

NOTES ON NEW TESTAMENT READINGS

Jan. 1

Matthew ch. 1

July 2

Both Matthew and Luke give the genealogy of Christ, the first enumerating forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ; the second giving seventy-five generations from Christ to Adam. Thus, allowing for the twenty generations from Abraham to Adam, there is still a discrepancy in the numbers. This is accounted for by the fact that Matthew gives the legal line and Luke the actual line leading to Joseph. It will be seen that both lead to Mattan (Matthat Luke ch.3 v. 24) and whilst Matthew gives Jacob as his son, Luke gives Heli. Jacob had no son so Heli's son Joseph followed the law of succession. No genealogy is given of Mary, but she also was of David's house (Rom. ch.1 v.3).

The Virgin Birth

From the very beginning, the plan of redemption had indicated a virgin birth. In the books of Moses and in the Psalms and the Prophets (all of which Christ said spoke of him) it had been foretold.

In Gen. ch.3 v.15 it was specifically the seed of the woman which should bruise the seed of the serpent. In the Psalms (which are often prophetic and in many cases particularly of Christ, e.g. Ps. 22) there are two references to saving "the son of thine handmaid." (Psalm 86 v.16 and Ps. 116 v.16). As it was not usual to speak of descent through the mother, the statement is important, especially when Mary applies the phrase to herself: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." Matthew (ch. 1 v.23) quotes the passage from the prophets (Isa. ch. 7 v.14) foretelling the virgin birth.

The virgin birth was a necessity in the plan of redemption. It was necessary that one born of human kind should be able to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice (be bruised in the heel – Gen. ch. 3 v.15) to gain the victory over sin and death (the bruising in the head of the seed of the serpent – Gen. 3 v.15).

Therefore a seed was provided by God, "born of a woman" and thus "able to be tempted in all points like as we are," yet not born of the

will of man, but of the power of God (Luke ch. 1 v.35) and so of a character that could remain sinless.

Thus Jesus was called both son of man and son of God (or Emmanuel). Because he was the former, he came under the Edenic sentence, but “death could not hold him” and so by a resurrection he became “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. ch.1 v.18), the risen Saviour (or Jesus) who should save his people from their sins.

Matthew ch. 2

It is logical that the whole of the life of the Anointed Saviour (or Christ Jesus) should be given prophetically. Thus his birthplace (Micah ch. 5 v.2), his mission (Isa. ch. 61 v.1-3), his death (Isa. ch. 53) and resurrection (Psalm 16 v.10) and future glory (Psalm 2 v.7-12).

“Out of Egypt have I Called My Son”

This was spoken first in relation to Israel (Hosea ch.11 v.1; Ex. 4 v.22). It is now applied to the future saviour of “all Israel” (i.e. faithful ones of natural Israel and spiritual Israel) – the beloved son. It is therefore applied to those “taken out of the Gentiles” (spiritually called “Sodom and Egypt” Rev. ch.11 v.8) to be constituted “a people for His name (Acts ch. 15 v.14).

“He Shall be Called a Nazarene

The word “Nazarene” must not be confused with “Nazarite” (a separated one) – a name applied to those under the Law of Moses who performed a vow. No direct prophecy contains the word Nazarene, but this word comes from the Hebrew meaning “a branch.” Jesus is called “a righteous branch” (Jer. ch.23 v.5) and therefore called a Nazarene.

Jan. 2

Matthew ch. 3

July 3

John the Baptist

Separated (see Matt. ch.2 – Nazarite) from his mother’s womb and commanded to abstain from wine – but we are not told whether all the conditions appertaining to a Nazarite were required of him. Fuller

details of his life will be dealt with from Luke's Gospel ... but we note the double purpose of his mission; (1) to announce the coming of Christ and (2) to prepare a people by demanding repentance (i.e. a change of mind) and a public confession of a need for cleansing from sin (i.e. by baptism).

Pharisees and Sadducees

Pharisees (so called from the Hebrew word "perushim" meaning separated). They held that the "oral law," or accumulation of interpretations of, and decisions on, the Law of Moses were equal in authority to the written Law (contained the first five books of the Bible). These "traditions" had made "of none effect" many of the laws (e.g. they observed and enjoined upon others much washing of hands, garments and utensils, but neglected the cleansing of heart and mind of evil thoughts, desires and intents (Matt. ch. 23 v.25 etc.).

Sadducees The word means "just" or "righteous". They denied the existence of an oral (or unwritten) law, but embracing some of the teaching of Greek philosophy, they taught the doing of good without any regard to a reward. This developed into a denial of the resurrection and of the existence of angels (Matt. ch.22 v.23 etc.) The Pharisees were thus astray on practice and the Sadducees on doctrine.

Baptism of Jesus

For the purpose of being cleansed from actual sins there was no need for Christ to be baptised. His baptism, therefore, was (1) an acknowledgment that He was of human, or defiled nature, which needed cleansing, and (2) as an example of what was required and necessary in the case of all who would follow Him and His disciples.

Matthew ch. 4

The Tempter

Temptation can come from within or without. From within it is an evil suggestion engendered in the thoughts of the mind, and from without it is an evil prompting by another. In both cases the suggestion to do evil is contrary to the commands of God, that is to say, it either tempts one to "step over the line" marked out (the meaning of diabolos which is translated devil) and thus transgress

(which means “pass over”), or to oppose and thus be adverse to (the meaning of Satan is adversary) the word of God. Both forms of temptation only succeed where the suggestion is nourished and allowed to grow (James ch.1 v.14 etc.).

The temptation of Jesus could have been suggested by an outside tempter, but much more forcibly and effectively by suggestions from the mind.

1st Temptation. Christ knew that He could turn stones into bread by the power of the Holy Spirit. The temptation lay in the fact that He had the power and it would be an apparently innocent display that He was God’s Son.

2nd Temptation. Christ knew that Psalm 91 v.11 etc. had been written in reference to himself. The temptation lay in the fact that here was an opportunity to show to many that this was so, for surely as a result many would believe on Him.

3rd Temptation. Christ knew that the kingdoms of this world had been promised to him (Psalm 2 v.7-8). The temptation was for Him to avoid humiliation, suffering and death (written concerning Him in Isa. ch.53) and lead a willing people against the Romans.

The temptations were always resisted by an application of what had been written.

The Synagogue

Jesus (and Paul afterwards) commenced His ministry in the synagogue. This was a building wherein civil and religious activities could take place.

During six days in the week it was used as a school, a court (where offences were judged) and a meeting place. On the seventh day (or Sabbath) there was a public reading from the scrolls of the Law and prayers were made. Some of the officers who had some work or office to perform are mentioned in the New Testament.

The elders were the local Sanhedrin or court.

The chief elder was the ruler of the synagogue

(Matt. ch.9 v.18).

The delegate was the reader of the prayers.

The interpreter translated the reading from Hebrew into Aramaic.

The minister had charge of the rolls of the Law (Luke ch.4 v.2).

Jan. 3

Matthew ch. 5

July 4

The Jews (including the disciples) were still under the law of Moses. Christ came to fulfil it (i.e. to complete it). What the law could not do (i.e. give everlasting life), Christ by His perfect sacrifice achieved. The discourse in this chapter sets forth the higher demands of the law of Christ inasmuch as it was related to “better things.”

The law of Moses forbade killing – the law of Christ forbade angry thoughts.

The law of Moses forbade adultery – the law of Christ forbade thoughts of adultery.

Divorce

In this chapter Jesus combats the Pharisaic “traditions” on this subject. The law (Deut. ch.24 v.1) allows divorce (or putting away) for one reason. This was premarital uncleanness – or fornication. A different Hebrew word is used for adultery, and under the law this was punishable by death. (The Pharisees allowed divorce for any cause.)

The law also allowed divorce where a Hebrew had married a captive maid (Deut. ch.21 v.11-14), but this could not be applicable in the time of Christ as the Jews were themselves tributary to the Romans.

Christ therefore upheld the Edenic condition of one man, one wife; with us – no divorce and remarriage. Paul teaches that it is possible for two to separate in certain cases (1 Cor. Ch.7 v.12 etc.), but again – no remarriage.

Doing good to all men, even our enemies. (This will be dealt with under the heading of the Good Samaritan.)

Jan. 4

Matthew ch. 6

July 5

The Lord's Prayer

This is not necessarily a prayer for public or private repetition. Jesus said: "After this manner pray ye." It nevertheless is a model of what is acceptable prayer to God. It commences by (a) an ascription to God of His greatness and the greatness of His name (v.9). Our translation fails to bring out the meaning of the many names used in relation to God and the angels. Very briefly, the chief names used are (1) El, meaning "mighty one" and usually translated God or god; (2) Elohim, meaning "mighty ones" and usually translated gods; (3) Jehovah or Yahweh, meaning "He who is," and always translated LORD or GOD. God made himself known to Moses by the name Yahweh (or Jehovah) – Exodus ch.3 v.14 – and in the words Yahweh asher Yahweh ("I am that I am," or better still, "I will be who I will be") God gives a name which enshrines His purpose with man, namely, that his divine nature should be manifested in others upon whom he would bestow it. Jesus has been given this gift of immortality and thus is called "the beginning," (Col. ch.1 v.18).

Then follows in the prayer (v.10) a desire for the completion of God's plan and purpose, (v.11) a request for the necessities of this present life, (v.12) a prayer for the forgiveness of sins, and (v.13) a request for guidance and help in times of trial.

Warning Against Ostentation Righteous acts are not to be advertised or made the subject of boasting. The giving of alms, whether of money, goods, or of time and labour, and the offering of prayers or the observation of fasting are all to be in secret.

The Eye In v.22 the eye is used figuratively for perceiving. The genuine disciple sees clearly the true value of things. Earthly things are temporal, heavenly things are eternal. Undue striving after the first (i.e. serving mammon or riches) may cause one to lose the second. Jesus therefore counsels his disciples not to be unduly anxious over the things of this life (God will provide all that is necessary), and each day brings sufficient anxieties, or evils, without anticipating them.

Jan. 5**Matthew ch. 7****July 6**

v.3. “Mote” and “beam” are two old English words. “Mote” means a speck of dust and “beam” means a large piece of timber. The lesson is clearly given in v.5.

v.6. The pearl of great price is the knowledge of the Kingdom of God. But pearls are not food for pigs, therefore do not expect everyone to appreciate the value of this knowledge, and so exercise discretion in presenting it.

v.12. The “golden rule.” If we expect and are pleased to receive gifts, service and help, we must be prepared to give to others. Likewise, as we dislike to receive injury, reproach, scoffing or any kind of evil, so we must refrain from subjecting others to these.

v.21. Mere profession of service to God is unavailing. It is like building a house on sand (v.26). “The Lord looketh on the heart,” and deeds are a true index of discipleship. Jesus will reward every man according as his works shall be (Rev. ch.22 v.12). The works which will be approved are:-

- (1) Conquering one’s evil thoughts and propensities.
- (2) Showing love, compassion and consideration to all men.
- (3) Learning the doctrines of “the Truth.”
- (4) Preaching to others as opportunity occurs.
- (5) Being fervent in prayer and obedient to the commands.
- (6) Being watchful of the “signs of the times.”
- (7) Learning to be content with simple things.

Jan. 6**Matthew ch. 8****July 7****Miracles**

These testified two things concerning Jesus.

- (1) That he was the one spoken of by the prophets (Isa. ch. 61 v.1 etc.). John sent two of his disciples to ask, “Art thou he that

should come?" (i.e. Art thou the Messiah?) and Jesus answered by showing them that the blind received their sight and the lame walked etc. (Matt. ch.11 v.5).

- (2) That his doctrines were not of man but of God (John ch.10 v.37; John ch.7 v.16.) When the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts ch.2 v.4), the miracles they performed were "to confirm the word," or to prove that they spoke by the same power by which they performed the miracles.

Devils

There are two Greek words which are translated by this word. They are diabolos (see note to Matt. ch.4) and daimonion. The latter word is used here. Greek philosophy taught the existence of spirit beings intermediate between their gods and men, and to these they attributed powers (usually evil) of producing diseases of mind and body. It was customary to refer to one having these afflictions as being possessed with a devil – even as today we speak of a lunatic (i.e. supposedly under the influence of the moon), or of having influenza (i.e. supposedly under the influence of the stars) without necessarily believing in the actuality of such. That this is the way to understand the allusions see Matt. ch.9 v.32 etc.

Jan. 7

Matthew ch. 9

July 8

Faith Healing

The mind can exercise great power over the body. Cases have been known where the mind, as expressed in its will power or determination, has caused a disease to be cured, and conversely, persons have willed their own death. Examples of such are the result of their "faith" or will power.

The case of the palsied man shows that Christ's miracles were performed because he had the power to heal, for it is to be noted that it was in response to the faith of the four men (Mark ch.2 v.3) who carried him that he was healed. The faith of the palsied man does not enter into it.

Again, the raising of the ruler's daughter (v.18, v.25) was a reward of the father's faith. It could not have been that of the dead child, and in the case of the widow's son at Nain (Luke ch.7 v.11 etc.) no expression of faith was required or received.

The disciples were given this gift to heal temporarily (Matt. ch.10 v.1, 8) after the day of Pentecost, and again, the cures performed were not the result of "faith" on the part of those healed (e.g. Acts ch.3 v.5-6). Claims to heal by faith today are no evidence of the possession of the Holy Spirit. The powers given by the possession of this in the first century ceased when there was no longer need for a testimony to the truth of the word preached.

Fasting

There is no commandment to do this. It is a voluntary act, and may be done for health reasons, or as an act of asceticism (1 Cor. ch.8 v.8 and ch.9 v.3-4).

Jan. 8

Matthew ch. 10

July 9

The Twelve

Luke tells us that Jesus prayed all night before choosing the disciples (ch.6 v.12). Of those chosen, all were Galileans except Judas Iscariot (Iscariot comes from Kerioth – a village in Judea). Andrew (and in all probability, John – John ch.1 v.35,40) was a disciple of John the Baptist. Little is known of James the son of Alphaeus, of Lebbaeus, of Bartholomew or of Simon the Canaanite, beyond their names. The last was also called Simon Zelotes (Luke ch.6.15) and had therefore previously belonged to the Zelots or those who would have no dealings with the Romans, and were prepared actively to fight against them.

The Coming of the Son of Man (v.23)

This is not to be confused with the second coming of Christ. The disciples did not suffer the persecution spoken of in v.17-18 until they themselves went forth, after Christ's death, to preach in Judea and Samaria at the end of Christ's ministry (Matt. ch.24v.9). They were

also told to watch for the setting up of the abomination of desolation (Matt. ch.24 v.15) as a warning of the coming persecution.

This abomination was set up by the Romans after A.D.70, who scattered the Jews and destroyed Jerusalem (Luke ch.21 v.24) and thereby destroyed the “body of Moses,” or the constitution under the Mosaic law. When thus the Roman eagles were gathered about “the body” or “carcase” (Matt. ch.24 v.27-28) it was really the outpouring of Divine judgement at their hands, as had been foretold by Christ (Matt. ch.23 v.37-38). All power having been given to Christ (Matt. ch.28 v.18) this visitation is spoken of as the coming of the Son of Man. The second coming or personal return of Christ is at the end of the Gentile times (Luke ch.21 v.24 etc.).

Jan. 9

Matthew ch. 11

July 10

John the Baptist The imprisonment of John had caused him to wonder whether Jesus was the Christ. The miracles which Jesus did were an answer to the question, “Art thou he that should come?” Then follows Christ’s testimony to John. He was the messenger to prepare the way, and as such there was none greater.

In what way was he the Elias (Elijah) who was to come? The coming of Elijah “before the great and terrible day of the Lord” was prophesied by Malachi (ch.4 v.5). It must therefore refer to a future work of Elijah. Upon his first mission Elijah succeeded for a short time in “turning the hearts of the fathers to the children” when the “family” of Israel called out “The Lord he is the God.” (1 Kings ch.18 v.39)

For a short time John, who came “in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” (Luke ch.1 v.17) succeeded so far as the house of Judah was concerned, for there went out to him “Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan.” (Matt. ch.3 v.5). In this Elijah was a type of John (or, as we say, John was an antitypical Elijah.) Thus Elijah must still come to the whole house of Israel to unite them as a family and to lead a purged and purified people back to their own land at the second coming of Christ.

My Yoke is Easy A yoke is the bar of wood borne upon the shoulders of man or beast. A yoke which fitted did not chafe or rub. The word translated “easy” should rather be translated “good” or “gracious.” Christ’s commands are good and gracious to those who will receive them and who do not chafe against them or consider them irksome.

Jan. 10

Matthew ch. 12

July 11

Beelzebub Beelzebub or Baal-zebub means “the god of the flies.” The Pharisees had received from pagan sources a belief in “evil spirits,” attributing them to the service of Beelzebub, and to counter the approbation of Christ among the ordinary people, they attributed His power to heal diseases (or “cast out devils”) to this lord of spirits. It was a denial of the power of the spirit of God (or the Holy Spirit) as manifested through Jesus, and as such constituted the greatest of blasphemies – a sin which could not be forgiven. It moreover affirmed (wrongly, of course), that Jesus, the one “who went about doing good,” was subject to this supposed lord of evil. These affirmations were made through envy and malice, and shows why these supposed “righteous ones” were condemned as hypocrites.

Judgement of Nineveh (v.41) Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum (cities of Israel) are compared adversely with Tyre and Sidon and Sodom (cities of the Gentiles) and the generation to whom Christ preached is compared adversely with the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba. It is said that on the day of judgement it will be more tolerable for the latter people and cities than for the former. Does this mean that there will be a universal resurrection to judgement? This is not countenanced in other parts of Scripture, e.g. Isaiah says of “other lords” – “they are deceased, they shall not rise” (Isa. ch.26 v.13-14). The original Greek in Matthew has a judgement and not the judgement, and thus means that in passing a judgement upon these cities and persons, the towns and people of Christ’s day were more guilty because Christ had been among them giving them an opportunity which the others lacked.

Jan. 11**Matthew ch. 13****July 12**

Mysteries The word mystery is not used in the sense of something which cannot be understood, but in the sense of being hidden for the time. Paul speaks of the mystery which had been hidden but which now in his time had been made manifest (Col. ch.1 v.26). He writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ch.4 v.1): “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” What are these mysteries?

- (1) The mysteries of God (Col. ch. 2 v.2) must surely be those things concerning himself, which can only be revealed by himself in his Word. Therein is revealed his omnipotence (all powerful), omnipresence (ever present), omniscience (infinite knowledge), the almightiness by which the universe was created and is sustained. It declares his love and his severity, his great plan of redemption and the ultimate glory of this earth.
- (2) The mystery of Christ (Eph. ch.3 v.4) is the unique relationship between God the Father and His beloved Son. Though born of a woman and therefore son of man, Jesus was begotten by the “power of the Highest” and was thus Son of God. Though he could be tempted in all points, yet he remained without sin and could therefore offer himself as an unblemished “lamb of God,” an acceptable and perfect sacrifice to take away sin. And being perfected by a resurrection and the receipt of the gift of everlasting life, he now sits at the right hand of the Father (Acts ch.7 v.55) until the day appointed when he will return to bestow the gift of everlasting life on those followers who have proved themselves worthy.
- (3) The mystery of godliness (or god-like-ness) (1 Tim. ch.3 v.16) is bound up in the promise God made through Moses that he would be manifested in a multitude, who collectively represent the bride of Christ (Rev. ch.19 v.7-8), and who, being made “equal to the angels to die no more,” can be

forever united to him. This “divine nature” which emanates from God is the glory promised to Christ and by him to his disciples (John ch.17 v.5, 22) so that in this respect all are one.

- (4) The mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. ch.2 v.7) discloses the uprise of “the man of sin” who should exalt himself as if he were God. The system over which this man of sin presides can be identified by 1 Tim. ch.4 v.3. The full development of Catholicism (called Roman because its father (Pope) sits in Rome) was delayed until Pagan Rome was taken away in the early years of the 4th century and the State religion of the Roman Empire became nominally Christian. From that time the Roman Catholic system developed, and from her all the sects and denominations of Christendom came. This is the system described in Revelation ch.17 where she is called “The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth,” whilst in 1555 Pope Julius 111 won the Papal crown with the word “mystery” inscribed upon it (Rev. ch.17 v.5).

Jan. 12

Matthew ch. 14

July 13

The Scriptures contain seeming discrepancies which are not explained. Frequently, however, another passage adequately explains the matter. These undesigned explanations are among the strongest testimonies to the truth of the Scriptures.

Matthew says (ch.14 v.15) that the multitude of 5,000 men were in a desert place, whereas Mark says they sat upon the green grass (Mark ch.6 v.39) and John says there was “much grass” in the place (John ch.6 v.10). This seeming contradiction is explained by a reference to the time when the miracle took place. John says “the Passover was nigh,” and this is the only time when for a few weeks there is green grass. But where was the desert or desolate place, and how could so many be gathered there?

Neither Mark nor John tell us, but Luke says it was near Bethsaida (North end of the Sea of Galilee). Now this is not a populous part of Galilee (hence deserted place), but the numbers are explained by the

fact that all of Israel over 12 years old were required to keep the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, and they collected together as they journeyed south. It also explains why Jesus asked Philip, and not any of the others, from whence he might buy bread, for Philip came from Bethsaida and he therefore should know.

Jan. 13

Matthew ch. 15

July 14

The Scribes

They were condemned by Jesus along with the Pharisees (see notes for Matt. ch.3). They were not so much a sect as a body of men holding an office. They were originally those who copied (a scribe, a writer) the Scriptures and were custodians of them. Later they were consulted as to their meaning and eventually they became teachers of them. Many of the Scribes therefore belonged to one of the two great branches (or schools) of the Pharisees, and therefore supported the “traditions” or interpretations of the law held by these. One is given here (v.4). Christ shows that the command of Exodus ch.20 v.12 and the spirit of the command is to honour in all ways father and mother. But they taught that a son could neglect the supporting of father and mother in order to offer a gift to the synagogue or temple. This was far from honouring parents.

A further tradition is mentioned in v.20, for the Pharisees did not eat unless they had first washed, lest they should be ceremonially unclean. Though Christ does not advocate uncleanness, he shows that the vital matter was not what entered into a man by eating or drinking, but what came from within – from the mind and heart. If the evils of v.19 were manifest in a man, then he was indeed unclean despite all washing of hands, feet or body.

Jan. 14

Matthew ch. 16

July 15

The acknowledgment of Peter that Jesus was the Messiah (“Messiah” is Hebrew and “Christ” is from the Greek – they both mean “Anointed One”) and the Son of God, brought forth the statement of v.18. This has been used by the Roman Catholics to assert that their church was founded by Peter and is, therefore, Christ’s church. From v.19 they

also claim that when sins are confessed to one of their “priests” they can be forgiven.

The first claim is based on something which cannot be proved, namely that Peter was ever in Rome and that he founded a church there. To support the claim they teach that Simon’s name was here changed to Peter (meaning a stone) and that when Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church,” he implied that it should be built upon Peter. But the Greek words are not quite the same. The first – petros – means “a little stone,” and the second – petra – means “a Rock.” Moreover, Jesus did not here name Simon by the name Peter, it was already his name (Matt.ch.4 v.18). Jesus made a “play” upon the name by commending Peter for his true understanding of his position as the “Anointed son of God,” and stating that this true understanding (the confession) was the foundation of his church or ecclesia (called out ones). It is clear that this is so, for the New Covenant is centred in Christ and rests upon the fact that Christ was a son of man through Mary (and could therefore die) and yet son of God because God was his Father (Luke ch.1 v.35) and therefore “without sin,” so that “death could not hold him.” The gates of the grave (the Bible “hell”) could not prevail against him and now Christ has the keys of death and the grave (Rev. ch.1 v.18) and can unlock it. Moreover, the “keys” were not given exclusively to Peter (Matt. ch.18v.18). Both Peter and the apostles used these keys when preaching the Gospel first to Israel and then to the Gentiles (Acts ch.1 v.8).

Jan. 15

Matthew ch.17

July 16

The Transfiguration

The last verse of chapter 16 states that some of the disciples should see the son of man coming in his kingdom. We know that Christ will establish this at his second coming (Acts ch.3 v.20,21). What then, is the meaning of this statement? It is found in the opening verses of this 17th chapter. Peter, James and John saw Jesus in vision (v.9) glorified (v.2). Though Jesus was not yet made immortal, they saw him as if he were. Peter makes it quite plain in his second letter (2 Peter ch.1 v.16-18) where he says: “we were eyewitnesses of his majesty, “ or of his

kingship. The vision was a foretaste of the “honour and glory” of Christ as king over the kingdom of God.

The “lesson” of this vision was this. They, the apostles, had hitherto believed and obeyed the teaching of the law (given through Moses) and the prophets (represented by Elijah), but now they were to accept the teaching of Christ as of equal authority. “This is my beloved son, hear ye him.” (See note on Matt. ch.11 for explanation of v.10-13.)

Verse 15 shows what the “devil” really was which was cast out of the child.

Jan. 16

Matthew ch. 18

July 17

Hell Fire (v.9) This is a translation of the Greek word “Gehenna” and this was a place in the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem where the refuse of the city was thrown and burnt. Its fires never went out – until the casting of refuse ceased. It was therefore used as a symbol of burning until consumed and this symbolism agrees with the whole of v.8 & 9 which are symbolic. Christ does not teach that one should actually cut off a limb or cast out an eye; but rather should refrain from evil works (whether by hand – such as stealing, or by foot – such as entering places of evil, or from evil desires – such as coveting). If one does not refrain, then one is in danger of rejection at the judgement and – not being made immortal – of passing into the destruction of the grave.

Offences Against One Another Christ sets out a method of dealing with difficulties or wrongs between brethren. They are not to broadcast either actual or supposed wrong to others, but to speak personally to the one who has offended. Only upon a refusal to listen must one tell another, and then only for the purpose of arbitrating in the matter or witnessing the refusal – not for the purpose of securing a supporter. If this is not successful, then and only then, should the church (ecclesia) be told.

Jan. 1**Matthew ch. 19****July 18****Divorce (see notes on Matt. ch.5)**

Note that Jesus here states the marriage relationship intended from the beginning, v.6, v.8.

Riches: To be rich is not a sin. God has given riches to some of “the heroes of faith.” Abraham was a mighty prince (Gen. ch.23 v.6) and had great possessions (Gen. ch.24 v.35), but he set his heart not upon these, but on the great promises made to him (Gen. ch.12)

David had great wealth (1 Chron. ch.18 v.6), but he used it to show kindness even to Saul’s house and to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. Riches are given as a trust and we must use them, not for ourselves, but for God’s work and for others.

The rich young man was a ruler (Luke ch.18v.18), a godly man (Mark ch.10v.21), a zealous young man (Mark ch.10v.17), but he was not prepared to give up all his riches and follow Christ. He loved them more than he loved Christ. Those that have riches have great temptations to overcome (1 Tim. ch.6v.9-10).

There is no virtue in poverty. A man should seek to provide for himself and family and relations (2 Thess. ch.3v.10).

Jan. 18**Matthew ch. 20****July 19**

Parables These were stories of everyday life and customs used by Jesus to convey doctrine and teaching.

The parable of the vineyard teaches that whether our service to Christ is long or short, we shall receive a reward. But what is that reward here? It is represented by the “penny” which all get who have worked. It cannot here represent eternal life – for no-one given this would murmur because another received it. It can hardly refer to different degrees of honour in the Kingdom of God, though these will exist (Luke ch.19 v.17-19), for there will be no dissention among the rulers in that Kingdom. There is one thing all will have, who have

come to a knowledge of “the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,” and this is resurrection. This is a reward, for without it there is no possibility of obtaining eternal life. If one has worked to the best of their ability, the reward of eternal life will follow resurrection. For this Paul was zealous in the service of God (Phil.ch.3 v.10-11).

It is not always possible to find a meaning for every detail of a parable; some details are necessary to complete the story, but it is surprising how many details do have a meaning – e.g. in the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus (Luke ch.16v.19 etc.) the rich man asks that his “five brethren” be warned. Why five? Because there were six sects, or divisions, of the Pharisees. He represented one, and there were five others.

Jan. 19

Matthew ch. 21

July 20

Cursing the Fig Tree There are some who regard this as an unnecessary act. Some even look upon it as a vengeful act. Yet those who thus criticise would not hesitate to cut down a tree or plant to suit their purpose or even their whim. Two points must be remembered.

(1) The tree had leaves. This meant that it should have had fruit – even though the time of figs “was not yet (Mark ch.11v.13). It stood, therefore, as a symbol of those who make a pretence of doing things, of those who are not straight forward.

(2) It served as a lesson to the disciples concerning their faith. For a short time they had had power to heal (Luke ch.10v.17) and soon they were to receive the “gifts of the Spirit” on the day of Pentecost. If they had faith in this power which would be given them, they would be able to perform miracles of healing, and these would testify that they were apostles (or those who were sent) and would confirm the doctrine which they preached.

Authority v.23 The Pharisees, Sadducees etc. learned their “traditions” from respected teachers, or “rabbis,” and this gave them authority to teach. Jesus had “sat at the feet” of no rabbi and so they

disputed His authority. His knowledge, of course, was from God and His Word.

Jan. 20

Matthew ch. 22

July 21

The Herodians These were a section of the Jews who supported King Herod. The family of Herod were not Jews but Idumeans – the inhabitants of Edom. They were put into power by the Romans and therefore considered by the majority of the Jews to be friends with the enemy. They were really those Jews who endeavoured to secure power and wealth by friendship with those in power. The questions they asked had therefore to do with paying tribute to Caesar.

The coins in common use were issued by the Romans and had the image of the Emperor and his name and title stamped on them. This clearly showed that the coinage belonged to him (as head of the Empire) and that he could claim it. Jesus therefore confounds the Herodians by saying they should give to Caesar those things he could rightfully claim (see Rom.ch.13 v.7) but also give to God those things that belong to Him – service, obedience and even life. Christ's question to them concerning David's son put them, and especially the Pharisees, in a difficult position. They held and taught that the Messiah (or Christ) was David's son and therefore according to Jewish custom was subservient. Yet David, in prophecy, called him "Lord" (Psalm 110) and therefore acknowledged him to be greater. He was truly David's son through Mary, but greater than David because he was also Son of God.

Jan. 21

Matt. ch. 23

July 22

Phylacteries These were small boxes made of leather containing four pieces of parchment upon which were written the following messages: Exodus ch.13 v.1-10; Exodus ch.13 v.11-16; Deut. ch.6 v.4-9; Deut. ch.11 v.13-21. These were worn upon the forehead, being held in place by straps passed round the head, looped behind and the ends brought round over the shoulder. A smaller one was worn on the upper part of the left arm. This was done as a literal application of Exodus ch. 13 v.9.

In Christ's discourse against pride and ostentation, he denounced the Pharisees for making these broad or large as a sign of superior piety.

Proselytes These were Gentiles who accepted the teaching of the Law and believed in the God of Israel. They submitted to the act of circumcision and offered sacrifices and – in the period just before Christ – they were baptised. Throughout Old Testament times there had been voluntary proselytes, but under the Macabees compulsion was used, and immediately prior to Christ great efforts were made by the “Judaisers” to make converts – or proselytes.

Whited Sepulchres The Jews in the time of Christ buried their dead in caves cut into the rock. The entrance to the cave was whitewashed so that the purpose for which the cave was used was clear and no one should be “ceremonially defiled” by contact with a dead body (Num.19 v.11). Thus they appeared clean outwardly, yet they were, of course, places of corruption.

Jan. 22

Matthew ch. 24

July 23

Mount Olivet Prophecy The great admiration of the Jews for their temple received a shock when Christ foretold its destruction. It prompted the disciples to ask two questions: (1) When would the temple be overthrown? and (2) What should be the sign of Christ's coming and end of the world? (or constitution).

The first question was answered in v.1-28. The end was to be signalled by the setting up of an abomination of desolation. Such an abomination had been set up by Antiochus Epiphanes nearly two centuries before, but we have no certain knowledge of the exact abomination set up just prior to the fall of Jerusalem when the Romans brought to an end the Mosaic Age (the carcass of v.28) by their armies (eagles).

The second question was answered by the signs in the sun, moon and stars. The heavenly bodies are often used in the Scriptures as signs for ruling powers (Genesis ch.37 v.9-10). Another sign is given in the parable of v.30. The fig tree is used exclusively to represent Israel

(Joel ch.1 v.7), and the shooting forth of leaves symbolises the budding of Israel's nationalism. This was fulfilled in 1948 when the State of Israel was proclaimed.

The generation which should witness this event would not pass away until the Kingdom of God should be established (v.34). The present constitution of the kingdom of men (symbolised by the heavens and the earth) will pass away and the Kingdom of God will take its place (v.35). These are the new heavens and new earth spoken of by Peter (2 Peter ch.3 v.13).

Jan. 23

Matthew ch. 25

July 24

The three parables of this chapter represent the waiting, the working and the judgement of the disciples of Christ, but as a similar parable to the second occurs in Luke's Gospel, it can be left until later.

The Parable of the Virgins: It was the custom in Palestine at a wedding for the bridegroom to be accompanied on his journey to the house of the bride to claim her and then to take her (usually by torch-light, or lamplight procession) through the night to his own home. Those waiting for the bridegroom (Christ) are his friends (disciples), but as the time of his coming is not known exactly, they must be prepared to wait (and thus have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps). The oil symbolises the knowledge of God's Word (whereby the disciples are a light in the world) and if this Word is not continually read and more clearly understood, there is a great risk of the disciples not being ready for Christ when he comes.

The Judgement Seat: At the return of Christ, one of his first works will be the judgement of all to whom the Word of God has become known and understood. The judgement will not be upon everyone, for many will never have heard of Christ and will not have heard the invitation to believe and obey. Though Paul writes, "for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ" (Romans ch.14 v.10) the word "all" refers to those mentioned in Romans ch.1 v.7 – to those called to be saints (or separated ones).

Jan. 24**Matthew ch. 26****July 25**

Judas Iscariot It is possible that Judas was the only disciple who did not come from Galilee; for he probably came from Kerieth in Judea.

Early in Christ's ministry he went with another disciple, as they were sent two by two to preach and heal the sick. From this mission they "returned with joy." He was not of those who afterwards "walked no more" with Jesus, but continued right to the end: then why did he betray Jesus?

If indeed, Judas was from Judea, then the Kingly aspect of the Messiah would be uppermost, and since this must have been an element in Christ's Gospel message – the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God – there is reason to believe that Judas expected Christ to expel the Romans and establish the Kingdom of God then. When, however, Jesus spoke of his death at Jerusalem and by a parable (Luke ch.19 v.11 etc.) showed that it was in the future, Judas would feel disappointed, or defrauded, of the place he had hoped to have. Thus his readiness to betray Jesus.

The Bread and Wine The Catholic apostasy affirms that the bread and wine used to commemorate the death of Christ are actually changed into flesh and blood, and v.26 and 27 are quoted to support this. The phrases "this is my body" and "this is my blood" are Hebraisms for "this represents my body and blood." Christ says, "I am the vine," but no-one would affirm that Christ was actually the vine or the disciples the branches (John ch.15).

Jan. 25**Matthew ch. 27****July 26**

Quotations There is a very strong tradition that Matthew was written in Hebrew (or Aramaic) and especially for the Jewish converts. Consequently, he often refers to prophecies in the Old Testament which foretell the birth, life and death of Jesus. That there are very many references in the O.T. to Messiah and his coming, Jesus himself implies when he rebuked the disciples for not knowing that

which had been written in the Law of Moses, and in the Psalms and in the Prophets concerning himself (Luke ch.24 v.44).

Moses wrote of a prophet like himself (Deut. ch.18 v.15,16) – i.e. one who should proclaim a covenant (the new covenant) as he had proclaimed the old.

The Psalms spoke of his unique birth as Son of God , Psalm 2; of his Kingship over the whole world, Psalm 2; of his resurrection, Psalm 16; of his crucifixion ,Psalm 22; of his mission , Psalm 40; of his betrayal, Psalm 41; of his glory and beauty, Psalm 45; of his shame, Psalm 69; and of his Kingdom, Psalm 72.

The prophets showed in what family he should be born, Isaiah ch.11; the place of his birth, Micah ch. 5; his death and resurrection Isaiah ch.53; when he would commence his ministry and be “cut off” Daniel ch.9; when he would return Jeremiah ch.23, and the glories of his reign, Isaiah ch. 32. Thus the New Testament and Old Testament together give the “whole counsel of God.”

Jan. 26

Matthew ch. 28

July 27

Discrepancies

Critics and disbelievers of the Bible often say that there are contradictions and discrepancies in the Bible They quote as an example that whilst Matthew says there was one angel at the tomb, Luke says there were two. If the records are most carefully read, it will be seen that we really have two separate appearances. In Matthew the angel “sat upon the (rolled away) stone.” In Luke the angels appeared within the tomb (Luke ch.24 v.4). When Mary afterwards looked in the sepulchre she saw two.

In like manner Matthew tells us that the women after leaving the tomb saw Jesus and “held him by the feet,” whilst previously Mary Magdalene had been forbidden to touch him (John ch.20 v.17). There again is no discrepancy. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus (Mark ch.16 v.9) after he had risen, but had not yet “ascended to the Father,” i.e. he had not been changed from mortal to immortal – he had not “ascended” to the divine nature. Mary would have been ceremonially defiled (according to the Law of Moses) by touching a

body from the tomb. When Jesus, however, appeared unto the women, this change had been made. He was now immortal and no ceremonial defilement could take place. Jesus was now of angelic nature.

Angels It is to be noted that they always appear as “young men.” Since the righteous are to be “like the angels” it would seem that with their immortalisation will be a change also to youth and unblemished appearance.