

Thy Kingdom Come

By
Shaun Kearney

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a dealer in search of fine and precious Pearls, who finding a single Pearl of great price went and sold all he had and bought it." Matt 13:45, 46.

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MINISTRY PROFILE OF SHAUN T KEARNEY

After ministering extensively throughout Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America during 1967 the Lord led the Kearney's and their five children, (four sons and one daughter) to the North side of Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. There they began to pioneer a church that was to have a significant impact on the whole church nationally and the community at large. In 1972 this growing body of believers known as "New Life Fellowship" miraculously acquired a tract of land where a Convention Centre and facilities for a Bible College and Christian Campground were established.

This beautiful location with its own private beach became the scene of many wonderful events accomplished by God. It was the venue for many conferences sponsored by the church for Christian leaders. Speakers from many parts of the world came there to minister to God's servants as they gathered from all over New Zealand, Australia, and from as far away as India, South East Asia and the South Pacific. Ministers attended these gatherings from every mainline denomination to be challenged and blessed.

The Kearney's travelled to the United States for a Sabbatical along with their family. Returning to New Zealand they sold all their possessions and returned to US in 1981. They moved to Australia in 1989 and finally to New Zealand in 2006. Since then Brother Kearney has travelled in Asia, US, Canada, and Europe extensively. Over the past 16 years he has written articles and books on the 'Unstructured Church life'.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
The Church and the Kingdom	5
The Church is not an institution	7
The Messiah announces the Kingdom	13
Mixture in the Kingdom	16
Matthew chapter Five	25
Jesus the Miracle Worker	28
In Matthew 10 He calls His disciples	31
Matthew the Publican	35
Repentance	39
Kingdom Lessons on Prayer	41
The Church was born praying	49
Laws of the Kingdom	51
Imposition	57
Precedent or Incident?	59
Four essential activities	61
The Beatitudes	64
The Spiritual Laws of the Kingdom	65

Comment: In this book we have taken a position that most commentators could agree with; that the terms “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God” are used interchangeably. With other points of view we have no argument, except to say that the King and the Kingdom are omnipresent and indivisible.

INTRODUCTION

“But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:3. Religion seems to have a talent for complicating what was meant to be simple; in particular those things that Christ always meant should be straightforward and plain. The message of the Kingdom of Heaven is one of those subjects. The confusion that now exists surrounding the true character of the Kingdom has been a complete triumph for the adversary, the archenemy of Christ. It shows how easy it is for the Church to be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is Christ.

There are many interpretations abroad with regard to the nature and operation of the Kingdom of Heaven. No claim to authority by any individual or group can be accepted until they have proven it to be well founded. Simply because some put forward their claims is insufficient, and totally unacceptable, until they can prove their assertion from an infallible source beyond all doubt. This dissertation is an attempt to set forth as clearly as possible its true nature, free of any radical interpretations and unfounded claims of which many abound; some of which stretch the imagination to astounding lengths.

In matters of doctrine it is of vital importance that the authority we act upon is one we can unhesitatingly rely on. The matter of where, or from whom the church gets its authority, is undoubtedly of supreme importance. Some advocate that such authority is vested in the Church. This at once raises questions for our consideration, namely, which Church? I have been a member of several and none could agree about almost anything. Perhaps we should be asking ourselves; what is the purpose of the church, its calling, and what is its constitution and destiny?

**God has put some things together that we divide to our peril.
Among them is the “Spirit and the Word” What God has put
together, let no man put asunder**

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

These are two separate entities. The Kingdom is timeless and preceded the formation of the church. The Angels, although they do not form part of the church, are never the less in the Kingdom. Psalm 103:19-22. The Kingdom has always been. The King has always ruled. The Pharisees were hindering men from entering the kingdom, not the church, as it didn't then exist. God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai making them custodians of the Kingdom on earth. The nation, although professing allegiance to it, continually rebelled against it, thus sharing in the general rebellion of all mankind. When the King finally came to them, they refused to acknowledge Him, but set about to reject Him, and kill Him.

The ownership of the church:

Some facts are basic, and clear, namely, that the church belongs to Christ. It is His personal possession. If Christ did not exist there would be no church. That the church exists at all is only because of three foundational facts; His Incarnation; His Atoning Death; and His Resurrection, and to this we add His prophetic announcement, "I will build **my** church." The personal pronoun immediately suggests that other persons have laid claims to owning church congregations. (This must be so because in many cases they are traded as one would dispose of a personal possession or a piece of real estate). Moses had one in the wilderness Acts 7:38. When Jesus came He took one look at it; denounced it; and then He forsook it. Of the four Gospels, Matthew is the only one that contains direct reference to the statement made by Christ concerning building **His** church. The same is true regarding the local church. All that is taught in the rest of the New Testament is consistent with our Lord's statements. The claims of Holy Scripture and the Divine authority of their teachings compel our adherence to, and acceptance of, them alone. To follow any teaching contradictory to the doctrines taught by Christ and His Apostles is to have the effrontery to challenge His right to govern.

Christ the head.

The one to whom all things are to be subject has been given to the church as its head. The phrase, “Head over all things to the Church” is comprehensive. The Church in its relation to Christ occupies the highest position in the Divine counsels for the future. All things in Heaven and on the earth come under His authority. The position of the Church as being “in Christ” determines its association with Him in the exercise of this universal control. We are “joint heirs with Christ” Rom 8:17. The church was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and is united to Him in the closest possible manner. While being under His Headship as His Body, it also at the same time will be associated with Him in His power to rule, and thus He is in the fullest sense, “Head over all things to the Church”.

Antagonism to His Headship.

Against such truth, affecting as it does the glory of God, and the person of Christ, it comes as no surprise to us that the arch-enemy should set about with his utmost might, and his most persistent and ingenious devices, to appose **and imitate**. Nor should we be surprised that although we live in an era when God is calling out from among the nations a company for His name, to constitute the church the Body of Christ that the adversary should seek to obscure, **and mock the truths relating to it**. Long before Christ came; Satan was busy making preparation to paganise the apostate Christendom of the fourth century AD, by the worldwide spread of Babylonian customs and practices.

Definition of the church.

It is a spiritual edifice. The Apostle Peter uses the metaphor chosen by the Lord, calling Christ a “living stone” rejected of men, but “chosen of God”. Then he says of believers, “ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God” 1 Peter 2:21. “All the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord”. Believers are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit Eph 2:21.

THE CHURCH IS NOT AN INSTITUTION.

The Apostles did not establish an earthly system, an organization of churches centralised in an ecclesiastical headquarters in Jerusalem. They had no such policy, method, or doctrine. What took place in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15 provides no example for us to set up councils to adjudicate when problems arise in the church. They were not setting a precedent for the future. The gathering has been referred to by some as an, ‘apostolic council’. Call it what you may, but the fact is no Apostle presided over it. They took part in it, James summed it up, an epistle was addressed in the name of the Apostles, the elders, and the whole church together (vs. 22) chose delegates. **But this gathering was not intended as a precedent, it was an incident.** The decision far from settled the matter. Peter himself caused much trouble by acting inconsistently with what the whole church recommended. Galatians 2:11-14.

Events at Jerusalem provide no support for the establishment of a controlling centre for the organization of churches. One will search in vain and not find one in Acts and the Epistles. The bond binding churches was spiritual. Their common life was in Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit. There was no such thing as external unity by way of a federation of churches or ministers. The church is heavenly in its constitution and organization, its seat of government is centred in Heaven, where it’s one and only head resides. The word of God does not countenance any organization or amalgamation of churches, whether in a locality or the world at large. The plural ‘churches’ is used, when referring to “the churches of the saints” and, “the churches of the Gentiles”.

Every reproduction of the church in any part of the Roman Empire in Apostolic days came about not by taking a fixed mould, and trying to pour people into it to reproduce the shape of things that existed in another place, but it began with “life”, the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven. *Austin Sparks*

The autonomy of each congregation.

A great missionary endeavour was initiated from Antioch **without any reference to the church in Jerusalem**. It was taken entirely independent of the Apostles and their delegates Acts 13:1-3. They never sought their permission; neither did they go there to seek their stamp of approval for what they were about to embark upon. There were no Apostles present in Antioch when the Holy Spirit spoke through certain prophets and teachers, telling the church to send Barnabas and Saul to do the work He had called them to. God the Holy Spirit visited this body of believers and commissioned two men to take the Gospel to the entire Roman Empire, (250 million souls), and from thence to the whole world. Only when they commenced to fulfil that commission, at that moment **and not before**, did Barnabas and Paul function as apostles. It was the complete unshackling of the Gospel from the Jewish religion. It was, and still remains the most monumental event ever undertaken by a gathering of saints. And today we are still reaping the glorious benefits of what happened in that local congregation of believers.

The task of the church

Is to promote the kingdom.

Demonstrate life in the kingdom under the constitution of its King; and to be salt and light in our world thereby persuading men to enter it through repentance and faith.

The destiny of the church

Is to reign with Him in His kingdom.

The natural seed Israel, failed to keep the conditions of the covenant and so their term of office as demonstrators and custodians of the kingdom ceased; it was then taken from them and given to a new congregation, the church, with whom Christ made a new covenant. This was no backup plan, **but the original plan** that was ordained by God before time began. Ephesians 1:4.

A new deception has arisen headed up by a novel breed of self-appointed apostles calling themselves the International Coalition of Apostles. It goes like this: -

The Unity of the church.

“The disunity of the Body of Christ is a scandal that robs us of the full blessing of God, and undercuts our testimony to the lost. Men of genuine apostolic heart have a burden to see God’s people come together as a united family and army. They see an overview of the universal church around the world and can sense the heartbeat of what the Lord is speaking. The vision is sorely needed in the church today, and only men of apostolic insight and authority can bring it about in a significant way.” That statement espoused by the newly self-appointed members of the so-called “Apostolic Council” is a mixture of lies and truth.

True unity.

Since the new paradigm definition of “unity” is simply agreement on subjective paranormal experiences, and not doctrinal truth, any unity they produce can only be a counterfeit. The very fact that these people think the way to produce true unity is to impose a pyramid-style government on the Church, shows that they have absolutely no idea what true spiritual unity is all about. The apostle Paul gave us the highest revelation of spiritual unity in his analogy of the human body (1 Corinthians 12). He used the operation of the human body as an illustration of the body of Christ. So consider the unity of the human body. Your toes never get near your face, yet they both function in perfect harmony. Your nose never gets near your liver, yet they function in perfect harmony. The unity that exists between the various members of your physical body is not a unity of proximity. It is based on one thing, that each member is where it is supposed to be, and that each one **does** what it is supposed to do. It is the same with the body of Christ. Unity is based on whether or not we are where we are supposed to be, and doing what we are supposed to be doing. It depends entirely on whether or not we are truly submitting to the Head. If the Holy Spirit is leading you, and you are obeying the Holy Spirit, you are in perfect unity with every other member of the body of Christ doing the same thing. It is immaterial whether you ever see them, talk to them, or even know them. To be brought to the unity of the faith, all that is necessary, is that each and every member of the body of Christ learns how to be totally “led by the Spirit”.

Spiritual unity has nothing to do with religious groups joining ranks with others, or getting everyone into close physical proximity of each other, or all coming under the same kind of ministry, or becoming part of the same denomination or organization. Spiritual unity and division are not issues of our relationship with each other. They are issues of our relationship with the Head.

When you are walking in absolute obedience to Jesus Christ you **cannot** be divided from other saints who are doing likewise, it is impossible. But when we begin walking in disobedience, not only is the unity between the Head and us broken, but also the unity between us, and those who are still walking in obedience is also broken. If you are a “big toe” in the body of Christ, and you stop being led by the Head, and obeying the Head, guess what? Even though you are still connected to the “little toe” right next to you, you are no longer in unity with it. We can live in the same house, go to the same church, believe exactly the same doctrines, pursue exactly the same religious goals, and all the rest of it; but this will not stop us from becoming divided because spiritual unity does not rest on **any** of these things. **It rests on being led by, and obeying the Holy Spirit.** *Taken from “Babylon Rising” by Daniel Mace*

The presumption of the clergy.

The doctrine of the church as the Body of Christ when embraced truly has a very practical effect on the life of believers. The contrast is particularly noticeable where regard to this truth is merely doctrinal lip service; with no application to the way Christianity is lived. The commanding principle for all believers in this figure, by which the church is set forth, is its complete submission to Christ. The body belongs to the Head. Human will of itself is completely ruled out. The glory of man has no place here. For the believer the cross of Christ is the death of every human ambition, self-seeking satisfaction and pride. The cross will always truly measure how much a man loves the world, and where he really is in Christ. At the same time the cross is the basis upon which the relationship of the church is built.

Man's tendency is to exalt himself.
He loves reputation.
He likes to be somebody.
To do something that will draw the attention
of other people to himself.

To be important in his own eyes as well as the eyes of others, he is apt to forget that everything he does is for the glory of God who should be directing everything. This innate tendency is with all human beings, but nowhere is it more dangerous than in the exercise of spiritual matters, particularly in the realm of feeding and caring for God's people. Exposed to the wiles of the enemy a man may be deceived into thinking that he is serving God while in reality he is establishing his own ministry, strengthening his own ecclesiastical power base. When man's greatness is prominent, God's glory is obscured. Ecclesiastical rivalries, and the resulting domination of the strongest men in churches, have served to produce religious centres where men have usurped the position and authority of Christ. Would God direct a man to do something and then give the glory to that man?

The Church, the Body of Christ, denies the idea of its establishment here on earth as a universal ecclesiastical organization. Christ the head is in Heaven and His body the Church is identified as being with Him in Heavenly places. There the Church is "seated" with Him; its establishment **and destiny are there**. Its very existence is dependent upon His exaltation and ascension there as a result of His incarnation, death and resurrection. He is the exalted Head to whom we are joined indissoluble. He sits there at the Father's right hand having been given all power and authority from whence **He** is building His Church.

The manner of the Church's birth, growth and development, is not according to natural inclinations. It clashes with the carnal mind. It is evident that while this great truth relating to the Church as the Body, of which Christ is the Head, was taught as the doctrine of Christ, and maintained by-Apostolic testimony, there is the clearest evidence that in post Apostolic times it was neglected

if not completely ignored. The low spiritual state into which the churches have lapsed made this inevitable. Christ Himself remonstrates to John on Patmos against this. Such was the disregard for doctrine that He instructed John to write 7 letters to the 7 churches in Asia Minor. Revelation 2; 3. As then, so also today, demonic forces are at work to undermine the Church. **The rapid advance of clerical supremacy is against His Headship.** The assumption of human power and domination **by self appointed apostles and church leaders**, have almost obliterated it. Why shouldn't this be the case when men "Loved to have the pre-eminence", and people glory in man, and man glories in himself? The growth of the clerical is detrimental, no, it is more than that; **it is antagonistic to the truth.**

Those who have carefully studied the history of the first few centuries of the post-apostolic era have observed that the writings of the early Church "Fathers" contain **no testimony** to this doctrine of the Headship of Christ over His Church as His Body. Whatever else was taught, that was allowed to lapse. Today, men guided by carnal ambitions and unrestrained aspirations that focus on worldly ideas have consigned the truth of the Church as **His** Body to oblivion.

THE MESSIAH ANNOUNCES THE KINGDOM

John 1:6 ‘There was a man sent from God whose name was John’ After several hundred years of silence God sent John the Baptist. The forerunner’s task was to bear witness to the true light; a voice in the wilderness crying, “Make straight the way of the Lord”.

John 1:30. “This is He of whom I said, “after me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for He was before me.” John’s final testimony of Jesus was, “He must increase and I must decrease”.

Luke 16: 16. “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the KOG is preached and every man presses into it.”

The kingdom whereof Jesus was both King and Lawgiver was not to be a kingdom of this world: it was not to be found geographically, nor would it to be monopolized by any one class or nation, but on earth it would be located within the hearts of men and open to all

The Jews and the kingdom. The Jewish concept of the Kingdom was nationalistic, natural, earthbound, and flawed. God’s intention for them was that they would be one nation under His governance demonstrating to the world kingdom life. Even as the covenant was in the making, ever before Moses came down from the mountain, it was in the breaking Exodus 32:1-6.

Matthew 21:43. “Therefore I say unto you the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Thus the keys of the kingdom were taken from them.

Luke 3:7-9. Before Jesus commenced to minister His forerunner had appeared in the wilderness of Judea, preaching, and saying, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”.

Immediately after John baptised Jesus at Jordan, the Holy Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. After fasting 40 days the Devil

came and tempted Him, but Christ triumphed victoriously overcoming the adversary in every test. Coming out of the wilderness in the power of the Spirit He commenced His earthly ministry in Galilee.

Matthew 4:12. “Now when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee.”

Mark 1:14-15. “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel.”

Matthew 4:17. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **repent** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Only through repentance would men be able to gain entry. Natural birth no longer would count for anything all must be born from above.

The scribes and Pharisees resisted Christ, just as their fathers had rejected and refused to listen to the Judges and all the prophets including John the Baptist.

2 Chronicles 36:16. “But they mocked the messengers, and despised his words, and misused his prophets until the wrath of God arose against his people, **until there was no remedy.**”

Matthew 23:13. “Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”

The anger of Christ was manifest time and again at the Pharisees for their relentless opposition to people entering.

They believed they had a monopoly on the kingdom, and resisted all who dared to say that they no longer had control over it. Their

counterpart today are the **self appointed apostles** of the modern church who insist they are the covering over the church.

Matthew 11:12. “The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.” When we speak of the Kingdom suffering violence we’re not talking about the Kingdom itself being under attack, but rather that the use of force is necessary to force one’s way into it. It really means that it calls for violence, and that the violent take it by force. There’s great opposition every step of the way confronting those who want to go on with God. It expresses the earnestness that men must have to enter into it. It’s an earnestness that’s continually ongoing.

MIXTURE AND THE KINGDOM

In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus expounds the doctrines of His kingdom by parables.

Here there is a special group of eight, designed to exhibit in simple pictures the outstanding features of the kingdom of heaven, describing its nature, and progress, and in its relations to diverse classes of men. We shall see that Jesus taught that wicked men would infiltrate His kingdom on earth, and have a powerful and growing influence over believers.

We see many classes of people in the kingdom, but we shall also observe that the kingdom isn't in them. Tobiah the Ammonite is one such example. Eliashib the priest set him up in the Temple in Jerusalem where he is seen living off the priests portion. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and heard about it, he ordered them and all their stuff to be cast out. Nehemiah 13:4-9.

Of these parables, the parable of the sower shows the different reception the word of the kingdom receives from various classes of hearers, and the issues in their lives. Matthew 13:3-9; Jesus gives the parable. Then in verses 18-23, He gives the interpretation.

The parables of the tares and the net cast into the sea, illustrate the mixture of good and evil existing in the kingdom, and explain that these conditions will remain until the end when (and not before) the final separation would take place.

The Scribes and Pharisees were opposed to any interpretation of the kingdom other than their own. They would not hesitate to lie under oath in order to destroy anyone that preached otherwise.

**While the treasure hid in a field, and the precious pearl,
set forth the incomparable importance of the kingdom,
And how priceless its citizenship is valued.**

The Pearl of great price is most certainly not Christ, as many would interpret it, else it would mean that He was lost and went to look for Himself. The pearl is kingdom possession.

The parable of the grain of mustard seed illustrates abnormal growth from small beginnings. This tiny herb grows into a great tree that becomes a refuge out of which demonically influenced ministers operate. The righteous in the kingdom is like the Cedar, or Palm tree, not an herb.

Ezekiel 13:4-9. “O Israel your prophets are like the foxes of the desert. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying “The Lord said, and the Lord has not sent them.” “I am against you says the Lord God, and my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies.”

Then the kingdom is likened to leaven which a woman Jezebel) hid in three measures of meal until all the meal was leavened (corrupted) read Rev 2:18-25.

Teachers whose practices had sunk to the depths of Satan had infiltrated the church at Thyatira.

There are 13 types of leaven in the New Testament; all refer to devilish doctrines and sinful activity. In spite of this clear evidence we find that some still proclaim leaven is the action of the Holy Spirit at work in the church.

Many in the kingdom are unaware that they are eating bread contaminated with leaven.

An eighth parable found in Mark 4:26-28 teaches that growth in the Divine Kingdom advances by stages, similar to the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, in the growth of grain. Illustrating natural, unconscious and normal growth of the word of the kingdom in the hearts of men.

These parables, or the greater number of them, were spoken in the hearing of a miscellaneous audience, and from a reply of Jesus to a

question put by the disciples, it might appear that they were intended mainly for the ignorant. So we ask the question; **why speak to them in parables?**

He replied, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” which seems to imply, that for the multitude, the parables were affording them their only chance of getting a glimpse into the mysteries of the kingdom. But for the disciples **such views of truth would be expounded to a much greater depth in private.**

Mark 4:26-34.

“Without a parable He never spoke to them; and when they were alone He expounded them to the disciples.”

At this stage of their training it appears that the twelve never had a clear understanding of the above parables from the fact that they asked, and received explanations of them in private from the Master. The interpretations of two of the parables, the sower and the tares, are preserved in the Gospels. “All these things,” Jesus spoke unto the multitude in parables that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which kept secret from the foundation of the world.” This quotation is found in Psalm 78.

The Kingdom in heaven. There are many different classes of beings in the kingdom in heaven beside the Godhead. We have supernatural beings such as Cherubim, and Seraphim, Living creatures, Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Lucifer; and unnamed principalities and powers such as Persia and Grecia. There is the Old Testament saints and patriarchs. We have New Testament believers in Christ; the spirits of just men made perfect who have departed this world, all dwelling in the kingdom in heaven above.

The state of the kingdom on earth. The condition of the kingdom on earth is a very sorry one. It is a mixture of good and evil. Many have entered into the kingdom by the door of repentance and faith

in Christ and then strayed from the faith they once embraced. “Who hindered you not to obey the truth” Galatians 5:7.

Its condition is far from acceptable to God. Every imaginable unclean thing has crept into it unawares. Some like Judas were once followers of the Master, but no longer own Him as their Lord. Jude calls these members, “Spots in our feasts”. Because of the stigma attached to the modern church many saints are ashamed to identify with it. The church is in damage control. In the eyes of the world it’s hypocritical, because it preaches what it doesn’t practice, and practices what it denounces from its pulpits. It is seen as two-faced useless fossil, with no relevance in the modern world.

Numerous ungodly practices are taking place within its precincts, in particular the doctrine of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness. While Nicoaitans intoxicated with power, practice unopposed in its midst. 1 Corinthians 16:22.

Mixture in the Kingdom of God. 2 Timothy 2:20-21. “In a great house there are vessels not only of gold and of silver, but also of wood and earth some to honour and some to dishonour”. Paul was using the metaphor of a “great house” to describe the church.

Mixture in the house of God, the church, was something that Jesus took great pains to teach on in Matthew 13. Later the disciples, and in particular Paul, spent a large part of their ministry doing the same thing. John’s letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor are a further example as they call the churches to repentance.

Romans 9:22. “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” The mills of God grind slow, but they grind sure. We should never fall into the stupor of thinking that because He is long suffering, He is slack, or indifferent about this matter of holiness.

In Matthew 13 and Mark 4 Jesus related 7 parables. After He had sent the multitudes away He interpreted the parable of the tares in

private to His disciples Matthew 13:36. His interpretation was as follows; the field is the world; the wheat are the children of the kingdom; the tares the children of the wicked one; the enemy is the Devil. While men slept the enemy sowed his tares where they shall grow together with the wheat until harvest time; the harvest is the end of the world. The reapers will **remove the tares first**, followed by everything else that offends from out of the kingdom, and bind them into bundles for burning, but the wheat will be brought into the barn. The tares are removed before the saints go anywhere. Have you noticed that whatever God says, the false prophet says exactly the opposite? And whom do you think the people believe?

The interpretation of the parable of a woman **hiding leaven** in three measures of meal is as follows. The woman is Babylon the false church; the leaven is sin and false doctrine working secretly until it leavens the whole lump. The woman corresponds to Jezebel the prophetess in the church of Thyatira Rev 2:20. These parables are a mystery to the uninitiated, but have been given to the children of the Kingdom to understand. This woman is putting leaven into bread, and feeding it to her unsuspecting household.

Having crept in unawares corrupt servants are operating within the kingdom of God on earth. Jude 1:4-5. "I say this because some godless teachers have wormed their way in among you, saying that after we become Christians we can do just as we like without fear of God's punishment. The fate of such people was written long ago, for they have turned against our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ. My answer to them is: Remember this fact which you know already, that the Lord saved a whole nation of people out of Egypt, and then killed every one of them who did not trust and obey him."

2 Timothy 2:17-18. "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."

False doctrine like cancer is a malignant, and terminal disease. Soul-destroying doctrines abound in the perilous times in which

we live. Be vigilant, and don't ever be discouraged or surprised at what you hear concerning ungodly behaviour among preachers. Jesus said these things would happen.

Let us take note. The days in which we live are dangerous indeed. The enemy is out in full force, tempting and deceiving many of God's people. The Lord Jesus desires to purify His people, not only in heart and mind, but in doctrine as well. False doctrines keep believers in confusion and cloud our vision. They hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our prayer is that the "body of Christ will experience a unity of the faith, and a more perfect knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ".

1 Corinthians 11:19. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

Deuteronomy 4:23-24. "For the Lord God is a consuming fire and a jealous God." Here the Lord warned Israel of the consequences of disobedience. He will not allow His glory or praise to be given unto another Isaiah 42:8. He expects no less from the church.

The foundation of the Lord's work stands firm.

2 Timothy 2:19-21. "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are his. Let every one who claims to belong to Christ depart from iniquity. **But** in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Hebrews 12:28-29.

"Wherefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."

The great house is the Church, and within it there are not only vessels of honour but also vessels of dishonour fitted for

destruction. Judas was such a vessel. In Egypt, Joseph owned a cup that was more than the life of his servant was worth if he was caught using it. This is why the crime Benjamin was accused of was so serious, because it carried the death penalty. We are like vessels that belong to the Lord; He is particular about how His vessels are being used; who is using them, and what they're being used for; so He says, "let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity", which is rebelling against His will.

Exodus 12:38. When Israel left Egypt after the first Passover they were accompanied by the mixed multitude. Where did these people come from? Jacob was the heir of all of Abraham and Isaac's wealth. Abraham had 318 soldiers, (Gen 14:14) besides other servants. Isaac had a great store of servants (Genesis 26:14). All these went down into Egypt with Jacob; by the time they came out of Egypt they had been multiplying for 430 years. This was the mixed multitude that wanted to go back to Egypt when things were not turning out the way they expected in the wilderness.

Numbers 11:4. "And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat?"

The church is a mixture. The parables in Matthew 13 confirm this. It has always been Satan's aim to pollute the church by sending corrupt servants to inject false doctrine into its midst. Into the first family Cain was born. Within the Ark that Noah built we find Ham, the grandfather of Nimrod. Abraham was the father of Ishmael. Esau greatly troubled Isaac. Jacob had many sons who never walked with God. Simeon and Levi were instruments of cruelty.

A mixed multitude came out of Egypt with Israel. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire. Hophni and Phineas made themselves vile. Jesus chose twelve and one of them had a devil. Tares were among the wheat for the enemy takes great pains to sow them. Bad fish were in the net. Unclean birds were nesting in the mustard tree of faith. Lucifer was perfect in all his ways, until the day that

iniquity was found in him. Judas was among the chosen twelve. Little foxes spoil the vine. Thorns and briars are in the King's garden, and dead flies are in the ointment of the apothecary. All these correspond to certain vessels in the house.

God is no respecter of persons, but He has a tremendous respect for Christian character. Called, chosen and faithful, in that order. Sadly many are called, but few are chosen. Matthew 22:14.

Vernon McGee pastor of the rescue mission in downtown LA for 40 years used to say, "I was never sure when someone came for help, whether it was a prodigal coming home, or a pig on an excursion."

Daniel 2:32-34. Nebuchadnezzar's image was made of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay. It was top heavy. There it stood with its golden head; silver breast; its thighs of brass and down to legs of iron, and finally feet of part clay and iron. There it stood until a stone cut without hands smote the image upon the feet, breaking it into pieces so that the wind might carry it away like chaff. Then the stone became a mighty mountain filling the whole earth.

Nehemiah 13:1-3. "On that day", the dedication day, after Judah had finished the restoring the walls of Jerusalem they separated the mixed multitude excluding them from worshipping in the Temple.

Jude 3-4. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are **certain men crept in unawares**, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul warned of divisions and strife in the church.

"After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30.

These are strong words; “grievous wolves”, “perverse things”. They were busy building their kingdoms, something every denomination does shamelessly. A wealth of experience in ministering worldwide has increased our awareness of our vulnerability to a multiplicity of temptations. The three greatest points of attack on those appointed to service are:

Material security: “The lust of the eyes.”

This may affect attitudes towards money, and possessions. A lack of trust in regard to Our Lord’s promise to meet and supply our needs. Matthew 6:31-33 makes it abundantly clear that New Testament ministry was mobile, but because of insecurity we stay with one flock, year after year, living on the fleece in the comparative safety of the sheepfold. The result is neither the shepherd, nor the sheep are edified and grow up. Under the current system, unless you’re a pastor, it’s hard to make a living, so they stay put and stagnate.

Moral failure. “The lust of the flesh.”

Particularly sexual failure: It can be imaginary or actual and is rampant in the ministry. If you feed an appetite until it’s full you will not satisfy it but only increase it. There is nothing so binding that cannot be broken by the power of the precious blood of Christ. How desperately we need relationships where there can be accountability without fear and condemnation.

Personal esteem. “The pride of life.”

Concerned about what others might think. It may manifest itself in arrogance, or in fear. Where we are forever measuring ourselves, by standards other than the scriptures.

MATTHEW CHAPTER FIVE

In Chapter 5:7 we see Jesus the great ethical teacher.

Before the ministry of Jesus commenced, His forerunner John the Baptist had appeared in the wilderness of Judea, preaching, and saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

But Jesus did more than proclaim the advent of the kingdom. He expounded the nature of the divine kingdom, and described the character of its citizens.

Additionally He discriminated between genuine and spurious members of holy congregation. This He did in the Sermon on the Mount preached shortly after the election of the apostles; and it was further developed in parables that He gave about the same period.

In this great discourse delivered on the mountain He proclaimed the blessedness of citizens of the kingdom of heaven, who exhibited characteristics, which contrasted greatly with the accepted notions of the religious. They were summed up in seven statements called the Beatitudes, in which the great happiness of kingdom dwellers was presented as altogether independent of the outward conditions with which worldly happiness is associated.

The blessed, according to the preacher, were the poor, the hungry, the mournful, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the sufferers for righteousness' sake. Such were a source of blessing to the human race for which they were to become the salt of the earth, and lights in the world.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus exhibited the righteousness of its true citizens, in contrast to that which prevailed saying with solemn emphasis, "Except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

And then He illustrated and enforced the general proposition by a detailed description of the counterfeit in the manner in which it

interpreted the moral law, and its manner of performing religious duties such as prayer, alms giving and fasting. In the one aspect He characterized Pharisaic righteousness as mechanical and superficial; in the other as ostentatious, pretentious, and disapproving. In contrast He described the ethics of the kingdom as a pure stream of life, having true righteousness and charity for its fountainhead, not merely of outward conduct. His kingdom was broad and universal, one that transcended all illogical barriers that the religious love to erect; free of legal literalists filled with pride and arrogance. The religion of the kingdom He set forth is humble, contrite, devoted in spiritual things and dear to the heart to God. Contentment, cheerfulness, and freedom from secular cares, and finally, as reserved in its judgment, leaving men to be judged by God. His teaching made a powerful impression on His audience.

The people were astonished at His doctrine for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes who had merely the authority of office.

It is unlikely that the multitude or the twelve fully understood the sermon; for it was far and away from anything they had ever heard, and spiritually it was too deep; besides their minds were filled with very different ideas as to what constituted the coming kingdom. Yet the drift of all that was said would seem clear and simple to those who were not brainwashed with Judaism. Things have not changed in 2000 years; it is still simple for those who have been set free from religious conditioning to understand.

The kingdom whereof Jesus was King and Lawgiver was not relocating to earth: It could only be seen by spiritual eyes, and entered into by those who were poor in spirit, and hungered and thirsted after righteousness. Nor would it be monopolized by any one nationality, or class of people, but would be open to all through repentance and faith in Christ the only door.

John 4:19-24. Records the great revelation that was given to the woman at the well.

Isaiah 56:7 “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.”

After admission into the kingdom, nowhere in the sermon is it said that ritual qualifications, such as circumcision, tithing, and Sabbath keeping, were required for maintenance. They are ignored here, just as they are ignored throughout the teaching of Jesus, and later on by the apostles. Imagine if you can for just a moment reading among the Beatitudes something that runs like this: blessed are the Tithers, for they shall not be cursed; and blessed are they that go to church every Sunday, or Saturday or whenever leaders insist that they must, for unless they do they shall not retain Kingdom status.

More blessed are they that don't go to religious institutions, for they shall not be fleeced.

Nor did He say “blessed are the circumcised for no uncircumcised shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”

This significant silence concerning the seal of the national covenant could not have failed to have its effect on the minds of the disciples, with not a little hint of more to come.

One does not remain in the kingdom by maintaining external observances in temporal things, but in those which are essentially spiritual; righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17; Eph 4:1-3.

We've a NEW covenant, the OLD is gone, the NEW has come.

The weighty truths taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, He sought at other times to popularise by means of parables. In the course of His ministry He uttered many parabolic stories, they were His favourite form of instruction. Of the around thirty parables preserved in the Gospels, most were given to fit the particular occasion, and are best understood when viewed in connection with the circumstances which prompted them. Proverbs 1:1-6.

JESUS THE MIRACLE WORKER

We see Jesus the great miracle worker in Matthew 8 and 9.

The things which the disciples had the honour to see in connection with the charitable work of the kingdom were, if possible, still more marvellous than those which they heard in Christ's company. They were eyewitnesses of the events, which Jesus sent the messengers of John to report to their master in prison as unquestionable evidence that He was the Christ who should come. In their presence, as spectators, blind men received their sight, lame men walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf recovered hearing, dead persons were raised to life again. The performance of such wonderful works was for a time Christ's daily occupation. "He went about in Galilee and other districts, doing good, and healing **all** that were oppressed of the devil". Acts 10: 38.

The "miracles" detailed in the Gospels give no idea whatever of the extent to which these wondrous works were carried on. The leper cleansed on the descent from the mountain, when the great sermon was preached, the palsied servant of the Roman centurion restored to health and strength. Peter's mother-in-law cured of a fever; the demoniac delivered in the synagogue of Capernaum, the widow's son brought back to life while he was being carried out to burial. These are but a few samples selected out of a multitude of remarkable deeds.

The truth of this statement appears from frequent references in the Gospels, which relate not to individual miracles, but to an innumerable number when all of them are taken into account. Take as an example the following report, as it briefly rehearses the works done by Jesus at the close of a busy day.

"And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils; and all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils."
Matthew 11:2.

This happened on a single Sabbath evening in Capernaum shortly after the Sermon on the Mount was preached. Such scenes appear to have been common at this time; for we read a little farther on in the same Gospel, that “Jesus spoke unto His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him; for He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.” And yet again Mark tells how “they went into an house, and the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.”

The inference suggests to the vast extent of Christ’s labours among the suffering, and is borne out by the impressions these made on the minds both of friends and foes. His antagonists were so struck, and disturbed by what they saw, that they deemed it necessary to discredit the mighty power wielded by Jesus in curing physical, and especially psychological maladies to Satan. “This fellow” they said, “doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.” It was a lame theory, but it was at least conclusive evidence that devils were cast out, and in great numbers.

The reactions of men concerning the works of Jesus were varied, but the great number of miracles recorded testifies to His immense workload and extraordinary zeal.

The sentiments of the people who benefited were more expressive. “They marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.” Mark 1:32-34. Mark 3:21. Mark 3:10-11. Matt 9:8.

Mark 3:20-21. His immediate family sought to take hold of Him for His enemies had reported to them that He had gone insane. His friends thought that enthusiasm for religion had disturbed His mind, and so sought to save Him from doing Himself harm through extreme concern about the needs of others.

In Matthew 10 we see Jesus as a master sending forth His twelve disciples on an evangelistic mission. After their election the twelve disciples were sent forth among the towns and villages of Galilee to repeat the Baptist’s message.

Knowing that the disciples were reluctant to think of Gentiles and Samaritans as potential citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus instructed them to go “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” and heal their sick, cast out devils, and say to them, “repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”.

Luke 9:1. “Then he called his twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases.”

Mark 6:12. “They went out and preached that men should repent.”

IN MATTHEW 10 HE CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

The twelve Apostles are called Matthew 10:1, Luke 6:12-13.

“And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God, and when it was day, he called unto him his disciples. And of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”

A.B. Bruce says in “The training of the twelve”. The number of the apostolic company is significant, and was as important as was the composition of this select band. A larger number of eligible men could easily have been found in a circle of disciples, which afterwards supplied not fewer than seventy for evangelistic work; and a smaller number might have served all the present or prospective purposes of the apostleship. The number twelve was recommended by obvious symbolic reasons. It happily expressed in figures what Jesus claimed to be, and what He had come to do, and thus furnished a support to the faith and a stimulus to the devotion of His followers. It significantly hinted that Jesus was the divine Messianic King of Israel, come to set up the kingdom whose advent was foretold by prophets in glowing language, suggested by the balmy days of Israel’s history, when the theocratic community existed in its integrity, and all the tribes of the chosen nation were united under the royal house of David. That the number twelve was designed to bear such a mystic meaning, we know from Christ’s own words to the apostles on a later occasion, when, describing to them the rewards awaiting them in the kingdom for past services and sacrifices, He said, “Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

It is possible that the apostles were well aware of the mystic significance of their number, and found in it an encouragement to the fond but **delusive hope** that the coming kingdom should be not only a spiritual realization of the promises, but a literal restoration of Israel to political integrity and independence. As we look at persons composing it, some are well known to us. Judas Iscariot is known to the entire world as the Traitor. He appears for the first time, in these catalogues of

the apostles, with the infamous title “Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him”. The presence of a man capable of treachery among the elect disciples is a mystery, which becomes clear when we understand that many such individuals have “set up shop” in the Kingdom. Judas was the only one among the twelve who was not a Galilean.

That some of the apostles were comparatively obscure cannot be denied. It does not take a great man to make a good witness, and to be witnesses of Christian facts was the main business of the apostles. That even the humblest of them rendered important service in that capacity there can be no doubt, though nothing is said of them in the apostolic records.

It is not surprising that Luke should mention only the key individuals in a history so brief. We need to realise how little we know of any of the apostles especially when we reflect how many characters that have made significant contributions to the welfare of mankind are quickly forgotten. The purpose of history is served by recording the words and deeds of the representative men, and many are allowed to fade into oblivion that accomplished much in their day. The less prominent members of the apostolic band are never the less just as significant as their brethren.

The eye of Jesus was single; He looked on the heart, being no respecter of persons unless it related to spiritual fitness. He had no faith in would be disciples with misapprehensions as to what it might entail, on the other hand He never drew back because of someone’s past history, He was entirely indifferent to the things that men place great store in.

Jesus called whom HE would unto Him, and HE made twelve that should be with Him. He called them apostles. from the time they were chosen the twelve commenced their apostolic apprenticeship. They were to learn in an intimate daily fellowship with their Master, what they should be, do, believe and teach, as His witnesses in the world. From this time forth the training of these men was to be a constant and prominent part of Christ’s personal work. He would make it His business to tell them in private what they should afterwards speak out publicly.

Hearing and seeing occupied much of their time. In the training of the twelve for the work of the apostleship, hearing the words, and seeing the works of Christ occupied an important place. Witnessing the facts of an unparalleled life was an indispensable preparation for future witness bearing. Because of this fact the apostles were able to preface their testimonies with the declaration: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." None would believe their report unless they were satisfied that it originated from men who had been with Jesus. Hence Luke, though not an apostle himself, but only a companion of apostles, presents his Gospel with all confidence to his friend Theophilus as a genuine history, and no mere collection of fables, because its contents were attested by men who, "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word".

In the early period of their discipleship hearing and seeing seem to have been the main occupation of the twelve. They were then like children commencing school, whose first and by no means least important course of lessons, consists in the use of their senses in observing the wonderful objects by which they are surrounded.

Luke 10:23-24. The things which the twelve were privileged, to see and hear were astonishing, and so Jesus was careful to impress on them the magnitude of their privilege. "Blessed," said He to them, "are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not."

Matthew saw in these amazing works the Old Testament Scripture in Isaiah 53 fulfilled, "Surely He hath borne our grief's and carried our sorrows" which he rendered, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" Matthew 8:16-17. The Greek translators interpreted the text as referring to men's spiritual maladies; their sins; but Matthew believed it was not a misapplication of the words to find in them a prophecy of Messiah's deep sympathy with all that suffered from any disease, whether spiritual, mental, or merely physical. He knew no better way to express the intense compassion of his Lord toward all sufferers, than by representing Him in the prophetic language of Isaiah 53 as taking their

sicknesses on Himself. By so doing he enabled us to see how intense the sympathy of the Saviour is with the spiritually diseased. **Certainly He, who so cared for men's bodies, would care yet more for their souls.** What great comfort and confidence we can take from the words of the prophet that, we have a Saviour who is touched with the feelings of all our infirmities.

The works that the twelve were privileged to see affected them enormously. They served to demonstrate that the King and the kingdom were NOT coming, but had arrived.

John the Baptist seems to have thought otherwise, (Matt 11:1) when he sent to inquire of Jesus if He were the Christ who was to come, or should he look for another. He imagined a work of judgment on the impenitent would be more in keeping with a true Messiah's advent than these miracles of mercy. John like Jonah, was displeased with God, not because He was too stern, but because He was too gracious, too ready to forgive. What the disciples wondered at was not just the miraculous nature of Christ's healing operations, but also the profound depth of His compassion that His divine nature revealed.

There is no trace in the Gospels and Epistles that the disciples were fascinated, spellbound, awestruck, or addicted to a love for the miraculous as we modern ministers are.

They may have felt that way when the signs and wonders first took place before their very eyes, but they seemed to have lost it entirely by the time the New Testament books began to be written. Throughout the New Testament, miracles are spoken of in an almost matter-of-fact tone. How can this be explained? The reason could be that the apostles had seen too many miracles while with Jesus to be carried away with them. Their sense of wonder had been deadened because they were so prolific. But though they ceased to marvel at the power of their Lord, they never ceased to wonder at His grace. Christ's great love remained for them the most amazing thing about Him. The longer they lived, the more affectionately they acknowledged the truth of their Master's words: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see".

MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN

The call of Matthew. Matt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 5:27-32.

The call of Matthew significantly illustrates a very prominent feature in the public action of Jesus. viz., His utter disregard of the maxims of worldly wisdom. A publican disciple is questionable enough, but a publican apostle could not fail to be a stumbling block to Jewish prejudice, and therefore create more problems for the Master as if He didn't have enough. Yet, while perfectly aware of this fact, Jesus invited to intimate fellowship one that had pursued the occupation of a tax-gatherer, and at a later period selected him to be one of the twelve. His procedure in this case is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the manner in which He treated others who on the surface seemed to have qualities to recommend them, and who showed their readiness to follow by volunteering. i.e., We have the scribe who came and said, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go". This man's social position and professional accomplishments seemed to mark him out as a very desirable acquisition, (he would cause many modern pastors to salivate) yet the "Master" deliberately scared him off with a gloomy picture of his own destitute condition saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no where to lay His head."

Matthew seems to have been employed in the town of Capernaum as a collector of revenue, at the time he was called, which Jesus had adopted as His place of abode; **for a while Jesus was at home "in His own city", (Matt 10:1) as Capernaum came to be called.** It was here that the palsied man was brought to Him to be healed; and from all the evangelists we learn that it was on His way out from the house where that miracle took place that He saw Matthew, and spoke to him the words, "Follow Me". The inference drawn is plain and important, as it helps to explain the apparent abruptness of the call, and the promptness to which it was responded. Jesus and His new disciple being almost neighbours would have had ample opportunity to see each other before his call.

Passing from these secondary points to the call itself, we observe that the narratives of the event are very brief and fragmentary. There is no hint of any previous social contact that might prepare Matthew to comply with Jesus invitation to him. It is not inferred that no such acquaintance existed, as we can see from the case of the four fishermen, whose call is recorded with equal abruptness in the Synoptic Gospels, while we know from John's Gospel that three of them at least were previously acquainted with Jesus. The truth is, that in regard to both calls, the evangelists concerned themselves only about the **crisis**, passing over in silence all preparatory stages, considering it unnecessary to inform intelligent readers that neither the publican nor any other disciple blindly followed one of whom he knew nothing, merely because asked or commanded to follow.

Because Matthew the publican resided in Capernaum, makes it absolutely certain that he knew of Jesus before he was called. No man could live in that town in those days, without hearing of the "Mighty works" done in and around it. Heaven had been opened right above Capernaum, in view of all. Lepers were cleansed, and the demoniacs delivered; blind men received their sight, the paralysed regained the use of their limbs; one woman was cured of a chronic malady, and another, the daughter of a distinguished citizen, Jairus ruler of the synagogue, was brought back to life from the dead.

These things done publicly, were noised abroad, and were the talk of the town. The evangelists relate how the people were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned one another, saying, "What thing is this, what new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands the unclean spirits and they obey Him. We never saw it on this fashion, or, we have seen strange things to-day."

Matthew concludes his account of the raising of the daughter of Jairus with the remark:

"The fame from went abroad into all the land" Matthew 9:31.

Just think, what a powerful effect that miraculous event would have had in preparing the tax-gatherer to respond to the command, "Follow me" from the Lord.

In crediting Matthew with some previous knowledge of Christ, we make his conversion to discipleship appear reasonable without diminishing its moral value. It was not a matter of course that he should become a follower of Jesus merely because he had heard of, or even seen, His wonderful works. Miracles of themselves do not make men believers, otherwise all the people of Capernaum should have believed. How different was the actual fact, when we hear the complaints made by Jesus concerning those towns along the shores of Lake Gennesaret, where most of His mighty works were done.

Matthew the collector of customs truly "repented".

Whether he had more to repent of than his neighbours, we don't know. It is true that he belonged to a class of men about whom there was much prejudice. Many of them really were frauds and extortionists; but he may have been an exception. His farewell feast shows that he possessed means, but we cannot take for granted they were dishonestly earned. But we may safely say, "He left all, rose up, and followed Him."

A feast in Matthew's house at which Jesus was present followed shortly after this great decision. From Luke we learn that it was a great occasion, and that it was given in honour of Jesus. His critics would have frowned upon this feast because of the questionable character of many of the guests, who were the type of people the religious despised.

A great company of publicans and others that sat down with them

A standing feature in Christ's public ministry was the constant presence of religious bigots, but it never disturbed Him. He went calmly on His way doing His work; and when His conduct was

called into question, He was always ready with a decisive reply. He vindicated Himself to those who examined Him for mixing with publicans and sinners at Matthew's feast; and again in the house of Simon the Pharisee; and another time when certain scribes and Pharisees charged Him saying, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." His defences for loving the unloved and morally unattractive are full of grace and truth. Matt 4:25. Luke 5:30. Luke 7:36. Luke 15:1.

REPENTANCE

This is the first principle of the doctrine of Christ.

In Matthew 11 Jesus denounces unbelief and predicts judgment on those cities that never repented. It was the first response to the kingdom message that He looked for in His hearers. Men may wave palms and cry “hosanna” but that won’t get anyone into the kingdom; only repentance can do that.

“Then He began to chastise the cities where most of His mighty works were done because they repented not saying, woe Chorazin and Bethsaida, for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.” Matthew 11:20-21.

And of Capernaum in particular He said bitterly,

“Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven shall be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.” Matthew 11:23.

There can be little doubt that Christ’s prophetic word in regards to those cities bears a close association with Isaiah 14:13-15. “Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend unto heaven, yet thou shalt be brought down to hell.”

Christ’s complaint about the inhabitants of these cities was that they did not repent.

Time and time again Jesus denounced the Jews for they showed no signs of repentance.

“The men of Ninevah shall rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold a greater than Jonah is here” Luke 11:32.

The multitudes wondered at His miracles; discussed them endlessly, and ran after Him to see more. They were comprised of

people with genuine needs, as well as thrill seekers enjoying the spectacle of witnessing the miraculous; but after a while both groups relapsed into their old habits and listlessness, and they remained morally and spiritually as bankrupt as they had been before He came among them. This powerful demonstration of the miraculous never made them “children of the kingdom.” In spite of this fact the miraculous manifestations of God have always been, (and always will be) a sign that He is in the midst.

Many believe and teach that a great end time revival of signs and wonders is close at hand which will sweep millions into the church. I wouldn't hold my breath on that one. These accounts seem to suggest otherwise. Read Matthew 24 and ask of yourself some searching questions, and see if the answers you receive are the same as the ones He gave to the disciples?

The Masters intentions go far beyond healing people and feeding them. He wants to transform men and women through repentance and regeneration.

Because miracles do not ALWAYS lead to repentance is no reason to ignore this aspect of the gospel message. Mark 16:17-18.

Matt 5-7. Matt 8:16-17. Matt 13:1-42. Mark 4:33-34. Luke 1: 1-4. Luke 6:17- 49. Luke 10:23-24.

KINGDOM LESSONS ON PRAYER

How to pray, and what to say when praying was the disciples' first lesson. Matt 6:5-13; 7:7-11; Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-9.

It would have been a matter for surprise if, among the various subjects that Jesus gave instruction to His disciples on, prayer had not occupied a prominent place.

Prayer is a necessity of spiritual life, and all who earnestly try to pray very soon feel the need of teaching on how to do it.

There were many questions put to Jesus to which He never responded, but the theme of prayer was not one of them, but it received an immediate response from the Master who was Himself passionate about prayer, occasionally spending whole nights in communion with His heavenly Father?

So for that reason we find that prayer was a subject on which Jesus often spoke in the hearing of His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, He devoted a paragraph to that topic, in which He cautioned His hearers against Pharisaic pretension and showiness, or vain repetition as practiced by the heathen. His response was to recite a form of devotion as a model of simplicity, comprehensiveness and brevity. At other times He directed attention to the absolute necessity of perseverance, agreement, unwavering faith, and great expectation in order to prevail in prayer.

Modern ministers in the same manner as Tele-Evangelists solicit prayer requests instead of telling people to go to God for themselves. Make-believers are more than happy to comply with this convenient arrangement and so send their requests to their favourite 'prayer-partner' usually with a financial consideration. Besides, it saves them the embarrassment of having to face up to God personally.

Luke 11:1-4. The passage cited from the eleventh chapter of Luke's Gospel gives an account of what may be regarded as the most complete and comprehensive of all the lessons communicated by Jesus to His disciples on the important subject of prayer. The circumstances surrounding this lesson are interesting.

The request itself was an answer to prayer.

In all probability one of the twelve, after hearing Jesus pray, made the request, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The plea and its occasion convey to us two pieces of information. That Jesus besides praying much alone, also prayed in company with His disciples, practising corporate prayer as the head of a household, as well as **secret prayer** in personal fellowship with His Father.

Disciples hearing them were made painfully conscious of their own feeble attempts, and after the Amen were only too ready to tender the request, "Lord, teach us to pray", as if embarrassed to attempt the exercise any more with their own fumbling and hesitant words.

During the **whole period of their discipleship**, they needed to be prompted to pray, and exhorted to persevere in the habit of prayer. As disciples we all must learn this great and sometimes frustrating but most necessary business of waiting on God for righteousness, grace, light and truth, which no matter how earnestly it is desired is often long in coming. It is important for us to see that if the church's first servants needed this lesson on prayer; the time comes in the case of most of us, if not all who are spiritually earnest, that teaching on this important subject becomes very necessary.

When we first come to Christ we never seem stuck for words. Excitedly we rush in with our requests and it seems that everything we request He grants. Then all too soon that happy stage passes, and one in which prayer often becomes a helpless struggle, and dare I say it, a boring, silent, despondent waiting on God, until we are tempted to doubt whether God is really interested in our prayers, and whether prayer itself isn't a waste of time.

How many who got their hearts desire did not need to ask for it often? And many times had to wait for it?

This is not an uncommon experience for most of us.

Who hasn't been tempted to despair and give up asking altogether, because delay is so hard to bear, especially in connection with spiritual blessings, which Christ assumed incidentally, as the principle object of our desires?

The three wants pinpointed in this lesson are common; the want of ideas; the want for words to express them; and the want of faith to receive answers. Add to this a wandering mind, feeling awkward inside and out; not knowing what to do or say, and our failure to understand that prayer is communion between two people that love each other. What kind of a relationship would you have if you only talked to one another when you wanted something? We shouldn't just come to Him when in need; but also for His companionship.

Mature saints usually are not disappointed by delay, or even refusal, in connection with mere temporal goods; for they know that they might not necessarily be right for them at that particular time, and that it may be better not to get them at all than to get them too easily or too soon. But it is confounding to desire with all one's heart the Holy Ghost, and yet seem to be denied; or to pray for light, and instead become more confused; for faith and then be tried and tested with doubts which shake the foundations of beliefs long held. Yet this, as every experienced Christian knows, is part of the discipline through which students in the school of Christ must pass if the desire of their heart is to be fulfilled. Never forget that every true word is tried and tested. We need to contend if we are to receive.

The lesson on prayer taught by Christ, in answer to their request, consists of two parts; one in which thoughts and words are put into the mouths of immature disciples; the other provides stimulus to faith in God, the answerer of prayer. First is a form of prayer, which is followed by two parables arguing for perseverance in prayer.

The form of prayer commonly called the Lord's Prayer, which appears in the Sermon on the Mount as a sample of the right kind of prayer, is summarized here under the following headings.

It contains six petitions in all.

Of which three refer to God's glory.

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done.

And the remaining three to man's good.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.

Deliver us from evil.

How rare it is to find words that express clearly the things He instructed us to pray for.

Hallowed be thy name can only be expressed in worship by true worshippers.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord says the psalmist?" The answer comes back; "he that has clean hands and a pure heart, and has not lifted up his heart unto vanity." Psalm 24:4.

Those who have formed a clear concept of what that request really means can only petition "Thy Kingdom come" intelligently.

It is a kingdom of principles lived by, to form godly relationships; not practises for the purpose of building the reputations of men or movements.

Thy will be done in earth as in Heaven can only be acted upon by those who know what is the will of the Lord. In the final analysis only His will shall be done; while the fruit of every other will shall be undone.

Give us this day our daily bread.

He has pledged Himself to do this when we do the following.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others theirs.

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. But he that wanders from the way of understanding shall dwell in the congregation of the dead. Proverbs 21:16.

Deliver us, and protect us from evil.

The first three are God centred; the last three are man centred.

We are taught to reverence the divine name, pray for the advent of God's Kingdom, and to submit in obedience to the perfect will of God. We may then ask for daily bread, pardon and protection from evil for ourselves. Those members of the divine family who can rightfully say, "Our Father", address all this to God the Father.

John 16:23b-24. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name He will give it to you, hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask and you shall receive that your joy might be full."

There is no reason to think that the "Lord's Prayer," was designed to be a stereotyped, binding method of addressing the Father in heaven. It was meant to be an aid to inexperienced disciples, **not a rule imposed** upon apostles.

For this reason we call this form the "Alphabet" of all prayer because; It embraces all the elements of spiritual desire, summed up in a few choice sentences, for the benefit of those who would otherwise struggle.

Liturgical and methodical religious forms in general are much more acceptable to formal religion, than to disciples of Jesus. If our Lord had attached any importance to formal prayer, He would not have waited until He was asked for one.

No trace of its use as a form appears in the life of Christ, the Jerusalem church, or the records of the Apostle Paul.

Not until the second century did it become the object of regular, mechanical, use.

It is evident from Jesus instructions on the subject of praying, that it was a temporary remedy for a minor problem, the want of utterance, until the greater evil, the want of faith, could be cured. The largest portion of the lesson is devoted to providing a cure for unbelief.

Part of this lesson on prayer is intended to express the moral, which is made plain in the parable of the unjust judge, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”. The cause of fainting is delay on the part of God in answering our prayers. The moral in the parable of the ungenerous neighbour conveys the idea that the favour asked will be granted quickly. But the lapse of time between the presenting and the granting of our requests is implied as a matter of course. It is by delay that God seems to say to us what the ungenerous neighbour said to his friend, “Go away”, and so we are tempted to think that we are just wasting our time. But this is not the case when asking God.

Both of the parables spoken by Christ are to instil perseverance in prayer by showing the power of importunity in the most unpromising circumstances.

Both the characters appealed to are rotters, one is ungenerous, the other unjust, and from neither is any thing to be gained except by working on their selfishness. Irritation and perseverance pays in these cases.

The point each parable teaches is that the power of annoyance gets what it needs.

Proverbs 24:10. “If we faint in the day of adversity it is because we have little strength.”

It is important to observe what is supposed to be the first object of prayer in connection with the argument now to be considered. The thing, which Christ assumes His disciples have set their hearts upon, is personal sanctification.

It appears from the concluding sentence of the discourse: “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!” Jesus takes for granted that the persons to whom He addresses Himself here, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

This is born out in the Book of Job and Ps. 73 and 74.

In a limited measure; not at once; and without measure. He simply urges His hearers to persevere in seeking for power from on high, assuring them, in spite of trying delay; their desires will be fulfilled in the end. He gives them no philosophy as to why they must wait on God, but only tells them that they will not wait in vain.

Let patience have its perfect work.

Much could be said on that topic. Suffice it to say that character cannot be perfected in those where that virtue has no place, and that the gradual method of sanctification is God’s way of developing it.

Matthew 6:33. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.”

Matthew 5:6. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

The triumph of faith is in direct proportion to the trial.

The logic of Jesus contained in the parable of the ungenerous neighbour is to inspire hope in God, even in the darkest hour, when He appears indifferent to our cry, or positively unwilling to help, and so to induce us to persevere in asking.

Learn a lesson from this man who knocked on and on, louder and louder, with shameless persistence. We too should refuse to take “no” for an answer, until we get all that we have come for.

The selfish friend was finally glad to get out of bed and serve him, because it was impossible to sleep with such a noise. So continue knocking at the door of heaven, and you will obtain your desire if only to be rid of you. (Such is the moral of the argument).

Look and see what power importunity has even at the most unpromising of times, midnight, appealing to a most selfish person.

Ask therefore, persistently, and it shall be given unto you also.
Seek and keep on seeking, and you shall find.
Knock and keep knocking, and it shall be opened unto you.

Learn the lesson, take the point, and start to live by this illustrated truthful principle. The parabolic contrast is this: -

God is not selfish or mean; or unsympathetic; He will never become annoyed with us; He will not send us away empty handed. He who dwells on high is not beyond our reach. He is the comforter. Well may I ask what powers have I to annoy God; who dwells on high, far beyond my reach, in complete serenity? I cannot fully answer that, but I do know that this way I can receive His answer.

Job 23:3;8-10. “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat! Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me I shall come forth as gold.”

The parable does not give the reasons for divine delay or why importunity ultimately succeeded. But it stresses apparent refusal from whatever cause it may arise, is **not** necessarily **final**, and is therefore **not** a good reason to give up asking.

Ephesians 3:12 “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.”

It is for these reasons all men should pray, and not faint. Prayer is absolutely rational, and more so if as Christ taught and Christians believe, God is the one supremely good Being who will never give a serpent to those that ask for bread.

THE CHURCH WAS BORN PRAYING

At the churches first prayer meeting what did they pray about?

Immediately prior to Christ's ascension He commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Returning to Jerusalem the disciples resorted to the upper room and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women; Mary His mother; and His brethren. Here they continued steadfastly in koinonia, and O how wondrously God answered those earnest prayers, filling them with the Holy Spirit.

The first prayer gathering of the fledgling church, centred on their spiritual needs. The plain teaching of Jesus was spirituality and righteousness was on the top of His list as things to pray for.

Another purpose of prayer is to pave the way for kingdom activity outside of the agape circle. In fact prayer was the only dynamic that concerned itself in anything outside of koinonia. And when they prayed, the Holy Spirit responded, and doors began to open, and things were shaken to their very foundations.

Acts 16:25-26. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." Acts 4:31. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

At the final Passover they sang together and prayed. Oh how powerfully they learned to pray in the days that followed His death and resurrection, as they continued steadfastly in koinonia. And how wondrously God answered those prayers. One purpose of prayer is to pave the way for kingdom activity outside of the agape circle. In fact, prayer was the only dynamic that concerned itself in anything outside of koinonia. And when they prayed, the Holy

Spirit responded, and doors began to open, and things were shaken to their very foundations. (see page 60)

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Ephesians 6:18-19.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; And for me also that freedom of utterance may be given me.”

THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

Our daily walk.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (amp). “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, appeal to, and beg you to walk; lead a life worthy of the divine calling to which you have been called; with behaviour that is a credit to the summons of God’s service.”

The manner in which we conduct our lives is paramount in the eyes of the apostle.

False religion concerns itself first and foremost with the work, while true Christianity is interested primarily in the wayfarer and the manner in which he walks. The work is very much the Lord’s concern, which He shall direct and take care of in His own way, with those He appoints.

Any religion that majors on the work, and neglects character, has lost its way. Paul beseeches us to walk worthy of our vocation, and there is no greater vocation than to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

There is no greater vocation than to be called into the service of God. 2 Peter 1:5-7, tells us to give due diligence to making our calling and election sure, and this is done by spiritual addition as Peter points out when he says, “add to your faith virtue; and knowledge; and temperance; and patience; and godliness; and brotherly kindness; and charity. If these things are in us we shall never fail, stumble and fall away.”

Religious Leaders burdened with programs, highly prize men and women of ability above all else, and will instantly give them favourable consideration for positions of authority.

The more ability a person possesses, the more authority he is given. It happens time and again. Pride will eventually destroy all who neglect integrity. We cannot afford to ignore character development, without it we shall surely fall. Churches where men with personal agendas and character flaws are in charge are dangerous places to be around.

These people are a menace to the cause of Christ, acting like leaven in the midst. Many aspiring followers have been completely seduced by their own desires to pursue personal greatness. Some have had their feet placed on this slippery path by parents who brazenly bequeathed their church to them. The kingdom is infested with determined, 'terminal', (I say terminal for in due course God will remove them) carnal men, obsessed with personal agendas, looking for opportunities to coerce others to build their dreams.

Jesus chose His disciples with the view to develop in them righteous character. Not until after 3½ years of listening to the Master, watching Him; following Him; living with Him; and flunking repeatedly, did they realise they were being made to know that man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Then and not before (apart from two occasions with the 12 and the 70) did He entrust to them ability, the true kind that only comes from on high. Acts 2:4.

Satan's greatest weapon is deception. He wants us to believe that the "work" is more important than anything else in the kingdom. Paul warns us to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise redeeming the time because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-16.

Agenda addicts will not allow anyone to stand in the way of their goals. Operating from strong financial bases, with large and regular cash flows they ply their trade. Their power base is not the power of God but decidedly of another source, the power of mammon. They have the temerity to call it "faith" but in reality it is anything but that. Lamentably, most choose to ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit on this issue. Our basic problem has been the same since the fall, "All we like sheep have gone astray, and everyone has turned to his own way." We may enjoy freedom of choice, but we cannot choose its consequences. "We have eaten the fruit of going our own way" Proverbs 1:31. It's a bitter pill to swallow. We need to remember that our behaviour reflects on the one whose ambassadors we claim to be. We are living epistles, and sooner or later men will see us for who we really are. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

This was not so with the pattern Son who exhorted His disciples to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. “He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity” Hebrews 1:8 (KJV). “But unto the Son he said, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

The lament of the Shulamite in Song of Songs 1:6b is the sad state of many religious leaders. If it hasn't already happened, they will wake up one day only to realise they have been serving empty dreams, (theirs or some other man's) instead of God. “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.” In that day when we shall all stand before Him to give an account for the things we have done, will He say to us “well done thou good and faithful servant”? Or regardless of our great works will He say, “depart from me I never knew you.” Every man's work shall be tried to see what sort it is, for that day will declare it.

He requires truth in the inward parts. Integrity is the trademark on everything we say and do, it's the identifying mark of a man or woman of God. It will preserve what God has called us to do, and guide us on every difficult path. We shall be blessed if we hunger and thirst after righteousness. Without it everything we achieve is as combustible as wood, hay and stubble. Another trap set by the enemy is to get us to commend ourselves to God by the things we do. Some energetically and feverishly throw themselves into their work to compensate for personal indiscretions. In that way they seek to appease their conscience, while refusing to deal with real issues. Many actually begin to think that God will actually overlook their transgression.

The practice of “Nepotism”.

This is another matter that has crept into the kingdom that needs to be addressed. That the lawful heirs of reigning monarchs would succeed them on their demise has been an accepted rite for centuries.

In family corporations both large and small, the heir apparent, usually the eldest son, with the father's blessing, eventually takes control of the business and its assets. Cases in point are Kerry Packer, and Richard Murdock, whose respective sons have been given the reigns of the family business. Also, it is not uncommon

to see a small business with the appendage, “and Son” attached to the name. These things are normal and in most cases just.

But is this correct for Christianity? Should pastors be passing on the saints to their sons like goods and chattels, or pieces of real estate? Where do these men get their authority from to act in this manner? When did Christ ever relinquish His ownership over those He purchased with His own blood and deliver them into the control of men? After His resurrection Jesus Christ was given to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body. When did He step down from His position? The truth is He never has given away what the Father gave Him. His position is unassailable; He is and always will be the Supreme Lord, Lawgiver, Judge and King. His name is to be hallowed, (honoured and worshipped); His authority over His kingdom here on earth as in Heaven is absolute; it is insufficient to only pay lip service to this fact, God will see to that. Nepotism is practiced where possible whenever a church becomes wealthy. Assets then become the primary consideration.

Plato’s Republic points out that all forms of tyrannical and unlawful government have a short life. Citizens of France overthrew the Monarchy in a violent revolution. Fascism in Germany, Italy, Spain and South America; and Communism in Russia and elsewhere suffered a similar fate. Eventually over-throwers become the overthrown, because all humanistic forms of government are basically corrupt, whether they are dictatorships or democracies.

A few short years after the French revolution, the new Republic became a “police state”. Very quickly the oppressive conditions that the people were subjected too became worse than those of their former rulers. Nothing left to its own devices ever improves, but almost immediately begins to degenerate and self-destruct.

Enshrined within the constitution of most churches in the present modern religious systems, (many have millions of dollars worth of assets) the senior pastor has the muscle to ensure that only the man that he endorses will be allowed to take over his business, (oops! Church) provided he doesn’t fall morally, or become the victim of

a “coup d'état”. His authority is rarely questioned; his energies are spent making certain that the business does not fall into the wrong hands. If he has a son, or a close family member i.e. daughter and son-in-law, they are his first choice. This kind of behaviour is called “Nepotism”, which the dictionary defines as; “favouritism, especially in governmental patronage extended toward relatives”. This practice has been imposed upon many congregations.

The new ruler (usually about thirty-five to forty) is not chosen by the people, but appointed by those in a position to do so. They are vehemently opposed to any democratic form of government. Voting is anathema to them, it is claimed to be unscriptural, (Acts 1:26? Well almost) besides it is repugnant to these leaders because they fear that unsuitable people may get control of the assets of the business and interfere with their plans. I have often heard the remark, “if I am to take over this church, then I must have the authority to choose my own team.” The saints in most cases have no say whatsoever but must submit or split. This is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Jesus HATES. Rev 2:6;15-16. All who practice this doctrine are rebels, they may be ignorant rebels, but they are rebels none the less, and thus enemies of righteousness. Its close connection to the doctrine of Balaam made by Jesus is very suggestive. Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness. The love of money and lack of morality are seen to go hand in hand in the Bible.

God or mammon?

Matthew 6:24. “No man can serve two masters, either he will hate one, and love the other, or he will hold on to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” On two separate occasions Jesus said, “It is impossible to serve both”. To hate here is an idiom of preference. Sadly love the money and ignore the consequences is the motto of many servants?

Matthew 6:33.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.” All the things that the gentiles seek after our heavenly Father knows that we have need of.

Matthew 4:4.

“He answered: It is written, man shall not live by bread alone.” The question, which Satan put to our Lord, has to be settled in every life. Where does our bread come from? Is it to be our first consideration or the last? According to Satan’s way of looking at life, bread is paramount. But according to Christ it is secondary. Have you ever seriously considered which policy is yours, and what you would do if you had to choose in any supreme crisis? This temptation which came to our Lord arrives at all our doors sooner or later, whether alone, or in the crowded thoroughfares of life, the Devil comes to us with the suggestion that **we must live**, and in the last resort **we must make** and get our own bread, even if it means leaving considerations of truth, and God’s honour to come in second best!

At every important turning point in life these two methods are suggested: Satan says: “Make these stones into bread”. Christ says: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of God.”

We must choose between God and mammon. We are tempted to gratify our needs apart from God; for the material, with the lust of the eyes; for love, with the lust of the flesh; and for knowledge, with the pride of life. We are continually tempted to seek them in shady and crooked ways, and not by the light of truth, along straight paths.

God, who gave us these strong appetites and desires, knows that we need food, but the body is more than meat, and if He gave one, **He is responsible** for meeting the other. Do not take your life out of God’s hands! Throw all the responsibility on Him; they will never be ashamed that wait for Him. Remember the angel that prepared the meal for Elijah in the desert, and the breakfast that our Lord Himself prepared for His tired and hungry friends. If you will dare to trust and wait for Him even in the face of death, He will not fail you, He will supply all your need, according to His riches in glory. “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” Again, “A mans life does not consist in the abundance of things that he possesses”, but in Christ. God give us grace to seek first His kingdom and its righteousness, in the sure and certain faith that all else shall be added unto us.

IMPOSITION

Hebrews 9:9-10.

Old covenant sacrifices and ordinances were temporary, carnal, and powerless to cleanse. These ordinances that were imposed upon Israel were taken away by the ratification of a better covenant through the perfect sacrifice, Christ. We now live by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and not by the law of sin and death that could never make the offerer perfect, but instead ministered condemnation and death.

In spite of this fact religious clerics still insist on imposing burdens upon their people by way of laws and regulations, for which they have no scriptural authority to justify their enforcement. Sabbath keeping; church attendance, (rolling up obediently Sunday by Sunday to hear a monologue by a cleric); tithing; participation in the church's programmes, thus showing that you are committed to your leader's agenda. All of the afore and much more have been taken straight out of the Roman Catholic Church, and adapted.

The most diabolical doctrine of all, one that was introduced in the immediate post apostolic era, has been the division of the body of Christ into two distinct classes of people; namely an elitist group called the "Clergy" and lesser mortals called the "Laity". The latter from the beginning of the 4th century began to play a lesser role in the affairs of the church until by the Middle Ages they were an oppressed, unheard, voiceless ignored majority. This is the doctrine of the Nicaitans, which thing Jesus hates. It is practiced with impudence and without fear throughout Christendom today.

By the Middle Ages the main Christian organization in the world, the Church of Rome, had taken control of the lives of people in Europe from birth to death. Whenever this church felt to do so, it could excommunicate troublesome members and consign them to Hell fire for eternity. By fear and cruelty they ruled every facet of life. It was political as well as religious, controlling all the affairs of human existence. One could not be baptised, educated, get

married, receive a Christian burial, or buy or sell without their approval. Tithing was a tax rigorously imposed on all, and was never questioned by the populous at large. It was collected and then sent to Rome where it was spent on religious buildings in the eternal city, and around the Holy Roman Empire. To refuse to comply resulted in exclusion from all life in the community. Fear reigned in the hearts of all but a few. Not until Martin Luther's time did a revolt that had been brewing for two hundred years come to a head and begin to demand that the status quo make changes, which of course they never did. Every form of ecclesiastical government in the modern church comes from the Roman Catholic Church. Men talk about the reformation as though its ongoing efforts have been gradually setting the church free. But there is only one thing that will bring true freedom, and that is for all ecclesiastical ranks, such as prelates, bishops and other church dignitaries, on down to the powerful Pastors of the modern church, to repent and restore Jesus Christ to His rightful place in their midst. This form of government needs to be consigned to the pit from whence it came. Sadly men will not do it willingly, because they love darkness rather than light, but God will have the last say.

Prelate comes from the root *Praeferre*, 'to put before'. How sickening it is to see these men fawned over, having their hands and even feet kissed by their followers. Dressed in bizarre costumes, they parade themselves claiming to be Christ's deputies.

Honour to whom honour is due is right and proper, but we must take care that we do not ascribe His Glory to another.

Even in Evangelical and Charismatic circles men are held in such esteem that it borders on idolatry.

Who is the greater Jesus asks, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? The answer is plain; yet Jesus said, "I am come as one that serves".

PRECEDENT OR INCIDENT?

A precedent is a previous example or occurrence taken as a rule. An incident is a detached event attracting general attention; it is something that happened along the way, i.e. a parenthesis.

Unauthorized systems.

The Apostles did not establish an organization of churches centralised in an ecclesiastical headquarters in Jerusalem; neither was it their intention to encourage us to do so; nor did they leave us pattern to emulate. They had no such method, or doctrine. What took place in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15, provides no authority for us to set up councils to adjudicate when problems arise in the church. They were not setting a precedent for the future. That gathering was no more than an incident. The decision far from settled the matter as seen in Peter's behaviour at Antioch. Galatians 2:11-14.

It needs to be stressed again that events at Jerusalem provide no support for the establishment of a central control for the purpose of organizing churches. One will search in vain and not find one in Acts or the Epistles. The bond binding churches was spiritual. Their common life was in Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit. There was no such thing as external unity by way of a federation of churches. One has to go to the post apostolic era to see Councils made up of clergy coming together for the purpose of ruling on faith and morals. These councils have done much damage to the cause of the gospel since their inception. They may be well intentioned, but they are examples of man intermeddling in the affairs of God.

The Ecumenical Council is a deliberate, administrative governing body. The Roman Catholic Church has held 21 ecumenical councils in its history so far. The Pope calls and presides over these councils, which gather Roman Catholic officials from all over the world. Other Christian religions hold similar ecumenical meetings designed to address matters of "worldwide ecclesiastical significance". Most Protestants accept the first seven councils of the Roman Church.

The term council is also applied by Protestant denominations that summons their representatives to deal with administrative and doctrinal matters. One that would come to mind is, the World Council of Churches. The laity is not permitted to participate, but in some cases is asked to ratify decisions made by their leaders. These councils do not claim to have the authority of the councils of the Roman Church, but they are just as binding on their members.

Every time a religious organization holds a “Ministers Conference” they are imitating what the Roman Church has done for centuries. Conferences cover a large range of things from, how to grow the movement; credentialing their ministers; training the movements new crop of clones, missionary endeavour, fund raising, in fact any whim that takes their fancy is brought up. The rulings are then taken back to the rank and file who are told what they are going to be doing in the future. All must submit, but if they try to “buck the system” they will quickly find out they are left with one alternative, no matter how just the cause may be, and that is to split. By far the greatest division in the church since the reformation has been over church government.

Things that have come out of these councils ought to horrify us as we take stock of them. Over the centuries they have imposed commandments as diabolical as one could ever imagine upon God’s people. Time and space makes it impractical to go into every law these councils have imposed; but we shall mention a few; such as denominations, central government, clergy and laity, seminaries, titles, doctorates, tithing, church buildings, vestments, Maryology crucifixes, incense, transubstantiation, bells, idols, candles, rosary, nuns, celibacy, monks, indulgences, saints, the inquisition. Suffice it to say, that every post apostolic religious law imposed by clergy is Babylonian in nature, and is an attempt to make God’s people, docile, compliant, passive, and controllable. They have divided, fostered competitiveness, intolerance, hatred, murder, and wars. We must “Stand fast in the liberty whereby Christ has set us free, and refuse to become entangled in the yoke of religious bondage.”

FOUR ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Apostles Doctrine, Koinonia, Breaking bread, and Prayer.

The Apostles' doctrine. Acts 2:42.

It's almost impossible to separate these four cardinal activities, as they blend into each other. The Apostles' doctrine came from the things that Jesus spoke to them for 3 1/2 years; and during those special forty days prior to his ascension (Acts 1:3); and continued to speak to them by the Spirit afterwards. They had no bibles; they were receiving revelation from the Holy Spirit that dwelt within them, things that were to become our Bible. Modern apostles that insist upon our submission to their ministries are false. By their behaviour they infer to have the same infallibility as the chosen twelve. Like the church at Ephesus we have tried them that make these claims and found them to be liars. Rev 2:1-2.

Koinonia: The heart and “nub” of experiencing Him.

Koinonia is such a precious word. A word we are more familiar with is “fellowship,” which sad to say seems to have lost much of its potency in these days; but koinonia means far more than our limited view of it. Where there is no emphasis on koinonia, church life has become a spectator religion, with professionals monopolizing the ministry. This is the failure of western culture Christianity. Individualism is the order of the day. The koinonia of the early church was not like this. Neither were they a bunch of misfits just “hanging out” together swapping stories about the harm that may have been done by the iron hand of callous leadership. (As a matter of fact if we have truly walked with God it can't do us any harm but rather good). Neither were they a group of introverts who considered themselves to be the “select of the elect”, the inner circle who alone were privy to the deep things of God. There's nothing deeper or more profound than Jesus Christ and Him crucified to save us. Their Koinonia was rich and purposeful. It rejoiced in worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness. It was absorbed in knowing Christ in the communion of saints. It centred on the Lord's Table, breaking bread and drinking the cup. It was a life where righteousness, peace and joy prevailed.

It was not something that they had to strive to reach up for, but something they had been given to do in memoriam, by the Saviour at that final Passover feast.

1 Corinthians 1:9.

“God is faithful by whom we were called into the fellowship (koinonia) of his son Jesus Christ.” Koinonia is something that we have been called into.

1 Corinthians 10:15-16.

“I speak as to wise men, judge what I say.” The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the (koinonia) communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the (koinonia) communion of the body of Christ.”

True Koinonia will always concern itself with the Lord’s Table. You cannot fully function as a believer if you do not recognize this fact. The Christian life to be lived as He intended, must be lived in fellowship with the Lord and with one another. Individually we seek to grow through our personal relationship with Christ, but to be part of the body requires us to come into fellowship with other believers. God’s ultimate purpose is to have a people that express His character and glory. Living in koinonia is how individual believers become connected to the body where each member takes his place, and without interference learns to become a functioning member. May God deliver His people from all forms of religious manipulation and control?

This then was the hub of their koinonia as it centred upon Christ and two elements on the table. It surrounded the table of the Lord where they broke bread and drank the cup. True koinonia will regularly include bread and wine. They did it to remember Him as oft as they came together. It kept their hearts pure and transparent toward each other. The whole nature of koinonia demands plurality, the need to be dependent upon Christ and one another. God is not calling individuals for His name’s sake, but a people. He began by choosing twelve men, not one, and He has been building on that foundation ever since.

Breaking of bread.

Let us be quite certain that the term “breaking bread” as it’s referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 and Acts 2:42, is not referring to just having a meal together as some would suggest.

I Corinthians 11:20-24.

“When you come together to eat it isn’t the Lord’s supper you are eating but your own.” “Can’t you do your eating and drinking at home?” Says Paul. The act of remembering the Lord’s death by the means of these two elements, bread and wine are for a spiritual purpose, not physical nourishment. It may have followed a meal and may still do so, but the sole purpose of communion is for self-examination and gratitude, where I remember what He did for me that fateful night, and worship the Father for His matchless gift. It is most definitely not “giving thanks by saying grace” before eating a hearty meal.

It is important for us to have a place to come to often,
for spiritual adjustment.

A place to confess all unconfessed sin;

A place to receive forgiveness, and grace for our wilful lives.

The Lord’s Table is such a place, but if you say you have no need of such a place in your life, then you are very wrong.

THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5: Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
“Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil **against you falsely**, on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”.

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whosoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”.

THE SPIRITUAL LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

Are as binding as the Law of Moses.

“Who ever shall break the least of these commandments and teach men to do so, shall be called the least in the kingdom; but who ever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19. The following is a list of some of those laws. Space will only allow comments on a few of them, but the message He brings to us is clear.

On Hatred

“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ **But I say** to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire”. How many people break bread with spiteful hearts? Unforgiveness is a malignancy as deadly as cancer.

On Reconciliation

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, your gift may be your ministry, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny. Your gift may be your ministry. The Lord will not stand having contaminated vessels operating in His church. Many come to His Table to break bread in filthy garments, and leave the same way that they came, unwashed.

The Law of Purity

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery”. **But I say** to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye

causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

We need to see that God's plan is not external discipline via a new set of rules, but to give us a new heart. If we don't know this, our experience will be hell; especially in this day and age when we are being bombarded with an avalanche of impurity. If we try and live by will power we will most certainly fail. God is not dealing with acts, but with hearts. Proverbs 4:23 "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

On divorce and remarriage

"It was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. **But I say** to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, makes her become an adulteress; and whoever marries her commits adultery."

This scripture addresses the actions of men. It is true that God hates divorce, but it is equally true that He loves the divorcee, and treats every case as the occasion merits. Through repentance, mercy and grace He can rebuild any life. By way of personal testimony, I was standing around after a meeting I had taken, with a cup of coffee in my hand, when a sister came up to speak to me. Before she could open her mouth I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to say to her, "Do you know that God loves divorcees?", she immediately burst into tears of relief, because for 12 years she had been living in condemnation, trying to win back God's love after a failed marriage. Yes, God loves us all unconditionally, and all He wants in return is our love.

On making vows

"Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. **But I say** to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by

Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be a simple 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." We can do business with God because He is as good as His word, but can God do business with us? Many men always have an angle to all that they say, and so cannot be trusted. But God is not a man that He should lie. If He truly is our heavenly Father, then as His sons we should manifest His nature. Do people trust you? Or when you come around looking for help are they sceptical?

On evening up the score by retaliation

"You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. **But I say** to you, do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."

On love

"You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. **But I say** to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

On alms giving

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that men may praise them. **Truly, I say to you**, they have their reward. But

when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

On Prayer

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. **Truly, I say to you,** they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” I heard a preacher once say, “I’ve sold my Mercedes to give the money to the church; and I’m about to commence to fast and pray for seven days to ask God to pay the debt on the church.” There are only three things Jesus said to **do in secret; give, pray and fast.** When we do He said He would reward us openly. He got his reward; his church went down the tubes.

On conditions for answered prayer

If we forgive men their trespasses, the Lord will forgive us; but if I don’t forgive then He will not forgive us, or listen to us.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you yours.

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.

Again in 1 Peter 3:7.

“If I regard in iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.”

On Fasting

“And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

On trusting in Riches

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up

treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

On anxiety and unnatural care

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? Why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.”

On mote Hunting and Judgment unto condemnation

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, when there

is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

On Holy things to dogs and Pearls to swine

"Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. There is a time for everything under the sun, a time to speak and a time to keep quiet. Don't force truth on unreceptive people, or give precious things to fault-finders."

Against unbelief, Asking, Seeking and Knocking

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man of you, if his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

About making right choices

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Ask about everything; give Him the power of veto over all your plans. Ecclesiastics 12:1-2.

Against False Prophets

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but bad trees bear evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits." Not all who say to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he

who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.”

Having the right foundation

“Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

Wind, rain and flood are not abnormal phenomena, but accepted as part and parcel of life. Calamities come to every door without respect to rank of importance. The lesson here is, that the wise man prepares his household for the calamity before it happens.

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

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