

THE EARLY PARABLES OF JESUS

Message 9

Passage: Matthew 9:14-17

Words: 5874

INTRO: We have been looking at the early parables of Jesus. It is my view that these early parables give us a transition from the time of the old covenant to the new. The new will bring in the Church age because the Jews rejected their Messiah. The Church age was a mystery in the OT. It was never revealed in the prophetic Scriptures. Everything hinged on whether Israel would accept or reject their Messiah. They will reject Him, and Jesus begins to prepare them for the change that is coming, and He does so largely in these parables.

The second set of parables, found mostly in Matthew 13 and related passages in Mark and Luke, will speak prophetically of what the Church age will be like. Those messages are not available on line. The last set of parables, which are called "The Latter Parables" are available on-line. Here Jesus foretells what will happen to Israel in the future. He foretells the fall of Jerusalem, the rapture of the Church, and what will happen at the judgment at the end of the tribulation.

In these early parables we are now looking at the transition from the time of the old covenant to the new. In the first parable, Jesus looked at the disciples and that multitude which was gathered to listen to Him preach from a mountaintop near the Sea of Galilee, and said, "You are the salt of the earth." We are now talking, not about Israel, but that which will come into existence, the Church. And it will be the salt of the earth. It is the Church that has preserved mankind for the past 2,000 years. When the Church is in good shape, the ozone is not a problem. When the Church is in bad shape, everything is in trouble.

Then He said, "You are the light of the world." The only hope for all of mankind is the Church. The Church is God's most important work on earth today. May I ask you, what are you doing in the church? Are you seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Then, in a passage that is used by the majority of Christians today to say that we are not to judge, Jesus taught the most important lesson on judging or discernment we can get. It is

very simple, but very profound. Jesus said, "Judge not". But He was addressing the hypocrite. We must all judge. We must all learn to discern. But before we judge we must make sure our own life is in order first. One cannot successfully navigate through the issues that affect one's spiritual life unless one gets one's own life in order and one learns to judge righteous judgment. I believe the reason most are so adamant that Christians are not to judge is because their own lives are not in order.

Then we looked at the city with two gates. We saw three groups of people. We were standing within the city of destruction. Out of this city, hard to find, was a narrow gate. It represents those who use the Bible and enter the true Christian path. Then there was a broad gate, which speaks, in my view; of all those who use the Bible but they are deceived. At the gates stand false prophets dressed in sheep's clothing. They think they are helping people onto the true road to heaven, but in fact, they are sending them to hell.

And last we saw the two houses. The men who built these houses were both concerned for their spiritual well-being. These two houses looked the same above ground, but they were not the same underneath. One man was building on sand. This man heard the sayings of Jesus but did not do them. The other was building on a rock foundation. This man heard the sayings of Jesus and did them. The difference is so simple, but it has such far reaching consequences.

And now we move outside the Sermon on the Mount for a few more parables and they will complete this prophetic word of a transition from the old covenant to the new.

VIII. THE PARABLE OF THE BRIDEGROOM

A. The Parable

We go to the parable then to the parable of the bridegroom and we find it in Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is also found in Mark 2:18-22 and Luke 5:33-40. We'll go to Matthew 9:14-17 and it reads like this:

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"

15 *And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

16 *"No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.*

17 *"Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."*

As I see this passage, we have three parables in a row. The question for Jesus was why His disciples did not fast, but the John's disciples and the Pharisees did fast. The main parable is this: *Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

Jesus then gives two further parables to illustrate the truth of the first. John's disciples' question gives us the setting of the parable, so we look at the setting.

B. The setting

I have done a very detailed harmony of the four Gospels. I outline them, when you put all four Gospels together, into five points. They are: 1 The introduction of the Messiah to the world. This is information in the Luke and John's writings given about Jesus before He was conceived. 2 The preparation of the Messiah for the world. Here we have an account of His life from conception until His ministry begins. 3 The authentication of the Messiah to the world. Jesus' ministry begins and He is shown to be the Messiah by His words and His works. The first two sets of parables are found in this section. 4 The rejection of the Messiah by the world. Here we have the efforts to kill Him and His crucifixion. 5 The victory of the Messiah over the world. Here we have His resurrection and ascension back to heaven.

In point 3, the section of Jesus' life that gives evidence that He is the Messiah, I have divided into 59 sections or events. The 22nd section is Matthew 9:1-8, where Jesus healed a paralytic. The 23rd section is from verses 9-13. Here Jesus called Matthew the tax collector as one of His apostles. The 24th section is the one we have just read, where John's disciples came and asked this question of Jesus: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" Jesus has just called Matthew the tax collector as one of His apostles. We are in chapter 9 of Matthew. Not much is recorded between this and chapter 10, where Jesus had completed the calling of the twelve apostles and He was sending them out to minister. So times are changing, and we want to look at that as we go to the interpretation of these two parables.

Now in 9:9 Jesus called Matthew as an apostle. And Luke 5:28 says:

29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

So it may be that John's disciples cannot figure out how they and the Pharisees were constantly fasting and Jesus was feasting with His disciples. The Pharisee in Luke 18:12 who commended himself before God said, "I fast twice in the week." So John's disciples are troubled about this. It is then that Jesus gives these parables.

C. The interpretation

So we go to the interpretation. What we have before us here are the disciples of John the Baptist, and the Pharisees set over against the disciples of Jesus on the matter of fasting. Early in the Gospels we learn that times are changing. Turn to Matthew 3. John was the forerunner of Jesus. He was preparing the way for Christ. John was doing something that had never been done before. He was preaching in the wilderness. He preached sin. Sin is man's major problem. And John was calling the nation to repentance. Repentance is one of

the first and foremost doctrines in importance to the Gospel.

Look now at Matthew 3:1-3:

- 1 *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,*
- 2 *and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*
- 3 *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"*

Now look at the results of his preaching in verses 4-5:

- 4 *And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.*
- 5 *Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him*
- 6 *and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.*

What kind of preaching has to take place before people confess their sins in public? Well, it takes preaching in which the Holy Spirit of God can begin to do a deep convicting work in the hearts of people. It is divine preaching.

I think John may have preached about 6 months and then Jesus began to preach the same message of repentance. What makes me think that? Well, John was 6 months older than Jesus and Jesus began to minister when He was about 30, and John most likely started at the same age because He was a Levite and that is when they began their ministry.

So Jesus began to preach and call disciples. And it is then that John's disciples ask Jesus this question about fasting. John and his disciples fasted because of the great burden over the sins of Israel and their need to

be spiritually soft in order to receive their Messiah. And now these disciples are concerned about the fact that Jesus' disciples do not have this burden are they are not fasting.

Turn to Luke 5. When you put the Gospels together we find some very interesting additions to this account in Luke's account of the same time. We begin in verse 27:

27 *After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me."*

28 *So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.*

29 *Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.*

30 *And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"*

31 *Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*

32 *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

33 *Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"*

You see, what we have is Jesus feasting at Matthew's house. Jesus has just added another disciple to His already small band. It is as if the feasting brings on the question asked by John's disciples. But note that the scribes and Pharisees are upset, not about the feasting, but about Jesus, that He is eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus answers them. Jesus begins His answer in verse 15 like this:

15 *And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

This is the first time that Jesus likens Himself to a bridegroom. It is appropriate, as in the epistles, the Church becomes His bride. But the Apostles are here likened to the friends of the bridegroom, not the bride. The friends of the bridegroom were those that attended him when he went to get his bride. Such is not a time of fasting, but rather of feasting.

Then Jesus says that the days are coming when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them. This is prophetic of His ascension to heaven. And he says that at this time they will mourn. Well that was prophetic when it was given but for us that is history and we are familiar with Christ's death, burial, resurrection and later ascension to heaven.

But what happens when Jesus ascends to heaven is that the Church age begins. We find this in Acts 2. It happened on the day of Pentecost. It happened 50 days after His resurrection, and the Church has been in existence ever since, while He is physically absent.

Jesus then explains something very important by way of two other parables and we find the first in Matthew 9:16:

16 *"No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.*

So let me ask you, what is the connection between this verse and the preceding verse and John's disciple's question? John's disciples are asking why they and the Pharisees fast and Jesus' disciples don't and Jesus gives this answer. And our question is, just what is He saying?

Well, various answers are given. The Ecclectic Notes commentary gives this answer: "The garment of legal righteousness was in fact wearing out, and man being exhibited as the prophet declared him, : #Isa 64.6 'all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags'".

John Gill says this of some: "These words are, by #Lu 5:36 called a "parable," as are those in the following verse; and both are commonly interpreted of the unreasonableness and danger of putting young disciples upon severe exercises of religion, as fasting..." end quote.

Then later he explains like this: "Wherefore, by "the old garment," I apprehend, is meant their moral and legal righteousness, or their obedience to the moral and ceremonial laws, which was very imperfect, as well as impure, and might be rightly called "filthy rags"; or be compared to an old worn out garment, filthy and loathsome, torn, and full of holes, which cannot keep a person warm, nor screen him from the weather, and so old that it cannot be mended. And by the "piece of new cloth," or "garment," put unto it, or sewed upon it, are intended the traditions of the elders, these men were so fond of, concerning eating, and drinking, and fasting, and hundreds of other things, very idle and trifling, and which were new and upstart notions."

And so there are various explanations given as to the meaning of these last two parables. But I think the reason for Jesus' strange answer lies elsewhere. I believe Jesus is here teaching that an old era is coming to a close, and a new is about to begin. John's disciples fasted. They were closing out an old era. Jesus' disciples rejoiced that the bridegroom was with them. The Messiah had come.

Now note in verse 16 that it speaks of 'new' cloth in the KJV and the NKJV says it is unshrunk cloth. The original word is *agnaphos* and means 'unfulled' cloth. I would expect the name 'Fuller' comes from those who fulled cloth. And what is fulling cloth? Wikipedia says:

Fulling involves two processes, scouring and milling (thickening). Originally, fulling was carried out by the pounding of the woollen cloth with a club, or the fuller's feet or hands. In Scottish Gaelic tradition, this process was accompanied by waulking songs, which women sang to set the pace. From the medieval period, however, fulling was often carried out in a water

mill, followed by stretching the cloth on great frames known as tenters, to which it is attached by tenterhooks. It is from this process that the phrase being on tenterhooks is derived, as meaning to be held in suspense.

So the cloth of our text is cloth that has not been fulled. It is 'unshrunk'. If you sew that kind of cloth to an old garment, it will shrink when it is washed and will make the tear bigger in the garment. And I believe Jesus is speaking here of the new age that is just about to enter, but it has not been fulled yet.

If this new age was to be added to the old, to fix up the old, it would make the tear worse. This cloth will be used for something new altogether, and that is what the Church age is. It is something new. No longer would God's work be centralized in Israel. As a matter of fact, its center would not be on earth, it would be in heaven where the head of the Church now resides. It is the kingdom of heaven because it is ruled from heaven. It is a new age. A change is about to come.

If we should go to Jesus latter parables we would find that this age will close with the rapture, and then Israel will enter the tribulation, at the end of which will be the sheep and goat judgement.

So the conclusion is that this age that Christ will now bring in cannot be used to fix the old one that is now coming to an end. That age comes to an end with John's preaching. The new begins with Jesus' ministry. After He has been killed, buried, resurrected and has ascended back to heaven, it will be ushered in. At the time John's disciples asked this question it is only a preparation for that time.

Jesus then gives a second parable to explain the disciples' question. They had asked why they, John's disciples and the Pharisees fasted but Jesus disciples did not. So Jesus was saying that if He used the new work to patch up the old that was now fading away, that would be like adding an unfulled piece of cloth to fix an old garment. If this was done, it would only make the tear worse. And now He gives a second illustration of what

would happen if this was done. We find it in verse 17 like this:

17 *"Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."*

Now if you have been like I was whenever I read this passage, I thought it meant that old wineskins could not handle the stretching which would occur from wine when it fermented. That is the view I held until I did the series of messages on wine and the Bible. I gave evidence in those messages that drinking alcohol is forbidden in the Bible. Very few hold to that view, but that is what I believe the Bible teaches. So let me quote from those messages on this passage:

Let us begin by reading Matthew 9:14-17... Wineskins were animal hides that had been cured and then the leg holes and all cuts sewed up so as to be able to hold liquids. They were used to store wine. They look like bloated animals when they are full. The large skins were made from oxen. Smaller skins would be goat skin bottles. You can imagine how much wine a goatskin would hold.

The question of John's disciples is why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast often and make prayers, but Your disciples do not fast? Jesus' answer is that the disciples of John and the Pharisees had good reason to fast but His disciples did not. If one were to liken it to a wedding, would one fast as long as the bridegroom is present? No. It is a time of festivities and lively anticipation and that is not conducive to fasting. But after the bridegroom leaves, now times of fasting may come.

Then Jesus uses two parables to show what is really happening. The first parable is that of sewing a tear in an old garment. He says one does not use new cloth to sew an old tear. The reason is that if the new cloth is sewed to the worn cloth, the new will shrink, and cause it to be torn where it is sewed and thus create a bigger hole than the original. The disciples of John and the Pharisees were closing out an old age. They were the

last of the old economy. Jesus' disciples were beginning a new era. If the new were attached to the old, before it had time to stretch, it would cause a worse condition.

Our topic is this second parable. Now Jesus takes an illustration from something that is common to life for the people He is talking to, that of storing wine, or grape juice. The explanation for the illustration seems readily apparent. You do not put new wine into old wineskins because if you do, the fermenting wine would cause these old wineskins to burst, because they cannot withstand the pressure exerted by the expansive force of the fermenting grape juice. So Patton, in his book on Bible Wines says that those who hold that all wine was fermented say that new skins were used so as to "resist the expansive force of the carbonic acid gas generated by fermentation. This explanation necessarily admits that the new wine had not yet fermented..."

Now that explanation seems so obvious, it hardly needs more investigation, but here again we may just have a Scanlon error. It may well be, and I am convinced it is so, that this text teaches the exact opposite of what we naturally think it means. To the original reader it would have presented no problem. To those of us, not familiar with how they preserved grape juice, the conclusion seems so obvious, but it is wrong.

Now it appears that new wine skins were used to store fresh grape juice and to keep the juice FROM fermenting. If old wine skins were reused, a residue of yeast would adhere to them from storing grape juice in them before, this would cause the new grape juice to ferment, even though the skins were sealed. Patton holds that no wine skin, even a new one could withstand the pressure of fermentation. He writes, "Chambers, in his Cyclopaedia, early edition, says: 'The force of fermenting wine is very great, being able, if closely stopped up, to burst through the strongest cask.'"

So new wine had to be poured into new containers in order to keep the grape juice from fermenting. I quote Patton

again, "The new bottles or skins, being clean and perfectly free from all ferment, were essential for preserving the fresh unfermented juice, not that their strength might resist the force of fermentation, but, being clean and free from fermenting matter, and closely tied and sealed, so as to exclude air, the wine was preserved in the state in which it was when put into those skins. Columella, who lived in the days of the Apostles, in his recipe for keeping wine always sweet, expressly directs that the newest must (grape juice), be put in a 'new amphora,' or jar'" (pg. 59).

So, according to this, why was new wine to be put in new wineskins? Not because new wine skins could withstand the pressure of fermentation. They could not. The reason was to keep the wine, or the grape juice, from fermenting. The text teaches the exact opposite of the conclusion we naturally come to! That is the Scanlon error. And if this explanation is correct, it goes a long way to show that the Jews stored a lot of grape juice that was unfermented!

In my studies on wine on internet, I came across wine kits one can order to make home-made wine. Many of these kits include the juice, and it is, of course, unfermented. One of these companies called the 'Wine Maker' says, "The wine-kit boom began in the 1970's when high quality kits first emerged from California." So we might well ask, why would people buy wine kits and make their own when they could buy the wine ready made? The reason is that to make wine kits is less labor intensive for the companies and thus cheaper for the customer.

Now many of these companies send the grape juice in the kit. So my question is: how do they keep this juice fresh, without fermenting? Well, here is what they say about that question on page 7 point 3. The point is called, "Aseptic packaging." Then it explains aseptic packaging. "Juice is zapped at high temperatures, then sealed in pail or bladder pack. Air is vacuumed out." Point 4 says, "Bladder-pack juices can last as long as three years."

So, back to our text, a wine skin is a bladder pack. They did not put grape juice into wine skins to ferment it. They put it in wine skins and sealed it off to keep it from fermenting. If they had allowed wine to ferment in the wine skins, they would have had an explosion and lost both the skin and the wine. So by sealing it in a new wine skin, they kept the grape juice from fermenting.

Now McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia, which holds that almost every reference to wine in the Bible is fermented wine admits that this explanation is acceptable, but they feel it does not fit the context. I think it fits the context very well, end quote.

Well, once more Luke adds something to our story that speaks to our subject. We go to Luke 5:39. It says:

39 *"And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"*

In the previous verses, if one did not study what is being said one would conclude without question that it speaks of fermented wine. The same holds true in this verse. Let me once more read from my notes in the series, "Wine And The Bible":

Here we come to an interesting point that Luke makes on the passage we were just looking at in Matthew. It is not found in the Matthew passage but Luke continues the same topic a little further. Luke adds that no one who has had old wine immediately desires new wine, for he says 'The old is better.' Gill says this is a proverbial expression. And what is the lesson? When would this expression be used? When some new way of doing things comes into being, people do not find it easy to change and adapt to the new. So the proverbial saying here used, comes into play. We get accustomed to a way of doing things and we do not immediately take to new ways. This is precisely the reason the Jews came to question Jesus at this point. But what is the lesson? We say the old is better, when in actual fact, the new is better!

I can vouch for this from my experience in the logging industry. I was in that industry when many of the rules now in place were being implemented. We fought every new rule. WCB would threaten to shut us down if we did not comply. Well, by and by we gave in. Today, we can hardly imagine working in the forest without a hardhat or good boots or some of the other things we were forced to learn. But today, we say, 'The new ways certainly were better.'

Now the question is whether this verse endorses drinking fermented wine. If this is a proverbial expression, it would not say anything to that matter. However, I think there is reason to think this speaks of unfermented wine. There is one word in the passages that makes me think Jesus is referring to unfermented wine. It is the word *immediately*. The impression is that once one gets used to the new wine, it is actually a preferable drink. If this passage were speaking of fermented wine, I think it would read like this: No one, having drunk aged wine, ever desires new, for he says the old is always better. In fermented wines, the aged, as far as I can tell, is **always** preferred.

This summer when we visited a winery I asked if they aged their wine. The lady looked at me to make sure I was serious, for anyone familiar with wine would not ask such a silly question. Then she said, "All our wine is aged." If the wine in our text were fermented wine, it should read, "No man, having drunk old wine ever prefers new wine." And so the key word here is '*immediately*'. The fact is that after getting accustomed to the new wine, then he says, "Ah, the new is better!" This would never be true of fermented wine. This, as far as I can see, could only be true of unfermented wine.

So this passage would not necessarily condone social drinking, even if it speaking of fermented wine. But I think the word '*immediately*' argues that He is speaking of unfermented wine.

D. The Application

Now what application does all this have? We are in an age called the Church age. In the OT God set out Israel to be a

light to the world. God promised a Messiah to Israel. And if Israel would obey Him, they would be His covenant people for all time. Turn to Deuteronomy 28. God spoke to Israel way back here and promised the richest of blessings if they would obey Him. We begin in verse 1:

- 1 *"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.*
- 2 *"And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:*
- 3 *"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.*
- 4 *"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.*
- 5 *"Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.*

And you can read on as blessing after blessing is listed. However, when we go to verse 15 and on it goes like this:

- 15 *"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:*
- 16 *"Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.*
- 17 *"Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.*

Well, you can read on as curse after curse is listed. And Israel did reject Him and God took the nation from them and gave it to a people that would be called the Church, His called out ones, His ekklesia. And in our passage Jesus is speaking to the transition to the time that

will become known after this prophecy as the Church age.

Well, the disciples of John had a question for Jesus. Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples don't? And Jesus said that when you have wedding plans and the bridegroom is with his attendants, it is not a time of fasting but of joy, and you don't fast in a time of joy.

Furthermore, in my view Jesus uses the illustration of a piece of cloth that has not yet passed the fuller. It is something brand new. And it would not do to try to reform the old system by putting something brand new on it. The old would have to go and the new would enter.

After Jesus death, burial, resurrection and ascension that which was new came in. The new covenant had begun, and the last were the first to partake of it, and the first will partake of it last. The partaking of the Jews is yet future. If the Lord would seek to reform the old with the new, it would ruin both.

Furthermore, it could be likened to new wine and old wineskins. You do not put new wine in old wineskins. Why not? Because the old wineskins are not able to preserve the new wine. They will cause the wine to ferment, and when wine ferments in wineskins, both the wine and the wineskins are lost. So it would be if Jesus tried to put that which was new into the old.

CONCL: I have taken the view that the early parables of Jesus give us the picture of a change coming. When you consider the OT and life among God's people in one small nation and then the Church age and its expansion into every nation under the sun, the change is huge. That change happened because the Jews rejected their Messiah.

And in these parables Jesus is showing that a change is coming. He has said to the new believers of that time, "You are the light of the world", not "of Israel". He has said, "You are the salt of the earth." He has shown them how they will have to learn to exercise godly judgement. He has shown them that there is only one gate out of the city of destruction onto the narrow

road to glory. He has shown them that false prophets will stand at the gates to direct them onto the wrong path. He has shown them that only if you read and heed God's Word, are you truly on the narrow road. He has shown that at the judgement at the end of this age many will think they were Christians but they were not.

And now, in these parables He has shown that the new age that is coming is not an add-on to the old. If that was done, both would be destroyed. And so at this time in the life of John's disciples and Jesus' disciples, preparation is being made to enter an entirely new age, an age we know as the Church age.