

Matthew 12: 38-50

Reading with G. Davison

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In this section we have the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah of Israel before He turned away from them to introduce another aspect of the kingdom as outlined in Matthew 13.

It is the aspect of the kingdom which we know as Christianity.

Is it significant that in this rejection by Israel of their King, and before He as the Sower introduces in the next chapter the thought of something new, He should bring before them His own death?

I suppose you are referring to the sign of the prophet Jonas. There are three "greater" passages in this chapter, "greater than the temple" (v. 6); "greater than Jonas" (v. 41); and "greater than Solomon" (v. 42). He was "greater than the temple" because the revelation of God was shining out from Him at that moment. The display of light is the thought in the temple. "Greater than Jonas" relates to the effect of His death, and "greater than Solomon" to the glory that resulted as the fruit of His death.

It is a fact that whilst the Lord **pronounces** this judgment, the **basis** of the judgment will be His own death. The Lord Jesus introduces in the next chapter what is new, but the only way in which that could be substantially established is by His death. When they asked for a sign He spoke of His death, and **we** need to be brought back very definitely to the thought that everything hinges upon the death of Christ. We need ever to keep the cross in our thoughts. It was in this way God could move forward in the accomplishment of the secrets which were in His heart. Apart from the cross not one of us could have been blessed as we have been today.

Would there be a hint as to that which was new in the last few verses of this chapter?

I suppose you are referring to the break with His natural relations. It points to the definite break with Israel as a nation and the introduction of a completely new order of things. I believe the real transitional period began in Matthew 11, where we hear the Lord saying, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth". One of the things we learn from 1 Cor. 15 is that the natural is first and afterwards that which is spiritual. Having presented the kingdom according to promise and prophecy, the Lord is about to open up the kingdom in a spiritual way because Israel had refused the offer made to them in His ministry. We may point out that Matthew quotes more often from the Old Testament than the other evangelists, showing the kingdom as presented according to promise and prophecy. Now that the moment has come to introduce the heavenly side of the kingdom, the Lord does not say earth and heaven, but "heaven and earth". The earthly and material side of the kingdom had been presented first, now the spiritual and heavenly side was to take its place.

Is not the old going to be established as well?

The Lord uses these terms Himself in Matthew 13 verse 52, "things new and old". The moment had

arrived to set the earthly aside; not to give it up entirely, but to set it aside until the heavenly side of the truth was accomplished. Then what had first been offered to Israel and had been refused, would come in again when the Lord returns to establish His kingdom in power and glory in the world to come. At this juncture in the ministry of our Lord He is about to bring in the kingdom in a way not found in prophecy. He says in the next chapter that it had "been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (v. 35). Christianity was something entirely new and this fact marks out this section as being very important. It does not mean that the old is abandoned.

Would it refer to what the Lord speaks of in John 3? "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" Would that refer to the old and the new which we have in these chapters?

Yes! That is why we pointed out that these things were not recorded in the Old Testament. It is the kingdom on its heavenly side which is about to be brought in and I am persuaded it is through lack of seeing this that some have gone astray in the interpretation of these parables. They have attempted to bring in much that is connected with the earthly side of the kingdom, whereas the old things have been set aside and have no part in the heavenly side which is outlined in Matthew 13. I hope we shall clearly see this when we get to that chapter.

Do we not see in verses 43 to 45, the old going from bad to worse?

That is clear. We know that what is meant by the term "this wicked generation" is the nation of Israel in their present character as unbelievers and refusers of the Lord as their rightful King. That generation was to be removed as it certainly has been in governmental judgment.

In relation to what was said about the old eventually being established we may take as an example the children of Israel in the wilderness. Almost all who came out of Egypt perished in the wilderness, but the **nation** went in, in a subsequent generation. The old generation perished but a new generation went in.

Would not that have a present application? Is not this same sort of thing happening today?

That is true, but I think we should see clearly that here it is that generation which is in view. The nation never really gave up idolatry, as Stephen assures us, even carrying the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of Remphan through the wilderness, which led God to say to them "I will carry you away beyond Babylon". That is where idolatry belongs, and there they went. Zechariah refers to the same thing in the vision of the woman sitting in the ephah. For seventy years they suffered in Babylon because of this idolatrous spirit. By the time the Lord appeared among them the house was swept and garnished, a word meaning "adorned". The warning the Lord is giving them looks on to the time when the nation will apostatize to antichrist, and the last state of that nation will be worse than the first. John in his gospel records the Lord saying "I am come in my Father's name, and ye received Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5: 43). No doubt the Gentile apostasy will be just as bad when they apostatize to the beast, but here it is obviously Israel.

Does not all this show how we need to be clear as to what is new and what is old? If we were initiated by the Spirit into what is new, the old would be in its right perspective, and this new thing which has come out would hold our affections and attention.

Looking back to Genesis with this in view, we read that the first time God made promise to Abraham about his seed He told him it would be as "the dust of the earth" (Gen. 13: 16). The next time God spoke of that seed in Genesis 15: 5, He said it would be as "the stars". Then in Gen. 22: 17 He added a third thing as to the seed, saying it would be "as the sand". So Abraham received the promises in this

order-dust, stars and sand. When God gave confirmation to Isaac as to his seed, He said it would be "as the stars of heaven" (Gen. 26: 4). Later, when God confirms it to Jacob, he tells him, "and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth" (Gen. 28: 14). Isaac is typical of the heavenly company and Jacob is typical of the earthly. So to Isaac the stars are mentioned and to Jacob the dust. Yet in Genesis 32: 12, Jacob says God had also promised to give him seed as the "sand of the sea". In this chapter Jacob is about to meet Esau and effect a reconciliation, a picture of the Gentiles being brought into blessing through the Jew in a day yet to come. It is striking that just here Jacob should make mention of the sand. In giving them all to Abraham God gave them in this order-dust, stars and sand; but when in the **ways** of God the order is-stars, dust and sand. While the dust came first at the outset, the stars take precedence in the dealings of God; and we have long understood the stars to typify the heavenly company, the dust Israel and the sand the Gentiles. We see from this that while historically Israel was first in the dealings of God in this world, the heavenly company now take first place, Israel second and the Gentiles third.

Is there not a suggestion in the promise to Abraham as to the stars, that there is the heavenly side of the kingdom as well as the earthly? Would that be the Assembly?

No! I was pointing out that in the world to come that is the order of blessing. This is seen in the tabernacle system where the Assembly is in the inside place, the nation of Israel in the holy place, and the Gentiles in the court; this is, viewing the Tabernacle as a picture of the universe. We must bear in mind that when we speak of the heavenly company it includes more than the Assembly, it takes in all the Old Testament saints as well. This I hope we shall see in the parables. What we need to see here is that God does not bring in the earthly and fall back upon the heavenly when the earthly fails, but rather that the heavenly is **first in the thought of God**. We have mentioned before that God closed the history of man at the cross so far as expecting anything from him. If any of these companies are to be brought into blessing it must be on the basis of grace, hence the necessity of the cross. So far as man in responsibility is concerned no blessing can be obtained. God now is bringing in blessing according to the purpose of His own heart.

Do you think we can discern in this chapter the disposition of God in grace towards His earthly people? In Stephen's address we see the desire of the heart of God toward them in that He is prepared to give them another opportunity.

So far as I see, Stephen never offered them anything. What you speak of is seen in the earlier chapters, but not in the address of Stephen. So far as I read, neither Noah nor Stephen ever offered salvation to anyone. In both cases the die was cast and only judgment was in view.

Is not the suggestion here that God is bringing in a generation who will be in accord with His own thoughts? Not only that He brings in something new, but produces a generation in which it will all be substantiated.

That is one of the main things I hope we shall grasp in these readings. We read in Galatians 3: 20, "Now a mediator is not . . . of one, but God is one". Moses was the mediator of the first covenant because there were two sides to it, and man was responsible as to his side of the covenant. Reference has been made to the purpose of God, which does not refer to man in responsibility at all. God has put into operation that which was in His heart, bringing man into blessing no longer as expecting anything from him in responsibility, but bringing it all to him in sovereignty. That is why no mediator is needed in new covenant blessing.

"For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother". That is what you mean by the new generation.

Yes! And that is brought about by the sovereign action of God producing a generation who would do His will. It does not do away with our responsibility, but it does not begin from our side. The point is we have answered to our responsibility because of a new work in our souls which has produced obedience in us. That generation is in moral correspondence to Christ, doing the will of His Father.

Why do we have it in this order? The Lord refused these natural links before introducing the new ones. It is not refusing links of some who were far from Him, but the most intimate to Him, so far as His place in Manhood is concerned.

A verse in Rom. 15 will help us there. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers". We must remember that all the promises made to a nation were made to that nation only, and Christ came to make good to them all that had been promised. That is seen in the first verse of this gospel, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham". Further down we have reference to the seed of the woman, the virgin bringing forth a Son; all that God had promised through the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David was offered to that nation in the birth of Christ. It must come first in the ways of God with Israel. He could not cast aside what He had promised, and to make sure it was all there it was of that very nation, "as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9: 5). That is why we see Him here in that relationship, it was only right that He should be. Hence the verse in Rom. 15 we have quoted. Now the apostle can add in the next verse to the one we have quoted, "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (v. 9). The Gentiles could not thank God for His promises, but they can thank Him for His mercy. As Gentiles we had not a single promise, but we have **mercy** and all is through Christ.

Would not all this be established in resurrection?

It would, and we shall have to note that. The section beginning in Matthew 13 and continuing to Matthew 18 covers the principles of the present dispensation. In it we see the church within the bounds of the kingdom so long as it is on the earth. Now the church only came into being when the Spirit descended as recorded in Acts 2, hence it must have been subsequent to the resurrection of Christ.

It is blessed to see the Lord stretching forth His hand here to take in the circle which has been brought about by the sovereignty of mercy.

In Mark it says He looked round upon His disciples, but here the stretching out of the hand may indicate His kingly character.

That is what I had in mind; He stretches out His hand in a kingly way as in blessing and in ownership in the sovereign rights of a king. You cannot have a kingdom without subjects, and He stretches out His hand and indicates those subjects; and they are all there on the ground of sovereign mercy.

It is interesting to follow that out from the first outline of the principles of the kingdom in Matthew 15. I have found verses in the epistles where all those principles are in mind in the practice of Christianity today. We might expect that, for the church is in the kingdom so long as it is on the earth, and these things are to be seen, although we do see later that our place will eventually be on the heavenly side of that kingdom in the world to come. The first principle is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit". Compare that with Rom. 12: 16, "not minding high things, but going along with the lowly" (New Trans.). These things show that the church is within the bounds of the kingdom and we ought to be marked by them as individuals.

Referring again to Jonah, was he not a sign of the resurrection of Christ more than of His death?

Both, of course, were seen in Jonah, His death in verse 40 and His resurrection in verse 41.

The leper in Matthew 8 was a picture of the nation, but in verse 5 of that chapter a Gentile comes in for blessing. He was marked by faith, and it is on this principle the Gentiles are brought into blessing.

We had that in mind when we suggested this passage. The signs show that the Jew having refused the blessing it now goes out to the Gentiles; all subsequent to the Lord being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. We need to keep these things in mind when we come to Matthew 13.

That order comes in again in the book of the Acts, for it is only after the preaching first to the Jews that the gospel goes out to the Gentiles in Acts 10. What comes to light is God taking out of the nations a people for His name; not the Jews as a nation but a people which is now composed of Jew and Gentile.

That is all involved in the simile the Lord uses of Himself as the Sower. It is the beginning of a new order now coming to light in His ministry.

Another thing we should notice in this sign of Jonah is that he was a sign of coming judgment, as he said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown". We know that about forty years after the death of our Lord Jerusalem was overthrown. These things are all here in this sign of the prophet. Forty years, as we know, is a probationary period and their doom was sealed when they would not believe.

Is it significant that this question of sin against the Holy Spirit is brought in?

That was their final sin.

What is meant by three days and three nights in relation to the Lord/

It does not mean three periods of twenty-four hours, but involving this time. The time when our Lord died was already inclusive of a day and a night; then the Sabbath in which He lay in the grave was a day and a night; and on the first day He rose we have the third day and night, inclusive. At any time in twenty-four hours it is the same day and night whether early in the morning or late at night.

Would the three days and three nights carry the thought of competent testimony?

They would, and along with that three is the number of resurrection.

We must, of course, hold both His death and resurrection together. His death closed the old history, so that God might bring in this new order, and this He has established in the resurrection of Christ. We have often heard that new creation came to light in the resurrection of Christ. In His death old things have passed away, that is so far as we are concerned. It is this of which Peter writes, "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 1: 3). This is reserved in heaven where Christ is.

Please say more about the moral characteristics of this new generation.

We may gather two things from these two signs. First, we have repented like the Ninevites, and we have come with our hard questions to the Lord. These are two of the marks of "wisdom's children". These two things mark the gospel which Paul preached, as he said in Acts 20, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ". Repentance would involve that we accept the judgment of God upon the first man, and it leads us through faith to be attached to the Second Man as risen from the dead. We read that Solomon had the solution of every question, and Christ raised from among the dead has the answer to every moral problem in the universe. He had the solution of all while in this world, but it is as believing on Him as raised from among the dead that the solution of all our problems becomes available. "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God". Here we are, the children of wisdom, with the solution of every problem. Completely emptied in the sign of Jonah; and completely

filled in the sign of the Queen of South. It has all come to us through the mercy of God and our acceptance of it by faith. May we never forget that we are the subjects of His mercy, for we were all lost dogs of the Gentiles.

I suppose what we need to bear in mind is the greatness of the Person Who superseded Jonah and Solomon, for that is why it says "a greater".

The word translated "greater" means "more". This evidently means that more was bound to come to pass through Jesus Christ. That is one of the words used to show His supremacy.

Some have had difficulty about a greater than Solomon through not reading it carefully. I remember a brother asking me about it, contrasting the glory of Solomon with the lowliness of Jesus. I pointed out to him, she did not come to see the glory of Solomon but to hear his wisdom. It is not **glory** here but **wisdom**. When the Lord referred to the glory of Solomon He contrasted it with the lily of the field (Matt. 6: 29). It does say about the fame of Solomon it was "concerning the name of the LORD". So Christ was here concerned with the name of God and all that was due to Him.

Would not the reference to the Queen "from the uttermost parts of the earth" show how far this new blessing was to go?

It shows how far she was away from the place of blessing. It is suggestive of the moral distance of the Gentiles, the ends of the earth. This is seen morally in the Canaanitish woman; as to distance, she was not so very many miles away, but morally as far outside as she could be.

We do well to notice the closing words of our Lord to these people when His ministry is about to take a decided change. He had presented the kingdom in a way outlined in the prophets, and now was about to present it in a way not known in the prophets; yet He skilfully shows that while the Jews have refused their opportunity, it was about to be opened out to the Gentiles. It is worth noting that on the very day the Spirit came down the gospel went out in almost every language. We may not have stressed enough that there were "proselytes" in that company. While Jewish in religion they certainly were not Jews. It does seem to give us a picture of the universality of what was now being preached.

One of the places where this blessing going out is beautifully seen is in Isaiah 51: 16, "I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people". Is not the kingdom on its heavenly side and on its earthly side seen here?

It is indeed.

Is not this new generation brought to light by the Sower?

It is, and it is brought to light in relation to the Father Who is active in heaven, not in relation to God active on the earth.

It is a serious consideration here that the Son of God had come in power as their Messiah, healing on every hand, yet they refused to accept Him as such and were already conspiring against Him. Yet how blessed that it did not hinder God's going on with His work, but opened the way for Christ to bring in something greater than that which had been prophesied of Him as the Anointed. We do well to thank God for the day in which we live. The kingdom as we know it today is not any adjunct of Judaism which only came in because Israel refused Christ, but it is something which in the counsel of God is greater than anything He had ever promised to Israel.

Matthew 13: 1-9; 18-23.

I note at the beginning of this chapter it says, "The same day went Jesus out of the house". The position would now appear to be irrevocable so far as His ministry to Israel was concerned.

I think we do right to note that, as we have emphasized from the previous chapters. Some have thought that the kingdom of the heavens as presented in these parables is an extension of that house-Israel as a nation-but it is something altogether distinct from it. The Lord is seen leaving the one position, as indicated by the "house", and occupying a new position as indicated by the "sea side".

Does it always happen in the ways of God that when a new departure opens the break with what was previous is immediate?

It does not always happen simultaneously, as we see in the first seven chapters of Acts; in the transfer from Judaism to Christianity it took quite a number of years. But Judaism did not produce Christianity; it is quite distinct from it.

From the Divine side it was the same day, but on the side of man's responsibility it took time to bring it about.

Even Paul had a struggle to free the converts from Judaism and bring them into the liberty of Christianity; they had to learn that a system of works and a system of faith, or earthly things and heavenly things, could not go on together.

The Lord had not yet left Jerusalem; He was still there in their midst, but His ministry as outlined in these parables is something of an entirely new character. That is why the Lord presents Himself in the character of a Sower.

We have to see the distinction between what the Lord is doing and our acceptance of it in responsibility. In regard to what has been said about Genesis, after the offering up of Isaac, Rebekah is brought to light at the end of that chapter showing what was in mind in the purpose of God; but it is not until Genesis 24 that we see the matter worked out subjectively. So here, so far as the mind of God is concerned, the break is complete. It is for us and Christendom at large to accept it.

Another house is mentioned in verse 36 into which the Lord went, but it is distinct in its bearing from the house in verse 1. The second house is where we are today, as we hope to see when it comes to the instruction. He left the house in verse 1 and "sat by the sea side", before introducing us to the house of verse 36.

Does the first house suggest profession?

I have taken the first house to be Judaism, and the second one Christianity. When He leaves the house the multitudes are still prepared to follow Him, hence the necessity of this parable of the Sower. It shows they were attached to Him more than to the house, although they still belonged to it. It is the attraction of the Person which caused them to gather together unto Him. His position determines the position of His own.

Would not Hebrews 13 have a similar thought in view, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him"? He would attract His own to Himself.

What is conveyed in the fact that He sat in a ship?

That carries us in thought to Genesis, where we read of the promise of the seed to Abraham in three distinctive ways; first as dust, then as stars, and lastly as sand. We saw that when the Lord sent out His disciples in Matthew 10 He told them to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They are the dust, and had the first offer of His ministry in this world. Now, Israel having refused the offer, the sand

is coming into prominence, and we have learned that if the dust speaks of Israel the sand speaks of the Gentiles. I apprehend that the Lord sitting there suggests the Teacher. When we read of the Lord walking it is for disciples to see in Him the example which they should follow, but when He sits it is more as Teacher. A completely new set of principles is coming out and the Lord sits as the great Teacher of this multitude.

These things have more than Israel in mind, they include all nations.

Yes. We see in relation to Cornelius the public entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom, and Peter was the man who had the privilege of bringing him in. In Acts 10, where we read of this, Peter also was at the sea side, quite in line with what we have here.

I have noticed that Isaiah speaks a lot about the sea and also says much about the Gentiles being brought into blessing.

Did the Lord give these parables to attract the hearers to Himself, or were they given in such form in order that the people should not understand what He was saying?

I think we shall see both of those things in this chapter. I have noticed a word in chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16; it is the word "departed". In each of these chapters He departs, leaving one set of things for another in order that the new position may be established apart from that suggested by the house. We have perhaps got into the habit of taking up parables to explain the truth, while the Lord gave them to hide it. Hence, we shall find that what is brought to light in this chapter springs from sovereignty, for only those born of God were capable of understanding these things.

You do not suggest that Israelites are excluded?

This would be a Jewish crowd, but the Lord does not refer to them as such, showing that something new was being brought in so far as His ministry was concerned. It has often been pointed out that when that which God has committed to men breaks down, He goes on to something better.

We have seen that what had been promised to Israel is laid aside while this new thing is brought in. God will resume His dealing with Israel in a future day, which carries us in thought to the New Covenant, so that when He does take them up again it is in a much greater way. It will be the same nation to which the promises were given, but they will be fulfilled on an entirely new basis.

Does not the Old Testament show that Israel will be on the earthly side of the kingdom of the Son of Man, whereas the church is on the heavenly side?

The first presentation by the Lord of the kingdom was in relation to the Son of David, their long promised Messiah. I do not think the kingdom of the Son of Man comes into being until the world to come, when heaven and earth will be united together. Here the earthly side of the kingdom is being laid aside, so far as the ministry of our Lord is concerned, so that the heavenly side may be brought into effect. The prophetic promises to Israel will certainly be fulfilled, but when they are it will be on New Covenant lines and no longer on the ground of human responsibility.

Is the kingdom of the Son of Man merged in the kingdom of the heavens today?

I rather think it eventuates in that. So far as I see, the only thing in administration today is the heavenly side of the kingdom. I do not think it can be said to be the kingdom of the Son of Man till both heaven and earth are united in it, in manifestation. It is of course the kingdom of the Son of Man to us so far as the heavenly side is concerned, but we must remember that that term includes both heaven and earth. We have to keep these terms distinct.

It does say about the sower in the second parable that the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

That is why I said it is the kingdom of the Son of Man to us, for we are being formed for the heavenly side of it; but in its entirety as seen in such places as Daniel, it involves the earth as well. We know from Psalm 8 and Heb. 2 etc., that He is exalted already as Son of Man, and "all things" are said to be subject to Him, but this is not yet effectuated as to earth.

If we think of the administration of the kingdom it is quite clear.

Psalm 8 is quoted three times in the New Testament-in Heb. 2, Eph. 1, and 1 Cor. 15. I mention Heb. 2 first for it is given in relation to the place Christ has today. In Eph. 1 it is in connection with the world to come, heading up all things in Christ, but in 1 Cor. 15 it is in relation to eternity.

While the kingdom of the Son of Man carries the thought of administration yet the blessed features of it are known in a moral way today. Hence these references to the Son of Man.

We do have it in light as the fruit of teaching before it comes into public evidence, but what we are trying to show from this chapter is the aspect of the kingdom in administration today, as the kingdom of the heavens. It is also the kingdom of God, as we shall see. Again, we are to be manifested in the kingdom of the Father, but we have not reached that point yet. Then will the kingdom of the Son of Man also come into display, but we have the light of it all now.

Is that being brought about by the secrets being shown to us?

It has been said that this parable is not concerned at the moment with the inward work or effect, but what has been brought into manifestation today.

That is true and we must guard the fact that this first parable is not said to be a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. Hence we must have the word of the kingdom before the children of the kingdom are brought into evidence. They come to light in the second parable.

Another thing we must note, the **field** is not mentioned here, and for a specific reason. This parable only covers the ministry of our Lord, and during the time of His ministry the kingdom of the heavens had not yet been brought in, that is why it is not said to be a similitude. Nor did the ministry of our Lord go beyond the confines of Israel. We find the field in the next parable, for that does go beyond the limits of Palestine.

I suppose, to keep the matter quite clear, we do not get the heavenly side of the kingdom brought in till Pentecost.

The Lord in giving this parable begins by telling them, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow". It may help to point out that the phrase "went forth" is the same as "went . . . out" of the house.

May I ask in reference to verse 3 and what you have said about this first parable, are these "many things" connected with these first nine verses or are they in reference to something else?

I think all that comes out in this chapter is in view.

Does it mean that if we are to have some understanding of all that comes out in the rest of this chapter, we must understand first what the Lord is bringing out here?

It is the foundation of the other parables. How could we understand the end if we do not understand the beginning!

This parable covers the work of our Lord before the cross, the next parable His work subsequent to the

cross. It is when Christ is in glory and the field is left in the care of men that we come to the second parable. The Lord says in Matthew 10, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel", the house which is indicated at the beginning of this chapter. That is in line with this first parable; but in Matthew 28 He tells them to "teach all nations" and that is in line with the second parable.

Would not such a verse as the one further down which says "he bought the field" have this in view? It would.

We often have this parable compared with its report in the other gospels and we want to see the main thought here. Here emphasis is on the Sower, in Mark the sowing, and in Luke what He sows; but here it is the Person Who sows.

Is there any significance in the fact that He was in the sea, as in the boat, while they are still on the land?

Yes! They had not yet been taken off the land. He is showing His position, having in view the formation of the kingdom, but so far as they were concerned they were not taken off the land till after Pentecost. The ministry which was now coming out would eventually detach them from the nation, but that moment had not come as yet.

That would be interesting as connection the Sermon on the Mount with the land, and this with the sea.

Yes. A mountain is mentioned six times in this gospel. In referring to the presentation of this parable in the other gospels, what is stressed in this one is the majesty of the One Who brings it in.

It is often said that Christ is presented as the Son of David in this gospel, but in chapter 16 it is the greatness of His Person as Son of God which is stressed. Not only what He says, but Who He is.

What would the seed of the kingdom suggest?

The very words which the Lord was saying to them here. We have a complete section from Matthew 13 to chapter 18, and this is the beginning of it. It is this ministry, beginning here in this new character, and which is to form them for the reception of the kingdom. We shall find that the people who answered to it had already been born of God. Nor can we doubt they had been baptized by John as wisdom's children-Matthew 11: 19-but now they are ready for the unfolding of this new teaching, however little they may have understood it.

All this comes out as the administration of God, in Christ.

It is in contrast to the prophetic word, not in spite of it. They had been listening to Him in relation to the prophetic word concerning the kingdom of David; now they are to hear communications about the kingdom which had not been recorded in the prophetic word at all.

It has been said that the Father reveals His will, the Son effectuates it and the Spirit makes it good in our hearts.

It is God's administration in faith and we have that here in its beginning.

Did the Lord minister something different to them after His resurrection?

I think the second parable had that in view. I believe that this first parable involves what the Lord said to produce the company who were there for the reception of the Spirit, and in whom the kingdom was formed in this world in the power of the Holy Spirit. We find them active in the second parable, but the first sowing produced them. We have Divine revelations; one we have already seen in Matthew 11,

"revealed them unto babes" (v. 25). Again, "the Son will reveal Him" (v. 27). Another one is spoken of by our Lord in chapter 16, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (v. 17). All this is on the line of sovereignty. We have reference to these things in this chapter but not in these terms.

The sowing here prepares for the coming of the Spirit. In Isaiah 49: 4 we hear the Lord saying, prophetically, "I have laboured in vain . . . My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God". This would be the work which comes in after His vain labour with Israel. In that same chapter His work with the Gentiles is recorded.

In relation to the kingdom on earth the will of God is to go out from Zion, as so many Scriptures teach, but now the will of God is coming down from heaven and that is what marks the kingdom of the heavens.

Is not the sowing of this seed to establish the will of God in our hearts? We do not now look back to Jerusalem, or Zion, or the temple, but to heaven; and the kingdom is established in our hearts.

That is what the Lord said of the New Covenant in the previous chapter, they "do the will of My Father Who is in the heavens" (v. 50. N.T.).

Why are you emphasizing the term "kingdom of the heavens"? Is there some other term with which you are contrasting this?

Yes! We are comparing it with the term "the kingdom of our father David", which is the aspect spoken of in the prophetic word. That involved His riding into Jerusalem to deliver His earthly people. The kingdom of the heavens, seen in its beginnings here, views Christ as in heaven, not in Jerusalem, and the Spirit setting up that kingdom in the hearts of the saints today. These disciples had submitted to the baptism of John and had accepted Christ as the Son of David, their Messiah; but now, coming under this new ministry, they are being brought into a greater side of the kingdom because they have accepted Him. If the character of the kingdom is to be changed, then they too are to be changed, and they will find themselves not merely in relation to the kingdom as presented to Israel, but in the kingdom of the heavens and related to Christ in glory. So that as the result of this ministry the Lord established something in this world to which the Holy Spirit attached Himself at Pentecost.

We have at least ten aspects of the kingdom presented in the New Testament but they all refer to the one kingdom which is the kingdom of God. These terms are all used of it in order that we might understand the various things connected with it. To us today it is the kingdom of the heavens as taught here. Yet we are told in Colossians it is the "kingdom of His dear Son", the same kingdom but in another aspect.

I suppose those who had submitted to the baptism of John would be in this crowd, and it would seem that many of them would have ears to hear, as the Lord says. I do not doubt that they are those already referred to as wisdom's children.

Is not the theme here fruit for God?

Yes! Fruit as the result of the Lord's ministry. Israel being set aside as having rejected Him, this sowing will produce something greater for the pleasure of God.

In regard to that it may help to point out that Israel is referred to as an olive, a vine and a fig tree. Here we have a sower, one not seeking to re-establish the nation in any of these characters but to produce something of a new character, and I gather that as the sower He is not at the moment dealing with nations but with individuals.

I am glad you mentioned that, for the Lord here is not looking for fruit, but sowing in order that a yield may result. This would also help us to see the distinction already referred to between what is earthly and what is heavenly; there could not be anything of a heavenly character unless He Himself first sows the seed which produces it.

Complementary to that we read in verse 19, "When any **one** heareth the word of the kingdom".

The fact that **seed** is used confirms what you say that there is no thought of resuscitation here, such as the fig tree etc., but it is seed from which fruit is produced only after sowing.

It is a completely new beginning. Luke tells us the seed was the Word of God, but here it is the Word of the Kingdom, the same seed of course, but Luke tells us what it is in its essence, and here we see what it is producing. Some have ventured to suggest that the Word of God is that only which takes vital effect in our hearts, but these parables will not support that thought. If the Word of God is that only which takes vital effect in the hearts of people, how could the devil ever take it out? The book which is in our hands is the written Word of God, called in Ephesians "the Sword of the Spirit". We must hold fast to that.

The seed tests the soil, that is, the hearts of those who hear it.

Truly, but it is the Word which does the testing, and that brings us to the details of this parable. We read first of all "And when He sowed", and then we are told of the effect produced in those who stood round Him. We often wonder, when we hear earnest preaching and see no visible results, what is wrong; but if one fourth only of the preaching of our Lord produced positive results we need not be surprised at our apparent poor success. Tonight some brother will be preaching and we do not know what the effect will be; someone may be here as good ground, just ready to receive the seed. We have to leave it all with the Lord.

I have thought that the seed sown by the wayside may be seen in men like the Pharisees. In the second case where the seed made some little progress it might refer to such as walked no more with him as recorded in John 6. The seed which grew yet more, but was ultimately choked by the deceitfulness of riches, may refer to such as Judas. The Pharisees rejected it entirely through hardness of heart; some went on a little until the hard saying of John 6 stumbled them, and Judas went on almost to the end, but the love of money led to his destruction; not one of these brought forth fruit. Again one has thought the trouble in the first case with the wayside ground would be the **devil**; with the stony ground the **flesh**; and with the thorns the **world**. What we need to be occupied with above all is found in verse 23, "He that received seed into the good ground". This word for "good" is not the common thought of good, but is a word which means "honest", "worthy" or "virtuous". It is what is right in the Divine estimation, good ground, and speaks of those who had moral courage to go forward with the truth. While it says of all that they heard the Word and some received it, it is only in relation to this company we get the words, "understandeth it". We have referred to the Pharisees, those who turned back, and to Judas; but we should also remember the eleven true men who still stood by Him. No doubt there were others, but those were there, true-hearted men. They did not understand much, the Lord told them after they did not, but they believed in Him and kept His word.

That goes on today, for we read when Paul preached at Athens, "some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter . . . Howbeit certain men clave unto him" (Acts 17: 32, 34).

We have yet to see how that good ground is brought about, but we can be sure the good ground was there even as He spoke, for we can hardly think the Lord kept sowing on bad ground only. The primary reason for the sowing was the good ground.

Does this ability to understand indicate sovereignty?

It does, and I am sure that is very clear in this chapter.

The Lord's words in verse 11 would mark them out as having that understanding given to them of God. That is why He spoke to them in parables. It is only the initiated, as we say, who could understand them. Here they are, and no doubt they answer to the good ground.

We shall see as we go down step by step that it is God Who produces the good ground. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10: 17). So we go on with the word today.

How do we find out that people understand the word?

They bear fruit. If the word is sown on good soil the fruit is bound to come to light. Man being what he is there must be a work of God in his soul if fruit is to be borne. That is why we read in Rom. 2: 4, "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance". He puts what is essentially good into the soul. We need not puzzle our minds about this, for we read, "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7: 20). When fruit is seen, that is definite evidence of the work of God.

What would the fruit be for which we look?

Obedience to the Word of God. The first thing that marks those who turn to God is "obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1: 5).

Would not the reference to seed in Genesis help here? "Yielding fruit . . . after its kind" (Gen. 1: 12). Those who respond to the Word bear the marks of the Sower, that is, Divine marks.

They "do the will of My Father which is in heaven".

We read, "the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (Acts 5: 32).

I am persuaded that obedience lies at the foundation of every right thing we do for God.

The only suggestion I have as to the various quantities here may be in John 15: 1-5, "fruit"; "more fruit"; "much fruit". This is in the opposite order; but it may be the Lord has the full result in mind. The suggestion that the dispensation running to its end may account for the quantity decreasing will hardly fit in here; it is not the dispensation which is in view but the work of our Lord to produce the company in which the kingdom had its original commencement. While that is so, may the desire of our hearts be to make full proof of the work of God in our souls.

Matthew 13: 10-17, 34, 35.

What is meant by a "parable"?

If we break the word up into two halves we might understand it better. The word is para-bole. The preposition "para" means alongside of, and "bole" conveys the idea of an illustration. The word means "a placing side by side", it is an illustration with a spiritual meaning running alongside. A parable is useless to anyone who cannot see its application running alongside.

I have noticed two references to that word outside of the gospels, both of them in the epistle to the Hebrews. In Hebrews 9: 9 the word translated "figure" is literally "a parable", and in Hebrews 11: 19 where it is again translated "figure". These two references may help in the understanding of the word. As you say, it is something conveyed to those who have the intelligence to understand what is conveyed.

In verse 35 we have a quotation from Psalm 78, and that Psalm opens with a parable.

There are seven or eight people who are credited with parables in the Old Testament days, the best known of which is Balaam. We also see the tabernacle system with all its details as an illustration of that which is spiritual and heavenly, and these references give us a clear idea of what a parable is.

When you say intelligence, I suppose you mean spiritual intelligence?

Yes! That is what we wish to show. Thronging our Lord there were crowds who had plenty of natural intelligence but had not the least conception as to these things. We see this where the Lord answers the disciples' question as to speaking in parables, by assuring them that it was given unto **them** to understand what He was saying. Not that they had more natural ability to think these things out, but as the subjects of the sovereign work of God in their souls they were given a capability to understand these things.

In chapter 11 of this gospel we hear the Lord saying that the wise and prudent of this world know nothing as to these matters, but those who did have the ability to understand them were babes.

At a later date we read of the apostle Paul praying that the Ephesian saints might have granted to them "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph.1: 17). There it is that they might understand "the mystery of the gospel", and in this chapter wisdom is needed to understand "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (v. 11). Revelation is something unfolded; the word means "an unveiling", and wisdom is the ability to understand what is unveiled. We should not know anything of these things if God had not graciously made them known. On the other hand we must have the wisdom given of God to understand what He does make known.

Would the designation "disciple" involve that. Does it not mean one who is taught? I note the heading of Psalm 78, which is quoted in verse 35 is "Maschil" meaning "instruction" and a disciple is one who receives instruction.

Surely these are the "good ground" hearers; those who understood what they heard.

In referring to the tabernacle as an illustration of a parable, would the children of Israel understand that?

I cannot say as to the children of Israel, but you will remember that Abraham saw something of the day of Christ in his movements with Isaac, and perhaps Moses understood something of the heavenly system when he saw the patten of these things. Our Lord speaks here of things hidden since the foundation of the world, but it does appear that God intended to teach His people by the tabernacle pitched in the wilderness. That is why it is used so much in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Whatever the parable might be, only by the Spirit can we understand it. There are two distinct things; the initial work of the Spirit in new birth in each one of our souls, giving us a subjective capability to understand these things; then added to that, in the opening up of the word of God by way of Divine teaching we have the sealing of the Spirit and the anointing. No one can be sealed by the Spirit who is not initially born of the Spirit, and there can be no doubt these disciples were already born of God. It was said in the previous reading that they would not understand much of what the Lord was saying at this time, but when the Spirit came upon them later he would bring to their remembrance all that the Lord had said to them.

When the Lord asked them if they had understood all these things they said, "Yea Lord" (v. 51). Had they?

They must have had some grasp of them, but I am sure they would not fully apprehend them till the Spirit filled them.

It has been said that men grasp their knowledge in three ways: by observation-using their eyes; by inculcation-using their ears; by intuition-using their brains; but these human faculties are of no use in attempting to grasp divine things. Hence we read, "But blessed are **your** eyes, for they see; and **your** ears, for they hear" (v. 16).

The Spirit forms in the believer a faculty to understand what is revealed. We read in 1 Cor. 2: 16, "But we have the mind of Christ". This is a remarkable statement, it means we have the thinking faculty of Christ. Not only has God worked in our hearts so that we recognise that He is revealing Himself, but He has given us His Spirit that we may understand what is revealed. Hence in that chapter we learn that spiritual things can be understood by those only who have spiritual capacity.

In verse 12 the Lord says, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath". To understand this verse we must view these people in the place of privilege in which God had set them nationally; as such they had something which the Gentiles had not, but they did not possess this new thing which Christ was opening out. The result was they were as a nation about to lose the original standing they had before God, but those who had received Jesus as their Messiah were about to be introduced into the realm of the kingdom of heaven in its heavenly character. To them was given the ability of which we have spoken.

A footnote by J.N.D. shows it is not so much what is given but the manner of God in giving it. It is thus an abundance. There never was a day in which the manner of the giving of God was so liberal. This word is taken from the corn measure used in the market when it is so full that it runs over. Such is the measure of the giving of God today.

While I agree with that, we must remember the "abundance" is something by itself, distinct from what they had in Him as Messiah. I only want to keep that in its own sphere. No doubt the thought of the manner of giving has that in view, something greater than anything God had offered them before. The word "hath" would involve what had been promised to them on the earthly side of the kingdom in the prophetic word, and for those who accepted Him the "more abundance" would bring them into the heavenly side. Now that brings us to the "mysteries" of the kingdom of heaven and it is of interest to note that this is the first mention of a mystery in the New Testament. Israel have no part in the mysteries of the kingdom as we shall see, and we need to keep that in mind if we are to comprehend the teaching of this chapter.

Is the mystery of the kingdom the character which it assumes during the absence of the King?

Yes! We do not read of any other kingdom without a visible king, but this kingdom is established today without a visible King. We are in the most powerful kingdom in this world today, one which encompasses the most glorious things, yet the King cannot be seen.

"We see Jesus"

Truly; I meant, of course, He is unseen by the men of this world.

Why is the word "mysteries" in the plural?

Because all these parables stand in relation to them. There is so much to be learned about them that one parable could not contain all the teaching.

Do you not think verse 12 has in view our progress in the knowledge of these things? I have heard that verse used to warn saints that if they did not go on with what the Lord had given them they might lose what He had given.

I do not think that is the teaching here at all. It refers to Israel nationally as we have said.

Would not the parable of the pounds in Luke 19 rather give what our brother has suggested?

Yes! That is the Scripture for exhorting the saints to use what the Lord has given them, in case they lose it in the day of the kingdom in display.

These disciples had submitted to the baptism of John, they "had" and now "more abundance" was to be given to them. We read also of some in the Acts, Apollos for instance, who knew only the baptism of John, but he was soon brought into "more abundance" when Aquila and Priscilla took him in hand. We must not forget that the people to whom our Lord was speaking had a prior claim to the kingdom which we as Gentiles never had, that is on its earthly side. The Pharisees having refused the baptism of John "had not" and so were not offered the "abundance" coming in here. On that account the Lord said, "Therefore speak I to them in parables" (v. 13). They having refused what He offered them in His first approach to them, He now hides the new things in parables.

If God moves in sovereignty towards those who had received Him, He cannot be accused of being arbitrary in His dealings. So we have the order, "they seeing see not; and hearing hear not". Seeing comes before hearing, and I do not doubt seeing is the result of a work of God in our souls which led us to hear. It is worth noting in the first epistle of John that he begins by saying "which we have **heard**, which we have **seen**" (v. 1); but in v. 3 "That which we have **seen** and **heard**". The solution, I suggest, is that in verse 1 he is there as a **receiver**, but in verse 3 he is there as a **communicator**. On the responsible side he must hear first, but on the sovereign side he sees first. So, I think, I have found it in tracing out these two words which often appear together. In John 1 we read, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (v. 5). There is absolutely no capacity in the natural man to receive it.

I think the Lord in putting seeing first indicates that they had the power to perceive what He was saying, hence Paul prays that the saints might have first the "spirit of wisdom" then "revelation". The capacity is there first.

In John 10 we read, "My sheep hear My voice" (v. 27), but they were already His sheep and with a capacity to hear. That is how the Lord refers to them in verse 16 of our chapter, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears for they hear". It is negative in verse 13, but positive in verse 16. It is striking that when our Lord quotes from Isaiah it says, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive" (v. 14). That is from their side in responsibility, hence hearing comes first, but where God is working in the heart, seeing comes first. What the Pharisees saw was what could be seen with their natural eyes, but they could not see these spiritual realities. In the case of the blind man in John 9, the Lord said to the Pharisees "but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth". Such was their state.

The Lord said again to the Pharisees "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word" (John 8: 43). It shows that they lacked the capacity. All this has come in to our reading in attempting to explain the sovereign working of God and why the Lord spoke in parables. We might add another figure, the cloud between the children of Israel and the Egyptians. To the one it was a pillar of light, to the others a pillar of darkness. Hence these people of whom our Lord was speaking had closed their eyes; it does not say God closed them, they themselves closed them, and so were not given

the light of this new thing.

In Romans 11: 8 it says, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear". Also in John 12: 40, "He hath blinded their eyes".

But we must remember it is in relation to the things of Christianity that He has blinded them judicially, not to the things He promised them in the prophets. Read a little higher up in John 12: 37, "yet they believed not". It was after they had refused Christ as their Messiah that God closed their eyes to the greater things the Son was bringing to pass. So it is in this chapter. We must see that God is righteous in His dealings. They closed their eyes themselves to that which was so obviously outlined in their prophetic word, therefore God judicially closed their eyes to that which was not obvious and which came to light in the ministry of our Lord. He said to them in another place, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me" (John 5: 46).

In the face of these many demonstrations of power they turned away from Him, and He says as it were, You are not going to know the mysteries of the kingdom.

The root of the trouble was that their heart was waxed gross.

Do we not see the same things when God speaks of Jacob and Esau in Malachi? "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau" (Mal. 1: 2, 3). That statement was not made before the days of Malachi. Esau had deliberately chosen the wrong course, and at this late moment this judgment was given of God concerning him, long after he was dead.

If we read Scripture carefully we find subsequent events always justify what God does.

One of the places where this is clearly seen is in Romans 9: 10-12. Before Jacob and Esau were born God said, "the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25: 23). It may have seemed that God was arbitrary in this, but the time came when Esau deliberately sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and thus justified God in His selection.

May we not say on the other side in relation to Jacob, "But wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt. 11: 19)? What God loved in Jacob was his appreciation of the birthright, and what he hated in Esau was that he despised it.

The people here in Matt. 13 must have had a great opportunity of understanding what He said to them, for according to the New Translation it is "Beholding ye shall behold and not see". It was demonstrated in front of their eyes and yet they never understood it because of the hardness of their hearts. It was a very solemn thing for people to shut their eyes to Divine communication. They had so failed in relation to their responsibility Godward that when the light shone in Christ in all its brilliance, they were incapable of taking it in. That ought to make **us** appreciate more the blessedness of being able to see and to hear.

It is obvious that had these Pharisees received John they would have received Christ. It is recorded that they rejected the counsel of God against themselves not being baptized of John.

Could we have a word on the difference between the people mentioned in verse 15 and those mentioned in verse 17?

That is another important link in this teaching. Prophets and righteous men had desired to hear these things, the things of the kingdom as outlined in these mysteries, but had not heard them. These men wrote about the kingdom connected with the call of Abraham and the ascension of David, and had some knowledge of the kingdom in glory on this earth in a coming day, but they had no light as to the

things coming out in this chapter.

This is not said to decry these men but to amplify the greatness of what **we** are brought into.

That is what we want to see, for these men wrote on the lines of that ministered by our Lord in the first ten chapters, but they did not know these things in Matthew 13.

Would not the word of our Lord in relation to John Baptist help in that way? He said, "there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11: 11). Positionally greater I suppose, not morally so.

The prophets did not see these things because they were not presented to them. They only come to light when the Lord brought them out. How many of those faithful men were raised up of the Father and quickened; men who wrought wonderfully for God in their day, yet they did not know these wonderful things which we have had made known to us.

Are you connecting that verse in John 5 with the operations of the Father in raising up the Old Testament saints?

I am! It does not say he resurrected the dead but raised them up; raised them up to serve Him and gave them life to do so. Now the Son comes in to give life, "even so the Son quickeneth whom He will". I was asked to point some of them out and referred the enquirer to Heb. 11, men whom the Father raised up and quickened. I believe according to chapter 6 of John the Father is still raising up, but the Son now quickens. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (v. 37). The word "raiseth" in chapter 5 is the same as that said to the man at the pool, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (see John 5: 8 and 21).

If these things were not presented to the saints in days gone by, in what way did they desire to see them?

Someone referred to that verse in 1 Peter 1: 12, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things". It seems that they had some idea that they were writing of things for other people which they did not understand themselves, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify". They had the sense that something great was there but something which they could not understand.

This is what is in view in verse 35, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world". What comes out in these parables is what has come to light in Christianity; the preparation of this began in our Lord's later ministry as we have seen in the first parable, but what comes to light in the other parables is Christianity in its existence in this world following the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That which comes to light in these parables is the Church as brought in in the present aspect of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of David was not used to bring about the Assembly, but the kingdom of heaven in its present form does so, as we shall see in the treasure and the pearl.

Why, then, is this "from" the foundation of the world and not before the foundation?

It views the Assembly as being brought to light not so much as the fruit of Divine counsel but within the bounds of the kingdom today, commencing with the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.

While we know from Eph. 1 that the Assembly is the fruit of eternal purpose, we learn from this chapter that it is brought into being in the ways of God within the bounds of the kingdom in its present

aspect as set up on earth today in the power of the Spirit. The kingdom is being used to bring this about. We do read in Eph. 3: 9 that all things were created in order to bring the Assembly to light. Whilst it was counselled in eternity, the time ways of God are brought in when He created all things, but the secret behind those time ways did not come to light until Christ was in glory and the Spirit set up the kingdom here. "Kept secret from the foundation of the world" simply means that in the ways of God the secret had not yet been told. It is Christ Who discloses that secret. So in the verse we refer to, Eph. 3: 9, we read "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God". That is not eternity exactly but the beginning of the world, and the secret was kept until Christ was in glory.

While the New Translation renders it "hidden throughout the ages" it still remains true that this secret was not disclosed at any time prior to the coming of Christ and the subsequent work of the Spirit when Christ was in glory. That is, it is manifested in this time scene.

First we have it counselled; then comes the creation to provide the sphere in which it is to be effected; but not until Christ was here were those movements seen by which it has been secured-His death, resurrection and glory, and the coming of the Spirit. I gather then it is the creation that is in view in Eph. 3: 9.

It is clear that the things in Matt. 13 were not mentioned before in any Scripture, but were kept secret from the foundation of the world.

That is why in the teaching of our Lord we are led on from the earthly to the heavenly side of the kingdom, for the Assembly could never have been formed within the bounds of the kingdom in its earthly character. All this is involved in the teaching of this chapter as we shall see.

Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43.

We come now to the parables which the Lord said are similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. The phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is likened", was not used by Him in giving the details of the first parable. That parable covered the time of His own ministry while still in the world, and is not said to be a similitude of the kingdom. The reason, as we shall see, is that the kingdom did not come into existence until Christ was in glory and the Holy Spirit sealed the Christian company on the day of Pentecost; that is, so far as this aspect of the kingdom is concerned.

One clear mark of that is seen in the fact that Satan is active in this second parable. That could not have been in the work which Christ has done. Satan does catch away the word in the first parable but here he is seen as active in the **sphere** of the kingdom.

We note that the work of sowing is in the present tense according to the New Translation, referring no doubt to the fact that while the early disciples were doing the work in the power of the Spirit, the Lord Himself was behind the disciples and using them in His service in this world. The Lord was sowing "good seed in His field" (v. 24). In this parable the good seed is not said to be "the word of the kingdom" (v. 19), but rather what that word has produced. The seed this time is said to be "the children of the kingdom" (v. 38). It may help us to keep in mind what we said in our earlier reading that we do not have all these things taught in one parable, for each parable has its own similitudes and all are needed to give us a comprehensive idea of the whole.

Do I understand you to say that the company of one hundred and twenty we read of in Acts 1 was brought about by the ministry of our Lord, and in that company there was no mixture? The work of our Lord as seen there was all good.

Yes! For when the Spirit came down He sat upon each of them, proving that all there were genuine. We know that they were waiting and were in right conditions when this wonderful event took place.

Does this expression "the kingdom of heaven" cover the sphere where Christ is owned as Lord?

No doubt! For while there are many within its bounds who say, "Lord, Lord" (Luke 13: 25), and who do not really belong to Him, every one who does belong to Him and is a true believer is in this kingdom.

I suppose the kingdom in the future will not be like this? The Lord says, "The kingdom of the heavens has become"; that is, it is like this today.

Yes! We shall see later that a distinguishing between what is good and what is bad will take place ere the kingdom of the Son of Man is seen in display. We know that the kingdom in its spiritual character cannot possibly include any mere profession but only that which is real. We must remember that while the "field" is brought in here, it can only include the sown portion of the world. That would limit it to wherever the testimony of the gospel has gone forth today. Should there be any doubt that this parable dates from Pentecost, note the phrase "His field". Also, in verse 27 "Thy field", and again in verse 31 "His field". When did "the field" become "His field"? When He bought the field; hence what is taught here must be something subsequent to His death.

You do not mean by that that only the sown part of the field is His?

Oh no! He bought the whole field, but it can only be the sown portion which is in view in these parables. That is, where the gospel has gone and brought to light the children today. He must own the **whole** of the field. That too is a clear proof that Israel has been set aside, for the whole field is in view.

The devil does not seem to lose much time in sowing this darnel, as I suppose it is. He had already introduced Judas into the company.

Yes! And the Lord knew right from the outset about that, for it could not happen without His knowing. That serves to illustrate the point in this parable, for only the Lord knew of him, not the disciples. John says in his epistle, "even now are there many antichrists", and Paul says to the Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity doth already work. That is what the tares refer to, they were there right from the outset.

Does not the action of the enemy reflect on the fact that the sower sowed good seed? His attempt was to destroy its effect.

If we are set in testimony to the Lord within the bounds of the kingdom we can expect these spurious elements to come to light. That is the value of this parable to us. We have this assurance from the Lord that we shall have to suffer it, and indeed go on with it, so far as public testimony is concerned. We must wait until the end when that which is spurious will be rejected, and that which is good will be secured.

We get an emphatic Nay, when the question of dealing with the tares is raised.

Just so. It is not our task to eliminate them.

In regard to the explanation "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man" (v. 37), that is a beginning which must produce an abundant harvest. It is important to get hold of the fact that the beginning of Christianity was brought about by the movements of a Divine Person and what He does is good. Hence the harvest must be for His glory. While much that will be marked by failure has come in, what He began will not fail.

Why is the title Son of Man used here and not the Lord?

I think because it will be seen in the future that universal dominion will be His.

Would not the thought also be that consequent upon His refusal by Israel the kingdom will be brought in in a universal character? It is going beyond the bounds of Israel now and that will be seen in the future.

While the disciples were active in their labours something else was being done of which they were not aware, but it soon began to show itself. Some of the cases are recorded for us in the early chapters of the Acts.

The simple fact is, Satan saw the power of that company and the Holy Spirit among them, and seizes on the thought-I must sow others who will corrupt that company. That is how this great confusion which exists today has been brought about.

Satan has two weapons in his armoury-violence and corruption. He tried violence at first, but as fast as he destroyed one grain of wheat many others took its place; but when he resorted to corruption he did succeed in corrupting what is outward. Yet one is encouraged to note that in spite of the apparent success of the enemy in relation to what is outward, what is of God is there and will yet be gathered into His granary. That ought to encourage us.

I notice that when the disciples come to the Lord for an explanation they call it "the parable of the tares".

They would have no difficulty about the wheat, it was the tares which puzzled them.

In regard to the title Son of Man which, as we see, stands in contrast to Son of David in His dealings with Israel, and which goes beyond the bounds of Israel in its present aspect, it involves that He will gather into His own power all things in heaven and on earth. The bounds marked out for Israel indicate the bounds of the kingdom of the Son of David, but heaven and earth mark the kingdom as attached to the Son of Man.

Is there any wider glory than that which is attached to the Son of Man?

Not so far as the display in the kingdom is concerned; that is why we said earlier the kingdom of the Son of Man refers to the kingdom in display.

A Scripture like this would give us encouragement as we look around and see the state of things in professing Christendom today. Sometimes we are inclined to get downhearted thinking things ought to be different, but this mixed condition of things goes right to the end, so we need not be discouraged.

What we need to take note of is that in spite of the work of the enemy the wheat does not stop growing. That ought to encourage us to go on. Some may say, "Look at the tares", but we keep our eyes on the wheat.

In the explanation of the parable the servants are not to touch the darnel at all, He will deal with it through His angels.

Are we able to distinguish between the wheat and the tares? That is one of the points in the parable. It seems as though the angels are the only ones able to discriminate there.

The only way we can tell is by the fruit.

Who are these bondmen who are in charge of the field?

At the outset-the apostles. I hope we are still in line with their labours today. That is why I called attention to the fact that the sowing is in the present tense; it is still going on.

Did they fail in their responsibility in falling asleep?

I do not think they failed in their responsibility by being asleep. In the language of the parable, they had laboured through the day and gone to sleep at night. It was in the dark the enemy sowed the tares. They were, of course, unawares of what was happening.

Would you say that these servants were representative of every servant today? I would.

That is a challenge to us as well as an encouragement. When we have all explained to us, we are no longer dependent upon our own discernment and can view it in a right light. When these difficulties arise, and what is spurious comes to light, we are in danger of attempting to deal with it by our own efforts.

While the field is said to be sown and left in the care of those men, we can apply it to ourselves today as carrying on this work now. I think from the language here, the Lord is still doing the sowing whoever He may use to do it. It could not be said without qualification that it is good seed were it otherwise. If I thought the salvation of men was to depend upon my preaching, I doubt if I would dare to preach at all. While the Lord does use us it is His work to sow good seed though it may be through us.

That would be seen clearly in the last verse of the gospel by Mark, "the Lord working with them". The Lord can carry on His work without any one of us, but He does not carry on without us. Yet, as you say, He really does the work.

When you say that do you mean it does not matter what you say or how you say it when preaching?

By no means! We ought to give of our best in every service we perform, yet knowing that if any work of an abiding character is going to be done, only the Lord can do it by His Spirit. If we are working under His guidance we shall preach the preaching that He bids us and if we are working in touch with Him He will surely use it.

That would be why Peter says, "If man speak . . . as the oracles of God".

That is what the Lord said to them in the explanation, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man". That is what you are drawing attention to.

We may say it is the preacher, but we learn here it is the Lord Who does the work whilst using our preaching.

So we have these things explained as we read, "Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house" (v. 36). Looking back we read in verse 27, "So the servants of the householder came". It might have said that they come to the **field owner**, but these things are not explained in the field, but in the house.

You mean it is only in company with the Lord that we get these answers?

At a time like this when we are assembled together, apart from the world or the busy life we are called to live, the opportunity is given to us of hearing what the Lord has to say to us about these things.

That is borne out in verse 36 in the fact that ere He went into the house He dismissed the crowds.

Are you referring to the house here as the house of God?

No! Rather to the fact that we do not get things explained to us in the world, but apart from it and alone with the Lord, as these disciples undoubtedly were.

It is important to see that they were not only in the house but were in company with the Lord in it. It is not only that we are in the place of privilege, but in that place attentive to what the Lord has to say to us.

By paying attention to what the Lord says as the householder, we become in turn householders as He says in verse 52, "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder". If we are more in the field than in the house we shall not know much of these things. There are treasures in the house, and they are available to each one of us.

What do you mean by saying we may be more in the field than in the house?

If I attempt to spend all my time in active service for the Lord and neglect to wait upon Him for instruction and guidance I am afraid I should very soon over-run my power and usefulness in any service for Him. If I spent too much time in the house I may become idle in that service. We do need a balance.

I am sure we all know we must spend time with the Lord, as evidenced by our coming together this week to wait upon Him in His own company, so that we may hear His voice speaking to us, instructing us in these divine things. When He chose the disciples, He chose them first that they might be "with Him" (Mark 3: 14).

Would you say a word as to the distinction between the field and the Assembly? There could not be any tares in the Assembly.

We get the Assembly indicated in the parable of the pearl, but the kingdom has been brought in to secure the Assembly. The function and exercise of the Assembly as such is not given to us in these parables. It is the whole of the profession where Christ is owned as Lord, real or unreal, as we have seen; that is the bearing of the field. Hence in the sphere of profession we have much of the character of the tares, but no such spurious elements are in the Assembly. We know from this chapter and Matthew 18, the Assembly is **in** the kingdom, but the bounds of the kingdom go wider than the Assembly, enclosing much that has no living link with Christ in the power of the Spirit at all.

In the parable we are considering the Lord first said, "his enemy came and sowed tares", but in the explanation He says, "The enemy that sowed them is the devil".

I suppose the devil is the seducer, the deceiver who sows the tares. When the saints as the wheat came to be persecuted it was Satan in his opposition who attacked them, but the devil introduces these tares to corrupt the kingdom.

Paul had this in mind when he said to the Ephesian elders that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in. We see it coming to light as we said in the early chapters of the Acts.

Are these tares people?

They are! People of the character of the Pharisees, as the Lord said to them, "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8: 44). We must keep it quite clear that the tares are in the sphere of the kingdom, not in the church.

What would the servants have to do today to eradicate the tares from among the wheat?

They would have to put them out of existence, but that is not our work, it is the work of the angels.

Is there any significance in the fact that the saints are said to be wheat? Not barley, for instance.

I think there is. In the gospel by John we have recorded two facts which the other writers do not record. The first is in John 6, where he tells us the five loaves were made of **barley**, and he also records in John 12 our Lord's words about the grain of wheat. Barley is connected with resurrection and thus with earth, but wheat seems to be more connected with heavenly glory, and I believe it is the kingdom of the heavens and those who are rightly in it today are linked with Christ in heaven above.

There would be a link between the first parable where the devil is said to take away the seed, and this one where he sows the tares. It is said to be "A man, an enemy" in the New Translation. It would appear the devil has a choice of instruments which he can use.

There is no doubt the enemy uses both men and women to introduce these false people among the wheat. The Assembly is composed of both men and women, for it says of Saul of Tarsus that he brought out of the houses both men and women (Acts 8: 3). So if the devil uses men and women, there are at the same time men and women growing up alongside them who are truly of God.

Is the fact that He speaks of a man here and not a woman because He is dealing with the outside responsible condition? Further down when He speaks of that which is subjective and going on inside He speaks of a woman leavening the food.

That is an interesting comparison.

It would be extremely difficult for us to begin to uproot in any way. As an instance think of the apostle Peter; we might have said, "A man like that who denies his Lord with oaths and curses cannot be converted"; but he was, for he was wheat.

That is the very thing the Lord said to him, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22: 31).

I suppose these tares, darnel as the word should be, are very much like wheat. That would be why the Lord calls attention to the fruit.

If we were more occupied with the wheat we should not be so distressed about the darnel.

That is one of the things we are instructed in here. They said to the Lord, "Declare unto us the parable of the **tares** of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the **good seed** is the Son of Man".

What is involved in the tares being tied in bundles?

That has the end in view, as we read in verse 39, "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (age); and the reapers are the angels" (v. 39). We learn here that the final act of dealing with the tares will be done by the angels, not by men-"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world". The disciples no doubt had often seen tares burned in the fire and so would understand this reference. The tares are first gathered out in bundles. The next act will be to gather in the wheat, and the final act will be to burn the bundles of tares. In verse 30 the householder says, "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them". I understand the preposition "to" means, "ready to burn" or, "with a view to burning them".

Do we see anything of that today?

I think we do see movements today which seem to indicate the bundling has begun. The idea of a universal religion is coming more and more to the front. Nebuchadnezzar tried that out, and it is in the

air today. It will raise its head first in professing Christendom and finally in Israel.

We have read of a world federation of churches.

It is clearly said here that the bundling is to happen at the time of harvest. Have we reached the harvest yet?

Not quite, so far as we can see. I do not say the bundling has begun but the events connected with it are beginning to show themselves.

The apostle says to the Thessalonians, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2: 7), but the bundling cannot take place surely until the end.

I think the bundling may begin to take place before we are taken.

That is the point in the interpretation.

If we are going to defer this matter, are we not virtually saying in our hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming"?

No one knows what length of time a harvest will take. The wheat may be getting ready for the coming of the Lord as well as the darnel be getting gathered. The darnel is almost separating itself, and the wheat beginning to say as it were, "Come, Lord Jesus".

What a blessed thing it is to see that the wheat is not gathered into bundles.

No! It is gathered into the barn. We must note what the Lord says, "in the **time** of harvest". That includes all the events.

I would like this bundling to be further explained if you will.

So far as I see we have first in verse 30 the tares bundled; then the wheat gathered into the barn; then will come about that which is said in verses 41 and 42-the tares are cast into the fire

Could we bring 1 Thess. 4 into this, the wheat gathered into the barn?.

I am sure we can.

That is the action of the angels then, gathering the wheat?

It does not specify who gathers the wheat, but it does specify who gathers the tares.

Do you limit the corn of wheat in John 12 to the church.

We do not view the church in its heavenly calling here but in its responsibility in the kingdom. That we shall shine forth as the sun is clear from verse 43, but it is more the church in the kingdom in responsibility here. We must remember the many phases in which the church is presented in Scripture; as the Body of Christ; the House of God; the Wife and Bride of the Lamb; but here it is the church in its responsibility in the kingdom.

Will there be any saints here after the church is gone?

Yes! But not of this dispensation. We have seen that when what is taught here is accomplished, God will revert again to his dealings with Israel and the saints on the earth will be of the character of those seen in Matt. 10. We shall certainly be on the heavenly side of the kingdom, as this chapter teaches, but Israel have yet to be called to take their place on the earthly side of it. These saints are seen in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation, standing for God on the earth.

You think, then, that in the presentation of the kingdom here it is not that which is earthly at all/

Yes! It is brought about on earth but is in association with Christ in heaven. Here we are today in that kingdom and we shall have our part in the world to come on the heavenly side. In saying it is not our heavenly calling which is in view here, I had in mind Scriptures such as Ephesians 1, where we are seen as the body, a far higher calling than that which is outlined here although, of course, it is involved.

To me this bundling is a most interesting matter, for there are happening in the world today so many bundling movements and this puts one on the tiptoe of expectation of the coming of the Lord.

My difficulty in regard to what you are saying is this. If there are those who are being bundled today their doom will be sealed, but the gospel is still going out.

You are not suggesting that you may be able to change tares into wheat are you? All we said was that we can see the **beginning** of these things today.

Will not these beginnings facilitate the last bundlings when the time comes for them to take place?

Does it infer that the angels who gather the tares deal also with the wheat?

It does not say that in the parable. It may appear to be so, but we have to remember it is a parable and the Lord calls the angels harvestmen. We know from 1 Thess. 4, that it is the **Lord Himself** Who calls us to Himself with a shout.

Is not the main fact in this parable that the Lord wants us to know how the darnel will be dealt with at the end?

That is what we want to get hold of. That was the difficulty with the disciples.

It would be the concern of the Lord to gather the wheat.

It seems clear enough that this bundling will take place prior to the Lord coming for His own.

While we do not get the teaching of 1 Thess. 4 here, we know that is exactly what will happen when the wheat is gathered into the barn.

No doubt things will happen very quickly after the church is gone even if we do see them beginning.

It is often pointed out that in the book of Revelation we have a company designated, "them that dwell on the earth", who are quite distinct from "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14: 6). We have long understood that "them that dwell on the earth" refers to apostate Christendom.

In Revelation 7 we have a company of Jews sealed and after them a great company of Gentiles brought into salvation. Does the teaching of this chapter go forward unto that time?

I do not think so. There will be no wheat left after the gathering into the barn. The only thing left here will be the spurious material which comes under the judgment of God in the tribulation. The companies you refer to rather take us back to Matthew 10 and will form the earthly side of the kingdom as we have seen.

It is clear we get this bundling going on today, then we get the translation of the church followed by the burning of that which is spurious.

In Philadelphia we have the intimation of that. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth". It is Philadelphia which brings to light apostate Christendom, for the earth dwellers are first mentioned in that epistle, and I believe it is in line with what we have here in the exposure of the tares.

I remember a man who said on his death bed, "I am doomed, my last chance is gone", yet that man was

gloriously saved before he died.

But he was not a tare, in spite of what he said. That brings us back to what the Lord said-that we do not always know which are wheat and which are tares. So we go on with the gospel, for only by it can the wheat come to light.

We must note that when angels are brought in they are always used in judgment, that is in these parables. We have to remember that our work is to secure the good; the work of angels is to deal with the bad.

Now after the wheat is gathered into the barn and the tares in the field are burned, the wheat comes into manifestation, "Shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father". Referring again to the term "the kingdom of the Son of Man, alongside the term "the kingdom of the heavens", why is it now referred to as "the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43)?

I apprehend the term "the kingdom of their Father" refers to the heavenly side of the kingdom. I note this word "shine" is the same as that used of our Lord in the mount of transfiguration, "His face did shine as the sun" (Matt. 17: 2).

Will that be the answer to the prayer of the disciples, "Thy kingdom come"?

No doubt! But it will be in that day the kingdom of the Son of Man. That prayer is more on the earthly side, while we now see it on its heavenly side, and I believe both are included in the term "the Son of Man in His kingdom". As we have said, we shall be on the heavenly side shining as the sun. Let us bend our efforts to the wheat; caring for that which is good; sowing to produce that wheat as we take the gospel to all and sundry, that the Lord may carry on His work by us to secure those He would bring into blessing. We can well leave the tares to the angels, who will deal with them at the end of this age.

Matthew 13: 31-33; 44-52.

The first thing we need to note in the five parables which we have read is that two were uttered outside the house, and the other three were uttered inside the house. I believe we have a history of both the wheat and the tares in these five shorter parables. The result of the tares being sown is seen in the "mustard seed" and the "leaven", while the result of the good seed is seen in the "treasure" and the "pearl", that which is of value. Then in the parable of the "net" we see the securing of both good and bad material which will be sorted out at the end of the age. This we shall clearly see as we consider the parables together.

Do you connect these first two parables with Pergamos and Thyatira?

One has heard that application and no doubt there are features in these parables which have their parallel in the messages to those two churches in Rev. 2.

Is this "mustard seed" in opposition to the "good seed"?

Here we have seed which is neither wheat nor tares. Each parable has its own symbols. This time seed of a small kind is referred to by our Lord, yet it grows into a great tree which is out of all proportion to its usual size. It is what we call a monstrosity; that which should have been small in the world has grown into a great tree. The Lord was teaching the disciples that thought the kingdom began in a small way, and ought to have continued as thus in comparison with other kingdoms in the world, yet it was to grow out of all proportion to its real sphere.

The word used here is used of the city Babylon. "Greatest" is the description of the tree, and of

Babylon it is said, "that great city".

The Authorised Version uses the word "great" for Jerusalem, but in the New Translation it is "great" Babylon and "holy" Jerusalem. What is real is not marked by this feature of outward greatness but rather by that of holiness.

We may trace a correspondence between this tree and the tree mentioned in Daniel, chapter 4. In the book of Revelation we see it in its full-blown character, "Babylon the great is fallen"; and there we have the description of these birds-"the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18: 2). It is sad to think that the professing church of God, or if we hold to the term used here, the kingdom of the heavens, where the authority of Christ ought always to be owned, has grown to such dimensions and that room is found for these evil agencies with their corrupting influences to lodge in its branches.

Yes, and this corruption is the worst kind of corruption. Satanical agencies are operative there.

What about the grain of mustard seed itself?

It is used by our Lord to show the smallness of the kingdom in its inception, for perhaps no other kingdom was so small in its beginning.

You do not regard the mustard seed itself as that which is evil?

No! It is selected by our Lord because as He says, "the least of all seeds", yet it grows into a great tree, which naturally it ought not to have done. Such has happened to the kingdom today. It is not a question of good and bad seed here representing the children of the kingdom but of the character of the kingdom itself.

But is this not the result of the evil finding entrance there?

Yes! That is what I had in mind in my opening remarks, and it will be the character of it till the end of the age.

This, then, is what it has grown into. Evil men have found a place in it but they ought never to have been there.

Would a tree represent a worldly power?

Yes! That is what we had in mind in referring to Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar as the head of the kingdom of Babylon is regarded as a great tree, and many of the symbols there are used here by our Lord (Dan. 4: 12).

There it is the beginning of Gentile power and this is the beginning of the kingdom of heaven, only seen here in its ultimate character as already observed.

It is interesting to note that this word "lodge" or "roost" means "to camp down", which means they had a permanent place there. conditions are such that a harbour for these men is provided.

Had this kingdom remained in its true character there would not have been room or conditions for these men to have stayed inside, but political and ecclesiastical conditions have been introduced which just suit these men and there they are, very much at home.

At the beginning it was said, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (Acts 5: 13). It had not gone beyond its real limits at that time.

While you mention the testing we are put to in having to go along with this false element, what must it

mean to the Lord to allow it to go on?

There are men today who tear the heart out of the faith, destroy all that is true in Christianity, and yet are outwardly part of the profession. No other company in this world would suffer such a thing, but we have to suffer it.

It may be a comfort to us to remember that when our Lord came into this world He met similar conditions among the religious leaders of Judaism; and today the strongest opposition often comes from the supposed religious leaders, men who are not leaders in the faith at all but living denials of it.

It is a comfort to know that one day all the lodgers are going to be turned out. This is what the kingdom has **become like**, but this likeness will not be known in the future day of its manifestation.

When we consider that holiness becometh the house of God, there could not be any room for that sort of thing.

The reason Babylon is referred to in the book of Revelation is that we might gather the estimation of God about it, and see His judgment of it.

In these two sets of parables we get a twofold thought that one has long enjoyed. We are definitely called to view the preciousness of the church as the Bride the Lamb's Wife, but we are not told anywhere to view the harlot. What we are told to do is to see her **judgment**. The angel did not say I will show thee the great harlot, but "the judgment of the great harlot" (Rev. 17: 1). That brings us to another question. What is to be our attitude today in view of the moral import of this mighty monstrosity which has grown up?

In that section you are quoting from we have the answer, and it may help to clear up another difficulty. "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18: 4). One is often asked the question, Who does that verse refer to in a day like that? It is not addressed to anyone in that day, it is addressed to us. The whole of the book of Revelation is written to the seven assemblies. So then if we note what you have called attention to, "the judgment of the great harlot", our exercise today will be to get out of that which bears the character of Babylon the great.

That would lead to what God says again about that harlot, "God has judged your judgment upon her" (Rev. 18: 20 N.T.). We are capable of arriving now at the judgment which will fall upon her in a day to come.

If our original attitude is to come out of her, what is our continued attitude to be?

To stay out. If we take the first step and do not stop half-way, we shall not only leave such dishonouring associations but we shall continue to walk apart from them. Speaking for oneself, not only do I desire to answer the exhortation to get out of what is Babylonish, but I desire to listen to what the Lord has to say as to Philadelphian conditions on the positive side. I do not think we can answer to Philadelphian conditions unless we are well clear of Babylon.

That is exactly what I have in mind in raising this matter. In the face of this vaunted greatness what becomes us is to be content to be small. One has been much occupied lately with the thought of obscurity, not in a legal sense, but as knowing something of the intrinsic value of what we have. So to Philadelphia the Lord says, "thou hast a little strength"; they apparently had nothing great but what they did have was very precious. Preserved from the spirit of boasting, and contentment with obscurity in the enjoyment of what is intrinsically precious will, I believe, ensure deliverance from these features of outward greatness.

Would that be like "poor in spirit"?

It would! Would not Enoch be like that? Walking apart from all that was going on but having the assurance that he pleased God.

So we have this instruction for the days in which these features have come to light. Sometimes when challenged about these matters we have to tell people that we should have been surprised if these things had not come to pass. The Bible tells us that they would come.

It is still a "little flock", as the Lord said, in spite of what has attached itself to the outside testimony. We shall see that side before the reading closes. In Revelation we see that Philadelphia is surrounded by Romanism and Protestantism and the religious democracy of Laodicea; in the public eye we are identified with it all; but I hope we are morally apart from it.

Yet there are those in these systems to whom we can appeal with the gospel.

The grain of mustard seed does not refer to persons, but to the system which has grown from it; what it has become in the hands of men. You will remember that Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" He calls attention to what he had done, and so it is in principle today.

We see two things working together in this passage, external greatness produced by internal corruption. That is how it came about.

Is this the kind of secret thing which would deny the Deity of Christ, and similar negations? Do you think it comes about by men introducing their natural intelligence into the things of God?

It is referred to here as leaven, and the human intellect is destructive of the things of God. We do not read of God's dispensation which is in reason, but "God's dispensation, which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1: 4. N.T.). That is clearly to be seen in verse 11.

This tree is good for neither God nor man. Herbs have their use, but this thing is no good to anyone.

Are you referring to the leaven when you speak of internal corruption?

Are we not all part of Christendom?

Externally we are, but I trust we are apart from the system which carries the features of this tree.

Can that which is real be corrupted with this leaven?

The fruit of the work of God in our souls can never be corrupted, but we can come under corrupting principles and walk according to them.

In Zechariah 5, we read of the vision of an ephah with the talent of lead which is said to be "a woman", and it is carried to Shinar where idolatry began. Then we see in the Revelation that judgment falls on Babylon in its idolatrous character. I believe this leaven is idolatry. It will eventually corrupt the whole mass.

Wherever Shinar is mentioned, it is viewed as a challenging glory to the glory of God, but the remarkable thing about it is that when it appears God indicates a generation who will have nothing to do with it. The tower of Babel is Shinar and was a challenge to the glory of God. The God of glory indicated that He would call out a generation who would respond to His call and so Abram came out of it. Again in Joshua where the Babylonish garment is mentioned, calling attention to a man who is conspicuous in this world, God calls attention to Joshua, a man who was conspicuous in heaven, for the sun stood still at his word. Again in the book of Daniel, where we get some of the vessels of God carried into Shinar, we have brought to light three men who will go into the fire rather than dishonour

God. The reference in Zechariah is the only other place where it is mentioned, and there it is seen as judged of God.

I suppose in spite of this corruption there will always be those who are moving for the pleasure of God. The wheat will always be there so long as we are in this world.

In regard to that I have often heard it said that the path is becoming more and more individual. What is meant by that?

If those who use that statement mean they expect to be left on their own before the Lord comes, it will be their own fault if they are.

The word in 2 Tim. 2 is, "with them".

What I should mean by such a statement is, you cannot depend upon the collective gathering carrying you along unless you are going on in individual faith in the Lord. The company will not carry me. When one hears others say, I am prepared to go on alone, I wonder if they want to go on on their own.

One man did think he was alone but God told him there were another seven thousand.

Is this tree still growing or did it reach this stage at an early date?

I think it reached this state before the apostles had left this world. We trace warnings about the evils which had found entrance in their day. It is not so much how long it takes to grow but that it would assume this character.

We see this character coming out in the book of the Acts, for while the bounds of this kingdom have been expanding it has not altered its character.

Looking again at the leaven, it is well to bear in mind that it is never used in a good sense in the Word of God. It is used six times in the New Testament as a symbol and in each case in a bad sense.

Is that not true also when it is used in the Old Testament?

Yes! Just as in the New.

Will you say more about the point indicated that a man sowed the seed and a woman introduced the leaven?

No doubt the sower of the mustard seed was the Lord: He sowed in "His field". What others have done in that sphere accounts for its failure,. The Lord did not introduce the leaven, others have done that.

The tree began with what was good and became corrupted, but the leaven is corrupt to begin with. No doubt the mustard seed would originally be good and others corrupted it, but this leaven corrupts everything it touches, it corrupted the whole of those three measure of meal.

A servant of the Lord long since pointed out that these "three measures", or as the words are "three seahs", are the same measure as the ephah in Zechariah 5. An ephah is "three seahs". That is where we see the connection between these two Scriptures.

Leaven was strictly forbidden in the meat offering and one has suggested that this woman was corrupting the food of the priests. It would suggest what we feed on.

We certainly do need to take heed to what we give our attention in doctrine today. One has said, and I have proved it by contact, that outside of the sphere where the Spirit is owned as the great Teacher, one can expect only milk and water or milk and poison.

It certainly does seem to involve corrupting the food, that is what we enjoy as food. Some would adulterate it with modern ideas, intelligent men relying on their intelligence to provide food. It only leavens the food of the people of God.

It is interesting to note when Abraham sought to entertain his three divine visitors, he told Sarah to take three seahs of flour, the same measure as we have here.

It is striking in the next chapter when the two visitors arrived in the house of Lot, he baked them "unleavened cakes", but it does not say the cakes of Abraham were unleavened (Gen. 18 and 19). The suggestion is that they would certainly be unleavened in Abraham's house but it was not so sure with Lot, hence this point is noticed. One may imagine Lot saying to his wife, These are holy men, be sure and see the bread is unleavened.

The same thing is said of the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28: 24).

It is surprising to note these attempts to do what was right in circumstances which were hopelessly wrong; just an outward attempt to do what was right.

The suggestion in Matt. 13: 33, is that the woman did not hide the leaven because she sought a hiding place for it, but rather because she definitely desired to leaven the meal, and so the whole was eventually affected.

Does that indicate that where the things of God are held there will be that attempt to corrupt them?

We have to accept that fact for it says till the whole was leavened.

We read of it in two epistles, Corinthians and Galatians. All would be in some way affected by it, for the apostle tells them "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5: 6).

As we move on to the next three parables which we have read we find that all within the sphere of that kingdom is not bad. The first two were uttered outside the house, these three inside the house. We need to take care lest we spend too much time on the parables which speak of evil and have little time to speak of that which is good. Had we the two outside only to consider we might have given up any attempt to go on for the Lord, thinking all was just a waste of time, but we have something very valuable here. First, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field". We have already seen that "the field" became "His field", and now we have "a field" as bringing before us the world again. There was something hid in this world which was of such value to the Lord that He sold all that He had to buy the field in order to possess the treasure.

Was the treasure of more value than the field or Israel?

It must have been, for He sold all that He possessed in relation to Israel to buy the field to gain the treasure.

Would the selling be that He surrendered His rights as Messiah for the time being in order to gain that treasure?

It says all that He had, He was prepared to part with that to have this treasure. One would like to consider this parable minutely in its statements because of other interpretations which we judge have sprung from the lack of observing carefully what is said in these parables. First we have the statement that He knew the treasure was there but did not bring it to light, He kept it hidden till He had bought the field, but He knew from the outset it was there. I think this looks back to what we have considered in a previous reading, "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world".

Did you say that the field was only the sown portion of the world?

Not quite! I believe the whole world is seen as the field, but what we did say was that it can only be the sown portion of the world that is seen as the extent of the kingdom.

Would Matthew 16 give us a little insight of what this treasure is?

If we take both the treasure and the pearl together I think it would, though for myself I think the treasure is a wider thought than the pearl.

Had you in mind here the sovereignty of God, for He alone knew about that treasure?

Yes! It is things hidden from the foundation of the world. It was kept a secret while Christ was in this world and what is involved here did not come to light till the Spirit had come, that is, so far as we are concerned. I think this treasure is something wider than the church of Matt. 16. I believe it has in view the whole heavenly company, which would include the Old Testament saints. We see some of them in Heb. 11, beginning with Abel, who is said to be the first of that line of faith, although I do not doubt Adam also will be there.

It was given as a promise to Israel that they should be a peculiar treasure to God but they failed on the ground of responsibility. Do you think the church carries this through on the ground of what Peter says in his first epistle?

So far as the thought of treasure is concerned that may be, but we are dealing with the heavenly side of the kingdom, not the earthly side in this chapter, and we know when the Lord comes all the saints right back to Abel will be raised and have their part in the heavenly side of the kingdom. I think the treasure includes them.

In that connection it would go wider than the saints in Israel of old, for there are quite a number of Gentiles who will participate in the resurrection.

It has long been pointed out in 1 Thess. 4, that we have three things mentioned in relation to the resurrection-the "shout", the "voice" and the "trump". The shout is the shout of the Lord and will reach back to Pentecost in relation to the church. The voice is that of the Archangel and this will go right back to Abel, and I suppose Adam, but I am keeping Hebrews 11 in mind. God spoke to these men in testimony right up to the call of Israel. Then we have numerous instances in the Old Testament connecting Michael the Archangel with Israel, while now we have the Lord Himself as the Guide and Saviour of His people.

With that in view I have thought that in the treasure we have that which is mainly for the pleasure of God; in the pearl that which is mainly for the heart of Christ, and in the net that which is the product of the work of the Spirit.

If this man **found** the treasure, as though he did not know it was there, how do you align that with the counsel of God?

I believe the Lord found the treasure first of all in counsel, He knew it was there. That is where it first came to light and that is why we keep referring to verse 35, "kept secret"; but **He** knew of it before He came into the world. Indeed, the reason the world was created was to bring this into view. We need to remember, when we read of the purpose of God, that it involves more than the church. This is quite clear in Ephesians 1: 10, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth". I apprehend this treasure verges on all things which are in heaven so far as individuals are concerned; then after the church is in glory, all things which are upon the earth will be brought in.

That is why we saw it was the kingdom of the Son of Man, for it was as such the Lord began the work of the Sower.

From whom is the treasure hidden?

That is not the point in the parable, but it was hidden from all but Divine Persons. They only knew it was there.

It has been said to be Israel.

It cannot be Israel in this chapter at all for Israel have no part in the heavenly side of the kingdom, nor is there any mystery as to their part in the prophets.

A footnote by J.N.D. says, "because of His joy" and I think the joy of the Lord involves the Assembly. While, as you have been saying, it includes more than the Assembly, the treasure does not come to light till the Assembly is secured.

The next parable brings that to light.

I am convinced that in each case the hiding was not the objective. With the woman the desire was to corrupt the meal, but here it is to bring to light that which would be for Himself and for the glory of God. He would secure it all by redemption.

Would this be "the joy that was set before Him"?

It would be a large part of it, for it says here, "for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that He hath".

It appears to me that to attempt to restrict this to Israel would be to limit the joy of the Lord. Surely the chief joy of the Lord is in relation to the Assembly?

I thought that reference to the "joy that was set before Him" has His place on high in view.

I certainly think that is so, but do not let us forget the company which is associated with Him there.

Do we not see this in Psalm 16, the path which led through death to the glory?

You may remember in that very Psalm we read, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight".

Does not His joy involve all that was according to the will of God, which would include all these other things?

Selling all that He had would include the laying down of all He had a right to as Messiah in Israel, and may go back to His leaving the Father and coming into the world.

We must note the selling was to buy the field; it does mean parting with something to gain something of greater value.

We learn from another that the two words for selling are not the same. The word in relation to the treasure means "to trade in general"; but in regard to the pearl the word indicates one who is a "tradesman in **certain** goods", a much more definite transaction by one who knows the value of that which he has.

"Yet for you sakes He became poor".

That would involve the idea of cost. He knew the value of pearls. It does not say He was seeking the treasure, but it does say He was seeking goodly pearls, something specific. When He had found this one pearl of great price He recognises its value. As a merchant man He knew what He was after, and

His heart was set upon it.

The distinction you are making between the treasure and the pearl is that the treasure would include the whole heavenly company, and that the pearl sets forth the Assembly.

If you ask me for Scripture for these things, we find it worked out in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 5 we see the whole heavenly company as the four and twenty elders, and this runs on to Revelation 19. In that chapter the Lamb's wife is brought into view as having made herself ready for her marriage, and after that we do not read again of the twenty-four elders. There is clearly a differentiating between the wife and those who are invited to the marriage, but all are there in heaven.

They would be some of the friends of the Bridegroom.

Yes! John the Baptist will be in heaven and many more like him.

Will you, please, say something further as to this pearl?

There can be no doubt about the value Christ sets upon it, and all will eventually see how much He did value it, for when the city comes into display with Him, every gate is said to be a several pearl. In every outgoing of that city men will be impressed with this fact, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5: 25). What is in view is the oneness of this pearl, a great truth to be treasured today. The pearl would suggest something of great beauty.

I have noticed that this word for "great price" is used in this form in one other place only, and that is in relation to the box of ointment (John 12). It occurred to me that it may set forth the fact that there is a company on earth who measure rightly the love which took that blessed One into death in order that He might secure that choice note of praise for His own heart.

Why is the pearl selected to describe for us His thoughts of the church?

Why did you say earlier that the pearl sets forth beauty?

I was thinking of the book of Revelation, where we see that the Church in its beauty is going into the eternal state without any change. Again it is asked in Proverbs, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies".

It has often been pointed out that a pearl is the result of suffering and the church is the result of the sufferings of Christ. The church could not come into view until He had suffered.

You will remember that on the breastplate we have mention of twelve precious stones. Again in Ezekiel 28, in connection with the king of Tyrus, there are nine precious stones mentioned. Yet again we have mention of twelve stones in the foundations of the wall of the holy city. Now in each case these stones are there to reflect the glory of God. In Ezekiel 28, they reflect the glory of God in **creation**; on the breastplate they reflect the glory of God in **grace**; and in the holy city they reflect the glory of God in **redemption**. Now we do not read of a pearl in any of these collections, and I have come to regard it as having been reserved to symbolise the unique glory which attaches to the Assembly, not only what she will display but what she is to the heart of Christ.

In the holy city we read of all manner of precious stones in the twelve foundations, and "every several gate was of one pearl". I do not doubt that there will be a wonderful shining out through that city of the glory of God, but there will be a special ray that has not yet shone out in this world and that will be the pearl.

It says that each gate in the city was a pearl; does that mean there will be twelve pearls? If so why does it say here "one pearl"?

The New Translation makes that clear, "And the twelve gates, twelve pearls; each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl". "Of one pearl" would mean that each partook characteristically of the features of the pearl. To me it suggests that when the city is set in administration all the outgoings will be characterised by the fact that Christ loved the church.

Why did it say the treasure was found and then hidden, but it does not say that of the pearl?

Because the treasure includes the Old Testament saints, but the church does not. The church did not come into being until after the death of Christ, but the Old Testament saints had already appeared for God in the world. I am sure we all fully agree that this pearl is an intimation of the Assembly which comes out more fully in Matthew 16 in our Lord's word to Peter.

In the net we have a picture of the going out of the gospel, the means God is using today to secure the material which composes the church.

Does this drawing to land take place at the end of the dispensation or is it going on today?

I believe it is going on today. Would not "they" be the men who had cast the net? It is not left to men at the end to do the separating, that is the work of the angels. It may suggest the whole dispensation as brought in by these means, but we note that men gather the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. I take it the bad will be dealt with by the angels at the end, but these men secure the good before the end.

What do you think the gathering into vessels means?

It would be to exercise us to look out for what is good and seek to bring it where it can be of service to the Lord.

Do you mean gathering into the meetings?

So far as I am concerned, yes. We have often pointed out that four things are said about nets in the gospel. Both here and in Mark 1: 6, we read of them **casting** a net; in Mark 1: 19, we read they were **mending** their nets; in Luke 5: 2 we read they were **washing** their nets; and in this parable they **drew** the net. Regarding this as a picture of the going out of the gospel, I would put mending first; be sure the gospel you preach is capable of catching men for Christ. Then in regard to the washing, keep the gospel clean from worldly sayings and worldly influences. Further, no matter how good a net may be or how clean, if it is not cast we cannot hope to catch men. Then lastly, let us not be always casting the net, we need to take time to gather what we have secured, and this I think is in view in gathering the good into vessels. Take care, too, that we do not waste too much time over the bad, rather give more time to the good. A servant, well known to some of us, said to his nephew just before he died, "If I had my life to live over again I would give more time to those who wanted to go on and would not waste again the time I have wasted on those who would never go on".

As with the tares higher up, we read again that the angels will deal with the bad at the end. They sever the wicked from the just, but we ought to be severing the just from the wicked.

Let us take note of this and seek opportunities for helping those who give evidence of being good fish gathered in by the gospel.

If the Lord should ask us, as He did His disciples, "Have ye understood all these things?" may we be able to answer "Yea, Lord". If we can truly say so, then as spiritually enriched by the understanding we shall be "like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old".

Matthew 16: 21-28; Matthew 17: 1-9.

In our readings on Matthew 13 we have seen how the kingdom will be brought into being and the features which mark it during the time of its mystery character. This we had before us in the seven parables recorded in that chapter. It is interesting to note that at the end of that chapter we read, "He departed thence" (verse 53). Again, in Matthew 14: 13 we read, "He departed thence". Yet again in Matthew 15: 21, "Jesus went thence, and departed", and in Matthew 16: 4, "He . . departed". Having instructed the disciples concerning the new character the kingdom would assume, He is now moving from one sphere into another, so far as His ministry is concerned. It would appear that the climax is reached in the record of the mount of transfiguration, for this looks on to the world to come when the kingdom, which is in mystery today, will be in display in **that** day. In view of this, we have the reference to His death as given to the disciples, for the heavenly side of the kingdom could not be brought in apart from this. It was inevitable that He should die, and what He teaches them from this point to the end of Matthew 18 (which is the end of this section) is all in view of the fact that He was going into death. The glory of the Christ must be preceded by His sufferings.

When you said the glory depends upon the suffering, you mentioned the world to come. Do we share in that?

We shall see that a blessing on those lines is opened out for us in these verses which we have read together. The reference to His death in verse 21 is the fulfilment of what we saw in Matthew 13, "sold all that He had". It involved the giving up of His rights as Messiah in order that He might possess this greater object which was now in process of being formed by His ministry. He not only told them He was going to die, He assured them that He would rise again, and that has in view the establishment of the kingdom as we have seen.

Why is it at Jerusalem He must suffer these things?

That is the centre from which the administration of the kingdom will go forth over the earth, from "Zion . . the city of the great king" (Ps. 48: 2). In the very place where He ought to have been accepted and crowned as their King, He was rejected and crucified.

So He was not only going to die; it says here He was going to be killed.

Yes! It is His rejection by His earthly people which is in view.

Is it significant that He speaks of this matter of going to His death immediately after He has brought to light the fact that He is establishing by His own work something against which death cannot prevail?

This is not looked at as a laying down of His life, but rather what they would do as having rejected Him.

The laying down of His life is presented in John's gospel as that which He is doing for the glory of the Father; being crucified at Jerusalem as described in Matthew 16 is what the people are doing. We have the light of both of these things today and we thank God for it. He did not die at Jerusalem only because they refused Him, but their rejection of Him is the aspect of His death which is in view here.

We need to keep both sides of the truth in our minds; His suffering on our account and His suffering on God's account.

It is in the setting in which the death of the Lord is presented as being the deliberate act of wickedness at the hands of men that the question of discipleship is raised. It is a very important matter that the Lord should present first that He is establishing something against which the power of the gates of hades

cannot prevail, then shows that such an One as He is going to be completely and absolutely rejected by Israel on earth, and in that setting introduce the thought of men being prepared to lose their lives for His sake.

So that if the kingdom, so far as our Lord was concerned, is established in suffering, it is also to be characterized by suffering on the part of the disciples.

It necessitates that the mind should not be on the things of men but on the things of God. That is the point I have in mind. Peter's mind was related to the things of men. Now it is quite apparent that the things of men are irremediable. The mind of men has expressed itself in all its wickedness by the rejection of Christ. If our minds are set upon what is of God and not what is of men, we see the absolute necessity for the death of Christ to establish the thoughts of God, and the need on our part to accept the path of suffering that we may enter into the joy of these

thoughts.

There may be a tendency with us to try to avoid the consequences of the death of Christ. That is where Peter was wrong, and the Lord said to him, "Thou art an offence unto Me".

While Peter expressed a care for the Lord, he did not relish the thought of suffering, and it is a challenge to us as we speak of the principles of the kingdom of heaven as to how far we are prepared to suffer in relation to those principles. I do not doubt that the exhortation in Peter's first epistle was based on such events as are recorded here. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Peter 4: 1).

Why does the Lord say it would be the chief priests and the scribes who would kill Him?

They represent the leaders of the people who ought to have recognized Him and accepted Him. There must be the complete closing of one door before the other door can open. They cast Him out of the vineyard and as outside He has brought into effect the kingdom as we know it today.

Are there not three ways in which the death of Christ is spoken of? At the hands of men; laying down His life of Himself; and, as in Psalm 22, "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death".

We do well to keep these things in balance in our souls. It is of interest to note in the gospel by John that while we hear the Son saying, "The Father which sent Me", on other occasions He said, "I am come". While the Father sent Him that His will might be accomplished, the Son of His own volition came into the world to accomplish that will. We have, as you say, the further thought that man by wicked hands crucified Him.

Would Satan be using Peter here to hinder the Lord's going to the cross?

There is a distinction between sentimentality and spirituality and it was obviously sentimentality with Peter at that moment. We may think he had very little ability at the time to grasp the full thought of the Lord's words, yet it was sentiment and not of the Spirit. He was shrinking from the thought of suffering.

Do you think it was Satan or was it Peter himself?

I believe Peter himself was Satan characteristically at that moment. The Lord does not say the being we know as Satan was using Peter at that moment, but treats him as Satan, a definite opposer, which the name Satan means. An interesting distinction between this and what the Lord said to Satan in the wilderness is worth noting. In the wilderness when Satan tried to persuade the Lord to worship him, he received the reply, "Get thee **hence**, Satan" (Matt. 4: 10); but here when Peter is rebuked the Lord said,

"Get thee **behind** Me, Satan". He would not say to Peter, "Get thee hence".

Satan did not know what the consequences of the cross would be, otherwise he would never have urged men to crucify the Lord.

Was there a move by Satan to deter the Lord from going to the cross?

I rather think it was the flesh in Peter which shrank from the thought of suffering on the cross. Why did Satan later drive men to crucify the Lord if here he tried to dissuade Him? I think it is Peter himself but of **that** character, and so the Lord treats him as such. Satan means "opposer" and we can oppose the things of God if we too act in fleshly zeal.

The serious thing is that there was an attack upon the Lord in an endeavour to divert Him from accomplishing the will of God.

Satan can only operate through the flesh.

That is true, but the flesh can operate apart from Satan and that is what is here.

Would not the next verse confirm that? "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (v. 24).

It would! Peter may have had himself in mind as well as the Lord and did not relish the thought of suffering.

To a Jewish mind, the thought of the Messiah going to the cross would be abhorrent. Their idea of bringing the kingdom in was more by power and glory, not by going to a cross.

Earlier in this chapter the Lord had said, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). If the gates of hell are not to prevail against it He must destroy that power, hence the necessity of His death. We know He began to build His church after that power had been destroyed and when He rose triumphant from among the dead. It is all established in resurrection.

Is that why the Lord said, "I will build", looking on to a future day?

It is what He does in the power of the Spirit when He had taken His place on high in supremacy as the great Administrator.

Peter had practically said to the Lord, "Save Your life", but the Lord says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (v. 25). If we are desirous of possessing the blessings of this kingdom we must be prepared to lose our lives in man's world or in the kingdoms of men, and find it in the blessedness of this kingdom. We have been reminded that Ittai put death before life when he said, "Whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" (2 Sam. 15: 21).

The steps indicated here are, first the mind set upon what is of God; then the desire which accompanies that; then putting that desire into action, prepared to lose one's life in man's world and to find it in relation to God's world. If the mind is not set on these things the desire will not be there. The Lord says, "If any one desires to come after me" (New Translation). We have a similar thought with the Psalmist, "One thing have I desired to the LORD, that will I seek after" (Psalm 27: 4). It is not sufficient to have the mind set on these things, or to have the desire to follow what our minds are set upon ; we must put it into practice, there must be action.

The simple point is that I cannot hope for gain in both spheres. I cannot labour for a place in man's world and obtain the favour I may gain there, and then hope to obtain favour in this kingdom. There must be preparedness to surrender the one, with the view of enjoying the blessings of the other. In

Christianity the way into life is through death.

Could we have a little help on these three statements in verse 24? "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me". What do these three things mean?

To deny one's self means that you make up your mind that the things of God are going to be first in your life; not your will, but the will of God. Then you accept the judgment of God upon man after the flesh, for the cross means that God has ended the flesh as a means of producing anything for Him. Both its best and its worst are completely set aside. You may remember in the sin offering the skin went into the fire, that is the best of it; but the dung went in as well, that is the worst of it. While we may be thankful we have power to judge and set aside the worst of the flesh, we may often be captivated by the best of it. If we accept the cross of Christ we bring that cross to bear on every motive of the flesh, good as well as bad. There is only one way left open now to the man who has reached self-displacement, who has accepted the judgment of God upon himself in relation to the flesh, and that is, to follow Jesus. It would raise the question with one, What am I really seeking? Is it that I may be glorified, or that Christ may be glorified? Is the state of my heart right as having but one desire, that Christ may be glorified in my life here?

We have a good example of that in Levi, "And he left all, rose up, and followed Him".

Does the statement "his cross" mean my cross, not the cross of the Lord?

It does! It is the most testing thing any one of us can face. This complete surrender of will, the death of Christ applied to my aspirations or my ambitions. I may think that by living in another district conditions might be more congenial for me, but I have to ask myself, "Is it the will of God that I should be there, or am I seeking only my own will? I may give up one situation for another purely to get more money, but what about the will of God? A man who **practically** takes up his cross would first of all wait to ascertain the mind of God before making any move at all. These are testing things.

I thought taking up his cross would be a man applying the cross of Christ to himself.

It is! But to take it up in relation to one's self. It then becomes my cross.

Would not that be what Paul has in mind in Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ"? Then as able to enter into the realm where Christ lives he goes on to say, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2: 20). Only affection for Christ will bring this about in any one of us.

A brother, now home with the Lord, was once asked regarding a certain sentiment in a hymn, "Can you sing that?" His reply was, "I can sing any hymn in the book provided I know the tune". I must say when we reach such words as "All the vain things which charm us most, we'd sacrifice them at Thy word" I always sing them with reserve in my mind, and at times I feel I cannot sing them at all. In a home where we were lately singing a few hymns together, a sister asked us to sing that hymn as her favourite; yet that sister is slipping into the world as fast as she can. She may still be wondering why I did not sing that hymn. We must be honest with the Lord.

If we take an attitude like that we may not sing anything at all.

Oh no! There are many things one can truly sing to the Lord, but when it comes to my singing intelligently to Him and telling Him of my judgment of self and the world with all its appeal I must be able to sing honestly; but I speak for myself; others must speak for themselves. There is no doubt that we shall be tested on these things.

If a man were seen carrying his cross it indicated his end so far as this world is concerned.

There are times in each one of our souls when these right desires do mark us, and it is a good thing for them to find expression. If times come when we may feel we are not up to these truths the memory of a time when we were may be used to recover us.

I am sure there are times when we have all felt there is nothing we would not do for the Lord. We must keep in mind that devotion is not something which marks those only who may have advanced in the Christian pathway; it should mark us all.

Could we move on to the compensation which is mentioned here?

With all the gain men have made of things in this world, no one has yet gained the whole world, but our Lord says if that were possible and one lost one's soul, what would it be worth at the end? This word "soul" is the same word translated "life" in verse 25, and I am persuaded it is the same thought as in that verse.

It was the whole world which Satan offered to the Lord.

We usually apply this verse to the unconverted but in its setting here it applies to disciples. I do not think it is an appeal to sinners, but an appeal to saints to beware lest they lose their lives by wasting them on worldly things. Notice that the Lord adds, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works". This is the compensation, and He thus encouraged them to go on in faithful discipleship.

Again the Lord says to them, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom". This is the compensation on the way, a vision of the Lord as He will be at the end, and we may have this view before we reach that end. At times like this when we gather together we see rays of this glory, and we are thus encouraged to keep going on, knowing what the end of the path will be.

That is what Peter has in mind when he speaks of "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4: 14). We could not bear an eternal weight of glory in these bodies, but in the meanwhile as suffering for Christ's sake we can know the embrace (as the word means) of the Spirit of glory.

Would this be more on the line of suffering with Him than for Him?

Suffering "with Him" is a statement in Romans 8, "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together". It also says in 2 Tim. 2: 12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him". In both cases suffering and glory go together. It means that we enter in our spirits into the rejection of Christ by this world and are prepared to share in that rejection.

Suffering for or with Christ is not a matter of our bodies or our circumstances only, but it is a matter of our spirits also. When Paul went to Athens it says, "his **spirit** was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17: 16). As we walk through the streets of our towns and take account of the absolute indifference to the claims of Christ, it ought to affect us in our spirits. That is one phase of suffering with that blessed One, the feeling in our spirits that His Name is dishonoured and cast out.

When we are attacked in our preaching it may be suffering for Christ, but in what you say it is suffering with Him.

When you mentioned compensation you were not putting all off to the future, were you?

No! We come to that now in Matthew 17. The Lord had said that before the coming day of glory there was something to be known now, a vision of the Son of Man in His glory. That is what is seen on the

mount and their hearts would be encouraged through the experience.

It had a very establishing effect on Peter, and when he wrote his second epistle he said, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1: 16).

It has been pointed out that he apparently based his first epistle on the revelation he received in Matthew 16, and his second epistle on the vision in Matthew 17.

Is it not a blessed compensation to have our affections brought into a realm where we not only see Christ glorified, but we also hear the Father expressing His delight in Him?

I am glad you used that word "brought", as that is what is said here, "And after six days Jesus **taketh** Peter, James and John his brother, and **bringeth** them up into a high mountain apart". We shall only reach these things in our souls as we are in the company of the Son of God.

I had in mind, when I spoke of denying ourselves in regard to things here, that it leads to companionship with Christ. He will lead us eventually into the kingdom in the world to come, but He leads us now into this wonderful sphere where His glory alone shines. It is a wonderful thing to have our eyes and our hearts closed to the scene where man glorifies himself, and to have them really opened to a scene where there is no challenge to the glory of Christ. All that shines there is the glory of Christ, "they saw no man, save Jesus only", and the sound which breaks the silence is the voice of the Father expressing His approbation of His beloved Son, this blessed Man. We have the privilege of enjoying these things now.

These are the things we wanted to consider mainly today. I think in line with what has just been said, the term "Jesus taketh" would involve abstracting them from one sphere, and then when it says "and bringeth", that would be the introducing of them into another sphere. How blessed to be taken by Him in spirit out of things here, and to be introduced into the sphere of His glory. We may well ask, What kind of a sphere is it into which He would bring us? First, it is a very elevated sphere, for it is "an high mountain apart".

A mountain suggests something which is solid, and established. Then it is apart, it is in the region of sanctification and of the things of God.

What thought have you as to why it should have been Peter, James and John marked out for this special favour?

I have noticed at least one feature in regard to that in Galatians. When Paul went up to Jerusalem to make known to the disciples what God had wrought through him in the gospel of the glory, Peter and John were there; James had been killed by Herod. No doubt they would remember this vision of Christ in glory and the displacement of Moses and Elijah. It may have been to prepare them for the new departure in the ways of God which came out so fully in the Pauline ministry.

While He had warned them of His impending sufferings, He also gives them this vision of the glory which was to follow.

Paul refers to them as "pillars" in the reference in Galatians 2: 9. Their minds must have gone back to this scene as Paul spoke of his commission to take the gospel of the glory of Christ to the heathen. Further, Peter and John were themselves used to write epistles for the enlightenment of the saints. These may be two of the reasons why they were selected for this privilege.

It is worth noting in that connection that they both mention Christ's glory in their writings. Peter

records this very incident in his epistle, while John refers to beholding His glory, though that no doubt was His Personal and moral glory rather than His official glory in the kingdom. Apart from these Scriptures we do not appear to have any other references to this incident. It seemed as though the kernel of this truth of the glory awaited the writings of Paul.

Is this word "transfigured" the same word as that translated "transformed" in Romans 12?

It is! This word is used on three occasions only in the New Testament; here, then in Romans 12: 2, where it is translated "transformed", and yet again in 2 Cor. 3: 18, where it is translated "changed".

In regard to your remarks about the Lord abstracting them from one sphere in order to bring them into another, it is interesting to note that in Romans 12 we have the same two thoughts. "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind". While that is not from one place to another, it is from one condition to another.

The transformation indicated here was from a subject, humble, obedient Man to one of supreme glory and authority, One Who is to fill the universe with the glory of God in the world to come. It is the kingdom of the Son of Man, but He will use that kingdom in supreme administration and authority in order to fill the universe with the glory of God, and at the centre of that scene His own glory will shine forth. "His face did shine as the sun" would suggest a place of supreme power and authority. "And His raiment was white as the light" would refer to His intrinsic purity as One Who had ever been marked by moving in the light, and Who had no darkness in Him at all.

Have we not read in Matthew 13 that there will be a generation like Him, shining forth as the Sun?

That, as we saw, is said of those who will be in the heavenly side of the kingdom.

In 2 Cor. 8: 23, we have men spoken of as "deputed messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory" (New Translation).

You are suggesting that would be the fruit of transformation.

Yes! And in what we might call a very lowly service. They were carrying the collection.

Why does it say, "after six days" here, and "about an eight days after" in Luke?

It is dispensational here, the end of the ways of God on the earth as bringing together both that which is heavenly and that which is earthly in the display of glory in the world to come. Luke, who mentions the eighth day, has more in view the new features connected with it, features which did not appear in the prophetic word in relation to the ways of God with Israel. Luke is the only one who records that the disciples were asleep when the glory appeared and when they were awake they saw it. That is a picture of Israel who are asleep today, but when awakened again nationally they will see Christ in glory and men with Him.

We read that Moses and Elias appeared with Him at first, but after the vision had passed they saw no man save Jesus only. Why is that?

We must see the completeness of this picture. Moses and Elias were talking with Him. We read much about the laying aside of what is earthly in view of bringing in what is heavenly. All that Moses said and all that the prophets wrote will have an answer in glory in the public display of the kingdom. Moses and Elias talked with Him. Note we said "laying aside", not "giving up", for those things will yet have an answer in the coming day of glory. All that comes to light in the Old Testament is contained in this picture. What Moses and Elias said, taking the words of this vision, was the truth but not **all** the truth. Much has come to light as the result of Christ coming into Manhood which Moses and Elias

knew nothing of. We can be sure that all that was testified to will have an answer, but more than was testified to will be there in that day. Hence the Father says, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him". We do not take our instruction concerning the kingdom from the law and the prophets, but from all that the Son has brought to light. That is why in Colossians 1 we are said to be in the kingdom of "His dear Son". The rule of the kingdom for us is love, and we know it is a way that cannot be gathered from the Old Testament writings. We do not despise what was written there, it will all be seen as fully secured in the day of glory, but the greater things will also be there, things which only the Son could have brought to light. He has brought them to light and we have been engaged with them in our readings together. That is why our Lord said at the end of Matthew 13, "Therefore every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old". We have before noted this order, new and old, not old and new. So quite rightly "they saw no man, save Jesus only".