

King James Commentary on

Matthew 9 & 10

f. The healing of the paralytic and lessons on righteousness. 9:1–17.

9:1–8. He entered into a ship, and passed over. Jesus never stayed where He was not wanted; thus, He returns to **His own city**, i.e., Capernaum (cf. 4:13). This is the incident where the paralyzed man was lowered through the roof by his four friends because of their inability to penetrate the density of the crowd (see also Mk 2:1–12; Lk 5:17–26). Jesus’ statement, **Thy sins be forgiven thee**, shocked the crowds. In reality, Jesus attended to the man’s spiritual needs before He dealt with his physical problem. **This man blasphemeth.** Because He claimed to forgive sins, Jesus was labeled a blasphemer by the religious leaders who were in attendance. Yet, Jesus instinctively knew the nature of their wicked attitude and asked them a pointed question, whether it was easier to forgive sins or heal sicknesses. He wanted them to understand that He not only had the power to deal with the symptom, but also the cause of the sickness, which was sin. The audience was stunned again when Jesus healed the man of his paralysis; and **they marveled**, (lit. they were afraid).

9–12. The receipt of custom refers to the toll booth in the street where tax collectors sat to receive various taxes. **In the house** means at home. We know from the other synoptic writers that this house was Matthew’s (see Mk 2:15; Lk 5:29, where the expression is phrased as “in his house”). The usage of the phrase meaning at home in this passage indicates that Matthew was both the owner of the home and the author of this writing. This statement serves as strong internal evidence for Matthew’s authorship of this gospel.

13–15. The righteous. The word is used here in an ironic sense, meaning self-righteous. Ultimately, as the Scripture tells us, “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10). **To repentance.** Some older manuscripts omit these words; but the principle taught by our Lord here is that fasting is not an end in itself, but is to be practiced only under appropriate circumstances. The Pharisees’ fasting was part of the righteousness of men, which the Lord condemned. **The children of the bridechamber** refers to the wedding guests. **As long as the bridegroom is with them**, i.e., while the wedding festivities last, which might be for some days. **When the bridegroom shall be taken from them** is an allusion to His coming death and ascension.

16–17. The principle expressed here is that Jesus Christ has come to bring in a new dispensation altogether, which cannot be fitted into the forms of the old Jewish economy. The principle taught here by illustration is that the rule of the Law must be replaced by that of Grace, which will now have free reign in the hearts of all believers. **New cloth** means unbleached cloth. The RS^v reads “unshrunk.” **Bottles** (i.e., skins) were frequently used in the ancient East as liquid containers. The strength of fermentation of the new wine would be too much for the partly worn, old, or inelastic skins and would cause them to break.

g. The healing of the woman with the issue and the raising of the ruler’s daughter. 9:18–26.

18–19. A certain ruler, i.e., a magistrate. The other Gospels indicate that his name was Jairus (cf. Mk 5:22–43; Lk 8:41–56). **Worshipped**. This suggests that he recognized Jesus’ deity and authority. In the parallel passages we are told that she was dying when the father first came and that she died while he was en route. Matthew combines these two phrases into one, saying, **is even now dead**.

20–22. I shall be whole (lit. I shall be saved). It was customary for a rabbi to address a young girl as **daughter**. Jesus’ exhortation to **be of good comfort** means to cheer up. The further statement, **thy faith hath made thee whole**, indicates that God’s blessing on our behalf is usually in proportion to our willingness to trust Him.

23–26. The scene described here is typical of a Middle Eastern home where someone lay dead. Mourners were actually hired to make noise. The **ministrals** were fluteplayers. Jesus’ statement that **the maid is not dead, but sleepeth** meant that her death, though real, was ultimately going to be a temporary “sleep” in light of the fact that He would quickly raise her back to life again. On the same principle, the “... dead in Christ ...” (I Thess 4:16) are said to be asleep only in view of the certainty of their resurrection. It should also be observed that those whom Jesus brought back to life during His earthly ministry later died a natural death, whereas those who are resurrected at the last day shall never die again.

h. The healing of the blind and dumb men. 9:27–38.

27–32. This incident is also peculiar to Matthew’s gospel. (cf. Lk 11:14–26). Two blind men call out, **Thou son of David**, which was a messianic designation. The implication of their address seemed to indicate that they had put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. **Into the house** probably refers to Matthew’s house as in verse 10. **Believe ye ...?** Notice the emphasis on faith again as the catalyst to this miracle as well as the previous one. **See that no man know it** (see **note** on 8:4). Their disobedience does not need to be viewed as a serious violation, but rather, as an overt exuberance from the effect of the miracle itself.

33–38. The connection between spiritual evil and physical illness is clearly illustrated in this incident. The **prince of the devils** is Satan himself. **Fainted** means they were distressed. The observation that they were **as sheep having no shepherd** is taken from Numbers 27:17. The quote is taken mainly from the LX^x but with altered construction. Verses 37–38 constitute one of the great missionary passages of the New Testament. Jesus pictures the world as a great spiritual harvest in need of laborers to gather it into the fold. He urges the disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth the workers to gather it. Kent (p. 945) observes: “As so often occurs those who prayed were themselves sent.”

3. His missionaries: Sending of the Twelve. 10:1–12:50.

10:1. The **twelve disciples** had been formed as a group some time previously. Now after a time of instruction and training they were sent on their first mission. This would be no ordinary preaching mission since they were also given **power**, or “authority” over demons and disease. Their miracle-working ministry was to attest to the legitimate claim of Jesus to be the Messiah.

2–4. Apostles (Gr *apostolos*) is the technical term that later came to be applied to the twelve disciples. The literal meaning of the term is a “sent one.” In this passage their twelve names are arranged in six pairs, which probably corresponded to the arrangement in which they were sent out on this mission. **Simon** is Peter, who heads all four lists of the Twelve (cf. Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14;

Acts 1:13). Since he appears to be the most prominent disciple in the early stages of Jesus' ministry, as well as in the early period of the church, it may well be that he exercised a natural leadership over the others. It does not follow from this, however, that his leadership was necessarily passed on to successors. **Bartholomew** was generally considered to be identical with the Nathanael of John 1:45–51. **Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus.** Better texts read simply “Thaddaeus.” Luke gives his name as Judas (Lk 6:16). **Simon the Canaanite** actually means the Cananaean. Since he had been a member of the nationalist party known as the Zealots, who resisted Herod the Great by force, he is also at times referred to as Simon the Zealot. **Judas Iscariot** has been variously interpreted as meaning that he was a member of the tribe of Issachar, or an inhabitant of Kerioth, or the one who carried the purse (Ara^m *secariota*, purse), or the one who was strangled (Heb *iscara*, strangling). It has been generally recognized that he was the only disciple who was not a Galilean.

5–10. The way of the Gentiles. There were several Greek cities in Galilee which existed separately from the Jewish lifestyle. The apostles were instructed to avoid these towns and to confine themselves to the Jewish cities only. Toussaint (p. 138) observes the dispensational interpretation of this emphasis, noting the exclusiveness of their ministry to the house of Israel only. The word **Gentiles** is in the objective genitive, indicating that they were not to enter into a road even leading to the Gentiles, nor were they to enter into a city of the Samaritans. Thus, it is proper to conclude that the legitimate offer of the kingdom of Israel was still being made by the rightful King. Had Israel accepted her King, she would have had her long-awaited kingdom. Therefore, it is properly noted that the **kingdom of heaven is at hand.** The apostles were to **provide** (better “get”) nothing in the way of money in their **purses** (lit^o belts). The fold of the robe or the girdle served the same function as our pockets. **Scrip** refers to a wallet, actually a small bag for holding various articles. **Coats** were the outer robes or tunics that corresponded to the Roman toga. The Greek of **staves** is actually singular, meaning staff, agreeing with Luke 9:3. Some have suggested that the meaning of Mark 6:8 is that they were to have one walking stick between a pair. **The workman is worthy of his meat.** They were to rely upon the gifts and hospitality of those to whom they preached. This same concept is quoted in I Timothy 5:18, in the lucan form. The idea here is that the preacher of the gospel is to be supported by the free-will contributions of those to whom he ministers. Thus, the ministry of preaching is always viewed in the New Testament as a faith venture.

11–16. Inquire means to search out. Hospitality was a normal part of Oriental life and many offers of accommodation were probably received; however, the disciples were restricted to accepting hospitality only from those who received their message. **Shake off the dust of your feet** is a symbolic act of rejection and condemnation, the idea being that not even the dust of a wicked city was worthy of them. Verily (Gr *ame n*) is a transliteration from the Hebrew meaning “truly,” which gives emphasis to the statement that follows. **Sodom and Gomorrah** are referred to as an example of the divine judgment against those cities that reject God (see 11:23–24 for an application of this statement to Capernaum as well). **Wise as serpents** (cf. Gen 3:13. In the ancient east the serpent was commonly regarded as the wisest of beasts. A cautious wisdom was necessary in order to deal with the fierce opposition that the disciples would face.

17–22. Take no thought means do not be anxious (see also Mk 13:9–13; Lk 12:11–12; 21:12–19). **It shall be given you** promises that the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit would tell them what to say in each situation they would face. **Children shall rise up against their parents** is a summary statement of Micah 7:6 (cf. Mk 13:12). **For my name's sake** (i.e.,

because you belong to Me). They would endure great persecution because of their identification with Jesus Christ. **But he that endureth to the end shall be saved** is a promise of perseverance, not a teaching that salvation may be lost. Rather, it indicates that those who are truly saved will indeed endure to the end.

23–24. Till the Son of man be come. Premillennialists view this passage as referring to the time of the Great Tribulation and the Second Advent, which were in the distant future. Thus, the reference to the coming of the **Son of man** in this passage is to be viewed as eschatological. To imply that at this point Jesus merely viewed Himself as a forerunner to the yet-coming Messiah is ludicrous in light of all the statements made earlier in the Gospel of Matthew. Therefore, He must have His own Second Coming in view.

25–31. Beelzebub refers to Satan himself, the ultimate evil demon. The disciples are told to **Fear ... not**. Their enemies can only take their physical life, which cannot prevent their blessed resurrection to life everlasting. To God alone belongs the power of the second death. In other words, Jesus reminded them that it was more important to fear Him who had authority over the **soul** as well as over the **body** and who can bring both to eternal condemnation in **hell** (*Gehenna*). It should be noted that God is the One who has authority to cast men into hell, and not Satan, who will himself be ultimately cast into everlasting fire. Conversely, Jesus reminded His disciples of the Father's loving care, even for the **sparrows** (common birds in Palestine). A farthing (Gr *assarion*) was a copper coin worth about one-sixteenth of a denarius. **Without your Father**, i.e., without His being concerned. Here we are reminded of God's gracious providential care over His saints.

32–37. Confess me, i.e., acknowledge that you belong to Me. In reality, secret discipleship is a practical impossibility. Jesus constantly called for an open confession of Himself by His followers. We must be willing to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour, with all that those terms imply. That our confession is to be **before men** clearly indicates that a public confession of true Christian faith is a virtual necessity. The warning, **Whosoever shall deny me**, is in the aorist tense, referring not to one moment of denial (such as Peter's), but to an entire lifelong resistance to Christ which shall never cease. Therefore, it is not a single act of denial which makes one unworthy of being a disciple, but a refusal to confess Christ at all that eliminates one from being a true follower of Jesus Christ.

38–40. Taketh not his cross. This is the first mention of the Cross in the New Testament (for the theological significance see L. Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* and *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*). It was the custom for the condemned man to carry his cross on the way to his own execution. There is plenty of evidence that our Lord anticipated the mode of His own death. These words come as the climax of His warning to the apostles that their mission would involve arrest and persecution, potentially culminating in condemnation to death. These important words also have a deep spiritual significance for every believer and constitute the basis of Paul's teaching about the identification of the believer with the cross of Christ (see Gal 2:20). **Findeth his life** means to gain something out of life for oneself. Here the word means the self-life, or natural life, as opposed to the spiritual life. **Shall find it** refers to a life emptied of self and poured out in the service of Christ in this world, and which will find full enjoyment and blessing in the world to come.

41–42. In the name of a prophet (i.e., as a prophet). The meaning of this statement is that those who are not prophets themselves may share in the labor and reward of the prophets by willingly supporting their ministry. **One of these little ones** is a reference to the fact that even the smallest

service done to the most insignificant of Christ's servants shall be rewarded by the Lord Himself.

a. *Excursus: John the Baptist and Christ. 11:1–30.*

11:1–7. Verses 2–19 are a parallel with Luke 7:18–35. This imprisonment has already been mentioned in Matthew 4:12, but the circumstances leading up to it are not described in detail until 14:3–12, where the manner of John's death is also recounted. The **works of Christ** refers to His miracles. **He that should come** refers to the predicted Messiah of Old Testament prophecy whose coming had already been proclaimed by John. **The blind receive their sight** is an allusion to Isaiah 35:5; 61:1, where it is stated that this will be one of the works performed by the Messiah. John would certainly have understood the allusion. **The poor have the gospel preached to them** is another allusion to Isaiah 61:1. Hence, Jesus was clearly vindicating His messiah-ship to John who may have begun to question why Jesus had left him in prison.

8–11. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? ... more, i.e., much more (Gr *perissos*). The quotation in verse 10 is from Malachi 3:1. John was recognized as the foreordained forerunner of the Saviour and, technically, the last of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, he belonged to the Old Testament dispensation. This certainly emphasizes the clear distinction between the Old Testament era (i.e., before the resurrection) and the New Testament era (after the resurrection). The weakest believer who has the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of the risen Christ is, therefore, in a more privileged position than the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. The expression, **them that are born of women** means mortal men, the idea being that the greatest of all in this life cannot be compared with the glory of the life to come.

12–15. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence (Gr *biazo-mai*). The meaning of this saying, and the connection of verses 12–14 with preceding and following contexts, indicates that John opened the kingdom of heaven to sinners and thus became the culminating point of Old Testament witness. Jesus' statement that **this is Elijah** [Elias] indicates that He saw the ministry of John as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming of Elijah in Malachi 4:5–6. This is a valuable hint that we are not to over-literalize Old Testament prophecy. The meaning of Malachi 4:6 seems to be that John was to form a link between the Old and New Testaments. Most commentators have taken **suffereth** to be in the passive voice, indicating that the church has been suffering from the days of John until that of the author of this gospel (cf. also the parallel passage in Lk 16:16 where the same verb is used).

16–19. This generation refused to exercise its capacity to hear, but made excuses for rejecting both John and Jesus. Some have likened the illustration of Christ to that of children playing a game of "weddings" and then a game of "funerals." The idea is that the children cannot decide which game to play, therefore, they decide to play nothing at all. The reference to the rejection of John's ascetic ministry brought the charge that he was demon-possessed. However, Jesus' open contact with sinners brought the equally untrue claim that He was **gluttonous, and a winebibber. But wisdom is justified of her children** is probably the correct reading, even though some texts read "works" for **children**. The meaning is the same in either case. The differing life-styles of John and Jesus were justified in either case by their results.

20–24. The denunciation of Galilean cities which follows is recorded also by Luke, but in a different context (see Lk 10:13–16). **Chorazin** was about an hour's journey on foot north of **Capernaum**. **Bethsaida** was on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, about three miles southeast

of Chorazin. **Tyre and Sidon** were both on the Mediterranean coast beyond the northern boundary of Palestine. **Shalt be brought down to hell.** The statement here is an allusion to Isaiah 14:13, 15, where it is spoken of the king of Babylon and probably refers to Satan himself. **25–30. Answered.** The words that follow are the response of Jesus to the circumstances just described. **Thank** (Gr *ex-omologeo*) is literally to acknowledge. **Babes** refers to spiritual babes who receive God's revelation in simple faith. The **yoke** refers to the teaching of Christ, which is represented as being light in comparison with the burdensome teaching of the Pharisees (see 23:4). **Ye shall find rest unto your souls.** These words are taken from Jeremiah 6:16. The LX x has "ye shall find purification unto your souls" and is corrected by Matthew to the original meaning in the Hebrew. **Easy** means good or kind. The entire passage is peculiar to Matthew's gospel.

b. *Excursus: A dispute with the Pharisees. 12:1–50.*

12:1–9. The sabbath day, i.e., the seventh day of the week, corresponding to our Saturday (cf. Mk 2:23–3:6; Lk 6:1–11). However, in New Testament times it began at sunset on Friday and lasted until the following sunset. The Pharisees had burdened the Sabbath with a multitude of detailed observances which were not laid down in the Mosaic law. Correspondingly, in this incident they had objected to the manner in which Jesus' disciples had plucked grain on the Sabbath, violating the command against reaping on that sacred day (Ex 20:10). In responding to their legalistic traditions, Jesus always referred to Scripture. **Have ye not read ...?** The passage referred to is I Samuel 21:1–6. The point that our Lord makes is that in the case of necessity the ceremonial law might be overruled. He uses the illustration of David eating the **showbread**. These loaves were placed on the table in the holy place in the Tabernacle each Sabbath. They were to be eaten only by the priest and his family (cf. Lev 24:5–9; Num 28:9). The priests prepared the sacrifices on the Sabbath in spite of the general prohibition of work. If the necessities of temple worship permitted the priests to **profane the sabbath**, there was all the more reason why the service of Christ would allow a similar liberty. **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.** The application of this principle is that ethics are more important than ritual. The passage clearly asserts that Jesus had the right to interpret the Mosaic ordinances in light of their spiritual intention, rather than their literal application.

10–27. Withered (i.e., paralyzed). Luke 6 shows that this incident occurred on a different Sabbath. However, the objection of the Pharisees on this occasion was ultimately the same. They were in opposition to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath. The reference to **their synagogue** indicates that in this particular synagogue the Pharisees were predominant. He asked them the searching question, **Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?** The Old Testament made no such prohibition, but some rabbis considered healing as work. Jesus' response was that what one would be willing to do for an unfortunate animal, in sparing its life on the Sabbath, ought to be extended as a gesture of mercy to people in physical peril as well. The miracle only enraged the Pharisees further who immediately **held a council** (lit. took counsel). The Old Testament reference to **my servant** is here applied to the person of the Messiah Himself. The statement that **he shall show judgment to the Gentiles** is a prophecy that the righteousness of God would be made known to the Gentiles through the ministry of the Messiah. **Till he send forth judgment unto victory** means until the final triumph of righteousness which shall be brought about by Christ Himself. The question **Is not this the son of David?** is definitely a messianic title (see

9:27). **Beelzebul** refers to Satan. **Jesus knew** implies that He fully understood the true meaning and intention of their thoughts. His reference to **your children** meant the disciples of the Pharisees.

28–30. The kingdom of God. Matthew’s usual expression is the **kingdom of heaven** (e.g., 3:2). While some have attempted to distinguish between the meaning of the two, it is more likely that they mean the same thing. **Is come unto you** (lit. has come upon you unawares). The Lord’s power over demons was evidence enough that He was the Messiah. Hence, **spoil his goods ... house** refers to Satan as being defeated or ruined by the capture of souls from him for Christ by the gospel. It must be noticed that the **kingdom of God** was, in a sense, already present in the person of the King—Christ Himself! Jesus’ admonition **He that is not with me is against me** clearly states that there is no middle course in relation to the authority of Christ as King and Lord. In Mark 9:40 we have the converse truth stated. The present passage applies to any person or position that is definitely anti-Christ. While the passage in Mark indicates that there may be minor differences (e.g., denominational distinctives) among genuine believers, Matthew’s passage indicates that there can be no departure from the doctrine of Christ. Those who fail to affirm Him as the divine Son of God are ultimately against Him, no matter what kind of “appreciation” they claim to have for Him.

31–38. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This sin is that of deliberate rejection of Christ and His salvation. It is the ultimate sin that by its very nature puts a man beyond the opportunity of salvation. The reason for this is that it is the Holy Spirit who brings the offer of salvation to the heart of man. To reject Him is to act “presumptuously” and thus to “blaspheme” God. Those who reject His offer of salvation are in reality blaspheming the very nature of God Himself and the genuineness of His grace. **The tree is known by his fruit.** The point of this verse seems to be that the good works done by Christ were evidence of His personal goodness and should have prevented any such blasphemous saying as that spoken by the Pharisees. However, this illustration is conversely applied to the Pharisees who are known by their wickedness as well. **By thy words** does not refer to justification or condemnation on the basis of what one says, but to the outward evidence of the inward attitude of the heart. While the Pharisees asked for evidence of Christ’s claim, they overlooked the clear evidence that was to be seen in His miracles.

39–42. The word **adulterous** means unfaithful to God. It was a metaphor frequently used in the Old Testament for spiritual “adultery.” **The prophet Jonah** [Jonas]. Here Jesus clearly refers to one of the most controversial stories in the Old Testament. Jesus uses Jonah’s interment in the fish for **three days and three nights** as an illustration of the literal three days and three nights that He would spend in the grave Himself. The actual period was either, minimally, from Friday evening to Sunday morning (covering parts of three days idiomatically) or, maximally, from Wednesday evening to Sunday morning (covering seventy-two literal hours; see W. G. Scroggie, *Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 569–577). The reference to the **whale’s belly** in verse 40 is unfortunate in the A^v. The Greek word *ketos* means a great sea monster. The Old Testament references are to a “great fish” (e.g., Jon 1:17). It should be noted that our Lord placed this entire account on the same level of historical reality as that with which He Himself was dealing. To imply that Jesus was the “victim of the ignorance of His day” is ludicrous. He certainly did not show such victimization in dealing with other issues of life. **The queen of the south** refers to the Queen of Sheba (see I Kgs 10). Here our Lord contrasts her eagerness to hear the wisdom of a man (Solomon) with the refusal of His listeners to hear one **greater than Solomon**. Again, this

statement must be taken in light of the deity of Christ, rather than as a presumptuous boast.

43–45. Jesus gives a striking parable of the precarious spiritual condition of the nation. The parable is that of a house well **swept** but unoccupied. The demon having been driven out, but finding no place to rest, returns with seven other spirits, resulting in an even greater degeneration. In using this illustration Jesus clearly indicated that though the Jews had been cleansed from their idolatry by the severity of the Babylonian exile, their unbelief and hardness of heart was in danger of producing an even worse moral condition than when they were idolaters. The moral reformation that had taken place after the captivity should have prepared Israel for the ministries of John and Jesus. Unfortunately, in most cases it fell short in that Israel's spiritual house was **empty**. Only by inviting Christ to occupy the position of Honored Guest and Head of the Home could Israel know the full blessing of God.

46–50. The chapter closes with a reference to **his mother and his brethren**. These brothers are presumably the children of Joseph and Mary born after the virgin birth of Jesus. While some have attempted to view them as cousins, this certainly is not implied in the gospel records. Kent (p. 951) believes that Jesus' preaching at Nazareth had already forced the family to move to Capernaum. By asking, **Who is my mother?** Jesus called attention away from earthly relationships to more important spiritual relationships. A believer is even closer to Christ than to a physical relative. This saying was not intended to be one of disrespect to Mary or to His brothers, for they too would come to share that spiritual relationship. It should also be noted that there is no suggestion here at all, however, that Jesus' mother had any special access to His presence or any particular influence over Him. By using this startling question, Jesus prepares the crowd to receive the precious truth that **whosoever shall do the will of my Father** was, in fact, His mother, His brother, His sister. Hendriksen (p. 542) suggests that it was to His inner circle of disciples that He gave this loving and honored designation. The beauty of this passage can be seen in the fact that while they had left all and followed Him, they were still often "of little faith" (8:26). Yet He was not ashamed to call them brothers (see Heb 2:11). Those who trust Him as their personal Saviour become adopted members of the family of God (see Rom 8:17, 29).

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^t. literally

^vSV Revised Standard Version

^t. literally

^{xx}X Septuagint

^mram Aramaic

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^xXX Septuagint

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^wv Authorized Version

ⁱJerry Falwell, executive editor; Edward E. Hinson and Michael Kroll Woodrow, general editors, *KJV Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.