

Mar. 4 2 Corinthians chs. 1 & 2 Sep. 3

“All the Promises are in Him Yea”

By this the apostle means that all the promises made to the fathers as especially stated in the covenants of promise, receive their affirmation, or fulfilment in Christ. As Paul says when writing of the promises to Abraham (Gal. ch.3) the seed promised was Christ, even as Peter said concerning the Davidic covenant, “God... would raise up Christ to sit on his throne” (Acts ch.2 v.30). The word “Amen” in the same verse (2 Cor. 1 v.20) means “so be it” in the sense of fulfilment. Jesus uses the same word at the beginning of a sentence where it is translated “verily” and where it means “of a truth” or “truly,” and is a call for the exercise of implicit belief in the words he would speak.

2 Cor. ch. 2 v.14-16

This refers to a Roman triumph when the victorious general was accorded a triumphal procession through Rome – he being seated in a chariot behind which notable captives walked chained together. Incense was scattered as the procession proceeded and flowers were strewn before the chariot. This incense and sweet smell is the savour (or odour) of verses 15 and 16 – to the victor an odour of joy and life, to the captives an odour of death.

Verse 17 – “Corrupt the Word”

An allusion to the dishonest vintners or wine sellers, who diluted the wine with water. Paul therefore declares that he was not afraid to speak the word of God, whether or not it offended his hearers.

Mar. 5 2 Corinthians chs. 3 & 4 Sep. 4

The Two Ministrations

Having shown that the Law of Moses – even though a ministration of death (because it could not give life) – was glorious, so much so that, figuratively, Moses had to cover with a veil the shining of his face after receiving the Law, so Israel “could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished” (ch.3 v.13). What was the end of that glory in the law which was to be done away (v.7)? The end of the law was Christ in as much as when the perfect sacrifice was made,

there no longer needed to be sacrifices and oblations. Moreover, when the Mosaic order came to an end with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of Judah, there could be no temple services – no service of the Tabernacle as required by the Law. But Israel (because they were blinded by their own inability to believe “all that the prophets had spoken”) could not and would not see in Christ this fulfilment, so that when the Law was read in home or synagogue “the veil was upon their heart” (v.14 & 15).

By contrast the apostle likens the knowledge and understanding of the “new testament” (or new covenant) as a beholding with “open face” (v.18) the glory therein revealed; the glory of the risen Christ – to which glory he trusted that he, together with all true believers, should be changed, “when he shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto his glorious body.” (Phil. ch.3 v.21)

Mar. 6 2 Corinthians chs. 5, 6 & 7 Sept. 5

“Present with the Lord” – ch. 5 v.8

Peter says that Paul wrote “things hard to be understood” which may easily be misunderstood (2 Peter ch.3 v.16). Misunderstanding often comes when a sentence or verse is taken out of its context, or when other passages of Scripture are not brought to bear upon it.

“Absent from the body but present with the Lord” is often quoted to support the doctrine of the immortal soul. But the setting of this saying shows that Paul taught something quite different. He says (ch.5 v.10) that we must be judged and as a result of this be rewarded “in body.” The reward in body which Paul desired was to be “clothed with our house which is from heaven” (v.2) – to be clothed upon “that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (v.4).

Moreover, he had already taught the Corinthians that this change would be when Christ comes (1 Cor. ch.15 v.23), so that being “present with the Lord” must wait until the second coming. Nevertheless, he desired earnestly for the time to come when this body wherein he “groaned being burdened” (v.4) should be changed, for then he would be present with Christ. For this he laboured so that he might be accepted (v.9).

“God was in Christ” – ch. 5 v.19

This is often taken from its context to support the doctrine of the Trinity. But if God were actually in Christ, how was it possible for Christ to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” – or for it to be said that he “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared”? (Heb. ch.5 v.7) There are two persons here, and one (the Son of God) wholly dependent upon the other.

It therefore means that God was working in and through Christ so that the world might be reconciled to Him. (“Made to be sin for us” will be dealt with when writing on Galatians ch.3).

Repentance

This word often means “change of mind,” but sometimes another word is used (also translated repentance) which really means “without carefulness,” that is, without limit or meanness. When Paul wrote (Romans ch.11 v.29) that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” the second word is used, and in this verse 10 of ch.7 both words are used, so that the verse should read, “For godly sorrow worketh a change of mind to a salvation without limit.”

Mar. 7**2 Corinthians chs. 8 & 9****Sep. 6****Giving**

We commented before on a collection being made for “the poor saints at Jerusalem” (Romans ch.15 v.26). These two chapters speak a great deal about this, and Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be generous givers “for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver” (ch. 9 v.7). In speaking of the abundance which God had given them (v.8) he makes two statements which may not be quite clear.

Verse 10 of chapter 9 would be more easily understood if it read, “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food multiply your seed sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.” They were to sow the seed of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and to show righteousness by “providing things honest.... In the sight of men” and also by their liberality, and Paul prayed that this sowing would be blessed by the Provider of all.

Verse 13 of chapter 9 would better read “For they (the saints) are glorifying God on account of the proof of this ministration in your avowed subjection to the glad tidings of the anointed one and the liberality of the contribution to them and unto all”; i.e. the saints in Jerusalem and elsewhere rejoiced that obedience to the gospel had caused the Corinthians etc. to show liberality.

The apostle closes the subject by thanking God for all things and especially the gift of Jesus Christ, for he says, “Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift.”

Mar. 8 2 Corinthians chs. 10 & 11 Sep. 7

“His Bodily Presence is Weak” – ch.10 v.10

It would seem that Paul had no attraction physically. Even though the basket in which Paul was lowered (ch.11 v.33) was a rope basket it would seem to indicate that he was not a man of great stature, but rather the contrary. It would appear also that his eyesight was not good – possibly it had not been fully regained after the blindness caused by the great light he saw on the road to Damascus (Acts ch.9), for in this epistle (ch.12 v.7) he speaks of a “thorn in the flesh...to buffet him,” and this was probably a weakness of eyesight, for he refers to an “infirmity of the flesh” when writing to the Galatians (ch.4) and says they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him (v.15), and verse 11 of Galatians ch.6 may mean that this letter (in distinction to many of the others which were probably dictated by him for another to write) had been written by himself despite his weakness of sight.

He therefore boasted of nothing – not even that he had journeyed (and some of the privations and hardships are mentioned in ch.11) as far as Corinth (ch.10 v.14) – but rather hoped that they, when their faith was increased (v.15), would “preach the Gospel in the regions beyond them,” and not merely in those regions to which the Gospel had already been brought.

Mar. 9 2 Corinthians chs. 12 & 13 Sept. 8

“Out of the Body” – ch.12 v.2

Paul writes, “I knew a man in Christ.” Who is this man? Verse 7 tells us – the one who was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable

words was, in fact, Paul, who fourteen years before had a revelation of things which “eye had not seen nor ear heard” (1 Cor. ch.2 v.9), which it was not possible (or lawful) for a man (uninspired) to utter (v.4).

But Paul was not able to tell whether he was in the body or out of the body. Can this mean that Paul possessed an immortal spirit which could leave the body? This would deny all the teaching of the Scripture. Moreover it would imply that Paul must have died in order to release it. Paul cannot mean this.

In 1 Cor. ch.5 v.3 he says he was “absent (from the Corinthians) in body but present in spirit.” We know quite well what this means. Though away at Ephesus he nevertheless had as active an interest in what was happening as if he were there – even to the extent of judging what to do with the man who had sinned. When Peter was released from prison he could not at first determine whether it was a fact or a vision (Acts ch.12 v.9), and so with Paul – did he actually see at the time the things revealed (related to the third heaven, or Paradise) or were they vision? Fourteen years later he was able to assess them as “visions and revelations.”

The Third Heaven and Paradise

Whether one regards the three “heavens and earth” of 2 Peter ch.3 as being the same as these three heavens, or whether (perhaps with more reason since only “heavens” are mentioned) they are the three God given orders of statutes and ordinances – the Mosaic (the Old Covenant), the true Christian (the new Covenant), and the Millennial – we are brought in each to the time when righteousness shall flow like a river and when finally “all enemies shall be destroyed, even the last enemy death” (1 Cor. ch.15 v. 25-26).

The earth will then be the Paradise – the Garden of the Lord – and these are the things of which Paul would glory and which, though natural man could not conceive nor utter them, had been declared through the spirit to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ch.2 v.9-10).

Mar. 10

Luke ch. 1

Sep. 9

John the Baptist (see notes Matthew chs. 3 & 11)

He shall be called John The fulfilment of the prophecies given through Malachi ch. 3 was fraught with the miraculous. The

advanced age of the hitherto childless parents, the sign of dumbness (and deafness v.62) of Zechariah, coupled with the angelic visitation (v. 11 & 26) are in keeping with the fulfilment of one of the most important of prophecies. For 400 years since Malachi had prophesied, a few had “looked for redemption” (Luke ch.2 v.38), and now to a generation “Jehovah had been gracious.” This is the meaning of John and gives a reason for the name being imposed by the angel.

The time had come for God to help “his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to the fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever” (v.54 & 55), and to raise up an “horn of salvation in the house of his servant David” (v.69). Just as the birth of the seed (“the Highest”) was by miracle, so the messenger was provided by miracle. These things were not hidden for “fear came upon all that dwelt round about them and all these sayings were noised abroad.” When some thirty years later John came from his long retirement in the deserted country around the Dead Sea and preached of the coming of the One who should “thoroughly purge his floor” (Malachi ch.4), they would find a necessary connection. This in part will explain the multitudes who went out to hear and be baptised of John in Jordan (Mark ch.1 v.5).

Mar. 11

Luke ch. 2

Sept. 10

The miraculous details of Christ’s birth need no comment.

Taxing when Cyrenius was Governor

This fixes the date of the birth (though not day nor month) of Christ. Luke mentions two enrolments for taxing both in the time of Caesar Augustus, the first in this chapter, v.2 and the second in Acts ch.5 v.37. The first enrolment must have been before 4 AD when Herod the Great died (Matt. ch.2), but Varus was Pro Consul (Governor) in Syria until this date. However, Cyrenius (Quirinius) was in Syria holding a military command and the word translated Governor may cover such a command. The Romans did not impose a return of everyone to their own city to be enrolled, but it was very frequently done. Since Herod commanded that all babes of two years and under be slain in the region of Bethlehem, this would bring the birth of Christ to the year 2 or 3 AD.

(Correction: Luke ch. 2 - More recent authorities place the death of Herod in 4 B.C., and this would make the birth of Christ to be in 7 or 6 B.C. A fragment of a Roman inscription shows that Quirinius had been Proconsul between 10 and 7 B.C., and that a census was probably held then as it was held every 14 years (“The Bible as History” page 327.)

Espoused Wife

Jewish custom included (1) betrothal (or espousal) and (2) marriage. The first was usually arranged by parents and a sum of money was paid by the bridegroom to the parents of the bride. After this “purchase,” the espoused one might not be given, nor give herself to another. At a time after this, whether long or short, the bridegroom would take the betrothed to his house – this constituting the wedding and marriage. This explains Matthew ch.1 v. 18 & 19.

Mar. 12

Luke ch. 3

Sep. 11

John’s Mission and Teaching

John demanded of his hearers repentance and immersion. Immersion had been practised by the Jews for some centuries before Christ, but always on those who were Gentiles and who had embraced the Jewish faith. Of these they generally demanded circumcision, a sacrifice and immersion, and when the two former were not enforced the last was. This implied that the Gentile “Proselyte” had been cleansed from all defilement of his previous life. Thus when John demanded it of the “multitude that came forth to be baptised of him” v.7, he implied that they were no better than the Gentiles and had need of cleansing even though they were of the natural seed of Abraham (v.8).

He taught also that a change of life must follow (repentance here means “to turn about”). To the tax collectors (Publicans) he enjoined honesty (see note Mark ch.2). To the soldiers he forbade the use of violence – which would really prohibit any being engaged in active service. To all he enjoined hospitality and generous giving.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit

This foreshadows the gift of powers of healing etc. to the disciples and apostles (Luke ch.9 v.1 and ch.10 v.1), but an immersion of spirit, or birth of spirit, will be necessary for all born of water before they enter

John fast often, but thine eat and drink? why do the disciples of the Pharisees make long prayers? They were judging Christ and his actions by old customs to which they adhered.

But Jesus had come to teach new ideas which could not be bound by old traditions. To try to do this would be like putting a new piece of cloth into an old garment or new, unfermented, wine into an old and therefore unsupple skin (wine and water were often stored in skins of animals).

Christ's teaching that fasting (though it might be good for a time or for one's health) did not make a man more acceptable to God, nor less a sinner; and that public praying (often merely for show by some) was not required – but rather the reverse (Matthew ch.6 v.6), and further, that to go to those who had need of help and advice (even though termed sinners) was good. This was new teaching which could not be fitted into the traditions which they had received and still held.

Nevertheless, Jesus implied that this new thinking and teaching needed time before it was accepted – the human mind clinging to that to which it was accustomed, rather than accepting straight away something new.

Mar. 15

Luke ch. 6

Sept. 14

There went Virtue out of Him

The word virtue is a translation of a word which means power.

The latter part of this chapter contains statements similar to those given in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew chs. 5, 6 & 7), although it need not necessarily be a record of the same occasion. A comparison of the two will be helpful.

In Matthew ch.5 v.3 the phrase found in Luke ch.6 (v.20) is enlarged to read, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It must be remembered that poverty is not praised in Scripture – indeed it is condemned if it is the result of idleness (Proverbs 20 v.4, 2 Thess. ch.3 v.10), but to be poor in spirit is indeed commended, for the word poor (and it is the same word in Luke) here is a translation of a Greek word which means "trembling." God has said "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." (Isaiah ch.66 v.2)

At the same time there is condemnation of those who only desire to be rich or to be surfeited with food, drink, clothes etc., or spend overmuch time in merrymaking (verses 24 & 25) and have no thought of the things of God, and so often no thought of their fellow men. The prophet Amos condemned Israel of his time for this (Amos ch.6 v.6), and so did Paul to his generation (1 Tim. ch.6 v.9). Thus it is a needful exhortation in every generation, and none more so when so many material things are displayed as desirable.

Mar. 16

Luke ch. 7

Sept. 15

A Certain Centurion

A Centurion was a Roman officer placed in command of a number of soldiers (nominally one hundred, but more often somewhat less). He was thus appointed under authority (v.8) and had to obey orders from those above him, whilst he himself gave orders to those under him (v.8). This Centurion at Capernaum (like others in Palestine) was favourable to the Jews (v.5) and had great qualities of humility (v.6) and compassion (v.3). Moreover he recognised that Jesus had power and authority to heal even without seeing or touching the diseased person – “Say in a word and my servant will be healed.” This was showing great faith, far more than Christ’s own people had shown to him.

“Art Thou He that Should Come?”

Since John had baptised Jesus and had heard the words “This is my beloved son,” it seems surprising that he should ask the above question. A reference to Matthew ch.11 v.2 will show why. John was in prison at Machaerus – a fortress east of the Dead Sea. Though it would seem that he was not completely cut off from everyone (for his disciples were able to visit, if not stay with him), yet at times he must have felt weak and despondent. It is noticeable that Jesus did not send back a verbal answer, but bade John’s disciples to tell what they saw. The works of healing and of teaching were ample evidence that Jesus was the Messiah who should come, fulfilling Isaiah ch. 65.

Mar. 17**Luke ch. 8****Sept. 16****Many Ministered Unto Him**

In this chapter Luke gives us the names of some of the women “who ministered unto him of their substance.” From what he says in verse 2 it is clear that some of them had been the subject of Christ’s healing powers, notably Mary Magdalene. It is sometimes thought that this Mary may have been “the woman of the city which was a sinner” (Luke ch.7 v. 37). There is just a possibility that this may have been so, for it is usually thought that Mary Magdalene means Mary of Magdala – a city near Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee which was noted for its wealth and also for its licentiousness.

There would seem to be even less support for the suggestion that Mary Magdalene was Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, though orthodox tradition supports it. It is clear that Mary Magdalene was ever grateful for Christ’s healing of her disease and for the knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, for she is faithful in her ministrations right to the end, being at the crucifixion and first at the tomb of Jesus (see notes Matthew 28).

Joanna, wife of Chusa, was also one of those who followed to the end, being at the tomb on the resurrection morning (Luke ch.24 v.10). It has been suggested that Chusa was the nobleman whose son Jesus healed (John ch.4 v.46), but there is no direct evidence. It shows, however, that a few among the “higher” classes believed in Jesus just as later there were some in Caesar’s household who believed Paul. Although no more is told of Susannah, what great commendation could be given than that she ministered to Jesus?

Mar. 18**Luke ch. 9****Sep. 17****Steadfastly Set His Face**

John says that only a few of the acts of Jesus are recorded (ch.21 v.25). This is clearly shown by verse 51 of this chapter. The last 15 chapters of Luke’s gospel are given over to the last few months (it may only be weeks) of Christ’s ministry. Of what he did in the three years previously we are told only a very little.

It is possible to trace this journey (which is not necessarily a direct one) first to Samaria, v.52 and 53, then into another village, v.56.

A little later we find them still passing through the cities and villages, journeying towards Jerusalem (ch.13 v.22). (At the end of this chapter Jesus laments over Jerusalem, but it is because of the threat of the Pharisees and the mention of Herod Antipas of Galilee. Christ knew that Jerusalem would be the place of his crucifixion – hence his lament over the city.)

The journey is again taken up in ch.17 v.11 where Galilee and Samaria are mentioned and then in ch. 18 v.31 where, getting nearer to Jerusalem, he once more tells the twelve of his impending death – though again “they understood none of these things (v.34).

The next place is mentioned in chapter 19 v.1, and it would seem that Jesus had followed the more usual route in going from Galilee to Judea by omitting much of Samaria, crossing the Jordan and journeying on the east side until over against Jericho and then crossing into Jericho.

In ch.19 v.11 it is because he was nigh to Jerusalem that he speaks of the nobleman going into a far country.

Mar. 19

Luke ch. 10

Sept. 18

“I Beheld Satan Fall from Heaven

You will know that Satan is an untranslated word and that it just means “an adversary.” What was the adversary in this case? The seventy disciples (v.1) had returned from their mission when, temporarily, they had had power “to heal the sick” (v.9). By reason of this they had healed those who suffered physical and mental illnesses, “the devils” and “unclean spirits” who thus became subject to them. This was the adversary they had defeated and for this they rejoiced (v.17).

But this was, of course, but a small victory, limited to the comparative few among whom they had been. Disease, sickness and infirmity as such had not been banished. This would only be achieved in the Kingdom of God where, first, the immortalised saints would have no more pain, nor sorrow, nor sighing (Rev. ch.21 v.4), and second, the mortal population would be greatly freed from these “adversaries” (Isaiah ch.65 v.20 & Rev. ch.22 v.2) and, finally, at the end of the Millennium all adversaries, even the greatest of all – death – would be destroyed (1 Cor. ch.15 v.26). It was to this great triumph, when the

adversaries of mankind should be cast down from the position of keeping it in bondage – from ruling over it or “from the heavenlies” – that Christ looked. It is interesting to note that Jesus speaks of an infirm woman as being bound by Satan, from which bodily bondage he releases her by healing her (Luke ch.13 v.16).

Mar. 20

Luke ch. 11

Sept. 19

The Unclean Spirit

Verses 24 to 26 may well be taken as an allegory, which can be applied to Judah. Under the teaching of John the Baptist, Judah had been “cleansed,” but they had not followed this with an acceptance of the teaching to which this was but a preparation. They refused the teaching of Christ, so that their response to John was of no avail, and because they refused Christ, their last condition was worse than the first. Before they could claim that they knew not, that they were in darkness, but now the light (“I am the light of the world”) had come, and they had “loved darkness rather than light.” Judah had taken to herself seven other spirits as was manifest when “they filled up the cup of their iniquity” by crucifying Christ.

Mint and Rue

These are small herbs, the mint being used in Greek and Roman times both in medicine and in cooking, and the rue (a small shrub) in medicine. Being cultivated in gardens, it was subject under the law, to tithing, i.e. one tenth was given to the Lord every third year (Lev. ch.27 v.30; Deut. ch.14 v.28). Jesus points out that they must obey the law in these small things, but not neglect much greater things, e.g. the two great commandments (Mark ch.12 v.29-31).

The Blood of Abel and Zacharias

Abel is the first martyr but Zacharias is not the last in our Bible. The Jews arranged the books of the Old Testament differently, placing Genesis first and the books of the Kings and Chronicles last. Now the death of Zacharias is recorded in 2 Chron. ch.24 v.20-21 so that he was styled the last of those who were slain as martyrs.

Mar. 20

Luke ch. 12

Sep. 20

Leaven (or Yeast or Balm)

These are fermenting agencies and when introduced into suitable substances greatly multiply until the whole is affected. In bread, the water mixed with flour gives a weak solution of gluten (natural sugar) in which the yeast grows rapidly and thereby breaks it into alcohol and carbonic acid gas, which “lightens” the mixture. Leaven was never allowed in anything used in connection with worship – in the case where it was allowed (Lev. ch.23 v.17) the bread was for the priests and was not placed on the altar. When used in the Scriptures figuratively, as it is here, there is not so much the idea of corruption as of permeating. Thus it is used in a good sense in Luke ch.13 v.21 and in a bad sense in Matt. ch.16 v.6.

First Watch

The Jewish day was divided into hours, the first being 6.00 a.m., so that the third hour was 9.00 a.m. (Acts ch.2 v.15), the sixth hour was 12 noon, and the ninth hour 3.00 p.m. (Luke ch.23 v.44), and the 12th hour 6.00 p.m., from which time the night watches were measured. Thus the first watch was from 6-9.00 p.m., the second from 9-12.00 midnight, the third from 12.00-3.00 a.m. and the fourth from 3.00-6.00 a.m. Sometimes the term “cock-crowing” is used (Luke ch.22 v.34). This was reckoned to be 3.00 a.m. Mark mentions two (Mark ch.14 v.30) and the first would be about midnight, the second being 3.00 a.m.

The Baptism of which Jesus speaks in v.50 refers to his coming betrayal and crucifixion.

Mar. 22

Luke chs. 13 & 14

Sep. 21

“Tell That Fox”

The fox (and jackal) were found in Palestine and the word here used is correctly translated “fox.” As it would seem to refer to Herod it shows that Jesus had a clear insight into his character – “it needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man,” John ch.2 v.25. Though the Scriptures tell us little about Herod Antipas

beyond his relations with John the Baptist, it is clear that craftiness and cunning were a part of his nature.

“I Do Cures Today”

As we have seen, this was probably spoken as Jesus and the disciples made their last journey to Jerusalem (see note Luke ch.9). Thus when Jesus says, “I do cures today, tomorrow and the third day,” he is speaking figuratively of the whole period of his ministry which was of three years’ duration. The term “today,” then referred to the first year, “tomorrow” to the second year, and the “third” day to the third year. Although it was already the “third day,” Jesus intimated by this passage that a threat to kill him had no effect for he knew that “it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” This was so, for only the Sanhedrin (in Christ’s day) had power to pass the death sentence for religious offences and only the Roman power could put this into effect. (The Sanhedrin was a body of about 70 elders who met in Jerusalem.)

Mar. 23

Luke ch. 15

Sep. 22

“He Spake this Parable Unto Them”

It is important to notice that Jesus spoke the three parables of this chapter to the Pharisees and scribes. You will note as you read them that all had the same theme. They tell the story of something lost and found; of one sheep lost out of a hundred; of one coin lost out of ten, and of the younger son “lost” to the family. They all have the same teaching – the putting forth of much effort to find or retrieve, and the joy experienced when this effort was successful. Now why was this directed to and against the Pharisees and scribes? It was because they themselves despised those whom they described as publicans and sinners, and would have no dealings with them. They actually criticised Jesus because he did – “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” In another place Jesus had said, “They that are whole need not a physician (or doctor) but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke ch.5 v.31) It was Christ’s regard and pity for the “common people” and his disregard of those “in high places” which increased the dislike and envy and hatred of Jesus by those “who sat in Moses’ seat.”

Mar. 24

Luke ch. 16

Sep. 23

Two Parables

There are two parables in this chapter which may present difficulties. The difficulties are lessened if we remember they are parables.

The Unjust Steward

In this parable spoken to the disciples, the rich master is shown as commending the unjust steward – not for his dishonesty in giving away what was not his to give – but for acting wisely for himself. Jesus then does not here teach that it is commendable to act unjustly, he merely teaches that we must act wisely in all circumstances; to be providential for the future. In some cases the “children of light” – those to whom the knowledge of the gospel has come – may be the possessors of riches and wealth. The lesson is that they must use these as good stewards, not for the gratification of their own desires, but for the help of those less fortunate, and in so doing lay up an enduring “treasure in the heavens.” They must not allow riches to become the master, but make riches a servant for the service of others.

The rich man and Lazarus

This parable is taken literally by orthodox Christians and used to support the doctrine of the immortal soul. Even if so used, it raises many difficulties for it cannot accord with their doctrine when it speaks of souls in hell communicating with souls in heaven. It must be regarded as a parable wherein Christ is referring to and using a belief of the Pharisees (v.14-15), without adding his support of it – concerning hades (or the abode of the dead) and concerning Abraham’s bosom (used by them to represent a place of the greatest joy). He refers to these to teach once more their wrong estimation of men and of righteousness. They would have sent the rich man (who showed no correct use of his riches by denying the poor) to “Abraham’s bosom,” and the poor to “hades,” but Christ reversed the order. Moreover, he taught from the parable that there could be no disannulling of the final judgement; there could be no passing from one to another. Then the rich man is caused to ask that warning might be sent to his five brethren (five other sects of the Pharisees), but the answer is given – and this is the great point of the parable – that they

had already had warning from Christ himself (“Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God and ye yourselves thrust out”), and no warning nor miracle, not even if “one rose from the dead,” would convert them. This proved to be the case.

Mar. 25

Luke ch. 17

Sep. 24

“The Kingdom of God is Within You”

The Pharisees had asked of Jesus, “When the Kingdom of God should come?” It is clear that when Jesus replies as above, it cannot mean that the Kingdom was within them, for they are described by Christ as hypocrites, and white-washed sepulchres. The marginal references of many Bibles gives the correct answer: “The Kingdom of God is among you, as indeed the nucleus of the Kingdom was, in the person of Jesus. The margin also gives a better rendering of the phrase: “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” for there it is given “The Kingdom of God cometh not with outward show.” The Kingdom of God was, for the time being, to be a matter of teaching and of joyful anticipation in the hearts and minds of believers.

The Days of the Son of Man

This may have two applications – a primary one and a final one. The concluding verse of this section (v.37) is also given by Matthew (ch.24 v.28) and there is such a connection that it may well be seen to refer to the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth (the body – see Deut. ch.28 v.26, 49) by the eagles (the Roman armies) sent by the risen Christ as punishment. This would be a primary application.

The final one will be the judgement of the whole earth in the days of that generation which witnesses the budding of the fig tree nation (Israel) and which will come suddenly as did the flood and the destruction of Sodom (see also 1 Thess. ch.5).

Mar. 26

Luke ch. 18

Sep. 25

Faith on the Earth

It is possible to have faith in many things. What is that exercise of faith which will hardly be found when Christ comes? Clearly it is faith in God’s plan for man and the world; faith in the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. It is also clear that this is almost

entirely lacking in the world today – a mere handful of believers among the millions of disbelievers. The absence of belief in the faith is a sign of the coming of the Son of Man.

A Needle's Eye

Though this may mean the eye of a needle as we understand it today, it is often thought that it represents the small passage made for pedestrians by the side of the larger opening made for animals and vehicles in the gateways in the walls of the cities of the East. It would be clearly impossible for a camel to pass through the first eye, but though difficult, not impossible for a camel to squeeze through the second “eye.” It is clear that the disciples thought that riches could “buy” the means of salvation from their question in v.26, so that it was necessary to teach them that really they might be a great hindrance.

“Thou Son of David”

This is often used in relation to Christ, but it should be noted that here it is used by the blind man after he had been told that it was Jesus of Nazareth that passed by. The house of David was of Bethlehem, and the prophets had foretold that the ruler should come from it (Micah ch.5 v.2), so that the scribes and Pharisees were able to say, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” The coupling of Nazareth with the son of David by the blind man shows that he knew a good deal concerning Jesus – that though from Nazareth he had been born in the house of David at Bethlehem, in accordance with the prophecy.

Mar. 27

Luke ch. 19

Sep. 26

He is “a Son of Abraham”

All Jews claimed Abraham as their father (Matt. ch.3 v.9), so that Zacchaeus (a Greek word, but derived from the Hebrew word meaning “pure”) could claim to be a son. What then is the reason for Christ saying, “He also is a son of Abraham.” The works of Abraham were faith in the promises, obedience to the commands (e.g. circumcision and offering up of Isaac), hospitality to strangers (Gen. ch.18) etc. And Jesus “who needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man” (John ch.2 v.25) saw in Zacchaeus these works, even though he was of the despised and hated class of tax collectors. He was a true son of Abraham.

The Stones...Should Cry Out

This was not only a statement but a prophecy, for in these “last days” the science of archaeology has developed and become much more exact. The result has been that digging in the ruins and mounds of ancient cities has revealed, not only the civilisations of the past ages, but so far as Biblical countries are concerned has shown the truthfulness of the Bible record. The Silvan Inscription shows that Hezekiah did bring the waters within the city (2 Chron. ch.32 v.30) and excavations at Jericho have shown that the walls of the city did fall down flat and that the city was burnt (Joshua ch.6); that Belshazzar was king in Babylon – this had before been denied by the “higher critics” – as given in Dan.ch.5; that Nineveh was burnt and buried (Nahum ch.1 v.14 and 3 v.12) and that Sennacherib was slain by his sons (2 Kings ch.19 v.37).

Mar. 28

Luke ch. 20

Sep. 27

“Not a God of the Dead”

This is sometimes quoted by itself to try to prove the doctrine of the immortal soul, but if it is remembered that Christ uses it to prove the resurrection, then it cannot be so quoted, for the resurrection means the reforming and raising from the dust of the ground (or the waters of the sea) a body re-animated so that an account may be given before Christ at the judgement seat. This phrase therefore means that the promises made by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can only be realised by their resurrection from the dead. They can only experience good at the hands of God in a living and not in a dead state.

Christ’s Question

After Jesus had answered so many of the questions put by the chief priests, scribes and Sadducees to catch him (v.20) he asked them a question concerning Christ’s relationship to David. They were not able to explain why David should call his son by the title “Lord” (Psalm 110) because with the Jews, as with many other nations, the father was the chief or lord of the household or family. Jacob was symbolised in Joseph’s dream by a sun whilst the sons were stars, i.e. of lesser magnitude (Gen. ch.37). It was therefore contrary to their fitness of things that a father should address his son by a title held by

himself. David, however, “being a prophet,” foresaw the birth of a son in his house who would have a name (or title) which is above every name (Heb. ch.1 v.4 & Phil. ch.2 v.9).

Mar. 29

Luke ch. 21

Sep. 28

Jerusalem Compassed with Armies

This was to be a sign to the disciples (Peter, Andrew, James and John, Mark ch.13 v.3) of the coming destruction, so that they could escape from the doomed city. A time for escape was miraculously provided. Vespasian had been made Governor of Syria (which included Palestine) and, having subdued riots in Galilee, proceeded in 68 A.D. towards Jerusalem which for some years had been a city of disorder. In this year, however, Nero the Emperor died and Vespasian waited for directions from the new Emperor, Galba. Nothing further was attempted during 68 A.D., and the beginning of 69 A.D., but in the middle of this year Vespasian was called to Rome and became Emperor. The command of the armies was now handed over to his son Titus, who commenced preparations for an attack upon Jerusalem. The attack was made in 70 A.D. at the time of the Passover (April) from the higher ground on the North-West of the city, but it was not until 44 days after the commencement of the attack that an earthwork was cast up around the whole city to cut off the escape of fugitives and the supply of food.

After 134 days of siege, the city was taken and order given for the destruction of walls and city. Three towers with intervening walls were left to show what mighty defences had been overthrown.

Thus it will be seen that there was a period of time during 69 A.D. and a further period of seven weeks in 70 A.D. during which those who heeded the sign given by Jesus could escape.

Mar. 30

Luke ch. 22

Sep. 29

Buying a Sword – v.36

This is sometimes given as a reason for taking part in the world’s “state forces.” A reading of v.37 shows that it had particular reference to that occasion alone, whilst Christ’s condemnation of using force or resisting evil (Matt. ch.5 v.39) is the guide for all Gentile times. The

sword was to be used to fulfil the prophecy quoted (Isa. ch.53 v.12), and when used became the subject of doctrinal teaching (Matt. ch.26 v.52). That this was the rule followed by the apostles is proclaimed by James (ch.5 v.6).

The Denials

A difficulty is experienced here in reconciling the Gospel account of those who challenged Peter. They can be set out as follows:-

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
<u>1st denial:</u>	a damsel	a maid	a maid	a damsel
<u>2nd denial:</u>	another (maid) said to <u>them that</u> stood by	a maid	another (Peter's reply <u>"Man</u> I am not"	they said
<u>3rd denial:</u>	they that stood by	they that stood by	another (Peter replies, <u>"Man</u> I know not."	kinsman

Reconciliation

At the first denial all agree that it was a maid and at the third the phrase "they that stood by" and "another" (addressed by Peter as "man") and "kinsman" are not contradictory for among them was the kinsman of whom John speaks. In the second denial Matthew says "another" (maid is not in the original), Mark says "maid" and Luke says "another" to whom Peter replies "man." The solution is given by John who says "They said." This shows that more than one accused him, both male and female, and to this "mixed" accusation Peter replies particularly to one, possibly the most forceful or the last to speak, who was a man. This is strengthened by the way Matthew expresses it, for he says "another (probably maid in view of Mark's testimony) said to them that stood by." It is clear that the accusation was passed from one to another to be finally voiced by the man to whom Peter speaks.

Mar. 31**Luke ch. 23****Sep. 30****Pilate**

Since Pilate plays such a large part in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, a few notes about him will be helpful. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from 26 A.D. to 36 A.D. A letter from Herod Agrippa 1 (see notes on Mark ch.6) and an account by Josephus describe him as obstinate and cruel, and that he was hated by the Jewish people. As both these writers would naturally be opposed to Pilate, their criticisms would be on the harsh side. Nevertheless, from the reference in Luke ch.13 v.1 to those Galileans “whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices” (no doubt because of some riot in the Temple courts) and of his treatment of the Samaritans which caused his recall to Rome, we can see that there was a good deal of reason for their criticisms.

It was probably because he feared exposure in Rome that he finally gave way to the demands of the chief priests and rulers over Jesus. Pilate could see that “for envy” they had delivered Jesus for trial and judgement (Matt. ch.27 v.18) and he resisted them until finally the charge against Jesus was altered from “saying he was a King” (Matt. ch.27 v.11) to “forbidding to give tribute to Caesar” (a false charge, of course). Pilate does not risk a report being made that he was lenient to a man who was against Caesar, and this was intimated by the words: “If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar’s friend” (John 19 v.12), so he finally gives in to their clamour and allows a condemnation and sentence totally opposed to Roman jurisprudence. It will be seen how the type of man was provided which would allow to be fulfilled that which had been before ordained.

Apr. 1**Luke ch. 24****Oct. 1****A Special Appearance**

It is Luke alone who gives details of the appearance of Jesus to two disciples as they walked on the first day of the week the seven and a half miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. We feel that he does so because there is every possibility that he was one of them. Neither of these two were “of the twelve,” yet Luke claims to have had “perfect understanding of all things from the very first” (ch.1 v.3) even “until

the day in which he (Jesus) was taken up” (Acts ch. 1 v.2). The fact that he mentions Cleopas and not the other is similar to the way in which Mark speaks of a special incident happening to a “young man” in the garden of Gethsemane without naming him (Mark ch.14 v.51). It would seem to indicate that it was the writer himself in both cases. This appearance of Jesus as well as that recorded in v.36-42 serve to show the nature of the revived body. In notes on 1 Cor. ch.15 it was shown that Christ died, rose and revived – the last being the change from mortal to immortal. This immortal body is one of substance: “handle me and see,” yet it differs from the mortal in that not only is it sustained and animated by spirit and therefore called a spiritual body (1 Cor. ch.15 v.44), but has powers of locomotion and passage and materialisation equal to that of the angels, and quite beyond our present power to comprehend.