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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

(Jas. 1:22-25). So Nehemiah, with all his practical application, was ready to acknowledge that God put these things into his heart (Ch. 7:5) and he owned the good hand of his God upon him. Is it not true that 'the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him'? (2 Chron. 16:9).

STUDIES IN THE GOSPELS

The Gospel of Matthew

H. BELL

The subject of this book is the Lord Jesus Christ in the character of *The King*. It forms the necessary sequel to the Old Testament. In past times God had taught His people to expect the Messiah who would reign over them as the Son of David (e.g., as in Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1, 10). Now Matthew tells us by the Spirit of God how this promise was fulfilled in Christ.

Fifty times in this book we find the word 'Kingdom', and on thirty-two occasions the phrase employed is the 'Kingdom of Heaven'—a phrase which appears nowhere else in the New Testament. The meaning of this expression can be gleaned from Daniel, chapter 2, where the prophet, having told Nebuchadnezzar of four World Empires that would arise, informs him that, *after this*, 'shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom'. So that when the Lord announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand people would realise that Daniel's prophecy was about to be fulfilled and Heaven's King was here to reign on earth.

There are three sections in the book which stand out in particular: namely, chapters 5 to 7, chapter 13, and chapters 24 and 25. In the *first* of these we learn of the Kingdom as it ought to be. That is, we are here instructed as to the principles which ought to characterise the subjects of Messiah's Kingdom. In ch. 5, we learn chiefly about the *outward* aspect; such as being peacemakers, and letting our light shine before men. Chapter 6 gives us the *inward* aspect, viz., 'secret' almsgiving; 'secret' prayer; and 'secret' fasting. Then chap. 7 links both these aspects together and shows that there must be no hypocrisy; the outward

life and the inward must correspond: 'By their fruits ye shall know them'. The house built upon the sand may look quite as good as that built upon the rock, but beneath the surface there was a vital difference, as seen when the floods came and the winds blew.

The *second* of these portions (chap. 13) shows us the *present* character of the kingdom as it now is. Israel has rejected Christ (chap. 11). He is about to turn to the Gentiles (chap. 12:41, 42;) and so now the Kingdom assumes a 'secret' or 'hidden' character (the Greek word *mustereon* here means 'secret'), and instead of the King being now publicly manifested, and the Kingdom being offered to Israel, it is universal, and all who own the name of Jesus are in His Kingdom until the time of His public manifestation; whilst the visible establishing of the Kingdom is postponed until the 'End of the Age' (vs. 39-41).

Thirdly, in chapters 24 and 25 we have the Kingdom of Heaven as it will be. Our Lord sits upon the Mount of Olives. This was the Mount up which King David had gone weeping when the usurper, Absalom, stole the hearts of Israel from him (2 Samuel 15:30). It was the place where the glory of God lingered after it had left the Temple before going back into Heaven (Ezekiel 11:23); and it is the mountain upon which the Lord shall stand when He returns in glory to reign as King (Zechariah 14:4). Again, it was the mountain where the Lord wept over Jerusalem because of its rejection of Him (Lk. 19:37-41). And so here on the very mountain which Scripture associates with His rejection He outlines the divine programme for the time of His return to this earth and to Israel, when He shall no longer be rejected and despised of them. It may be well at this juncture to remark that the Lord's coming for His church is *not* referred to here for He is speaking of the Kingdom being established on earth.

We will now pass to the consideration of the structure of the book, as may be set out in the following manner:

The Announcement of the King	chaps. 1 to 4
The Approach of the King	„ 5 to 12
The Absense of the King	„ 13 to 20
The Appearing of the King	„ 21 to 25
The Appointment of the King	„ 26 to 28

In the *first* of these sections we see the King announced by the genealogical records (chapter 1); By the Star in the East (chapter 2); By the preaching of John the Baptist (chapter 3); and by Himself (chapter 4).

The *second* section (chapters 5-12) shows us the King approaching His people and presenting Himself before them as their Messiah: (a) by His moral Principles (chapters 5-7), (b) by His Miracles (chapters 8-9), (c) by His Message (chapter 10). But toward all these evidences Israel turned a deaf ear (chapters 11 and 12). And so in chapter 13:1 we see the Lord leaving the house and sitting by the sea side—which we may view as an illustration of His leaving the house of Israel for the 'sea' of Gentile nations (cf. verse 47)—thus intimating that He was about to turn from the covenant nation of Israel to the nations without. It may be noted in this connection that His miracles are viewed as the witness of His Kingship (cf. chapter 9:35).

The *third* section (chapters 13-20) prepares us for the Lord's absence when, as a *rejected* King, He was about to return to heaven, and shows us the conditions that were to be observed while He remained away (chapter 13), as already referred to in our remarks above. In chapter 14 the disciples sail the stormy sea in a boat while the Lord prays on the mountain height above; just as even now He intercedes for us while we are exposed to the trials of life down here. In chapter 15 His grace goes out to the Gentiles in delivering power and then returns again to Israel in healing. In chapter 16 He shows that while rejected by Israel He is building His church. In chapter 17 we have a picture of how the Church will appear with Him in glory by and by, but for the present she shares His rejection. Then in chapter 18 we have the first mention of the local Assembly in its testimony to the absent Lord Who, nevertheless, is present by the Spirit.

Then in chapter 19:13 little children enter the kingdom while the rich and noble turn away. Chapter 20 illustrates the principle of sovereign grace in that even those who come in at the eleventh hour received the 'penny' as those who had toiled the whole day.

The *fourth* section presents the Rehearsal of the *Appearing* of the King (chapters 21-25): He rides into Jerusalem on the back

of an ass (cf. Zechariah 9:9). Also in chapter 22 we learn of the Reunion of His people, for the marriage feast tells of the time when Israel the 'earthly wife' shall be re-united to her Lord (see Hosea, chap. 2:19).

Then again in chapter 23 we get the *Reception* of the King at His appearing, as in contrast to the present attitude of Israel (see vs. 37-39). Chapters 24 and 25 depict the Retribution of His appearing and tell of the judgment on Israel and the nations in that Day.

Then in the *final* portion we see the King mocked by His own (chapter 26), and murdered by the Gentiles (chapter 27). And finally on the *Mountain* in Resurrection (chapter 28) as the risen and exalted King, He speaks of His commission to His servants to go forth and win subjects for His Kingdom, for 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth'; the Gospel is for 'all nations'; they need to be taught to understand 'all things' He had told them; and He Himself would be with them 'all the days' (vs. 19, 20).