or fowls of the air, to symbolize demon powers in the parable of the sower and so too He uses them to symbolize demon powers here. He would not use the same figure of speech in two different senses, making one parable contradict the teaching of another. The birds of the air do not represent the devil in one parable and Christians in another, as many in the church believe. Their view is that the parable illustrates the rapid spread of the gospel and the growth of Christianity throughout the earth from a very small beginning, with the figure of the birds of the air lodging in the branches of the tree as typifying new converts to Christianity finding shelter in the church. The problem with this view however is that it illustrates the growth of professing Christianity and the church in the earth, whereas the parable concerns

the nature and development of the Kingdom of Heaven in its earthly aspect ([CP V31](#)). As we learned in our study on Mt 3:1-3, the Kingdom of Heaven has a much broader aspect in the earth than the professing church. It takes in the whole of God's activity in Christ in the world – the whole of human society. The church is simply the visible manifestation of the kingdom. The birds of the air are a figure of the emissaries of Satan hiding behind the cloak of Christianity disguised as apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness. Satan has had to watch the spread of the gospel and the growth of Christianity throughout the earth from the time Jesus ushered in the kingdom, and he has ever sought to find a shelter in it. In the early centuries of church history he attacked the church from outside the kingdom, but when that failed to extinguish the light of the gospel he changed his tactics and moved his forces inside the kingdom, and since then countless millions of sincere people genuinely seeking the truth have been condemned to hell after being waylaid and deceived by his false apostles, and caught up in their counterfeit Christianity ([CP Mt 7:15-23; 24:5; 2Cor 11:4, 13-15](#)).

13:33 ***What does the leaven in the parable of the leaven symbolize?***

Leaven is a fermenting agent used in bread-making to make the dough rise. It requires time to fulfill the process, but once introduced to the dough it permeates the whole mass, and the process is irreversible. Because of its pervasive nature leaven signifies a corrupting influence among God's people, and throughout scripture it is used to symbolize evil. The common bread in the Old Testament was made with leaven and was acceptable as wave offerings to the priests, and as loaves to accompany the peace offerings ([CP Lev 7:11-13; 23:17](#)). However, leaven and honey, which is a fermenting agent too, and thus also a symbolic source of corruption in the Old Testament, were strictly forbidden to be used in any sacrifice made by fire unto God, because these were typical (a type) of the offering up of the sinless sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ ([CP 2Cor 5:21](#)). Typical bread representing Christ had to be unleavened ([CP Lev 2:4, 11; 6:14-17](#)). Leaven was forbidden in all offerings to God by fire. Being bred of corruption and spreading through the mass into which it is introduced, and therefore symbolizing the pervasive character of evil, leaven was utterly inconsistent in offerings which typified the propitiatory (atoning) sacrifice of Christ. Leaven was also forbidden to be used in the feast of unleavened bread which was celebrated in conjunction with the Old Testament Passover festival ([CP Ex 12:14-20; 23:15; 34:18; De 16:1-4](#)). The Passover festival commemorated God's deliverance of the children of Israel from the corruption of Egypt where they had been kept in bondage for over 400 years. The Passover Lamb was an Old Testament type of Christ ([CP 1Cor 5:7](#)).

In the New Testament leaven is symbolic of any evil influence in the church which, if allowed to remain, can corrupt the whole body of believers ([CP V1-8](#)). Paul uses leaven here in the same sense Jesus does –

as a type of sin in its development (CP Mt 16:6-12). Here we have the parable of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Leaven here symbolizes false doctrines which can penetrate and influence the whole church (CP Ga 5:6-9). Here leaven typifies the harmful effects of false doctrine. Paul refers to it as a “persuasion” – something that exerts a powerful and moving influence – hindering men from obeying the truth of God (CP Lu 12:1-3). This is called the parable of the leaven of the Pharisees. The hypocrisy that leaven symbolizes here is pretending to be something we are not – acting publicly as Godly and faithful Christians when in reality we harbour sin, immorality, greed, lust and unrighteousness (CP Mk 8:15). This is the parable of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod. The word “Herod” in this context is used collectively of the Herodians – those belonging to the court of Herod Antipas, also known as Herod the Tetrarch – who combined with the Pharisees in an attempt to kill Jesus. The leaven here symbolizes the hypocrisy of both the Pharisees and the Herodians in asking Jesus for a sign although their minds were already made up to kill him (CP V11-12; 3:1-6). In all these New Testament scriptures both Jesus and Paul use leaven to symbolize the pervasive character of evil permeating the professing church, which is the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven in its present earthly aspect, yet a great many Christians believe that in the parable of the leaven our Lord uses leaven in a good sense to symbolize the permeating effects of the gospel in Christianising the world. It seems incongruous that they could believe that because firstly, nowhere in scripture are we taught that the world will ever be Christianised. In fact the opposite is true – in the parable of the sower we learned that most people who hear the gospel will reject it, and this is the teaching throughout the whole of the New Testament (CP Mt 24:3-13; Ro 1:18-32; 2Th 2:7-12; 1Ti 4:1; 2Pe 3:3-4; Jude 17-19; Rev 3:14-16). Secondly, there is complete harmony in Jesus’ parables concerning the nature and development of the kingdom in Mt 13, and it must be restated here that Jesus would never use a figure of speech in two different senses making one parable contradict the teaching of another. So, as leaven is symbolic of evil everywhere else in scripture, it is here too. Furthermore, the particular action of the woman in the parable *hiding* the leaven in the meal is a significant factor also in helping to interpret the parable. If the leaven represented something good, why hide it? The word “hid” means conceal. The meal typifies God’s word and the leaven was concealed in it. It was not openly mixed in with the meal, but covertly introduced to it. This represents the subtle way in which the forces of Satan are at work in the kingdom spreading their corruptive influence by adulterating God’s word and undermining its authority among professing Christians (CP Ac 20:29-30; 1Jn 2:18-19; 2Jn 1:7-8; Jude 3-4). Jesus’ teaching concerning the nature and development of the Kingdom of Heaven in Mt 13 is quite clear – the kingdom will always be befouled by the presence and the plots of Satan. (See also comments on 13:3-9; 13:24-30; 13:31-32).

13:44 *What is the treasure the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to in the parable of the hidden treasure?*

The most popular interpretation of this parable is that the treasure symbolizes the kingdom. It is a priceless treasure to be desired above all else, and as such a person should be willing to part with everything in order to possess it. In this interpretation the term “sellesth all” is metaphorical. It simply means that one must transfer his whole heart from other interests to the one supreme interest, our Lord Jesus Christ. Another view is that Jesus Himself is the priceless treasure, and that we must sell all that we have to possess Him. These are both commendable views, but they are not what the parable teaches. Still another interpretation is that the treasure is Israel, which is called “God’s peculiar treasure” in scripture (CP Ex 19:5; Psa 135:4). It would be easy to agree with this interpretation except for the fact that Israel was always openly in view as God’s treasured possession right throughout scripture, whereas the treasure represented something hidden, even in Mt 13, as Jesus spoke this parable (CP De 7:6; Isa 62:1-5; Mal 3:16-17). Israel was never hidden like the treasure in the parable. Furthermore, Jesus did not pay the purchase price for Israel alone in His redeeming death, but for the whole world of sinners - Jews and Gentiles alike (CP Jn 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:33, 51; 11:51-52; 12:47; 2Cor 5:17-19; 1Jn 2:2; 4:14).

It is easier to understand this parable in the light of those scriptures. The word “world” means all mankind. This is not teaching that all mankind will be saved, but that the price Jesus paid was sufficient for all mankind. Although the man purchased the field in the parable, it was the treasure, not the field, that was the man’s object. He purchased the field in order to possess the treasure. The treasure represents something that was hidden even at the time our Lord told this parable in Mt 13. It was the church that was hidden. The church was decreed in God’s eternal purpose before the beginning of time, but it was not revealed even to the angels in heaven until Jesus revealed it to the disciples in Mt 16 (CP Mt 16:13-18). This is the first mention of the church in scripture (CP Ro 16:25-26; 1Cor 2:7-8; Eph 1:3-5, 9-10, 3:1-11; Col 1:25-27; 2 Ti 1:1, 8-10; Tit 1:1-3; 1 Pe 1:3-12, 18-20). The church is the treasure, and the man who purchased the field in order to possess the treasure is Jesus. The field represents the world of sinners – the whole of human society – for whom He died. It is significant that Jesus did not call the field *His* field in the parable, but *a* field. It became *His* after He purchased it with His life-blood at Calvary, which is what Jn 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:33,51; 11:51-52; 12:47; 2Cor 5:17-19; 1Jn 2:2 and 4:14 all teach. This interpretation harmonises with the rest of Jesus’ parables concerning the kingdom in Mt 13 and it also shows why neither Jesus nor the kingdom can be the treasure as so many Christians believe (see also comments on 13:3-9; 13:24-30; 13:31-32; 13:33).

13:45-46 *What does the pearl of great price symbolize in this parable?*

This is yet another parable which has many different meanings ascribed to it, but it is generally agreed among Bible scholars that this and the parable of the hidden treasure form a pair; that they both teach the same truth, namely, that the object of the man's desire is of such great value that he sells all to purchase it. The man in both parables is Jesus and the object of His desire is the church. In the parable of the hidden treasure we saw the incomparable worth of the church – represented by the treasure – underlined by the price Jesus paid at Calvary to possess it. He paid the redemption price for every living soul from that day forth to enter into the kingdom through the church, but sadly, most will not enter. We see in the pearl of great price in this parable a flawless pearl without spot or blemish, typifying the ultimate triumph of the kingdom at the consummation of this age when Jesus comes back to present to Himself a glorious church without spot or blemish (CP Eph 1:3-14; 5:25-27). The man's purchase of the pearl in the parable symbolizes Jesus' redemption of His purchased possession in Eph 1:14. This interpretation of the parable also harmonises with the rest of Jesus' parables in Mt 13. In its present earthly aspect the Kingdom of Heaven is fragmented by apostasy and backsliding (the parable of the sower); by the emissaries of Satan co-existing in the world with the children of the kingdom (the parable of the tares of the field); by counterfeit Christianity and false religious systems (the parable of the mustard seed); by internal corruption in professed Christianity (the parable of the leaven). Jesus then went on to show that the church would be the visible manifestation of the kingdom in the world (the parable of the hidden treasure) and here in the parable of the pearl of great price He foretells the kingdom's ultimate triumph at the end of the age when He returns for a church that is without spot or blemish. It is interesting to note here that pearls are formed as the result of an injury suffered by the living organism – such as oysters and other molluscs – that produces them. Thus it could be said that there is a sense in which the glorified church was formed out of the wounds of Christ. (See also comments on 13:3-9; 13:24-30; 13:31-32; 13:33; 13:44).

13:47-50 *What is Jesus teaching in the parable of the net?*

This is the last of seven parables Jesus told concerning the nature and development of the Kingdom of Heaven in its present earthly aspect in Mt 13. It has a similar teaching to the parable of the tares of the field in that they both teach that good and evil – the righteous and the wicked – are presently intermingled in the kingdom. However, whereas the parable of the tares of the field describes the kingdom in its present earthly aspect, and the day of judgement when the wicked will be cast down to hell as a future event, the parable of the net depicts the day of judgement itself in the figure of the fishermen casting the bad fish away and keeping the good ones in V48 (CP V24-30, 36-43). In these seven parables relating to the Kingdom of Heaven in Mt 13, Jesus gives us a progressive insight into the earthly aspect of the kingdom from its inception until its ultimate triumph at the end of the age. Studied as a whole we see the

contest between good and evil in the kingdom; between the power of God and the power of Satan, which fulfills the first messianic prophecy in scripture (CP Ge 3:15). Everything God said here is illustrated in the seven parables concerning the kingdom in Mt 13. Not everyone will agree with this interpretation of the parable of the net, nor with the summation of what the seven parables teach, but they all clearly harmonise with each other, and with what is taught about the kingdom of God in its present earthly aspect elsewhere in scripture. These teachings by Jesus were mysteries of the kingdom which He revealed to His disciples to enable them to go forth and teach them (see also comments on 13:3-9; 13:24-30; 13:31-32; 13:33; 13:44; 13:45-46).

13:52 *What is the theme of Jesus' teaching in the parable of the householder?*

The parable of the householder is the eighth and final parable in Mt 13, and while it does not concern the nature and development of the kingdom as such like the preceding parables in Mt 13, it does concern teaching the mysteries of the kingdom which Jesus revealed in them. It depicts the responsibility of teachers in the kingdom. *Scribe* in V52 is the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament teacher. As scribes gave progressive instruction of God's redeeming purpose in the Old Testament so Jesus here instructs teachers to do the same in the New Testament – not only with the parables though but with all the truths of God's word (CP 1Cor 4:1). Jesus compares teachers with their rich store of scripture knowledge to a householder with a treasure-house from which he shares his wealth with those for whom he is responsible. Jesus is instructing teachers here that they are not to teach the mere letter of the word or doctrine as such, but are to share the scriptural riches with which they have been entrusted with others in the kingdom, the same as the householder shared the things from his treasure-house. This does not mean that there are two orders of truths for teachers to impart, but *new* light on *old* scriptures. The *new* is the gospel made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection. It came as the fulfillment of the *old*, the law.

13:53-58 *What does it mean that Jesus did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief?*

This is not teaching as many believe that even Jesus Himself could not heal everyone. Jesus healed *all* who came to Him – here and everywhere else in scripture (CP Mt 4:23-24; 8:14-18; 9:35; 11:5; 12:15; 14:14, 35-36; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14; Mk 1:32-35, 39; 3:10; 6:56; Lu 4:40; 5:15, 17; 6:17-19; 7:1-10, 21-23; 9:11; 17:11-17 with Ac 10:38). Ac 10:38 sums up Jesus' healing ministry for us – He healed *everyone* who came to Him. Jesus did not many mighty works in His hometown of Nazareth, not because the townspeople's unbelief stopped Him, but because their unbelief stopped them coming to Him. His claim to Messiahship was an offence to them and they rejected Him. On His previous visit there they had even tried to kill Him (CP Lu 4:16-30). The

townspeople were impressed with Jesus' teaching, but His claim to being the Messiah offended them. They had watched Jesus grow up in their midst and they only saw Him as the son of the local carpenter, not God's Messiah (CP Mk 6:1-6).

14:13-21 *What is the significance of there being twelve baskets of food left over after more than five thousand were fed from five loaves and two fishes?*

This is also recorded in Mk 6:32-44; Lu 9:12-17 and Jn 6:1-13. There is no significance in the actual number of basketsfull of food left over, but in the fact that regardless of the thousands who ate there was still food to spare. This happened again in Mt 15 (CP 15:29-38). Here there were well in excess of four thousand people fed, yet again there was food to spare – this time seven basketsfull. We learn from these two miracles that not only will God multiply what little we have into much if we trust completely in His providence like Jesus did, but that His provision will far exceed our requirements (CP Eph 3:20). God also multiplied food in the Old Testament (CP 2Ki 4:42-44).

14:22-31 *What does Peter's failed attempt to walk on water teach?*

Here we learn how important it is to remain focused on Jesus and His word rather than on our circumstances in life. When Jesus bade Peter to walk to Him on the water Peter's faith initially was sufficient for Him to step out of the boat and commence the walk, but when his faith was challenged by his circumstances - he saw how high the wind whipped the waves up around him - he became focused on his circumstances and allowed them to overpower his faith in Jesus to perform His word, and he immediately began to sink. Believers must never allow adverse circumstances which beset them to undermine the authority of God's word for their lives. God has said it and He will do it (CP Num 23:19). See also comments on Mk 6:52.

15:1-9 *What was the scribes and Pharisees' purpose in saying to their parents, "it is a gift, by whatsoever you might be profited by me"?*

The scribes and Pharisees would say this to their parents to avoid having to materially support them. They used the excuse that whatever material possessions they had was a gift dedicated to God and therefore not able to be used for their parent's benefit, even though their parents may have been in need. This was a gross deception of the scribes and Pharisees and Jesus rebuked them for it. It was not required by God but was a device of men to circumvent their duty to their parents. This dishonoured the parents and nullified God's commandment that parents are to be honoured by their children (CP Mk 7:5-13). This helps us to better understand Mt 15:1-9.

15:15-20 *What do we learn from what Jesus says here?*

Although what Jesus said here was in response to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, it is also an admonition for professing Christians (CP Pr 4:23; Mk 7:14-15, 20-23; Lu 6:45). *Heart* is used figuratively in this context to represent the seat, or source of human motives, desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses, thoughts etc. While we must always outwardly be seen to be conforming to the image of God, we must always inwardly – in the deepest recesses of our heart – also conform. We are not to be like the Pharisees, outwardly righteous, but inwardly morally defiled (CP Mt 23:23-33). The root cause of unanswered prayer is cherishing iniquity in our heart (CP Job 27:8-9; Psa 66:18; Pr 15:29; 28:9; Isa 1:15; Jn 9:31; Jas 4:3). Christians must constantly examine themselves and ensure that they are in the place in God where their prayers will be answered (CP 2Cor 13:5).

15:21-28 *What did Jesus mean by saying "it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs"?*

(CP also Mk 7:24-28) The *children* referred to in these passages are the Jews – "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; *bread* symbolizes healing, deliverance and all the other salvation benefits God has provided in Christ; *dogs* is a euphemism Jesus uses here for Gentiles – non-Jews. In this context it is not a harsh word, but refers to little dogs or puppies; *not meet* (KJV) means not fair or not right. So in effect what Jesus is saying is that His first responsibility is to the Jews, and it is not fair to take of their blessings and share them with the Gentiles. It is not the Gentile's turn yet. But the woman persisted – she wanted the blessing regardless. Even though she may not be entitled to the full blessing, she would be satisfied with a fragment of the blessing – a crumb. As far as she was concerned that was enough to heal her daughter, and on the strength of that confession of faith her daughter was healed.

15:29-38 *See comments on 14:13-21.*

16:1-4 *See comments on 12:38-40.*

16:5-12 *What did the leaven of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees symbolize?*

The disciples thought that Jesus was alluding to bread which they had forgotten to bring with them, but bread was not the issue – Jesus reminded them that He could easily provide bread if need be, just as He had done previously, first for the five thousand who followed Him, and then for the four thousand. The issue here was the false teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The leaven symbolized their false doctrines which can penetrate and influence the whole church. In Lu 12:1 Jesus referred to it as *hypocrisy* (CP Lu 12:1-3). The Pharisees and the Sadducees were more concerned with external appearances and ceremonies and their man-made traditions than with the deeper things of God (CP Mt 23:13-36).

16:13-18 (A) *Is Peter the rock upon which the church is built, and if not, who or what is?*

(CP also Mk 8:27-29; Lu 9:18-20). The church is founded upon the great spiritual truth Peter confessed to Jesus in these passages that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. But Jesus Himself is the rock upon which He is building His church (CP Mt 7:24-25; Lu 6:47-48; Ac 4:10-12; Ro 9:33; 1Cor 3:11; Eph 5:23; 1Pe 2:6-8). Peter and the rest of the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church, but Christ remains the rock upon which it is built (CP Eph 2:13-22). There is much teaching in Christendom that Peter is the rock upon which Christ is building the church because his name means rock, but that is not correct. *Peter* is from the Greek word **Petros**, which simply means a stone or fragment of rock that is easily moved, whereas the rock that Jesus said He will build His church upon is **Petra**, an immovable mass of rock which is used figuratively of Jesus Himself in both the Old and New Testaments (CP Ex 17:6; Psa 118:22; Isa 8:13-15; 28:16 with 1Cor 10:1-4 and Mt 7:24-25; Lu 6:48; Ro 9:33; 1Pe 2:7-8). *Petra* is the word Jesus used in Mt 16:18, not *Petros*. Jesus was referring to Himself as the rock upon which He will build His church, not Peter or Cephas, a stone or a fragment of rock that is easily moved, but Himself and the testimony concerning Him, which is an unchangeable, immovable testimony (CP Mt 16:18). Jesus' closing statement in V18 that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church means that all the powers of Satan and his hosts cannot overcome the church. The church is the company of the redeemed of God and as such has power over all the power of the devil (CP Lu 10:19; Jas 4:7). See also author's study *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is Built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

(B) How is church defined?

Most Christians' definition of church needs to be redefined. They refer to it as the place they go to for fellowship with other Christians and to worship God, but it is the congregation of Christians themselves who are the church, not the building where they meet. The church is a New Testament term designating the Christian community, whether it be a local congregation of Christians or congregations of Christians collectively throughout the earth (CP Mt 18:17; Ac 11:22-26; 1Cor 3:1-2). Those scriptures refer to local congregations (CP Ac 20:28; 1Cor 10:32; Ga 1:13; Eph 1:19-23; 5:25-27; He 12:23). Those scriptures refer to congregations of Christians collectively throughout the earth – the universal church.

The church is not a building made with hands, but a spiritual building embodied in the Christian community, of which Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, or foundation (CP Isa 28:16; Mt 21:42-44; Ac 4:11-12; 1Cor 3:11; Eph 2:19-22; 1Pe 2:6-8). As the embodiment of the church Christians in scripture are called *God's Building* (CP 1Cor 3:9); the *Temple of God* (CP 1Cor 3:16-17; 2Cor 6:16); the

Household of Faith (CP Ga 6:10); the *Household of God*, an *Holy Temple of the Lord*, and an *Habitation of God through the Spirit* (CP Eph 2:19-22); the *House of Christ* (CP He 3:1-6); a *Spiritual House*, an *Holy Priesthood* (CP 1Pe 2:5); a *Chosen Generation*, a *Royal Priesthood*, an *Holy Nation*, a *Peculiar People* (CP 1Pe 2:9).

The church was decreed in God's eternal purpose before the beginning of time, but it was not revealed to the angels in heaven even until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (CP Mt 13:17; Ac 15:18 (KJV); Ro 16:25-26; 1Cor 2:7-8; Eph 1:4,9,11; 2:10; 3:1-12; Col 1:25-27; Tit 1:1-3; 1Pe 1:3-12, 18-20). The church is founded upon the great spiritual truth Peter confessed to Jesus in Mt 16 – that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (CP Mt 16:13-18). Jesus is the rock upon which His church is being built (CP Mt 7:21-27; 1Cor 3:11). It is the same confession of faith in Christ as Peter's, from the heart of every repentant sinner that brings about and confirms their new birth in Christ and sets them in the church (CP Ro 10:8-10; 12:4-5; 1Cor 12:12-20, 27; Eph 2:1-8; 4:1-6). These scriptures show us how the church is constituted. The baptism referred to in 1Cor 12:13 and Eph 4:5 is spiritual – the baptism by the Holy Spirit of repentant sinners into Christ and into His body, the church. The Holy Spirit unites them with Jesus as members of His church upon their conversion to Christ. The church is compared to a human body with its many members. Christ is the head of the body (CP Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23-24). Every born again believer is a member set in the body with a function to perform.

Scriptures stress the importance of church membership – of belonging to a local church. They teach us that it is not possible to be a Christian independent of the rest of the body of Christ because God has foreordained that each Christian has a place, a purpose and a function in the body that no other Christian can fulfil (CP Ro 12:4-8; 1Cor 12:14-18, 25; Eph 4:15-16). God has set us in the body to suit His purpose not ours, and if we refuse to join ourselves to a church we are refusing to join ourselves to Christ, because He is the church (CP 1Cor 12:12). It is folly for anyone to assume that they can be intentionally separated from the body of Christ and still be a member of His body. A body is an organised whole made up of parts and members, and nothing can function as a member if it is not attached or joined to the body. This applies in both the physical and spiritual realms. No member of a physical body can function if it is dismembered from the body, and neither can members of the spiritual body, the church, function if they become dismembered from it (CP He 10:24-25).

Here Christians are admonished to remain in fellowship with one another in the church as the day of Christ – His coming again – draws nearer, in order to stir each other up to love and to exhort one another to fulfil their ministries and functions in the church. The word "forsaking" here means abandoning or deserting. We are being warned not to abandon or desert the church like some are doing to their peril. The church is self-propagating. It is a living

organism reproducing itself as its members preach the gospel of salvation (CP Ac 2:36-47; 4:4; 5:12-14; 6:7; 11:19-26; 13:48; Ro 1:16; Col 1:3-6). We see in Ac 11:26 that the term "Christians" was first used to describe the followers of Christ in Antioch. To be called a Christian is the highest honour any human being can receive (CP Ac 26:28; 1Pe 4:14-16). See also comments on Ac 2:47 and author's study *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

16:19 *By telling Peter that He would give him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, did Jesus give Peter precedence in authority over the other disciples, as some teach?*

(CP V13-19) Peter had no precedence at all over the other disciples in authority, only in time – he was the first to confess his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. They were all equal in authority, as scriptures clearly teach (CP Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45; Lu 22:24-27). On the ground of his confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Lord simply designated Peter as the first one to open the door of the Kingdom of Heaven – to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (CP Ac 2:14-41). And later to the Gentiles through the salvation of Cornelius and all his house (CP Ac 10:1-8, 21-48). The keys are metaphorical – they represent the ministry of the word by which the Kingdom of Heaven is unlocked for all who hear the word and wish to enter in. Every believer in Christ has been given the keys of the kingdom. They have all been delegated to minister God's word and empowered to bind and loose, the same as Peter (CP Mt 18:18-20; Jn 20:21-23; 2Cor 5:17-19).

Many Christians believe that the believer's authority to bind and loose in Mt 16:19 and 18:18 extends only to church discipline and remitting or retaining sins (CP Mt 18:15-18; 1Cor 5:1-7 with Jn 20:21-23). The word *whatsoever* however is all-inclusive and encompasses every facet of ministry – not only church discipline and remitting or retaining sins, but also raising the dead; healing the sick; walking on water; stilling storms; making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak and the lame to walk; casting out demons; taking up serpents, etc. In this charge to the church Jesus is authorizing believers to activate everything He has made provision for in His life, death and resurrection (CP Mt 17:20; 21:22; Mk 11:22-24; 16:17; Jn 14:12-14; 15:7, 16; 16:20-23; Ac 1:8). The word *again* in Mt 18:19 means *once more*, pointing to a repeat of the believer's authority in V18 but expressing it in another form, which is that if any two believers agree in prayer for anything at all, God will do it for them (CP V19). *Anything* in this context means essentially the same as *whatsoever* in its context - it is also all-inclusive. We have Christ's assurance that it will come to pass because where two or three believers gather together to fulfill Christ's purpose for the church He is in their midst. It goes without saying though that both *whatever* and *anything* must always be in accordance with scripture (CP 1Jn 5:14-15). See also author's study *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is Built* in his

book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

16:21-23 *Why did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan here?*

Here Jesus had just begun to tell the disciples how He must shortly suffer and die. Peter could not understand how Jesus could be Messiah and yet have to suffer at the hands of the religious leaders and then be put to death. Peter did not comprehend God's redemptive plan in Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and he tried to talk Jesus out of allowing it to happen. In so doing Peter unwittingly allowed himself to become a tool of Satan by trying to thwart Christ's mission on earth and interfere with God's redemptive plan for all mankind. Jesus' whole purpose in living was to die (CP Isa 53:10; Jn 3:16; 10:17-18; 12:27; Ac 2:22-23; 4:26-28). Peter was not thinking from God's viewpoint but Satan's, and Jesus rebuked him as Satan for yielding to Satan's influence. (See also comments on Mk 9:9-10, Jn 20:9).

16:24 *See comments on 10:37-38.*

16:25-26 *See comments on 10:39.*

16:28 *What did Jesus mean when He said, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom?"*

Most commentators agree that Jesus is referring to Peter, James and John here who were to shortly see Him in His glory at His transfiguration on the mountain in Mt 17 (CP 17:1-9). The transfiguration was a preview of Christ's future eternal glory in the coming Kingdom of Heaven. It is also recorded in Mk 9:1-8; Lu 9:27-36 and 2Pe (CP 2Pe 1:16-18).

17:1-9 *What is the significance of what happened to Jesus here?*

This is called the transfiguration of Jesus. Being transfigured like this was a preview of Christ's future glory in God's eternal kingdom (CP Mk 9:1-8; Lu 9:27-36). We learn in Lu 9:31 that Christ's death was predetermined by Him and God both, because that is what Moses and Elijah discussed with Him (CP Jn 10:17-18; He 2:14-15). The transfiguration also fulfilled Christ's prophecy in Mt 16:28 (CP Mt 16:28). Peter, James and John were the ones referred to here. They were eyewitnesses to the transfiguration and saw Jesus as He will be in the eternal kingdom (CP Jn 1:14; 2Pe 1:16-18). See also comments on Mt 16:28 and 2Pe 1:16-19.

17:14-21 *Is Jesus teaching here that before some demons can be cast out Christians must first pray and fast?*

This scripture has been used many times to teach that believers must first pray and fast before attempting to cast out demons like Jesus did in V18, but that is not correct. To properly understand Jesus' saying here

we need to study the context in which He said it. It was the disciples' lack of faith, as V20 clearly teaches, that enabled the demon to resist them, and Jesus was pointing here to the future ministry of the disciples and their need for faith to perform His work. Such faith only comes by constant contact with the Lord through prayer and fasting, and abiding in His word, but it does not have to be any greater, metaphorically speaking, than a tiny mustard seed for it to work. This is for our admonition too. It stresses the importance of our own Christian walk being one of prayer and fasting and abiding in God's word to do His work. Then it only remains for us to exercise our faith by acting upon His word. We do not have to specifically fast and pray in order to be able to cast out demons - we simply cast them out in Jesus' name by the authority of His word (CP Mk 16:17-18).

17:24-26 **What does Jesus mean here by "...then are the children free"?**

The word *free* here means *exempt from an obligation*. So what Jesus is in effect saying is that as earthly kings do not tax their own sons, He, as God's Son, should be exempt from the temple tax which was levied on behalf of God (CP Ex 30:12-13). But to show His submission to ruling authority, Jesus paid the tax for Himself and Peter (CP Ro 13:1-7; Tit 3:1; 1Pe 2:13-17).

17:27 **How did Jesus know that there would be money for the temple tax in the fish's mouth?**

Jesus caused it to happen. The fact that He said it would be there caused it to be there. Jesus spoke it into being the same as He spoke everything else that did not previously exist into being (CP Jn 1:3; Ro 4:17; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:1-2; 11:3). Causing the money to be in the fish's mouth is one of the miracles Jesus did that He said Christians could also do (CP Jn 14:12).

18:3 **How do adults become as little children so they can enter the Kingdom of Heaven?**

This is how Jesus characterizes true conversion. He pictures it as the simple, helpless, trusting dependence of those who have no resources of their own, such as little children (CP V1-5; Mk 9:33-37; 10:13-16; Lu 9:46-48). Jesus teaches here that greatness in the kingdom is based upon childlike humility of spirit (CP Ps 37:11; Mt 5:5). See also comments on Mt 20:20-28.

18:6 **Who is Jesus actually referring to here as "these little ones"?**

Whereas Jesus used a literal child to characterize a true convert in Mt 18:1-5, *these little ones* He refers to here are not literal children but those who have humbled themselves like children. The word *little* here does not refer to size but speaks figuratively of dignity, authority, meaning *low, humble* (CP Mt 10:40-42; 18:10-14). These are all truly humble converts Jesus is referring to here and anyone who

causes them to go back into sin will incur the ultimate condemnation of God (CP Mk 9:41-42; Lu 17:1-2). This also applies to anyone who would lead little children into sin too (CP Mt 18:5-7).

18:8-9 **See comments on 5:29**

18:10 **Does this scripture teach that every child of God has a so-called "guardian angel"?**

This teaches that even the humblest followers of God – including little children – have angels to minister to them. But whether or not we each have a particular angel is not clear from scripture (CP Ps 34:7; 91:11-12; He 1:13-14).

18:15-17 **What is Jesus teaching here?**

Jesus lays down the guidelines here for conflict resolution in the New Testament church. The goal is restoration of fellowship. There are three steps to follow: 1. The one sinned against must first go alone to the offender and tell him his fault. 2. If the offender is unrepentant the one sinned against can go to him again, this time with one or two witnesses (CP De 19:15; 2or 13:1-2; 1Ti 5:19). 3. If the offender is still impenitent, he can be brought before the whole assembly and then disfellowshipped if there is still no change. It is incumbent upon church leaders to follow these guidelines. They must not favour the offender because they are charged with the responsibility of all the flock (CP Ac 20:26-28). If the offender remains unrepentant he must be disfellowshipped. It should be noted here that the local church is the responsible body to adjudicate in matters involving members, not a court of law (CP 1Cor 6:1-8). See also comments on 1Cor 6:1-8 and 1Ti 5:19.

18:18-20 **See comments on 16:19**

18:23-35 **What does this discourse about an unmerciful servant teach?**

This is called the parable of the unmerciful or unforgiving servant. It is only found here and was spoken by Jesus in response to Peter's question concerning forgiveness in V21-22 (CP V21-22). What Jesus is teaching us here is that forgiveness must be a constant attitude with believers. When Jesus told Peter that he had to forgive someone who sinned against him 490 times Jesus was simply underlining the fact that believers cannot ever afford not to forgive others, irrespective of how many times they sin against them. We are to forgive others as God has forgiven us (CP Ps 103:10-12; Mt 6:14-15). Forgiving also means forgetting (CP He 8:12). We are to behave toward others as God behaves towards us. If we claim to be His then we must have His disposition to forgive, even our enemies (CP Mt 5:7; Lu 6:35-36).

Forgiveness is a matter of life or death for believers. If we do not forgive others neither will God forgive us. Jesus teaches us in the parable of the unmerciful servant that the forgiveness of God, though freely

given to repentant sinners, nevertheless remains conditional according to their willingness to forgive others ([CP Mk 11:25-26](#)). The judgement the king pronounced on the unforgiving servant in the parable of the unmerciful servant is the equivalent of eternal damnation upon unforgiving believers, because just as the servant could never repay his debt to the king, believers can never repay their debt to God. Forgiveness is a kingdom principle, and it is incumbent upon Christians to live out this principle in their Christian life. Christians have had all their sins forgiven by God, so they must forgive others in return. (See also author's study *Forgiveness – A Matter of Life or Death for Christians* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

19:3-9 See comments on [5:31-32](#)

19:10-12 Is Jesus enjoining celibacy here?

No! Jesus clearly makes it a matter of personal choice. Because of being born impotent or having been emasculated, eunuchs do not marry. To make oneself a eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, means to live like a eunuch in voluntary sexual abstinence by refraining from marriage in order to devote oneself exclusively to the work of God. To be able to do this however is a gift. Not every Christian can do it, and God does not expect it ([CP 1Cor 7:7-9](#)). In V7 here Paul is alluding to a gift with which God had endowed him. He was not referring to his unmarried state, but to the gift of self-control he had which led in turn to him being able to remain unmarried. We learn this from V8-9. The phrase "it is good for them if they abide even as I" in V8 refers to Paul's unmarried state. *Abide* (KJV), or *remain* (NKJV), is a verb in what is known as the aorist tense in the Greek construction of the sentence, signifying Paul's unmarried state as a permanent and final decision: "as I have always been and always will be." Paul's unmarried state was of his own choosing and he was able to maintain it through the gift of self-control with which God had endowed him. (See also comments on [Ac 22:3-5](#); [1Cor 7:7-9](#)).

19:13-15 What does Jesus mean here by His reference to little children as "...for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"?

Jesus teaches here that the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of those who exhibit humility and childlike faith, whether they be little children or adults ([CP Mt 18:3-4](#)). We learn too from these scriptures that little children go straight to heaven when they die, which is also confirmed for us in the Old Testament ([CP 2Sam 12:22-23](#)). When David said here "I shall go to him..." he meant that he would one day be with his son in heaven. Neither Mt 18:3-4 nor 19:13-15 mean that little children do not have an inherent potential for sinning, but rather that they are not culpable in the same sense as those whose sins are premeditated and deliberate. God does not hold them accountable as He does those who can properly understand His purpose for them in His plan of redemption. The age of accountability will vary with one's understanding (under Jewish law a youth is accountable at 13 years

of age by his Bar Mitzvah – a ceremony by which he is accepted into the Jewish congregation of men).

19:16-22 Why did the rich young ruler not get saved?

The rich young ruler sincerely wanted to get saved, but on his terms, not the terms Jesus laid down. He was not prepared to obey Jesus and put Him above his possessions. This is not teaching that believers have to dispose of all their possessions as a condition of salvation, but it does teach that whatever material wealth we do have must be placed at the service of God. We must be prepared to employ it for the Kingdom, not for self-gratification. Believers must place all of their possessions at the service of God once they are saved, and this is taught throughout the New Testament ([CP Mt 6:19-21](#); [Lu 12:13-21](#), [32-34](#); [16:9](#); [Ac 2:44-45](#); [4:34-37](#); [1Ti 6:17-19](#); [He 13:5](#)). See also comments on [19:23-26](#); [Lu 12:13-15](#), [12:16-21](#), and author's studies *Christians and Wealth* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and *Christians – Flee from Idolatry* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

19:23-26 Is Jesus teaching here that it is impossible for rich people to get saved without God's help?

Yes! Jesus illustrates here the impossibility of a rich person entering into heaven with the figure of a camel being unable to go through the eye of a needle: it is not merely difficult, but impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. So it is equally not merely difficult, but also impossible for a rich person to be saved. But God can do it – He can even save rich people. But even so, their hearts must be changed by having their attachment to material riches replaced by attachment to the true riches - treasure in Heaven ([CP Mk 10:23-24](#) with [Pr 23:4-5](#); [Mt 6:19-21](#); [Lu 12:13-21](#), [32-34](#); [16:9](#); [Ac 2:44-45](#); [4:34-37](#); [1Ti 6:17-19](#); [He 13:5](#); [Jas 5:1-6](#)). See also comments on [Lu 12:16-21](#). [Mt 19:16-22](#); [Lu 12:13-15](#), [12:16-21](#) and author's studies *Christians and Wealth* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and *Christians – Flee from Idolatry* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

19:28-29 To what does Jesus refer here?

In the regeneration in V 28 (KJV), refers to the age to come – the new earth and Christ's millennial reign ([CP Mk 10:29-30](#); [Lu 18:29-30](#), [22:28-30](#) and [Ac 3:20-21](#)). Part of the present-day – now, in this time – rewards promised to Christians in [Mk 10:30](#) and [Lu 18:30](#) are persecutions. There is a cause for rejoicing when Christians are persecuted for Christ ([CP Mk 10:30](#); [Lu 18:30](#) also [Jn 15:20](#) and [2Ti 3:12](#) with [Jas 1:2](#) and [1Pe 4:12-17](#)). The blessings Christians receive in this life far outweigh the persecutions and any material losses they may suffer, and beyond the persecutions is the triumph assured to those who love Christ ([CP Mt 10:22-23](#); [24:13](#); [Mk 13:13](#); [Jn 6:27](#); [Jas 1:12](#); [5:11](#)). See also comments on [1Pe 4:17](#).

19:30 *What does Jesus mean by “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first”?*

Jesus uses this phrase on four different occasions in the gospels: twice in Matthew – here and in Ch 20 – and once each in Mark and Luke, to teach Christians that no one should suppose that they will be placed first in the future eternal kingdom before others (CP V23-30). In answer to Peter’s question in V27 as to what exactly could the disciples expect seeing that they had left all to follow Him, Jesus assured them that the blessings He gives will far outweigh any material loss or persecutions they may suffer for Him, but in His closing statement in V30 that many that are first shall be last, and the last first, Jesus warns that even those who have given up most for Him must never presume that the chief places in the future eternal kingdom are guaranteed to them (CP 20:1-16).

Jesus’ discourse in Mt 20:1-16 is called the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. In it Jesus expands upon His closing statement in 19:30. Jesus teaches in this parable that salvation is by grace alone, not by merit, and everyone who responds affirmatively to God’s call to salvation will have a place of honour in the future eternal kingdom. Length of service has no bearing on it – new Christians in their service to God are just as important to Him as those who have served Him the longest. No one should feel superior because of position or length of service in the church, for God is no respecter of persons. In the age to come many who held high office in the church and were thought to be great leaders will be placed behind others who held no office and were considered to be unimportant. In the future eternal kingdom, every Christian will be treated according to how their works are made manifest at the Judgement Seat of Christ (CP Ro 14:10; 2Cor 5:9-10). Every Christian has to come before the Judgement Seat of Christ for their earthly works to be tried, and it is how those works stand or fall that will determine the Christian’s place in Heaven (CP 1Cor 3:11-15). Every one of the earthly works we build upon the foundation of Christ will be evaluated, but only the works symbolized by gold, silver and precious stones will be able to withstand the heat of the refining fire. All lesser works represented by wood, hay and stubble will burn up. Christians will not lose their salvation if this happens, but there will be a loss of heavenly rewards (CP Lu 13:22-30). Jesus teaches us here that merely professing to know Him will not gain anyone entry into the future eternal kingdom. Only those who conform strictly to the conditions He has laid down for salvation can enter in. The Jews thought that as they were the descendants of Abraham and Isaac, etc, they would automatically enter in, but Jesus illustrates by this parable that no one can enter in who is not totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus. This applies to everyone who professes to be a Christian (CP Mt 7:21-27). See also comments on Mt 20:20-28.

20:16 *What does Jesus mean by His closing statement here that many be called, but few chosen (KJV)?*

This is Jesus’ closing statement in His parable of the labourers in the vineyard (CP VI-16 KJV). It means simply that while the call to salvation goes out to all of humanity, only those who respond affirmatively to the call and conform strictly to the conditions Jesus has laid down for salvation are chosen to inherit the future eternal kingdom (see comments on Mt 19:30). It does not matter how long one has been a Christian, it is how we conform to the conditions Christ has laid down for salvation that will determine our place in the future eternal kingdom and whether or not we will even inherit it (CP Mt 22:2-14). This is called the Parable of the Marriage Feast. It teaches that within Christendom there are many professing Christians who will not inherit the future eternal kingdom. They have answered God’s call to salvation – like the man in the parable accepted the King’s invitation to the marriage feast – but on their terms, not Christ’s, like the man in the parable refused to put on the wedding garment. Wearing the wedding garment and being yielded to the King’s authority in the parable typifies Christians being totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus. Those are the conditions Christ has laid down for salvation and no one can enter into the future eternal kingdom on any other terms. That is what “many be called but few chosen” means. The *chosen* are not specially selected individuals whom God has predestined for salvation while He condemns the rest of mankind to hell, as some teach. God has not already determined for or against any man’s salvation. Like Jesus teaches in this parable and scriptures teach everywhere else, all mankind is called to salvation, but sadly, not everyone chooses to be saved (CP Isa 55:1-2; Mt 13:3-8, 18-23).

There are two truths illustrated by the parable of the marriage feast: one is that as the king called all men to the marriage feast of his son, so God calls all mankind to partake of the kingdom benefits of His Son, Jesus. No one is excluded from responding to the call (CP Mt 11:28-30; Jn 7:37-38; Rev 22:17). Sadly though, and this is the second truth the parable of the marriage feast illustrates, not all who respond to God’s call to salvation are totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus (CP Mt 7:21-27; Lu 13:22-30). The *chosen* are those who conform strictly to the conditions of salvation laid down by Jesus. They constitute the glorious church, which is what God predestined before the foundation of the world, not the individual members of it (CP Eph 1:3-5, 9-10; 3:1-11; 2Ti 1:1, 8-10). See also comments on Mt 11:28-30, 13:10-11; Jn 3:14-15, 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40; Ac 2:37-38, 13:48, 28:23-29; Ro 3:24-25 (A), 8:28-30, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 9:19-21, 10:14-17, 11:4, 11:7-10; Eph 1:3-6, 1:11-14, 2:8-10; 1Th 1:4; 2Ti 1:8-9; 1Pe 1:2; 1Jn 1:10. Refer also author’s studies *Salvation – A free Will Choice or Predestinated?* and *Chosen by God?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

20:20-28 *What do we learn from this?*

When the other disciples knew what James and John asked Jesus they were resentful, moved with indignation, because they all coveted exalted positions in the kingdom themselves (CP Mt 18:1; Mk 9:33-35; Lu 9:46; 22:24-26). In Mt 20:25-28 Jesus explained that in the world the greatest are those who wield the most power, but in God's kingdom the greatest are the servants of all, like Jesus Himself (CP also Mk 10:41-45). Jesus even forbids His followers seeking after and receiving titles for themselves, or referring to each other by title (CP Mt 23:8-12). Christ condemns the use of titles in the church because He does not want His followers to be like the religious leaders in His day. We learn in V12 here that no Christian has precedence over another in God's order. (See also comments on Mt 18:3, 18:6, 19:30, 20:16, 23:8-12, and author's studies *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is Built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

21:1-7 *Who prophesied that Jesus would come riding a donkey and how many donkeys were involved?*

Zechariah, the Old Testament prophet, referring to Messiah's first advent prophesied that He would come riding a donkey (CP Zech 9:9). The word *and*, both here and Mt 21:5 in the KJV, indicates that there are two donkeys involved in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, yet both Mark and Luke only mention one (CP Mk 11:1-7; Lu 19:28-35). According to **Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament** and most modern versions of the Bible *and* should have been translated *even* in both Mt 21 and Zech 9, thus rendering the latter part of the verse in the KJV "...and sitting upon an ass, even a colt, the foal of an ass". Thus we see that only one donkey is involved.

21:9 *What does the word "Hosanna" mean?*

Hosanna means *save now, help now, or save, we pray thee* (CP Psa 118:25-27). *Save now* in V25 is from the Hebrew word **hoshiana**, which translates to **hosanna** in the Greek New Testament where it is an exclamation of adoration, an acclamation of praise (CP Mk 11:9-10; Lu 19:37-38; Jn 12:12-13). The whole multitude of disciples who followed Jesus here acknowledged Him as Messiah – the one sent from God to save them. They acclaimed Him as King and were shouting His praises at the top of their voice. The setting is Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on His way to the cross (CP Mt 21:1-11, 15-16). The Pharisees demanded that Jesus rebuke the crowd and silence them, but Jesus replied that even if He did the very stones on the ground would take up their cry (CP Lu 19:39-40).

21:16 *What does Jesus mean here?*

In saying what he does here Jesus is asserting His Deity and claiming the right to be worshipped as God (CP V14-15 with Psa 8:2). God has chosen children and perfected praise in them to honour Himself and silence His enemies and the devil (CP 1Cor 1:27-29). See also comments on 1Cor 26-28.

21:17-22 *What lesson do we learn from Jesus cursing the fig tree and causing it to die?*

(CP also Mk 11:12-14, 20-24) This is the parallel passage to Mt 21:17-22. The fig tree in these passages is not to be confused with the fig tree in Lu 13 (CP Lu 13:6-9) called the parable of the barren fig tree. This barren fig tree symbolizes the fruitlessness of Israel (see comment on Lu 13:6-9). This barren fig tree teaching is different altogether to what we learn from the fig tree Jesus cursed and caused to die in Mt 21 and Mk 11. What we learn in Mt 21:17-22 and Mk 11:12-14, 20-24 is a Divine object lesson in faith in which Jesus teaches that believers who trust implicitly in God would not only do miracles such as cursing a fig tree and causing it to die, but that they would be able to literally move mountains (CP also Mt 17:20). Many Bible commentators do not see the mountain Jesus refers to as a literal mountain, but it is, because He said the same thing about a literal tree elsewhere in scripture (CP Lu 17:6). Christians must believe that Jesus is referring to a literal mountain and a literal tree in this teaching, and that if they act out their faith, even though it may only be as tiny as a mustard seed it will produce the results Jesus promises (CP Jn 14:12-14). Jesus' teaching in these scriptures places no limit on what believers may speak into being or ask for in prayer in accordance with God's word. Every Christian without exception is promised everything they ask for in prayer and more, providing they qualify for an answer (CP Jn 15:7-8; 2 Cor 1:19-20; Eph 3:20; 1Jn 5:14-15). See also author's studies *Faith and Confessing God's Word* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Signs and Wonders in God's Redemptive Plan** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *Making the Impossible Possible* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)** and *The Key to Answered Prayer* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 3)**.

21:23-27 *See comments on Mk 11:27-33.***21:28-32** *What is Jesus illustrating here in this story about a man's two sons?*

This is called the parable of the two sons. In it Jesus illustrates for the Jewish religious leaders that the responsibility for propagating the Kingdom of God would be taken from them and be given to the Gentiles (CP V43-46). The religious leaders were like the second son in the parable who said he would go but did not. They were self-righteous hypocrites who not only would not enter into the kingdom themselves, but held others out who wanted to enter in. They had promised to do everything for God but when the time came they did nothing (CP Mt 22:1-7; 23:13).

21:33-41 *What does this parable of a householder teach?*

This is also known as the parable of the landowner and is recorded as well in Mk 12:1-12 and Lu 20:9-19. Here Jesus demonstrates the response to His ministry by the nation of Israel. The householder, or landowner, symbolizes God; the husbandmen are the Jewish religious leaders; the servants are the Old Testament prophets, and the son is Christ Himself. What happened to the servants in the parable is what happened to the Old Testament prophets (CP 1Ki 22:7-9, 13-14, 19-28; 2Chr 24:20-22; 36:15-16; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30). The “other vinedressers” in V41 typify the Gentiles who obtained the salvation that the Jews rejected (CP Ac 13:46-47). This is not to say though that there will not be a rebirth of the Jewish nation (CP Ro 11:7-11). There will be a rebirth of the Jewish nation when they repent of their unbelief and accept Jesus as Messiah (CP Zech 12:8-13:2 with Ro 11:23-28). See also author’s study *Israel in God’s Eternal Purpose* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

21:42-45 *What is meant by “the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?”*

This forms part of the parable of the householder. It is a quotation from Psa 118 which is a Messianic Psalm – one which foretells the events surrounding the coming of Messiah in the New Testament – (CP Psa 118:22-23). Jesus quoted this passage to draw the religious leaders’ attention to the fact that the son whom the husbandmen slew in the parable represents the chief corner stone in God’s redemptive plan. The stone of course is Jesus Himself - “The stone which the builders – the Jews – rejected” (CP Ac 4:10-11) – “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” to unbelievers (CP Isa 8:13-15; Lu 2:34; Ro 9:30-33; 11:7-10; 1Cor 1:21-24; 1Pe 2:8). Jesus is the chief cornerstone – the head of the corner – in God’s redemptive plan (CP Isa 28:16-17; Mk 12:10; Lu 20:17; Ro 10:11; Eph 2:19-22; 1Pe 2:6-7). Mt 21:44 means that whoever throws themselves on the mercy of Christ shall be broken and made contrite (CP V44 with Psa 34:18; 51:17; 147:3; Lu 20:18). But whoever rejects His mercy will damn themselves for eternity (CP Isa 60:12; Dan 2:44; Jn 3:16-18, 36). See also author’s study *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is Built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

22:1-14 *See comments on 20:16.***22:21** *What does Jesus mean by what He says here?*

Jesus means by this that believers are responsible to both earthly rulers and God. Christians must be scrupulously honest in all their dealings with civil government. They must financially support their country’s government and pay their taxes. Governments are ordained of God and Christians must honour that fact. They are to pray for those in

authority – not pray against them, as so many do (CP Ro 13:1-7; 1Pe 2:13-16). This does not mean that Christians have to obey civil law if they conflict with God’s law. Our first loyalty is to God – it is more important to obey His law than man’s law (CP Ex 1:15-17; Psa 75:6-7; Dan 3:12-18; 6:6-10; Mt 2:1-5, 7-9, 12, 15-16; Ac 4:13-20; 5:28-29, 40-42; He 11:23). See also comments on Ro 13:1-2.

22:23-30 *Is Jesus teaching here that angels are sexless and therefore unable to procreate?*

Jesus is simply teaching here that “in the resurrection” – the eternal state of believers after they are resurrected – marriage will be unnecessary (CP Lu 20:27-36). In the Divine order, the basic purpose for marriage is for procreation, but as those taking part in the first resurrection will no longer be subject to death, the need for procreation will no longer exist, and in that regard believers will be like the angels in heaven who do not die nor reproduce themselves (CP also Mk 12:18-27). This is not teaching that angels are sexless and therefore unable to procreate (see also comments on 1Pe 3:18-20). Neither is it teaching that Christians will *become* angels, as some think. To better understand the resurrection we need to read the scriptures relating to it (CP Jn 5:28-29; 1Cor 15:19-23; 42-45, 51-57; Php 3:20-21; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 20:4-6). See also author’s study *Who are the Spirits in Prison?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

22:31-32 *How are we to understand this?*

This means that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are still living, which proves the immortality of the soul. Only the body dies at physical death – the spirit and the soul of man lives forever, whether it be in heaven with Jesus, or in hell to be tormented day and night forever. This is taught right throughout scripture (CP Job 19:25-27; Psa 16:9-11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24-26; Isa 25:8-9; 26:19; Dan 12:2; Hos 13:14; Mt 10:28; 25:31-46; Mk 10:17, 30; Lu 23:43; Jn 3:16, 36; 5:24, 28-29; 10:27-28; 11:25; 12:25-26; 14:1-3; Ro 2:7; 1Cor 15:51-58; 2Cor 5:1; Ga 6:8; Php 3:21; 1Th 4:13-18; 1Jn 2:17, 25; 3:14; 4:7-9; 5:11-12; Rev 20:4-6). We learn from all those scriptures that the righteous live forever in heaven with Jesus (CP Psa 9:17; Pr 15:24; Dan 12:2; Mt 5:22, 29-30; 7:19; 10:28; 13:36-42, 47-50; 23:33; 25:31-46; Mk 3:29; 9:43-48; Lu 16:19-31; Jn 3:18; 5:28-29; 15:5-6; Ga 6:8; 1Jn 5:11-12; Jude 7-13, 21-23; Rev 14:9-11; 20:12-15; 21:7-8). These scriptures all teach that the unrighteous also live forever, but in hell. This clearly refutes the doctrine of complete annihilation of unbelievers; that they do not undergo a permanent and changed state of being involving punishment and pain, as some teach (see also comments on Jn 5:28-29, 14:1-3, 1Cor 15:51-58, Php 3:20-21, 1Th 4:13-18, Rev 14:9-11, 20:11-15, and author’s study *Hell* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

22:36-40 *See comments on Jn 13:34-35.*

22:41-45 *How is this question answered?*

As Jesus was God in His preincarnate state, He is David's Lord. In His human state Jesus is David's son in that He descended from David through Joseph, who was married to His mother Mary (CP Mt 1:1, 6-16; Lu 3:23-31). The Pharisees believed that Messiah would be merely a man, descended from David, but Jesus' reply asserted His Deity as well (CP Mic 5:2; Mt 1:18-23; Lu 1:26-35, 38-43; Jn 1:1; Php 2:5-8; 1Ti 3:16; He 1:1-13; Rev 1:8; 22:13, 16). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, Lu 1:3 B, Jn 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, 1Ti 3:16, He 1:5, 5:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8, and author's studies *Jesus - Eternally God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Doctrine of the Trinity and Jesus* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

23:8-12 *Does Jesus forbid the use of titles by New Testament Christians here?*

Yes! We cannot downplay what Jesus means here. He clearly forbids His disciples seeking after and receiving titles for themselves or referring to each other by title, as the religious leaders of His day did. Jesus teaches here that every ministry gift in the church is to be one of service – not with titular power, but servant power – and that there is always to be a brotherly relationship between Christians, regardless of their ministry gifts (CP V8, 11-12 with 20:26-27). Paul was a father in the Lord to the Corinthian church but he was never called “Father” Paul (CP 1Cor 4:14-15). Throughout scriptures Paul only ever refers to himself by his first name and to everyone else by theirs. We only have to read the first verse of every one of his epistles and the last chapter in Romans (Ro 16) to verify this. And Peter, James and John were the same. No one in the first century church had a title conferred upon them, and if both Jesus and God condemn the use of titles, how can the contemporary church justify them (CP Job 32:21-22). None of this is teaching against the respect Christians must have for those whom God has raised up in the church to lead and teach them - we are commanded to honour them in love (CP 1Cor 16:14-18; 1Th 5:11-13; 1Ti 5:17; He 13:7). But it is a warning against the development of a hierarchical system of church government to which Jesus is totally opposed (CP Mt 19:29-30; 20:1-16; 2Cor 1:24; 1Pe 5:1-3).

When Jesus forbade His disciples using such titles as “Rabbi”, “Father”, and “Master” in His day, that also applies to “Pastor”, “Doctor”, and “Reverend” etc, today. The use of titles to define rank and authority in the church has created a conception of the Christian calling in the church that divides Christians into two classes – the *clergy* and the *laity*. The *clergy* designates paid, professional, full-time ministers or priests, as opposed to the rest of the church – the *laity*. This implies a system of church government with grades of status or authority ranking one Christian above another, which is hierarchical and unscriptural. Titles are necessary to conform to the world order in many instances, but they should never be used in the congregation of believers. (See also

comments on Mt 20:20-28 and author's study *Jesus not Peter the Rock upon which the Church is Built* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

23:16-22 *How are we to understand what Jesus says here?*

First of all let us see what a vow is in this context. It is a solemn undertaking to do something for God in return for some specific benefit from Him (CP Gen 28:20-22). The scribes and Pharisees in Mt 23:16-22 were evading paying their vows by dishonestly applying a false set of conditions to swear by which ensured that it was never binding upon them to pay (CP Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:5-13). Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for being so devious and told them that regardless of what they swore by, the vows had to be paid (CP De 23:21-23; Psa 66:13-16; Ecc 5:4-5 with Judges 11:30-40). See also comments on Mt 15:1-9.

23:23 *When Jesus acknowledged the obligation of the Jews to tithe here does that mean it is also obligatory for New Testament Christians to tithe?*

Many Christians believe that by acknowledging the obligation of the Jews to tithe here Jesus is teaching that tithing is also obligatory for New Testament Christians. It should be noted though that Jesus is not talking to New Testament Christians here, but to the scribes and Pharisees, who were subject to the Old Testament law. A great many Christians believe that tithing is purely an Old Testament concept and does not translate to New Testament giving. They believe that under the New Covenant the supreme law of love has been substituted for Old Testament tithing and that New Testament giving is centred entirely around stewardship – the giving of ourselves completely to the work of God, which includes our time, our finances, and our material possessions. They believe that we are to give voluntarily, spontaneously and freely, not from a sense of obligation, nor with an intent to merit God's blessings. God has given wonderfully to us and is deserving of all that we might be moved to give Him. Many of these Christians use the tithe as the minimum standard by which they measure their giving to the Lord, but they do not accept that the tithe is required by scripture. They do not agree that scriptures teach that the tithe Abraham paid to Melchizedec established a precedent for tithing that New Testament Christians must follow. Rather they believe that Abraham's tithe had special symbolic implications related to establishing Christ's eternal priesthood. They believe this is borne out by the writer of Hebrews when he contrasts Christ's eternal priesthood with the temporary Levitical priesthood (CP Ge 14:5-20 with He 6:17-9:17).

Whether or not we agree with that is beside the point here, suffice it to say that at the heart of all giving is the acknowledgement that God is the creator, the owner and the giver of all things, and what we give back to God is only a part of what He has given to us in the first place (CP Ge 1:1; Ex 19:5; 1Chr 29:10-16; Psa

24:1-2; 50:10-12; Hag 2:8; Jn 1:1-3; Jas 1:17). Everything we have belongs to the Lord. No one has anything that they had not first received from God (CP De 8:7-20; Job 1:21; Jn 3:27; 1Cor 4:7; 2Pe 1:3). (Concerning Job 1:21 we must remember that Job did not have a complete revelation of God when he said "... and the Lord hath taken away." Job did not know that it was not God but the devil afflicting him. He knew God gave him all he had and so he believed it was God also who took it away. But we know better – we have the book of Job to teach us, yet Job's misconception of God has been perpetuated in Christendom ever since. Let us not perpetuate it any further.) To sum up here, our stewardship is a valid test of our relationship with God (CP Mt 25:14-30; Lu 19:11-27). These parables warn us that our place and our service in heaven will depend on the faithfulness of our lives and stewardship here on earth. A talent represents our abilities, time, resources and opportunities to serve God while on earth. A pound represents God's word that has been given to us. These things are considered by God as a trust that we are to administer on His behalf in the wisest possible way. We will all have to give an account of our stewardship to the Lord in due course and every work we do in the meantime will be brought into judgement (CP Ecc 12:13-14; Mt 5:20; Lu 16:1-2; Ro 14:12; 1Cor 4:1-2). Christian giving should always be characterised by what Paul says in 2Cor 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (CP 2Cor 8:12 and 9:7). See also comments on 2Cor 8:1-7, 9:6, Ga 6:7-8 and He 7:1-10, and author's study *To Tithe or Not to Tithe?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

23:34-36 *What is Jesus prophesying here?*

Jesus is prophesying here the destruction of Jerusalem during the lifetime of the generation of Jews then living because of their continued rejection of the truth Jesus proclaimed (CP V37-39). The prophecy foresaw the Jews' continued rejection of the gospel and the Jewish leaders' involvement in the shedding of innocent blood. History records that both Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 70 AD.

24:1-3 *What will be the sign of Christ's second coming and the end of this present age?*

Before we proceed with this question let us first find the answer to the other question the disciples asked in V3 concerning the destruction of the temple, which Jesus prophesied in V1-2 (CP Mk 13:1-4). The disciples' question as to when this would happen is not answered in either Matthew or Mark, but in Luke (CP Lu 21:5-7, 12-24). Jesus' response to the disciples' question here merges with what He also has to say in this discourse about the signs prefacing His second coming and the end of this present age. We have to carefully study the discourse to find the verses which answer the respective questions. Jerusalem being encompassed about by armies in V20 points to her destruction in fulfilment of Christ's prophecy in Mt 23:34-36 (CP 23:34-36). History records that both the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in 70 AD. The

period leading up to Christ's second coming will be characterized by false Christs (CP Mt 24:4-5, 23-26; Mk 13:5-6); wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes (CP Mk 13:7-8). Many will be betrayed and martyred for the gospel's sake (CP Mt 24:9-10; Mk 13:9-13); false prophets will rise up, and many will be deceived (CP Mt 24:11; Mk 13:21-23); lawlessness will abound, and the love Christians should have for each other will decrease (CP Mt 24:12). All this takes place during the seven years reign of Antichrist - the first three and a half years as a benevolent dictator (CP Rev 6:1-2) - the last three and a half years as the enemy of God, whom he blasphemes when he breaks his seven years peace treaty with Israel and sets up the image of himself in the temple to be worshipped (CP Mt 24:15 with Dan 9:27; 2Th 2:3-4; Rev 13:11-15). These are all the signs that preface Jesus' second coming (CP Mt 24:32-36; Mk 13:28-37). Jesus said when all these things comes to pass, those that will be living at the time would know that His second coming and the end of this age was about to take place (CP Mt 24:27-31, 40-51 with Rev 19:11-21). Jesus' statement in Mt 24:22 that no flesh would be saved in the tribulation except the days be shortened simply means that had God not ordained the tribulation to be limited to three and a half years, no one could survive it (CP Mt 24:22 with Rev 11:1-2). Jesus will come again immediately after the tribulation, and as lightning is visible right across the sky, so too His second coming will be visible to all. The sun and the moon will darken, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken (CP Mt 24:27-30 with Isa 13:6-16; 34:4; Joel 2:30-31; 3:14-16; Mt 26:64; Ac 2:19-20; Rev 1:7; 6:12-17).

Mt 24:28 refers to the dead bodies of Antichrist's army slain by Christ at Armageddon. The eagles refer to vultures which will be gathered together to eat the bodies (CP Eze 39:17-20; Rev 19:11-21). Where two people are together the ones taken in Mt 24:40-42 are with Antichrist and will be among those slain at Armageddon (CP Lu 17:34-37). Those who are left behind will go into the millennium – the thousand years reign of Christ on earth – to replenish the earth at that time (CP Zech 14:16 (see also comments on Mt 25:31-46)). It will take the Jews seven months to gather up and bury all the dead bodies that are left after Armageddon, and seven years to gather up and burn all the weapons of war (CP Isa 34:2-3; Eze 39:9-16). There are three parables in Mt 24: the parable of the fig tree in V32-34, the parable of the goodman of the house in V43-44, and the parable of two kinds of servants in V45-51. The core teaching in all these parables is faithfulness, preparedness and watchfulness in view of Christ's second coming. The church is not in view in any of the teachings in Mt 24 and 25 or Mk 13 – it is caught up to heaven to be with Jesus before the emergence of Antichrist, at least seven years before Christ's second coming (CP Jn 5:28-29; 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:7-8).

While the primary application of the teaching in Mt 24 is toward the future generation that will experience the reign of Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, and the second coming of Christ, the teachings are relevant to all Christians in all ages. Believers today must also be faithful and prepared for Christ's coming, whether it be

in the air to catch away the church to heaven, or on earth to set up His millennial reign. Christ's second coming should not be confused with when He comes back for the church and all who have died – all the redeemed of God – to take them up to heaven with Him. They are two distinct and separate events in time, as the scriptures in this study clearly prove. The event when Christ comes back *for* the saints to take them up to heaven with Him, is called the first resurrection. This takes place in the air, which is what Jn 5:28-29; 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18 and 2Th 2:7-8 all teach. The disciples in Mt 24:3 knew nothing about the rapture – Christ alluded to it in Lu 21:36 ([CP Lu 21:36](#)), but it was reserved for Paul to reveal in 1Cor 15:51-58. (See comments on Lu 21:36; Jn 5:28-29, 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:6-8; Rev 1:19, 3:7-13). Christ's second coming takes place on earth when He returns to earth *with* the saints, at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation to defeat Antichrist and his armies at the battle of Armageddon, prior to setting up His thousand years reign on earth ([CP 2Th 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Rev 20:4-6](#)). See also comments on Jn 5:43, Rev 6:1-2, 13:1-7, 14:14-16, 16:16, 19:11-21, and author's studies *The Rapture* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Daniel's Seventieth Week – the Last Seven Years of this Age** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Armageddon, Judgment of the Nations, Christ's Millennial Reign and the Eternal Kingdom* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

24:32-33 *What do we learn from what Jesus says here?*

This is called the parable of the fig tree. It is also found in Mk 13:28-29 and Lu 21:29-31, and is one of many parables Jesus told pertaining to the uncertainty of the time of His second coming. Other parables are as follows ([CP Mt 24:43-44](#)). This is called the parable of the goodman of the house. It is also found in Lu 12:39-40 ([CP Mt 24:45-51](#)). Here we have the parable of the two kinds of servants – one faithful and wise; the other unfaithful ([CP Mt 25:1-13](#)). This is called the parable of the ten virgins. It is essentially the same teaching as the three previous parables in Mt 24 ([CP Mk 13:33-37](#)). This is called the parable of the watchful porter ([CP Lu 12:35-38](#)). This is called the parable of the watchful servants ([CP Lu 12:41-48](#)). Here we have the parable of the unfaithful servant.

The core teaching in these parables is faithfulness, preparedness and watchfulness in view of Christ's second coming. In all of them Christ links behaviour to belief. If Christians believe in the imminence of Christ's second coming, they must act accordingly. They cannot live to suit themselves, but must be totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus. Otherwise, they will forfeit their place in God's eternal kingdom ([CP Mt 7:21-27; Jas 1:22-25](#)). Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven – only those who have prepared themselves for His return (see also comments on Mt 24:1-3, 25:1-13, Lu 12:41-48). While the primary application of the teaching in the parables subject of

this study is toward those who will still be living at the time of Christ's second coming, the teachings are relevant to all Christians in all ages. Believers today must also act in accord with their professed belief. (See also author's study *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

24:34 *What generation is Jesus referring to here?*

Jesus is referring here to the generation living at the time all the events associated with Antichrist's seven years reign take place (see also comments on 24:1-3).

25:1-13 *What does this story of the ten virgins teach?*

This is called the parable of the Ten Virgins. It is only recorded here and is a continuation of Jesus' discourse in Mt 24 about the events that will take place on earth during the time of the Great Tribulation just prior to His second coming. We need to read at least part of that discourse to better understand what Christ is teaching here because this parable has been used down through the ages to teach many different things in the contemporary church ([CP Mt 24:27-51](#)). There are three parables included in those scriptures, all pertaining to the uncertainty of the time of Christ's return: the parable of the Fig Tree in V32-33, the parable of the Goodman of the House in V43-44, and the parable of the Two Kinds of Servants in V45-51. The core teaching in all of them is faithfulness, preparedness and watchfulness in view of the second coming of Christ, and the same teaching applies to the parable of the Ten Virgins ([CP also Mk 13:28-37; Lu 12:35-48](#)). It needs to be restated here that the church is not in view in any of these teachings - it is raptured, or caught up to heaven before the emergence of Antichrist and the onset of the Great Tribulation ([CP Ro 5:8-10; Eph 5:1-7; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:7-9; Rev 3:10](#)). But by way of application the teachings in both Mt 24 and Mt 25 are relevant to all believers in any age until Jesus comes back, whether in the air to rapture the church, or on land to defeat Antichrist.

The parable of the Ten Virgins has been used variously to teach among other things that there are two kinds of Christians – wise and foolish; the oil is the baptism in the Spirit; the rapture will take place at midnight or in the middle of the Great Tribulation; only those baptized in the Spirit will be saved; only those baptized in the Spirit will celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb; the door of mercy will be closed to the Gentiles after the rapture and the five wise virgins represent the true church, etc, etc. The list goes on, but none of these teachings have any grounding in scripture whatsoever. They only detract from the real meaning of the parable – that of Christians always being in a state of readiness for when Jesus returns. The bridegroom's response to the foolish virgins' knocking on the door echoes what Jesus also teaches in Mt 7:21-23 ([CP Mt 7:21-23](#)). Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord will enter into the eternal Kingdom of Heaven – only those will who

have prepared themselves for His return. The kingdom will not be open to those who profess to belong to Christ but have no Divine resources within, (CP Lu 13:23-27). See also comments on Mt 7:21 and author's studies *Conditions of Entry into Heaven* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

25:14-30 *What does this story of a man going on a journey and giving to his servants various talents teach?*

This is called the parable of the Talents. There are many profound truths to be gleaned from this parable and we need to study it carefully to fully understand them. What this parable teaches has a double application – present and future. In V29 Jesus reveals a very important principle with regard to the believer's reward and state in the future Eternal Kingdom. What he receives then will depend on what he possesses of the kingdom now. His position and inheritance of the future kingdom will be in proportion to his dedication and consecration to the service of God in the present earthly aspect of the kingdom. The basic teaching of this parable is that God has given every believer spiritual gifts and graces according to each believer's ability, and that these gifts and graces must be put to use in God's service (CP Ro 12:3-8; 1Cor 12:1-31; 2Cor 5:17-19; Eph 4:7-16; 1Pe 4:7-11). God means us to use these gifts and graces for the extension of His kingdom. They are not given to us for our profit, but for His. The believer who does not use his gift or grace for God's glory is the same as the servant in the parable who hid his talent in the ground (CP Mt 5:14-16).

There is a tendency among some Bible commentators to downplay the punishment the servant received in the parable of the Talents. They teach that symbolically it compares only to loss of rewards in heaven, but that is not what the parable is teaching at all. The servant was not punished simply because he failed to return a profit to his master. He was punished because underlying his failure to return a profit was his prior intention not to even invest his master's money (CP Mt 25:24-25). He had no intention of putting his master's money to work, and then he justified himself for not doing so by finding fault with his master, and accusing him of unfair business practices. He was condemned by his own words (CP Mt 12:35-37 with Lu 19:22). He was not a true and faithful servant as the other two were. He was found to be untrue and unfaithful, and the punishment he received is the equivalent of one who merely professes faith in Christ being condemned to hell. Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord is going to heaven (CP Mt 7:21-27). The slothful servant's prior intention not to put his master's money to work is reminiscent of the guest in the parable of the Marriage Feast in Mt 22 who had pre-determined not to put on a wedding garment. Their punishment was the same (CP Mt 22:2-14). The parable of the Talents illustrates the attitude of many professing Christians in the contemporary church. They are

prepared to do the work of God on their terms, but not on His. They accept that part of the Bible that conforms to their theology, but reject the parts that do not. But God has the final word (CP Mt 25:28-30 with Mk 4:21-25).

The Kingdom of God would soon be made manifest that all can see it alike, and Jesus admonishes us to put into practice what we hear. It is not to be hidden, but used in the service of God. What we do with the truth we receive will determine whether or not we will be given more, or lose even that which we already have. This is a stern warning to believers to beware what they hear, and a promise that if they hear aright – if they use what they hear in the service of God – more truth will be given them. We also see in the parable of the Talents the biblical pattern for promotion in the New Testament church. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Apollos and Titus to name a few, were all promoted after proving their faithfulness in lesser areas of ministry first. God promoted them just as Jesus teaches here, and this confirms our opening statement that what a man receives in the future eternal kingdom will depend on what he possesses of the kingdom in its present earthly aspect. (See also comments on Mt 3:10, 7:13-14, 7:21, 12:30; Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:22-25, and author's studies *Conditions of Entry into Heaven* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

25:31-46 *What judgement is Jesus talking of here?*

This judgement takes place after the Tribulation and Jesus defeats Antichrist at the battle of Armageddon. It is generally called the Judgement of the Nations, although in fact it will be individual people who will be judged because Jesus separates them from each other into "sheep" and "goats" (CP V32-33). The sheep represent those individuals who will go into the Eternal Kingdom (CP Joel 3:2, 12; Zech 14:16). The goats represent those who will be cast down to hell. "All nations" who will be gathered before Jesus in Mt 25:32 are the Gentiles who survive the Tribulation. Their judgement takes place prior to Christ setting up His millennial reign on earth, to determine who of them will go into the millennium. The basis of the Gentile's judgement will be their failure to extend mercy to the Jewish believers during the Tribulation (CP Mt 25:34-40 with 41-46). Although the application of this teaching is toward the Gentiles who survive the Tribulation, the teaching is relevant to all Christians of all ages. Believers today must also extend mercy to the least of God's children, whether they be Jews or Gentiles (CP Mt 5:7). See also author's studies *Coming Judgements of God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Armageddon, Judgement of the Nations, Christ's Millennial Reign and the Eternal Kingdom* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

26:6-13 *Who is this woman who anointed Jesus here and when did this anointing take place?*

There is some confusion in the contemporary church over who the women were who anointed Jesus, and how many times He was anointed. There are three distinct and separate anointings of Jesus by women in scripture, and this is the third. The first took place in Simon the Pharisee's house in Nain early in Christ's earthly ministry (CP Lu 7:11, 36-39). This woman anointed Jesus' feet. Many in the church believe that this was Mary Magdalene, and/or that she was a prostitute, but there is nothing in scripture whatever to identify her. Luke simply describes her as a sinner, which can mean literally anything, but it is no proof that she was a prostitute. There is no proof either that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute – scriptures merely teach that Christ cast seven demons out of her (CP Mk 16:9; Lu 8:1-2). Generally scriptures teach that demons affected people they possessed physically, not morally (CP Mt 8:16-17, 28-34; 9:32-33; 15:21-28; Mk 9:17-27; Lu 4:33-36; 11:14). Mary Magdalene is mentioned in Lu 8 but this is no proof either that she was the one who anointed Jesus' feet in Lu 7. The second anointing took place in Lazarus' house in Bethany, six days before Jesus was betrayed (CP Jn 11:1-2, 12:1-3). This Mary is Lazarus' and Martha's sister. She also anointed Jesus' feet, the same as the woman did in Lu 7. The third anointing in Mt 26:6-13 also took place in Bethany, in Simon the leper's house, two days before Jesus was betrayed. Mark's gospel also records this anointing (CP Mk 14:1-9). This woman anointed Jesus' head, not His feet, like Mary, Lazarus' and Martha's sister in Jn 12, or the first woman in Lu 7. And there is also nothing in scripture to identify her either. Like the woman in Lu 7, she too is not named.

26:14-16 *Was Judas Iscariot ever saved, or was he always of the devil, as some teach?*

To say that Judas was never saved, always of the devil, and never in grace as some teach, is to ignore the plain facts of scripture. Judas was given by God to Jesus and Jesus had once given him eternal life (CP Jn 17:1-12). Jesus trusted Judas – He called him “mine own familiar friend”, which means that Judas was a confidant of Jesus, a trusted friend (CP Psa 41:9; 55:12-14; Jn 13:18). Would Jesus have referred to Judas like He did in Psa 41 and 55 if he was always of the devil? (While Psa 55:12-14 also applies to the betrayal of King David, it is a messianic prophecy and applies to the betrayal of Jesus too). The Holy Spirit indwelt him and Judas had all the power the other disciples had to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons, etc. (CP Mt 10:1-8, 16-20; Mk 3:14-19; 6:7-13; Lu 6:13-16; 9:1-6). Along with Jesus' other disciples Judas' name was written in God's Book of Life (CP Lu 10:1-9, 17-20). Judas was a bishop in the church Jesus is building (CP Ac 1:15-25). But Judas became apostate, then a thief, and eventually he betrayed Jesus (CP Zec 11:12-13; Mt 26:14-16, 47-50; Mk 14:10-11; 43-46; Lu 22:3-6, 47-48; Jn 6:70-71; 12:3-6; 13:2). He forfeited his apostleship, his bishoprick (his ministry), and his salvation (CP Psa

69:22-28; 109:6-20; Ac 1:15-20). In Ac 1:20 Peter quoted Psa 109:8 as being fulfilled in Judas. Psa 69:22-25 applies to both Judas and those who had Jesus killed. We learn from Psa 109 that Judas had a wife and children. His wife became a widow and his children vagabonds (wanderers), who had to beg all the rest of their days (CP V9-10). Judas' family name died out in that generation. It was lost to posterity forever - no one was left to carry on his name (CP V13).

26:17-19 *What is the significance of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread for New Testament Christians?*

(CP also Mk 14:12-17; Lu 22:7-16) The Passover concerns the events immediately preceding Israel's deliverance from its four hundred and thirty years captivity in Egypt. It was instituted by God and celebrated by the Jews to commemorate being spared by the death angel on its way to kill all the firstborn of Egypt prior to the Exodus. The Passover involved the killing of an unblemished lamb by the Jews and sprinkling its blood on the lintels and doorposts of their houses. The blood of the lamb was a sign for the death angel to spare, or **pass over** the houses of the Israelites (CP Ex 12:1-14, 21-28). There is rich prophetic symbolism here which points forward to our redemption through the blood of Christ. The Passover and the feast of unleavened bread were “a shadow of things to come” (CP Col 2:16-17). The Passover itself was an Old Testament type, of which Christ was the New Testament antitype (an *antitype* is the person or thing represented or foreshadowed by an earlier *type*, or symbol). The unblemished lamb sacrificed for its blood prefigured the shedding of Christ's blood as the sacrificial lamb of God.

As the Passover lamb was a substitute sacrifice for the firstborn of the Jews, so Christ was the substitute sacrifice for sinners (CP Jn 1:29; 1Cor 5:7; 2Cor 5:21; 1Pe 1:2, 18-20; Rev 5:5-10). The sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb on the lintels and doorposts typified the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. The sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb by the Old Testament Jews was done in obedient faith. This response of faith brought about redemption through the blood. Salvation through Christ's blood is likewise obtained through the obedience of faith. And as the blood sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts saved all the firstborn Jews, so Christ's blood on the cross saves all repentant sinners (CP Eph 1:7; He 9:11-15, 22; 10:19-20; 13:20; 1 Jn 2:2; Rev 1:5). The eating of the Passover lamb represented the Jews identifying with the lamb's death, a death which saved them from physical death. Similarly, partaking of communion represents the Christian's participation in the death of Christ, a death which saves them from spiritual death (CP 1Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-26).

It is also significant that only unleavened bread could be eaten with the Passover lamb. In scripture leaven is used metaphorically to refer to sin and evil (CP 1Cor 5:1-8). The symbol of unleavened bread for New Testament Christians is to be without sin before God. As the Old Testament feast of unleavened

bread represented the Jew's separation from the corruption symbolized by Egypt, New Testament Christians must likewise be separated from the corruption and evil of the world (CP 2Cor 6:14-18; Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15-17). We must repudiate all sin or we will be cut off from the covenant promises like the Old Testament Jews who ate leavened bread were to be cut off from the congregation (CP Ex 12:15). See also comments on Mt 26:26-29; 1Cor 11:20-22 and author's study *Communion* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

26:26-29 *Are Christians to interpret what Jesus says here about eating His body and drinking His blood literally or symbolically?*

There have been three major interpretations placed upon the meaning of Christ's reference to His body and blood when He instituted the Lord's supper and we need to know what they are in order to distinguish between them. The first is the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Transubstantiation. The second is the Lutheran Doctrine of Consubstantiation and the third is the non-Lutheran Protestant Doctrine of Symbolic Commemoration. Non-Lutheran Protestants include Pentecostals.

The Doctrine of Transubstantiation promotes the theory that in the Roman Catholic Communion service the bread and the wine are literally converted by the officiating priest – though their appearance remains the same – into the **actual body and the blood of Christ**. Roman Catholics are taught that the power to change the elements (or emblems) – the bread and the wine – into the actual body and blood of Christ was given to the apostles at the last supper by Christ and has been carried on by Catholic priests as the successors to the apostles ever since. They are taught that through His earthly priest Christ's sacrifice is renewed at every Communion service, and that by giving the apostles and their successors the Divine power to change the bread and the wine into His own body and blood Christ ensured that His redeeming sacrifice would forever be present in the church. Roman Catholics believe that partaking of Communion is crucial to their salvation. There is no warrant for this doctrine in scripture. Even Catholicism's own St Augustine taught that Christ's references to His body and blood are merely figures bidding us communicate in His sufferings (ref **Augustine – On Christian Doctrine**). The Lutheran Doctrine of Consubstantiation is just as fallacious as the doctrine of transubstantiation. This denies that the elements are changed into the actual body and the blood of Christ but it asserts that the **literal presence of Christ** is present in, under, and with the elements so Christ can be received sacramentally by those taking Communion. *Sacramentally* means necessary to salvation. This is much the same as what Roman Catholicism teaches and like the Catholic teaching is also not scriptural.

The non-Lutheran Protestant Doctrine of Symbolic Commemoration teaches that what Jesus says about eating His body and drinking His blood is not to be taken literally but only symbolically, and that the observance of Communion is a commemoration of the

death of Christ in which Christ is **spiritually** present. The Lord's supper is therefore a memorial feast. As they receive the bread and the wine, symbolic in their nature, it is an acknowledgement by those partaking of Communion that their salvation is solely through the broken body and the shed blood of Christ. To eat the bread and drink the wine is to commemorate Christ's death and accept the benefits He has provided for us in His death until He comes again. This is the correct teaching (CP Jn 6:47-63). These passages are the continuation of a long discourse by Jesus contrasting the manna, the bread which the Jews' forefathers ate and which could not save them, with Himself, the Bread of Life, and they must be kept in the context of that teaching to better understand them. They provide us with the most in-depth explanation of Communion in scripture and while Jesus is not making a direct reference to Communion, this discourse conveys the same truth in words that Communion conveys in action (CP V27-35). When scriptures are kept in context it is quite clear that the expressions Jesus uses about eating His body and drinking His blood are to be understood spiritually. They are used figuratively not literally. In V51 Jesus is in effect saying, "I will give this bread which symbolises my body given in death to save the world" (CP V51). By comparing V47-48 with V53-54 we see that **believing** in Jesus is the same as eating His body and drinking His blood. Jesus teaches in V63 that even if we could literally eat His body and drink His blood it would not save our souls. This clearly refutes both the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Transubstantiation and the Lutheran Doctrine of Consubstantiation. The life Jesus speaks of is spiritual and eternal life, not fleshly life. Eating of Christ simply means that man must accept by faith what Christ has done for him and live by obedience to Him without sin so the penalty will not have to be paid again (CP 1Cor 11:23-32).

Paul received the revelation of the Lord's supper direct from Jesus Himself. It is clearly symbolic in nature, and as the word *remembrance* in V24-25 signifies, it is a memorial of Christ. Those who partake of Communion must do so reverently, remembering always the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death for them. But it is not meant to be a morbid re-enactment of Christ's death. Rather it is to bring to remembrance the purpose of the cross and Christ's victory over it (CP Ac 2:22-24; 3:13-18; 5:30-31; Col 2:13-15). See also comments on Mt 26:17-19; 1Cor 11:20-22 and author's study *Communion* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

26:29 *What does Jesus teach us in this verse?*

We learn from what Jesus says here that communion, or the Lord's supper will be observed by Christ and all believers in the Kingdom of God throughout eternity (CP Mk 14:22-26; Lu 22:14-18). Scriptures also confirm that all the redeemed of God will eat food and drink liquids in the eternal kingdom (CP Isa 65:21-22; Eze 28:25-26; Amos 9:14; Lu 22:30; Rev 2:7, 17; 19:9; 22:1-2).

26:31-35 *See comments on Lu 22:31-34.*

26:36-44 *Considering that Jesus knew that His purpose on earth was to die, why was He so distressed here?*

Scriptures teach that Jesus had looked ahead to this hour (CP Jn 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1). But now, as the time drew near Jesus dreaded it (CP Mk 14:32-36; Lu 22:41-44). Jesus' anguish had nothing to do with the fear of man or the physical torments of the cross, for He had resolutely set Himself to die (CP Isa 50:6-7; Mt 20:28; Mk 10:32-34, 45; Lu 9:51; Jn 12:24, 27). Our Lord was sorrowful because within hours the full cup of Divine fury against sin would be His to drink; He would bear the punishment for sin by being separated from God (CP Isa 53:10-12 with Psa 22:1; Mt 27:45-46; Mk 15:33-34; 2Cor 5:21). See also comments on Mt 27:45-46; Lu 22:44; Jn 18:11.

26:47-51 *Who struck the servant of the high priest with a sword?*

Neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke tells us who did this – only John does (CP Mk 14:44-47; Lu 22:47-50 with Jn 18:10). Peter struck the servant with a sword, completely severing his ear, but Jesus restored it to normal (CP Lu 22:51). Jesus reprimanded Peter for doing it because He did not need anyone to defend Him – God would have sent 12 legions of angels (72,000), had Jesus wanted them, but He only wanted to fulfill God's eternal purpose in His death (CP Mt 26:52-54; Mk 14:49; Jn 18:11).

26:59-61 *When did Jesus say that He was able to destroy the temple of God and build it in three days?*

Jesus never said this. That was a statement made by the two false witnesses against Him at His trial. What Jesus really said is recorded in Jn 2:13-19 (CP Jn 2:13-19). Jesus said as an ironic command to the Jews in response to their demand for a sign to prove His right to eject them from the temple: “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”. He was not referring to the temple from which He had just ejected them, but to the temple of His body and it being raised up in three days after His death (CP Jn 2:20-22).

26:64 *What coming is Jesus referring to here – the rapture or His Second Advent?*

His Second Advent (CP Isa 63:1-6; Dan 7:13-14; Mt 24:29-31; 25:31; 2Th 1:7-8; Jude 14-15; Rev 1:7; 19:11-12). Those Scriptures all concern the second coming of Christ, not the Rapture. They relate to Antichrist, the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, the Judgement of the Nations, Christ's Millennial Kingdom, etc. (See also comments on Mt 24:1-3; 2Th 1:7-10; Rev 1:7, 19:11-21, and author's studies *The Rapture* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Daniel's Seventieth Week – the Last Seven Years of this Age** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Armageddon, Judgement of the Nations, Christ's Millennial Reign and the Eternal Kingdom* in his

book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

27:3-5 *If Judas repented of what he had done to Jesus why could he not have been saved?*

V3 here tells us that Judas repented of what he had done, but it was not true repentance - he was seized with remorse. *Repented* here is from the same Greek word as *remorse*, **metamelomai**, which means little or nothing more than a selfish dread of the consequences of sin, rather than a deep regret at the cause of sin, which is what true repentance is. **metamelomai** is never used of true repentance towards God in scripture (CP 2Cor 7:8). Here we see it used twice. It means that even though Paul had caused the Corinthian church sorrow because of his letter, he did not regret – **metamelomai** – it, notwithstanding at the time he did regret – **metamelomai** – writing it. However, their sorrow led them into true repentance – **metanoia** – which means a complete change of mind – from evil to good – towards God (CP 2Cor 7:8-11). This teaches what true repentance is. It is not merely being seized with remorse at the consequence of sin as Judas was, but having Godly sorrow for sin that works repentance toward God and brings with it salvation (CP Ac 2:22-24, 32-41).

27:6-10 *Where in scripture is this prophecy?*

Although this prophecy is ascribed here to Jeremiah, it was actually prophesied by Zechariah (CP Zech 11:12-13). The price on Jesus' head set by the chief priests for Judas to betray Him was the same pittance Zechariah prophesied – thirty pieces of silver, which was used to buy the Potter's Field as a burial ground for Gentiles (CP Ac 1:16-19). It is pointless speculating why Zechariah's prophecy was attributed to Jeremiah – there is nothing in scripture to indicate why.

27:24-25 *What do we learn from what is said here?*

We learn from this that while the Romans physically killed Christ, the Jews instigated it, and in so doing called down a curse upon the whole nation of Israel, “... His blood be on us and on our children.” However, although the Jews were responsible for Christ's death it was foreordained by God (CP Mt 27:20-25; Mk 14:55-64; 15:1, 15; Lu 23:10, 20-24; Jn 19:12-18 with Ac 2:22-23, 36; 3:11-15; 4:8-10, 24-28; 5:30; 13:27-29; 2Ti 1:9). Although Christ's atoning death was foreordained by God, it does not absolve the guilt of those who caused it, including Pilate. In making no decision Pilate made the decision to let the Jews have their way with Jesus and instigate His crucifixion. The curse the Jews called down upon themselves will remain until they acknowledge the Christ who they rejected as their Messiah – King (CP Hos 6:1-3; Zech 12:10 – 13:1; Mt 23:37-39; Ro 11:25-29; Rev 1:7). See also comments on Lu 23:13-26, Jn 19:11, Ac 2:22-23, 1Th 2:14-15.

27:45-46 *What reason would cause God to forsake Jesus?*

Jesus on the cross was the sin-bearer for all mankind (CP Isa 53:6; 2Cor 5:21; Ga 3:13; Eph 5:2). But God could not look upon sin even if it was borne by His only begotten Son, and at that moment in time Jesus experienced the abandonment and despair of being separated from God as punishment for sin (CP Isa 53:5-12 with Psa 22:1; Mt 26:36-44; Mk 15:33-34; 2Cor 5:21). See also comments on Mt 26:36-44.

27:50 *Was this day that Jesus died “Good Friday” as so many in the church teach?*

No, our Lord could not have been crucified and buried on “Good Friday” as so many in the church teach or these scriptures are meaningless (CP Jonah 1:17 with Mt 12:40; 27:63; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 1Cor 15:3-4). The clear teaching in all these scriptures is that Christ would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth before being raised up again. A day consists of twelve hours and a night likewise, totalling twenty-four hours (CP Jn 11:9-10). Three days and three nights therefore equal seventy-two hours. Night precedes day in God’s order (CP Gen 1:3-5; Lev 23:32). The Jewish day began at 6pm in the evening and continued until 6pm the next evening. On that basis if Jesus had been buried in the evening of “Good Friday” He would not have risen until seventy-two hours later, on Monday evening. Yet scriptures clearly teach that He was already risen when Mary Magdalene and the other women got to the tomb before daybreak on Sunday (CP Mt 28:1-7; Mk 16:1-9; Lu 24:1-7; Jn 20:1-10).

Thus, in accordance with Gen 1:3-5, Jesus had to die and be buried on Wednesday evening in order to rise again on Saturday evening at the conclusion of the weekly Sabbath. Jesus was not crucified and buried on “Good Friday” before the commencement of the weekly Sabbath as so many believe, but on the Wednesday before the next day’s – Thursday – Sabbath, which was a **high day** Sabbath (CP Jn 19:31-32, 38-42). A “high day” Sabbath is a special Sabbath, a day of great, solemn celebration, such as the day of the great feast in Jn 7:37 (CP Jn 7:37). This Sabbath is completely different to the normal weekly – Saturday – Sabbath (see also comments on Mk 16:1, Jn 19:31, Ac 12:4, Ga 4:9).

27:51 *What was the significance of the veil in the temple being torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died?*

This veil separated the Holy of Holies, the most holy place in the temple, from the outer sanctuary, where the temple priests ministered (CP He 9:1-6). Only the high priest was allowed to go beyond this veil into the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on the day of atonement, to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering – an Old Testament type of the atoning blood of Christ, the New Testament sin offering - on the mercy seat (CP Lev 16:2 with He 9:7-10). The sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat was an Old Testament type of the forgiveness that is only possible by God’s grace and

mercy through the atoning blood of Christ. The Holy of Holies represented God’s throne of grace in heaven where Christ entered into after His death, bearing His own blood to make atonement for sin (CP He 9:11-24). No other living human being beside the high priest was ever allowed beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies in God’s earthly temple, but when Jesus died on the cross the veil rent in two, God thus signifying that now all can enter into His throne of grace in heaven. The most holy place in heaven is now open to everyone, but only through Christ and His atoning blood. The veil represented His flesh (CP He 4:14-16; 10:19-23). The veil also represented the middle wall of partition that kept Jews and Gentiles apart. When the veil was rent it broke down that wall (CP Eph 2:14-18). Christians no longer have any need for earthly high priests to mediate for them – Jesus is both mediator of the New Covenant and their high priest in heaven (CP He 7:22-28; 8:1-6; 9:24-10:23). See also comments on Eph 2:14; He 8:1-2, 9:1-10, 10:19-20 and author’s study *The Old Testament Day of Atonement and God’s Plan of Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

27:52-53 *What happened to all these bodies that came up out of their graves?*

These bodies were resurrected to establish the reality of the miracle of Christ’s own resurrection, and nothing more is said about them in scripture (CP 1Cor 15:3-8). They doubtless died again to be included with all the other Old Testament saints who had died, whose spirits and souls Jesus took to heaven with Him when he ascended on high (CP Eph 4:8-10; He 2:14-15). The significance of the resurrection of those bodies is the prophetic indication that Christ’s resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all believers when He comes back to take them all to heaven (CP Jn 11:25-26; 14:1-3, 19 with Isa 26:19; Jn 5:28-29; 1Cor 15:20-23, 51-58; 1Th 4:13-18).

27:57-60 *What is the significance of this passage of scripture?*

(CP also Mk 15:43-46; Lu 23:50-53; Jn 19:38-42). This fulfilled Isaiah’s Old Testament prophecy that Jesus would make His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death (CP Isa 53:9). The Jews intended that Jesus be buried along with the two criminals who were crucified with Him (CP Jn 19:31), but Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, prevailed upon Pilate to give him Jesus’ body and he put it in his own new, unused tomb, thus fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy. (See also comments on Jn 19:31).

28:19-20 *(A) Is this a command to the church, or a commission, as so many believe?*

It is the responsibility of every believer in the New Testament church to win souls to Christ. That is the Christian calling. It is not an option for believers, but a command that has to be obeyed: Christ has commanded it (CP Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 1:6-8; 10:42-43; 1Cor 9:16-17). Christ’s directive to His followers in Mt 28 and Mk 16 has been termed the *Great Commission* in the contemporary church, but

that term is a misnomer. Christ's directive is more than a commission – it is a command as Ac 10:42-43 and 1Cor 9:16-17 clearly teach. A commission can be rejected – and there are many in the contemporary church who do not see that winning souls to Christ is a duty incumbent upon them personally – but a command has to be obeyed, and we can only prove our love for Christ and ensure our place in His eternal kingdom by obeying His commands (CP Psa 119:9, 16, 24, 47, 77, 174; Mt 19:17; Jn 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:10; 1Cor 7:19; 1Jn 2:3-5; 3:22-24; 5:2-3; 2Jn 6; Rev 22:14). All those scriptures teach the same thing: if we love Jesus and want to ensure our place in His eternal kingdom we will obey His commands (commands and commandments mean essentially the same thing). The word *observe* in Mt 28:18 means obey, fulfil a duty. If we are to teach new converts to Christ how important it is to obey His word then we must obey it too. Mt 28:19-20 highlights our responsibility to safeguard the teachings of scripture and commit them to those we win to Christ.

The command to believers is “Go ye”. *Ye* is plural, which means that each and every one of us, not only those in public ministry, as many in the contemporary church think, has to go and preach the gospel and win souls to Christ (CP Ac 8:4; 11:19-21). These were ordinary, everyday believers here who took the gospel that saved them to others who were not saved, exactly as Jesus commanded us to do in Mt 28 and Mk 16. *Teach* in Mt 28:19 (KJV) means literally *make disciples*. Making disciples means winning souls to Christ. So the clear command to every believer in the New Testament church in Mt 28:18-20 and Mk 16:15-16 is to go and win souls to Christ, baptize them, and teach them – among other things – that they in turn must also win souls to Christ (CP 1Pe 2:9). Knowing that the gospel saves is not something believers can keep to themselves. It has to be shared with those who are not saved (CP Lu 8:16-18). Jesus warns us to take heed to what He says here: we have not been given the light of Divine truth for it to be obscured by our business or domestic affairs, but we are to proclaim it for others to hear, and whoever does this will be given more light, while those who do not will lose even what little light they have. We need to heed this warning - it is for our admonition also. Only faithful hearers and doers of His word can be Jesus' disciples. There is no such person in God's order of things as a silent witness. Everyone who is saved must bear witness to the Saviour (CP Mt 12:30). Jesus makes it quite clear here that there is no neutrality in Christianity. If Christians are not actively involved in doing the work of the gospel for Christ, then they are actively involved in doing the work of the devil in opposition to Christ. That is what this scripture means: anyone not doing the work of God as commanded by Jesus is doing the work of the devil, and it is hardly likely that anyone doing the work of the devil in this life will rule and reign with Christ in the next life (CP Mt 7:21-27; Lu 6:46-49; 11:27-28; 13:22-30). Jesus clearly teaches here against professing faith in Him for salvation without doing the work of His word.

Many Christians in the contemporary church do not properly understand that what Jesus teaches here applies to every professing Christian who is not doing

the work of God's word. It does not apply to those outside the church. It applies to those inside the church who profess to love Christ but do not obey His commandments. They will forfeit their salvation. We cannot play down this meaning because this is what is taught throughout the New Testament (CP Mt 12:30; Jn 15:5-6, 10; Ro 2:7-11, 13; Ga 6:7-8; Jas 1:22-25; 2:14-26). Let us find out now what value God has put on souls going to hell (CP Jn 12:23-26; 1Pe 3:18). The life of our Lord Jesus Christ is the value God has put on souls going to hell – His life for their life (CP Jn 3:14-18). This was the purpose of the cross. Jesus said “...if I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto me” (CP Jn 12:32-33). Once we fully appreciate that Christ died for all sinners, not only us who are saved, and that there are countless lost souls going to hell without our witness to His saving grace, winning souls to Christ will become the most important part of our Christian walk, as Jesus means it to be. Everything else in the life of the church is simply a consequence of winning souls to Christ. It is an urgent matter. Jesus and Paul both taught the urgency in getting souls saved (CP Lu 9:59-60). Jesus is not being insensitive to the propriety of funerals here, but is teaching against procrastination - deferring or putting off taking the gospel out into the world and winning souls to Christ (CP Jn 4:34-38). Here again Jesus warns us against putting off taking the gospel out into a world of sinners waiting to be saved (CP Jn 9:4 with Jude 21-23). *Day* in Jn 9:4 signifies life and *night* signifies death. Believers are to take the gospel out now because soon it will be too late (CP 2Cor 6:2). *Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation (CP 2Ti 4:2). Paul's command to Timothy here is for our admonition too. It teaches us that we must be in a constant state of readiness to win souls to Christ whether we consider it to be an opportune time or not, and whether we feel like it or not.

It needs to be restated here that Christ has assigned to every believer in the New Testament church the responsibility to preach the gospel and be a soul winner for Him (CP 2Cor 5:18-20). It is obligatory upon us to get as many sinners saved as possible (CP Ro 1:14-15). As Paul was a debtor to the lost, so are we (CP Eph 2:10). This teaches us that God has saved us to serve Him, and He expects every one of us to bear fruit for Him (CP Lu 8:4-18; Jn 15:2, 5, 8, 16; Ro 1:13; Col 1:3-6). Fruit in this context is used metaphorically of souls won to Christ. The gathering of lost souls is also compared to harvesting grain in scripture (CP Psa 126:5-6; Mt 9:37-38; Jn 4:35). Christ demands that our fruit be commensurate with what He has invested in us (CP Mt 25:14-30; Mk 11:12-14, 20-21; Lu 19:11-26). Christ cursed the fig tree that failed to produce fruit in Mk 11, and He condemned the unfaithful servants who failed to show results in their life as stewards while their master was absent in Mt 25 and Lu 19, and while those scriptures do not refer to soul winning specifically, nevertheless, soul winning is included in Christ's investment in us by way of the variety of gifts and graces He has bestowed upon us, represented by the talents in the parable of the talents, and the word of God He has committed to each and every one of us, represented by the pound in the parable of the pounds (CP 2Cor 5:18-20). How we use our talents and God's word in this life will determine

our eternal destination in the next life (CP Ga 6:7-8). When He comes again Jesus will reward everyone according to their works (CP 1Cor 3:8-15; Rev 22:12). See also comments on Mt 3:10, 12:30; Lu 19:11-27; Jn 15:2, 15:4-6, 15:16 Ac 11:19-21; Ro 1:13; 2Cor 5:18-19 and author's studies *The Christian Calling – Winning Souls to Christ* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, Chosen by God?** in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, and *Redeeming the Time – Winning Souls to Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

(B) What is the real significance of water baptism, and who is authorized to do it?

Jesus gave three distinct and separate commands here, and He stipulated baptism second to salvation in order of importance. That means that as soon as repentant sinners acknowledge their need of salvation they are to be baptized, and then, after they have been baptized we are to teach them the way of God and how necessary it is to conform to His way. These commands are directed to the entire New Testament church, not only those in public ministry (CP Mk 16:15-16). Every Christian has been authorized in Mt 28:19-20 and Mk 16:15-16 to get saved, to baptize, and to teach repentant sinners the way of God, and it is incumbent upon every Christian to do so. Sadly though most contemporary Christians do not do this and we are remiss in our sacred duty to God's word for not doing so. Generally, it is left up to the church leaders to baptize new converts, which invariably means that baptisms then have to fit in with church timetables. This should not be. Sinners do not have to be taken to church to get saved and neither do repentant sinners have to be taken to church to get baptized. This is not denigrating church-held baptismal services, but directing the church's attention to the biblical pattern for baptizing new converts, which is the example we should follow. Baptism is the repentant sinners' pledge of a good conscience – inward cleanliness – toward God, a conscience reconciled to God by the repentant sinners' new-found faith in the resurrected Christ and the salvation benefits He has purchased for them with His blood (CP 1Pe 3:18-21). Obeying Jesus' command to be baptized is the repentant sinners' first act of obedience to God's word and it should not be delayed wherever water is available and the new convert is able to be baptized. Jesus placed baptism second to salvation in order of importance in God's redemptive plan. The first century church followed this order and we should too (CP Ac 2:36-42). You will notice in V41 here that those who received the gospel for their salvation were baptized immediately thereafter "...then they that gladly received His word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls". When the Jews asked Peter "...what shall we do?", he told them to repent and be baptized. He did not mean that salvation depended upon being baptized – he was simply restating what Jesus commanded the church to do. Notice also the order of events in this passage of scripture: first, they were won to Christ (CP V37-38); second, they were baptized (CP V41); third,

they were taught (CP V42) – exactly as Jesus commanded in Mt 28:19-20 (CP Ac 8:12, 36-38).

It is obvious here that Philip stressed the importance of baptism as part of his gospel message to the Ethiopian Eunuch because as soon as he saw water in V36, the Eunuch asked to be baptized – he knew it to be an integral part of God's redemptive plan, and immediately he confessed his new-found faith in Jesus, Philip baptized him, and that is the pattern throughout all the other scripture references to water baptism by the first century church in the book of Acts (CP Ac 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:1-7). As soon as repentant sinners acknowledged their need of salvation they were baptized. Baptism does not have to be a public ceremony to be valid in God's eyes. The Ethiopian Eunuch in Ac 8:36-38 was baptized privately, and his baptism was no less valid than that of the three thousand who got baptized on the day of Pentecost in Ac 2:41. None of this is teaching that water baptism saves. It does not, as Peter clearly teaches in 1Pe 3:18-21, but it is to remind the church that to be an effective witness for Christ we must conform strictly to His way, not ours, and that means that we have to instruct repentant sinners that the next step after acknowledging their need of salvation is to be baptized as their pledge of a good conscience toward God and the affirmation of their new-found faith in the resurrected Christ and the salvation benefits He has purchased for them with His blood.

It should be noted here that Paul does not have water baptism in view in Ro 6:3-4 as so many in the contemporary church believe (CP Ro 6:3-4). This baptism is by the Holy Spirit of repentant sinners at their conversion, into Christ and into His body – the church. This is when repentant sinners are born again spiritually and have the power of sin over their lives broken, which is the "newness of life" Paul refers to in V4. We really need to study the complete context in which V3-4 are spoken to better understand what they teach (CP Ro 6:1-23).

By keeping V3-4 in their proper context we see that being baptized into Christ is the basis for the repentant sinner's power to live a Godly life in Christ. The "newness of life" Paul refers to in V4 speaks of a new life imparted by the Holy Spirit at their new birth, which is a motivating energy, providing both the desire and the power for repentant sinners to live a Godly life in Christ. That is the theme of Paul's teaching right throughout scripture (CP 1Cor 12:12-14). Here the church is called *Christ* and is compared to a human body with its many members. This shows how the church is constituted – it teaches us how the Holy Spirit united us with Jesus as members of His church when we were converted to Christ. It was when we surrendered our life to Christ that we identified with His death, burial, and resurrection and were born again spiritually and the power of sin over our lives was broken – not when we were baptized in water, as so many believe Ro 6:3-4 teaches (CP Eph 4:1-6). This is another scripture many in the church also believe refers to water baptism, but it too refers to the baptism of repentant sinners into Christ. Paul illustrates for us here the sevenfold spiritual unity of God and man: one

body – the church; one Holy Spirit; one hope of our calling; one Lord; one faith; one baptism, and one God. In V1-3 Paul exhorts the church to be unified in the Spirit because, as he points out in V4-6, there is only one body in Christ, which is the church, and we were all baptized into that one body. Other scriptures referred to as teaching water baptism are Ga 2:20; 3:26 and Col 2:12, but again when kept in the context in which they were spoken, it soon becomes apparent that

they are not referring to water baptism either, but to the only baptism that saves – the baptism by the Holy Spirit of repentant sinners into Christ, and into His body, the church (CP Ga 2:20; 3:26-27; Col 2:8-13). It is the element one is baptized into which determines what kind of baptism it is. (See also comments on Mk 16:16; Ro 6:3-5; Eph 4:4-6; Col 2:12; 1Pe 3:20-21 and author's study *Water Baptism* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.)