

Gathering II

A Bible study

During the 2000 Feast of Tabernacles, I gave a sermonette on the subject of Ingathering. I later converted that sermonette into an [article](#).

Whilst studying for that sermonette, I came across many relevant and interesting New Testament scriptures which, due to time constraints, I was unable to fit in. In this Bible study, I would like to go through every New Testament "ingathering scripture" and comment on them all.

Matthew 3:11-12:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

[See also parallel scripture in [Luke 3:17](#)]

This was John the Baptist's introduction to his Cousin, Jesus Christ:

- Jesus would come with His fan (winnowing shovel) in His hand.
- A winnowing shovel is a tool by which grain was thrown up against the wind that it might be cleansed from broken straw and chaff.
- He would thoroughly purge (cleans) His threshing floor.
- A threshing floor (otherwise called a ground plot) was a place in the field made hard after the harvest by a roller, where grain was threshed out.
- He would gather His wheat into the garner (a place in which anything gathered is stored, laid by or up, a storehouse, a granary).
- God's people (past, present and future) are represented here by Jesus' store of wheat.
- He would burn up the chaff with a fire that could not be quenched by humans.

- Those (past, present and future) who ultimately refuse to live by the Word of God are represented here by the useless chaff, which has been threshed and winnowed from the grain.
- Like the chaff, these people will be gathered up and burnt to ashes because they will have proved themselves to be useless.
- The earth's surface will be totally cleansed through burning before God the Father transfers His throne to earth
- Has Jesus done these things yet?
- No. He has not.
- Here are some notes from Easton's Bible Dictionary on the harvesting process:
 1. The corn when cut was generally put up in sheaves, which were afterwards gathered to the threshing-floor or stored in barns [*temporary storehouses – JHP*].
 2. The process of threshing was performed generally by spreading the sheaves on the threshing-floor and causing oxen and cattle to tread repeatedly over them.
 3. On occasions flails or sticks were used for this purpose.
 4. There was also a "threshing instrument," which was drawn over the corn. It was called by the Hebrews a moreg, a threshing roller or sledge.
 5. It was somewhat like the Roman *tribulum*, or threshing instrument.
 6. When the grain was threshed, it was winnowed by being thrown up against the wind, and afterwards tossed with wooden scoops.
 7. The shovel and the fan for winnowing are mentioned in Ps 35:5, Job 21:18, Isa 17:13.
 8. The refuse of straw and chaff was burned.
 9. Freed from impurities, the grain was then laid up in granaries [*more permanent storehouses – JHP*] till used.

Matthew 7:15-20:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

[See also parallel scripture in [Luke 6:44](#)]

Evil fruit – spiritual thorns and thistles grown by false prophets – shall be gathered as well as the good spiritual fruit. But they shall be cut down and then gathered, not to God's granary, but to His fire for the chaff.

Matthew 12:30:

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

[See also parallel scripture in [Luke 11:23](#)]

Jesus was here responding to the Pharisees' claim that He did not have the power to cast out demons.

The picture here is of two groups: one gathering the crops into a storehouse for future processing, the other scattering the crops indiscriminately in places where it would be difficult, if not impossible, to use them.

Jesus told the Pharisees that those who are not with Him are against Him. Also that anyone who is not sharing His work of gathering is doing a work of scattering!

What was Jesus' gathering work?

He was doing a work gathering the good fruit into His storehouses to be processed and used as required. If the good fruit represents His brethren, and the garner represents His Kingdom, then is His church a temporary storehouse?

Does Jesus own multiple storehouses at this time – representing the multiple congregations of His church? Has He, for some reason, divided His crop amongst these multiple storehouses?

Also, Jesus was doing the work of gathering the useless chaff to a fire where it would be reduced to ashes and at least could be put to some use by putting it back into the ground as fertilizer.

Matthew 13:2:

And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Great numbers of interested people were gathered by the lake to listen to Jesus.

It is interesting that the chapter should begin with the people being gathered, because Jesus began to teach these people (those who were given to understand Jesus' meanings) from parables with agricultural themes, and specifically about the subject of gathering.

If there is a Bible chapter that can be called "the gathering chapter of the New Testament," then this thirteenth chapter of the book of Matthew must be it. It contains eight references to *gathering* throughout the chapter: in verses 2, 28-30, 40-41, and 47-48.

Matthew 13:28:

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

This verse is part of the parable of the wheat and the tares.

God is "the man" who sowed good seed in His field.

In God's plan, the sowing time pictures the calling and conversion of God's children, pictured in this parable as "good seed" and "good wheat." Jesus goes into more detail on sowing in the parable of the sower in Mark 4:1-20.

In God's holy day sequence, the spiritual sowing and germination process might be pictured by the Passover season.

Getting back to this parable, an enemy crept in while the man's servants slept (notice that it does not say that the man himself slept!) and sowed tares among the good seed in His field.

The wheat plants represent the true children of God. The tares represent counterfeits of God's children... wolves in sheep's clothing.

When his servants reported this sabotage of his crop, the man immediately recognized and proclaimed it as the work of an enemy.

His servants, who may have been experts on recognizing the differences between wheat and tares (as the verse implies that they were able to distinguish the tares from good wheat plants when they were still young) asked the man if they should go through the crop and separate (implied) and gather the tares. (It is interesting to note that separation is often an integral part of gathering).

I always thought that a tare was just any ordinary, relatively harmless weed and could have been easily recognized, but I was wrong. A tare is a kind of *darnel* plant, resembling wheat except the grains are black. Easton's Bible Dictionary says:

Tares: The bearded darnel, mentioned only in Mt 13:25-30 It is the *Lolium temulentum*, a species of rye-grass, the seeds of which are a strong soporific poison. It bears the closest resemblance to wheat till the ear appears, and only then the difference is discovered. It grows plentifully in Syria and Palestine.

The wheat was, of course, wholesome and nutritious, but the tares were more than harmful; they were dangerously poisonous!

Matthew 13:29:

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

The man wasn't as much concerned that his servants were insufficiently expert or able to distinguish between the two types of young plant. He was more concerned that, even at that young stage, the roots of both would be somewhat intertwined and that the servants would be unable to prevent plucking up the good wheat plants along with the harmful tare plants.

Matthew 13:30:

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The man commanded his servants to leave the wheat and tares alone to grow until the harvest time... even though the tares would use up some of the water and soil nutrition that was meant for the benefit of the good wheat.

He told his servants that when the wheat and tares were grown to maturity, he would instruct his reapers to go into his fields, to gather up the tares first of all, to tie them into bundles and to burn them. Then they were to return to the fields to gather the wheat and to take it to his barn for safe storage.

Notice again the necessity of the separation process. The man gave special orders as to when and how this separation and gathering should take place.

Another interesting note is that his *servants* and his *reapers* were two different groups. The servants were earlier identified as specialists who would have the ability to distinguish the wheat from the tares at an early stage of growth. The reapers would find it easy to distinguish the black-headed tares from the wheat, but only once they were both fully grown.

Who did the servants and reapers represent? Angels, yes (see verse 41 below). But different ranks or battalions of angels, perhaps?

The tares would be gathered to a blazing, destructive fire, whereas the wheat would be gathered to a safe storage place.

Matthew 13:40:

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Here, Jesus begins to explain the meaning of this parable.

He homes in on the gathering and burning of the tares in the fire.

He says that something like this gathering and burning of the tares will happen at the end of this world (Greek *aion*: age).

When will this gathering and burning take place? At the end of man's age of six thousand years? Or at the end of the total seven thousand years? Let us read on and gather some more clues as Jesus continues to explain the meaning of this parable.

Matthew 13:41:

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

Jesus says that He will send out His angels at that time, firstly to "gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend." It is usually human beings that offend, and the inanimate things that the evil mind of man invents and markets.

The second group that the angel reapers will gather are "those which do iniquity." All in this group will be human.

Notice that God's angels are the anti-type of the reapers in the parable.

Notice also that the angels will gather out these people and things from the Kingdom. They will be gathered and removed – extracted – from the earthly territory of the Kingdom of God.

Although the rest of the parable gives an implication that the gathering and burning will take place as soon as the harvest is reaped, there is also an implication that the Kingdom is already in place.

Maybe, as there will be two harvests, there will also be two reapings, two gatherings, and two fires! One for the firstfruits and one for the remainder of mankind!

On now to another "gathering" parable... still in Matthew 13... the gathering chapter:

Matthew 13:47:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Jesus says here that His Kingdom – or rather the process of choosing citizens for it – is like the lake or ocean fishing process in which the fishermen throw a huge net into the ocean and gather in all different kinds of fish.

Matthew 13:48:

Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

When the net is full of fish, the fisherman drag it onto the beach.

There they sort and separate the fish.

My family and I have watched a similar sorting process at the Pacific Princess fishing resort at Ucluelet on the Pacific coast of British Columbia. The expert sorters gather the good fish into containers that would keep the fish fresh until they reached the customers. The bad fish, they throw away... hopefully not indiscriminately! Many birds species appreciate such cast-offs. [See Revelation 19 quote below]. Also, like chaff and tares, even poor quality fish can be recycled as very effective fertilizer.

This process that Jesus is describing here pictures the choosing of the citizens for His Father's Kingdom.

He told His disciples that He would make them "fishers of men.":

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:18-19)

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. (Mark 1:16-17)

Assisted by His "fishermen" Jesus casts His net far and wide and, over time, He gathers all kinds of people.

However, He is very selective in which ones He will keep as His Firstfruits.

Those human "fish" whom He rejects for now, for His own good reasons, will have their opportunity later, either during the Millennium period or in the Great White Throne Judgment period.

But some human fish will reject themselves by thinking they can thwart His will and His rule through the use of military might.

These "fish" will make a feast for the birds of the air:

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:17-21)

Matthew 18:20:

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Here, Jesus was talking to His disciples (see verse 1)... but also, by extension, to future generations of Christians.

He told them that He would be present with groups of true Christians – no matter how small – whenever they would be gathered in His name.

He, no doubt, foresaw the time when his true church – once having had huge congregations – would be scattered and reduced to tiny groups.

It is comforting to know that He is present in spirit at our small gatherings.

Matthew 22 contains three gatherings:

Matthew 22:10:

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

Jesus gave another parable about the Kingdom of God.

Here the Kingdom is pictured by a royal wedding.

The original guests were formally invited, but they spurned the invitation, they rejected, ridiculed and even murdered the king's messengers who were sent out to deliver the invitations, and returned to what they thought to be higher priorities.

The king punished these invited guests accordingly – by fire – and then sent his servants out to find and gather some people – perhaps simpler people – who would be willing to attend the wedding and to give it their highest priority.

The lesson here is that we, who have been invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb of God, must give it our highest priority.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9)

Matthew 22:34:

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

The Sadducees had tried to argue with Jesus about the resurrection, which they did not believe in.

Jesus silenced their arguments with scripture and with sound logic.

When the Pharisees heard that the Sadducees had been silenced by Jesus, they gathered together so that they could pool their collective resources in trying to stump Him.

Matthew 22:41:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

The Pharisees, of course were unable to stump the Son of God.

He then took advantage of the fact that the Pharisees were gathered together, and He turned the tables on them by asking them a question which they were completely unable to answer:

Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. (Verse 42)

From this day on they refrained from their attempts at trick questions against Him.

Like the Sadducees, the Pharisees were also silenced.

Matthew 23:37:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

See also Luke 13:34:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

There is very little difference between these two verses.

The main difference is that Matthew uses the word "chickens" [*Greek nossion*] and Luke uses the word "brood" [*nossia*].

In the first part of Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces woes upon the Pharisees, calls them "hypocrites" and other things, and He exposes some of their sins – including the murder of the prophets and wise men He had sent (and would send in the future) for the spiritual benefit of the Jews (and other Israelites).

In this verse, even though He repeats the charge of murder against them, He softens and pronounces a lament over Jerusalem.

They had no idea of how often He would have gathered the children of Jerusalem together in a protecting and loving way – like a mother hen with her baby chickens.

But the children of Jerusalem would have none of that!

They rejected Him!

They rejected His love and protection.

They eventually added the greatest prophet – the Son of God - to their list of heinous murders!

Matthew 24:28:

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

See also Luke 17:37:

And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Jesus is answering His disciples' questions about the conditions that would precede His return to earth:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24:3)

In Matthew's account, He was giving advice that those who are alive at His second coming (His disciples, of course, will then have been dead for approximately two thousand years) should not be deceived into believing rumours that the returned Christ has been seen *here* or *there*.

In Luke's account, Jesus is telling His disciples about the period when, "one shall be taken and the other left" (verses 34-36).

Whenever Christians of our generation hear or read this passage, we tend to ask the question, "When?"

But the disciples also asked a different question, "Where?" – "Where will the ones who are taken be taken to?"

Jesus answered that the "eagles" will be taken to the place where the "body" or "carcase" is.

Who is the *carcase*?

And who are the *eagles*?

At first reading, there seem to be two possible answers to this:

1. That Jesus is the *carcase* and that His people are the *eagles* who will be gathered to the place to which He returns... or, rather, at some intermediate point from His starting point (e.g. the clouds of the first heaven I Thessalonians 4:17; Acts 1:9-11).
2. That the many false Christs are the *carcases* and the *eagles* those that go chasing every rumour that He has returned and that He is here or there.

Luke's account and Matthew 24:31 strongly suggest that option 1 is Jesus' meaning.

Jesus commands His disciples not to believe the rumours, ideas and opinions of men, but to believe the scriptures and His account of the end time sequence of events.

Matthew 24:31:

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

See also Mark 13:27:

And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

This verse implies that, in verse 28 of Matthew 24, the *carcase* refers to Jesus Himself, and the *eagles* picture His people.

Jesus continues His account of His second coming.

He tells His disciples that, at the last trumpet, the Son of man will send His angels to gather His brothers and sisters (those newly resurrected and those which are alive and remain) from the north, south, east and west of the "first heaven," in the clouds.

Why will they be there?

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up [*gathered!*] together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Matthew 25:24:

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

This is part of the well-known parable of the talents in which a man, before he leaves on a long journey, gives some of his money to his servants.

He gave more talents to the first two servants because he knew that they would use them well.

He gave only one talent to this last of the three servants because he knew that he was least likely to obtain a good increase from it.

But he did at least give him a chance to improve on his poor record.

The servant, however, did not take advantage of this opportunity.

He buried the talent so that it would not get lost or spent.

The third servant's opening words of his flimsy excuse were in the form of an accusation against his master.

He said that the landowner was a hard man, that he reaped crops that he had not sown and that he gathered crops that he had not winnowed.

In effect, the servant was accusing his master of stealing.

Matthew 25:26:

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

The landowner did not deny that he reaped where he had not sown, not that he gathered where he had not winnowed.

But did this make him a thief?

Not at all.

If his neighbours' sowers cast some of their seed over the fence onto his land, it was his legal right to harvest it.

If some of the wheat, barley, etc. from his neighbours' winnowers was caught by the wind and blew onto his property, then it was his legal right to use it.

The landowner was a good businessman.

He would caution his own sowers and winnowers against losing any of their own seed and crop grain to his neighbours, but he understood that if they did lose any seed or crop grain, his neighbours had the same right as he did to claim it.

The landowner represents Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was not and is not a thief.

If a portion of spiritual seed is sown in some people via other religious organizations than His own true church, and if they are called over into God's true church, and that seed grows successfully, thus producing true Christians, He will not reject those people.

Even if a person is spiritually developed in another religious organization throughout his whole life and comes over to the true church of God at the time of one of the spiritual harvests (i.e. winnowing time), Jesus will not reject him either.

Matthew 25:32:

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

Still in the agricultural vein, but here Jesus turns from crop farming to animal farming.

Again we see that separation is often a part of gathering.

Christ will gather all nations.

Then He will separate the spiritual sheep from the spiritual goats – the blessed of His Father from the cursed:

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (Verses 34 and 41)

What is the time setting here?

Verse 31 says that it is when Christ comes in His glory:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.

This would indicate that the time setting is immediately after Jesus' return – at the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets.

But verses 41 and 46 indicate that the time setting is at the Last Judgment – at the fulfillment of the Last Great Day:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Matthew 27:17:

Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Who were "they"? Who was gathered together here?

Verse 15 implies that it was a crowd of Jewish people who were gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

But verses 18 and 20 imply that it was the chief priests and elders:

For he knew that for envy they had delivered him... But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

They were the ones negotiating with Pilate over Jesus' future.

They were the ones who were envious of Jesus, not the people.

The people had welcomed Him as a king just a week before.

The chief priests and elders were the ones who persuaded, or even bribed the mob, as soon as they knew that Pilate planned to go to the people for their vote and opinion on which man – Jesus or Barabbas – he should free as the Romans' Passover "gift" to the people of Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:27:

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

After freeing the criminal, Barabbas, Pilate took Jesus – and gathered his whole band of soldiers – into the common hall.

Why?

We sometimes tend to think that Pilate wasn't too bad a person, and that the Jewish leaders tricked him and forced him into doing what he did.

But did he have to allow what the following verses describe?

And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:28-31)

Mark 1:33:

And all the city was gathered together at the door.

We are now at the beginning of Mark's gospel account.

Early in His ministry, Jesus and His disciples were in the city of Capernaum, at the home of Simon and Andrew.

Simon's mother-in-law was ill, and Jesus healed her.

Her health improved so quickly that she was able to get up and give hospitality to them.

When the word got around, those with relatives who were ill or possessed by demons brought them to Jesus, and He healed as many of them as time allowed.

But, of course, news of such supernatural healing brought the inquisitive crowd – those who wanted to see "the show."

Was the *whole* city literally gathered at Simon's front door, striving to get a glimpse of the supernatural healings?

Or was "all the city" just a figure of speech, meaning a large portion of the population?

The Greek word for "all" - *holos* - indicates that it was literally the whole city that was gathered!

Mark 2:2:

And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

After a "road trip" around the Galilee area, Jesus and His disciples returned to Capernaum:

And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils... And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. (Mark 1:39; 2:1)

Verse 1 implies that Jesus had His own home in Capernaum, and that is where He was at this time.

As soon as the people of Capernaum heard that He was at home, the word spread, and a huge crowd gathered there – some to seek healing – some to witness the miracles.

How many went there to listen to what He had to say?

Mark 4:1:

And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

A huge crowd from far and near had followed Jesus to the Sea of Galilee:

But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, (Mark 3:7)

As He began to teach, the crowd thickened around Him until it was necessary for Him to get into a ship and to speak from this floating podium.

This was probably a good idea for other reasons, e.g. that His voice would carry better over the calm water and reach the majority of the crowd rather than being soaked up in the clothing of the few who were closest to Him on land.

The interest in His words and deeds were proportional to the size of the crowd that had gathered here.

Mark 5:21:

And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

Jesus and His disciples had traversed the lake a few more times between the gathering in Mark 4:1 and that in Mark 5:21:

And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side... And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. (Mark 4:35; 5:1)

As soon as they arrived, another crowd gathered to see and hear Him.

Mark 6:30:

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Jesus had sent His disciples out in pairs to preach repentance, to heal the sick and to cast out demons.

And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. (Mark 6:7-13)

After the murder of John the Baptist, Jesus' disciples returned to where He was and, gathered back together with Him.

This gathering of the disciples implies a certain level of spiritual unity. Unity is, to some extent, synonymous to gathering.

Mark 13:27:

And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

See also Matthew 24:31:

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mark's version of Jesus' words here is a little different than Matthew's.

Mark records that He said that the Son of man will send His angels to gather His elect from the four winds (north, south, east and west)... from the furthest points on earth to the furthest points in heaven. Matthew has it, "from one end of heaven to the other."

Mark's version implies that some of the elect will still be scattered around the earth when Jesus' time for gathering comes.

It also causes us to ask which heaven the other section of the elect are in.

Paul tells us that when the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Perhaps they will arrive in the clouds of the first heaven a very short time before the elect who will still be alive and remain:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (I Thessalonians 4:15-17)

Another thought is that the bodies of many of those who have been dead for a very long time will have been reduced to dust and, as many were never buried, and the graves of many of those who *were* buried have been disturbed over the thousands of years, the particles of their dust may well be literally blowing around by the four winds in the the sky... the first heaven.

Only the power, knowledge and wisdom of the Great God will be able to locate and regather these particles.

Luke 3:17:

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

Please [see the notes for Matthew 3:12](#). This verse is almost exactly the same.

Luke 6:43-45:

For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For

of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

See also Matthew 7:15-20:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Luke's version of this agricultural parable – if in fact it is the same one – is somewhat different to Matthew's:

- In Matthew's account, Jesus is warning His people against false prophets and how to recognize them.
- Although Jesus, earlier in Luke's account in verse 26, *does* mention false prophets, He is, here in this *figs and thorns* section, instructing His people not to judge one another improperly.
- Luke records that Jesus said that men do not gather figs [*Greek: sukou*] from a thorn [*akantha*] bush, nor grapes [*staphule*] from a bramble bush [*batos*].
- Matthew records that Jesus asks if it is logical for men to gather figs [*sukou*] from a thistles [*tribolos*] bush or grapes [*staphule*] from a thorn [*akantha*] bush.

Whether it be ourselves or our neighbours that we are judging (in the proper way), we must be good spiritual trees in order to bear good spiritual fruit.

If we are bearing bad spiritual fruit, then we are bad spiritual trees.

And what will God do with bad spiritual trees?

Jesus warns us, in Matthew 7:19, that:

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Luke 8:4:

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

Again, we read of a large crowd gathering from the neighbouring cities to see and hear Jesus.

Luke 11:23:

He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

See notes to [Matthew 12:30](#), which is virtually the same.

Luke 11:29:

And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

Again, we read of a thick crowd gathering to see and hear Jesus.

Luke 12:1:

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

The crowds seem to be getting larger as Jesus' ministry moves on.

Here they are treading on each other to get closer to Him.

Luke 13:34:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

See note for [Matthew 23:37](#), which is very similar.

Luke 15:13:

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

This, of course, is Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son.

"Not many days after"... after what event?

Not many days after he had asked his father to give him his portion of his inheritance and his father did so:

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. (Verse 12)

What did the young man gather together?

"All" - all of his inherited belongings.

Perhaps some of his inheritance was in material goods rather than money alone.

And what did he do with his substance?

In his immaturity, he wasted it all in a very short time on riotous living.

What can we learn from this section of the parable – this *premature gathering* section?

The inheritance was probably very large.

Although the boy would have eventually received his due portion of his father's inheritance (probably upon his father's death), he was at this time too immature to know how to properly handle such wealth.

The physical example is easy to understand: Most young people do not know how to properly handle wealth.

Some thought must be put into the spiritual example.

The fabulous inheritance that God has promised His children will eventually come to us – at the return of Jesus Christ.

He has even given us an earnest of that promise now:

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Romans 8:19)

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (II Corinthians 1:22)

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (II Corinthians 5:5)

Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:14)

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. (Philippians 1:20)

But not all of it!

Those who claim that Christians have already been born again and that the Kingdom of God has already come – in full – should heed this example.

Remember that Satan tried to tempt Jesus into selfishly taking His inheritance before the proper time.

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. (Luke 4:5-7)

Luke 17:37:

And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

See notes for Matthew 24.28

Luke 24:33:

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

This is one of the closing verses of the account of the meeting with the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus.

The eleven were gathered together, probably for multiple reasons:

1. For a certain level of protection in case they should be persecuted because of their connections with Jesus.
2. Because of the unity brought about by the incredible things that they had seen – especially since Jesus' resurrection.
3. Perhaps in anticipation of His instructions to remain there and to wait for the Holy Spirit:

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. (Acts 1:4)

It never struck me before that these two disciples were not two of the eleven. The two returning disciples found the eleven, augmented by others. One of the two was named Cleopas, who we know was not one of the eleven. Easton writes of him:

Cleopas: (abbreviation of Cleopatros), one of the two disciples with whom Jesus conversed on the way to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection [Luke 24:18]. We know nothing definitely regarding him. It is not certain that he was the Clopas of John 19:25 or the Alphaeus of Matthew 10:3 although he may have been so.

John 4:36:

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

The gathering of fruit here is the harvesting process.

The reaping – the cutting of the fruit-bearing stalk from its root – is part of the harvesting process.

In verse 34, Jesus had told the disciples that His food – i.e. that which gave Him nutrition and energy – was to do the will of His Father and to finish the work that His Father had started:

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

There is an implication here that God the Father and the Old Testament prophets were the sowers, and that Jesus and His brothers and sisters are the reapers.

See also verse 38:

I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

In verse 36, Jesus was expanding upon His modification of a common saying of theirs, which He had quoted in verse 35:

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Haven't we wondered, "What is the antitype of the *fruit* that is mentioned so often (58 times) in the New Testament?"

Here is the answer:

Our fruit/meat/food should be the same as our Elder Brother's fruit/meat/food... to do the will of God the Father and to help finish His work.

What is fruit?

It is a seed pod.

What is its purpose?

Its purpose is to provide an effective means of reproduction.

God is reproducing Himself!

Jesus Christ is:

- The first-born Son of God the Father,
- The First of the first-fruits.

The people who make up His church are:

- The second of the first-fruits,
- The balance of the first-fruits,
- The younger brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ,
- The begotten children of God the Father.

John 6:12-13: When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

Verse 10 implies that there may have been five thousand men – plus women and children:

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

If the word "men" means masculine adults literally (the Greek word *anthropos* can be translated into the English words *men* or *people*), then there may have been ten to fifteen thousand people in total.

The feeding of even five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish was, in itself, a great miracle.

The fact that Jesus' disciples gathered twelve baskets of left-overs was another astounding miracle.

Depending, of course, on the size of the baskets and the food, the initial amount of food would scarcely fill perhaps three or four baskets.

The fact that there were any left-overs at all from such a small amount of food shows that all of the people must have eaten enough to be satisfied.

Verse 11 says that each person ate as much as he wanted:

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

Notice in verse 12 that Jesus specifically commanded His disciples to gather all the left-overs – that not a scrap be lost.

Why?

Just to show what a great miracle had been performed?

Or was there something else that was significant?

Were the numbers – five loaves, two fish, twelve baskets-full of left-overs – significant?

If so, what do they symbolize?

The opinions of many commentators were that Jesus was teaching His people not to waste.

But I feel that there is something more.

John doesn't say what was done with the left-overs: e.g. that they were given to the poor, etc.

Notice also that verse 13 states that the left-overs were all fragments of the barley loaves – not of the fish.

We know that Jesus is the Bread of life that was sent to us by God the Father; He tells us so later in this very same chapter:

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world... And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst... I am that bread of life. Verses 32-33, 35, 48)

We also know that the barley harvest was one of the early harvests, and that it began with the Wave Sheaf Offering day which followed the Last Day of Unleavened Bread:

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread... But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein... Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. (Leviticus 23:6, 8, 10-11)

And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. (II Kings 4:42)

Perhaps the five barley loaves represented Jesus Himself.

This begs the questions: Why five loaves? Why not just one?

We can be quite sure that the twelve baskets of barley-loaf left-overs represent God's people.

Remember that Jesus, in verse 12, specifically commanded His disciples not to lose any of the barley-loaf left-overs?

Compare this with verse 39:

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Perhaps Jesus was telling His people that, although it was necessary for Him to be *devoured* by the world and its systems, they (and we) would be empowered (after His death, resurrection, ascension and the giving of the Holy Spirit) to continue and to complete His Father's work.

Verse 39 implies an alternative or supplementary explanation:

- That the five loaves represent God's people doing His work in this human life,
- That the twelve baskets of fragments represent God's people as powerful spirit-beings continuing His work after the First Resurrection.

John 11:47:

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles.

This gathering occurred immediately after the raising of Lazarus.

Jesus' enemies formed a committee in order to decide what they should do about Him.

There was an element of fear in them because of the power displayed in His miracles.

If he had the power to read their thoughts, to heal the sick, and even to raise the dead, what else was He able to do?

Their ego and their desire to retain their positions of authority, however, overcame their fear of His power.

John 11:52:

And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Caiaphas told the council that, through Jesus' death, He would gather together all of God's people from all over the world.

Caiaphas' statement was correct, but not in the way he thought.

In Caiaphas' mind, "the children of God that were scattered abroad" were the scattered tribes of Israel.

In the committee gathered in verse 47, Caiaphas, the high priest, said that it was expedient and acceptable that one man should die to save the nation.

Verse 51 states that Caiaphas did not come up with this idea himself, but rather that it was a prophecy given to him because he held the position of high priest.

And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

Who gave Caiaphas this temporary power of prophecy? Was it God? Or was it Satan - with God's approval?

The implication is that Caiaphas would not, of himself, have said these words.

The "good idea" that one comparatively expendable human life should be spent for the sake of the nation was probably his – with a little help from Satan.

But, although the idea that Jesus' death would unite the scattered people of Israel might be attractive to Caiaphas, the unification of God's true people as followers of Jesus would be unacceptable to both him and Satan.

It is through Jesus' death and resurrection, and under Jesus' leadership that both Israel and the church will eventually be gathered together.

God repeated the miracle He performed in the time of Balaam (Numbers 22, Deuteronomy 23:5, Nehemiah 13:2), and turned Caiaphas' intended curse into a blessing.

John 15:6:

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

In a similar (but inverse) way that God the Father will gather His children (those who abide in His Firstborn Son, Jesus) together at the fulfillments of the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day, He will also have those gathered who refuse membership in His family.

They will be put to death and their bodies will be burnt up in the lake of fire:

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire... But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 20:15; 21:8)

They will *not* live and be tortured forever in a Hell fire.

Satan knows that such is *his* fate:

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

So he has tried for many years to foist the idea on mankind that God has the same punishment as his for all unrepentant sinners.

Acts 4:5-6:

And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

The time setting for these verses was shortly after the Feast of Pentecost, 31 AD.

This was another sinister gathering, the like of which did not cease after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, but were to continue against His apostles who had just healed a man through Christ's name.

John and Alexander were related to the better-known Annas and Caiaphas and may have been high-ranking members of the Sanhedrin.

Acts 4:26-27:

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

This verse is part of a prayer that was said after Peter and John had been released from prison.

The first part of this verse is quoted from Psalms 2:2:

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed.

Verse 27 makes it clear that the gathering mentioned in verse 26 was that of the Jewish and Roman leaders who, under the leadership of the prince of this world, gathered themselves together to kill Jesus Christ.

The verse implies that a gathering against the Son is also a gathering against the Father.

Did these people know the magnitude of the Power they were fighting against?

There seems to be a link here between the previous gathering against Jesus and the recent gathering (mentioned in verse 6) of the Jewish leaders against the apostles, which too was, in effect, a gathering against God.

One gets the impression that God is saying here (in the vernacular), "If you mess with my children, you mess with me!"

Acts 12:12:

And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

Many of the church members had gathered (*sunathroizo*) at Mary's home to pray for Peter who had been imprisoned by Herod.

God answered their prayers even before they had finished them.

What was "the thing" that Peter was considering (*suneido*)?

He was considering the miracle that God had just performed. He had just been released from prison by God, through the intervention of an angel.

Acts 14:27:

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

When they returned to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas gathered the local church members together and gave them a summary of their novel, ground-breaking, adventure-filled journey.

Acts 15:30:

So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

Paul, Barnabas, Judas Barsabas and Silas travelled again to Antioch, gathered the church members there, and delivered the contents of the letter (regarding the circumcision of Gentile members) to them, probably verbally as well as in writing.

Acts 16:10:

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

This usage of the word "gathering" is quite unique in the New Testament.

It means gathering, not in the sense of most of the other usages in which some objects or some people are being gathered together, but rather in the sense of putting some relevant facts together in one's mind, considering them, and coming to a conclusion.

The two English words, "assuredly gathering" are translated from the Greek word *sumbibazo*, which can also mean:

- to force by reduplication,
- to knit together, to compact,
- to cause to coalesce,
- to join together,
- to put together,
- to unite or knit together: in affection,
- to compare,
- to cause a person to unite with one in a conclusion or come to the same opinion,
- to prove, to demonstrate
- to teach, to instruct

What were the facts that Paul and Timothy put together in order for them to come to the conclusion that they should go over to visit Macedonia?

God's will for them was quite clear.

They had journeyed through Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia and were planning on going into Bithynia.

But through His Holy Spirit, God directed them not to preach the gospel in these places, but to move on to the coast at Troas, where Paul had a vision that a Macedonian man was pleading for them to visit him and his fellows, and to help them.

Let us not forget the help God gave to us when we so sorely needed it.

Acts 17:5:

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

The New Testament gatherings appear to alternate between those of righteous men and those of the wicked.

The taking advantage of mob-mentality was typical of the way the envious Jews in power got their way.

Perhaps it is typical of the way Satan does things, too.

Moved with envy because some of the local citizens of Thessalonica (including more than a few high-ranking women) were convinced that the preaching of Paul and Silas was the truth, the Jewish leaders gathered a mob, probably through bribery.

The mob attracted more and more people and, eventually, the large crowd made it look as though their wicked cause was a righteous one.

Acts 20:8:

And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

This gathering of disciples was at Troas (see verses 6 and 7).

Paul had been there for seven days and he was taking advantage of his last hours there by speaking until midnight.

The quantity of lights is relevant probably in that the heat they generated contributed to the cause of young Eutychus falling asleep.

Acts 28:3:

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

The apostle Paul gathered a bundle of sticks to stoke the fire the shipwrecked group and their Maltese hosts had built to help relieve them from the cold and wet.

The main point of this verse deals with Paul being bitten by a poisonous snake, not with him gathering sticks.

However, the fact that he was willing to help out with the building of the fire shows that, despite his position as an apostle, he did not consider himself as being above such manual labour.

Of course, the company he was in at this time would not have regarded him with any special respect anyway.

I Corinthians 5:4:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Although this was a gathering of the Corinthian church members commanded by God through Paul, it was not a pleasant convocation.

The purpose of this gathering was to instruct the church members to take swift action regarding a case of incest in the church.

All of the local members were familiar with the case, but no action had been taken; in fact, Paul implies that they were even somewhat proud of the affair!

This is the kind of church gathering – dealing with church problems – that we do *not* look forward to.

I Corinthians 16:2:

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Here is another kind of gathering.

This usage is only used once in the New Testament.

It refers to a "collection for the saints" (verse 1) – perhaps of first tithe, perhaps of third tithe, perhaps of other offerings, perhaps of money, perhaps of food and other necessities, perhaps of all of these.

Was Paul instructing the Corinthian church members to take up such a collection every Sunday?

Not necessarily.

It appears to be more like a one-time collection planned before an upcoming potential visit by Paul to their area.

He did not want them to take up the collection while he was present, perhaps because he wanted to use that time with them for preaching and fellowshiping, or perhaps because he thought that, if the collection was taken up in his absence, their gifts would be from their hearts rather than for appearance's sake.

II Corinthians 8:15:

As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

This is an unusual "gathering verse" in that the Greek word for "gathered" was not written at all.

The very common Greek word translated twice here as "had gathered" is *ho* which can mean:

- which,
- who,
- the things,
- the son,
- this,
- that,
- these.

The meaning comes from the words that followed both instances of "had gathered":

much: Greek "polus": many, much, great, large.

had: Greek "pleonazo": abound, abundant, have over, make to increase, to super-abound, to exist in abundance, be augmented.

little: Greek "oligos": few, little, small, few things, of things, of time, of light.

had: Greek "elattoneo": have lack, to be less, inferior, to make less, diminish.

Paul introduces this verse with, "As it is written".

Where was it written?

It was written in Exodus 16:18 and referred to manna.

The previous verses imply a comparison between the physical wealth of the Corinthian congregations and the poverty of the Macedonian congregations.

There is also an implication that the Macedonians were actually richer in spiritual gifts than the Corinthians.

It is a fact that an excess of physical toys can take away our attention from spiritual pursuits.

But Paul writes of a balance in spiritual gifts; some abound in certain gifts and are lacking in others.

Other members may be gifted the other way around.

This is no less a miracle than was the distribution of the manna.

There is no reason why we should not continue to apply this principle in its physical sense by helping our poorer members out of our comparative abundance.

The third tithe fund was designed for this purpose.

Ephesians 1:10:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

The day will come when God the Father will gather to Himself all "things" that are His.

This is pictured by the Last Great Day.

All those that have rejected Him as their Father will have been put away and out of their misery.

All those that have accepted His wonderful offer of sonship in His family will, at the fulness of times, be gathered around God the Father – with His Firstborn Son, Jesus Christ and His holy angels.

II Thessalonians 2:1:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

The beginning of this chapter deals with the timing of the return of Jesus Christ to earth.

Paul is beseeching the members of the Thessalonica congregation not to be troubled or deceived concerning the timeframe of Christ's return.

He assures them that certain irrevocable prophecies must first be fulfilled so that, to God's people, there will be no doubt as to when and to where Christ will return.

This verse might be better worded, "Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and concerning our gathering together unto Him."

It is exciting to think that, when Jesus Christ returns to this earth, the members of His true church will be gathered together to be with Him.

Those who at that time will have suffered "the first death" will, before their meeting with Christ, be resurrected as immortal spirit beings – born again as children of God.

Christians who will still be alive at that time will first be changed into immortal spirit beings – just like their brethren.

Revelation 14:18:

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

Yet another angel (considering the context) emerges from the altar in God's heavenly temple.

This angel has power over fire.

Is it this angel that provides the fire mentioned throughout the book of Revelation?

It is his duty at this point, not to provide fire, but to advise the angel bearing the "second sickle" (see verse 17) that it is time for him to begin reaping.

The human "crops" that the second reaper must reap are symbolized as ripe grapevines.

Revelation 14:19:

And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

This "second reaper" obeys the message from God's throne and begins to reap the vine of the earth.

This crop represents a different group of humans than that reaped by the one like the Son of man in verses 14 to 16.

It is likely that these grapevines represent the same group of humans as do the **tares** and unfruitful fruit trees of Jesus' parables (see the verses above from the gospel accounts).

After this angel reaps the vine of the earth, the cut vines are gathered and thrown into the winepress of God's wrath.

This crop is subject to the wrath of God, which is also mentioned in Revelation 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 15:1; 16:1, 19; 19:15.

When will the wrath of God take place?

According to Revelation 6:16-17, those suffering from the effects of the Sixth Seal believe that it has started at that time.

In verse 18 of chapter 11, the twenty-four elders tell us that God's wrath will coincide with the blowing of the seventh and last trumpet, the return of Christ, and the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

In verse 1 of chapter 15, God tells us that His wrath is completed through the seven last ("vial" or "bowl") plagues, which are described in chapter 16.

The wrath of God is again compared with a winepress in verse 15 of chapter 19.

Revelation 16:14:

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

This gathering takes place during the pouring out of the sixth of the seven last ("vial" or "bowl") plagues (see verse 12).

Three evil spirits use their powerful influence to gather the kings of the world and their armies to attempt to fight the righteous armies of the returning Christ.

Revelation 16:16:

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Who is the "he" who gathers the kings of the world together to Armageddon?

Yes, verse 14 states that the miracle-working spirits of devils are used to gather the kings; but they are plural and "he" is singular.

It could be referring to God Almighty, also mentioned in verse 14, and indirectly this is so: God scatters and gathers according to His will.

But it is more likely that this "he" refers more directly to the sixth "vial" angel mentioned at the beginning of this section in verse 12, the one who dries up the Euphrates River so that the eastern kings have easier access to the battlefield.

Revelation 19:17:

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

The kings of the earth and their armies are gathered at Armageddon to attempt to fight the returning Christ and His righteous armies (see verse 19).

This angel of God calls for yet another gathering.

He gathers together all of the birds for this grisly supper of human flesh.

Two questions come to mind as I read this:

First: Does the angel gather the birds before the battle takes place?

If so, just imagine the effect that such a gathering would have on the assembled soldiers – and especially those who have some familiarity with these scriptures.

Second: Does the angel gather every bird left alive at that time – including the non-carnivorous species?

Try to imagine the spectre of this vast flock of birds!

Perhaps God will temporarily change the nature of the non-carnivorous birds just for this one terrible feast.

Revelation 19:19:

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

Jesus Christ will have gathered His new-born brothers and sisters (see verses 14 to 16 of chapter 14).

One of His angels will have gathered a vast flock of birds for the grisly supper of the great God (chapter 19, verse 17).

And here we see the gathering of the food for the supper, still "on the hoof" as it were: the Beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies.

Revelation 20:8:

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

This is the last gathering mentioned in the scriptures.

Satan has been imprisoned in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and is now released temporarily.

After his thousand year punishment, does he repent of his misdeeds?

Not at all!

After being bottled up and impotent for a millennium, his fury knows no bounds.

He goes out and does what he does best.

He deceives a surprisingly large quantity of people from all four corners of the globe to attempt one last-ditch effort at defeating God.

Are these people not conversant with the history of the world?

Do they not know what happened to the last army that made such an attempt (Revelation 19:17-21)?

We can only understand their action if we consider that Satan will have pulled out all the stops of his incredible deceptive power.

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