



MATTHEW

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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Biography:

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Background Information by Denny Petrillo

Eusebius – 260-240 A. D. Palestine - Ecclesiastical History, 3.24:3-8.

“Yet nevertheless of all those who had been with the Lord, only Matthew and John have left us their recollections, and tradition says that they took to writing perforce, Matthew had first preached to Hebrews, and when he was on the point of going to others, he transmitted in writing in his native language the gospel according to himself, and thus supplied by writing the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent, and Mark and Luke had already published the gospels according to them, but John it is said used all the time a message which was not written down, and at last took to writing for the following cause.”

Eusebius quotes Papias - Ecclesiastical History, Book 3 XXXIX.

We know little of Matthew except to say the most ancient manuscript we have of Matthew starts by saying “KATA ΜΑΘΘΑΙΟΝ.”

Gospel comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον; Mark 1:1 - “the beginning of the gospel,” and Mark 16:15 - “now go preach the gospel.” The gospel is the good news about what God has done in Jesus Christ. There is a difference between διδασχία (doctrine) and εὐαγγέλιον (evangelistic preaching about Jesus). In the book of Acts the apostles preached Jesus. Evangelistic preaching (Acts 10:34-42-- compare with Mark - it is very similar in message) is that which was the major focus in the preaching of the early church. However, it is wrong to say that there is no doctrine in the gospel. It was established very early that there were four gospels (documents that contained the gospel).

Irenaeus - A.D. 180 Against Heresy 4.11.8 said: “It is not possible that the gospels can either be more or fewer in number than they are. For since there are four zones of the world in which we live and four principle winds, while the church is scattered throughout all the world, and the pillar and ground of the church is the gospels and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she would have four pillars, breathing our immortality on every side; vivifying men afresh.”

Jesus said on this rock I will build My church.

CHURCH
M M L J
T K K N

Tatian, a Syrian Christian in A.D.170, devised the first harmony of the gospels. He used only four gospels in his harmony. He wove them together into the diatessaron - “through four” or “made out of four.” This was a basic mistake in methodology, for if

God had wanted us to have only one gospel why did He give us four? Each gospel has its own thematic thrust, its own different purpose, its own special points to make, which is totally destroyed if you put them all into one. Tatian's harmony account had great popularity in the East as late as 400 A.D. Theodoret, who became Bishop of Cyrus in upper Syria in A.D. 423, found that many copies of the diatessaron were still in use in his own diocese and it became the standard work. Tatian later became a heretic, so Theodoret declared orthodox Christians should not use his work, destroying all the copies he could find (two hundred) and replacing them with the original four gospels.

By reading the four gospels side by side, men soon developed the SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

It was a result of a naturalistic method of investigation - everything must be provable by the sciences or it does not exist. There has to be a provable method for its coming about. It should be obvious to any reader of the gospels that the first three are very similar in outline, incidents treated and even in wording in certain places. The fourth is very different.

Eusebius called John's gospel the "spiritual gospel," and the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke the *somatic* or "fleshly gospels." The first three gospels are the "synoptic gospels" and are the focus of the Synoptic Problem.

J. J. Griesbach (1745-1812) was one of the first to see the fourth gospel as a separate entity and the first three needing to be dealt with together. He was thinking scientifically. He thought it was futile to put them together because of the non-chronological sequences, but instead he made a synopsis (for scientific reasons) in that he laid similar texts together side by side for comparison.

The Synoptic Problem Stated:

How are we to explain the obvious similarities in general outlook and construction between the three and at the same time account for the startling differences in order, in emphasis and in expression? Various theories were proposed to explain the synoptic problem. These theories are as follows:

- I. **Theory A.** Possibly all three were dependent on an earlier **Aramaic gospel.** (This view was held by G. E. Dessing and J. G. Eicchorn.) But this failed to explain why some material is left out of some and why Matthew and Luke have something in common that Mark does not have.

- II. **Theory B. The Fragment Theory.** F. Schleirmacher - 1825 - the apostles wrote some eyewitness accounts of various events and sayings and these circulated as small units. For evidence of this they appealed to the prologue of Luke. This theory has no manuscripts to support it and fails to explain the remarkable verbal similarities (same word tenses, etc.)

III. Theory C. The Oral Theory.

- A. J. K. L. Guesler produced a prototype of this theory. Basically the apostolic preaching formed itself into similar oral traditions which would then form a basic gospel in oral form. These said it was preserved in oral form in Aramaic but was translated into Greek for Gentile missionary efforts. These two factors form the basis of the written gospel.
- B. B. F. Westcott - Introduction to the Gospels.
 - 1. Strongly argued for oral theory basis on the ability of the ancients to pass down tradition. For example, the MISHNAH, a compilation of the sayings of the Jewish Rabbis written B.C.200 - A.D.200. This showed their ability to pass down traditions.
 - 2. He focuses on Papias' statement, "Matthew collected oracles in Hebrew and each interpreted them as best he could."
 - 3. Objections:
 - a. It is difficult for naturalists to believe that such precise verbal agreement can be explained by oral tradition.
 - b. It also fails to explain why the general orders are the same among the three.

IV. Mutual Literary Dependence Theory.

- A. Augustine DeHippo - early 400's.
 - 1. "Mark followed Matthew closely and looks like an imitator and an epitomizer."
 - 2. Because of this, the priority of Matthew held sway for a long time even though Eusebius said Mark and Luke had already been published.
- B. Karl Lachmann - 1835.
 - 1. Considered the order of the events narrated and found that where Matthew and Luke used material also found in Mark that the order of events corresponds, but when they used material not found in Mark that the order is different.

2. Therefore, Mark must have been used as a source by the other two.

C. C. H. Weisse 1801-1866.

1. Mark was definitely written first, but Matthew and Luke must have had another source that contained the sayings of Jesus called "Q" = Quella = source.



2. This is called the "two source theory."
3. By the end of the 1800's it was almost unanimously agreed that Mark was the earliest gospel (this was influenced by Darwin's theory of things beginning simply and evolving into something more complex).

D. John Chatman (1865-1933), a Dominican priest, challenged the priority of Mark.

E. B. C. Butler - The Originality of St. Matthew (1951).

1. Showed the logical fallacy of the Markan theory (why it does not make sense).
2. It was possible that Mark used and shortened Matthew and that Luke, in turn, made use of Mark.

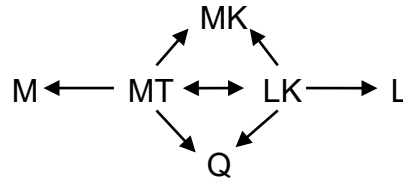
F. William R. Farmer (1964), very effectively challenged the priority of Mark.

G. Sir John Hawkins (1900's).

1. He did some meticulous statistical studies and produced them in his famous book called Horace Synopticae (how many times authors agreed, percentages, etc.).
2. This resulted in the Mutual Dependence Theory: the "Four Document Theory."

H. B. H. Streeter.

1. The Four Gospels - a Study of Origins 1924, 600 pages long, based on scientific formulas,
2. Concluded on the "Four Document Theory."



3. To the scientific world this solved the Synoptic Problem. This theory is still held in great respect today.

V. **"Form Criticism"** has come to the forefront in recent times.

A. Martin Dibelius - From Tradition to Gospel - 1919.

1. The gospels gradually took on a fixed form through preaching and teaching in the ancient church - they circulated in various fragments and sayings.
2. He classified the material into these classes:
 - a. Paradigms,
 - b. Tales,
 - c. Sayings,
 - d. Legends and
 - e. Myths.

B. Rudolf Bultmann.

1. Emphasized the Christ of faith as opposed to the historical Jesus. (A man named Jesus, did nothing supernatural, no direct revelation from God - really no resurrection, the disciples had visions of resurrection - based on these they started the church - the innocent stories grew into fantastic stories as they were preached and taught.)

THE EVALUATION OF THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

I. The Four Document Theory has not been proven.

- A. Rests on priority of Mark and the use of "Q."
- B. Priority of Mark has been successfully challenged.
- C. The existence of "Q" is no more than a theory - total faith required for its existence.

II. External evidence in ancient church is against priority of Mark.

- A. Referred to least by apostolic fathers, etc.
- B. Not until the fifth century was there any record of a commentary of Mark.

III. The assumption that brevity equals priority is to be questioned.

- A. This is Darwinism.
- B. The philosophy of Hegel transferred to the New Testament study.
- C. The underlying evolutionary assumption that there must be a literary development:

No supernatural - started small and developed into something bigger.

IV. "Q" is the pillar of the Four Document Theory but has never been proven to exist.

- A. There is the Coptic Gospel of Thomas (agnostic sayings gospel), so "Q" must be like this writing (so assumed by these evolutionists).
- B. Farrah wrote a challenge to "Q" called On Dispensing With "Q," 1955.

V. Form Criticism fails to give a satisfactory answer as to why the church exists.

- A. Why did martyrs give their lives? Were people just stupid? Did they not see for themselves the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles?
- B. Does not consider the length of time it takes for a folk tradition to solidify.

1. They are trying to tell us that a full-grown doctrine came into existence, preaching a standard gospel, from folklore in only fifty years.
2. They are trying to say that a well organized institution like the church was formed in fewer than twenty years.

VI. All these theories are naturalistic.

- A. They start with the basic assumption that nothing miraculous could have happened, therefore they are forced to offer alternative explanations for the teachings and events presented in the gospels.
- B. The theories are offered by men who do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

THE FORMATION OF THE GOSPELS

- I. Certainly the gospel was first preached before anything was written!
 - A. Speeches in Acts very similar to the gospels - Acts 2; 10:34ff.
 - B. They follow the same general outline:
 1. Baptism,
 2. Ministry,
 3. Death of Jesus,
 4. Resurrection and
 5. Promise of a second coming.
 - C. The Holy Spirit brought to their remembrance all that Jesus had said and done and told them its true meaning - John 14:26; 2:22; Luke 24:44-45.
 1. This could explain the exact verbal correspondence in some sayings.
 2. Surely this preaching was repeated in fairly fixed form.

3. The four documents are called “gospels” - therefore they must contain what was preached.
- II. By inspiration the various gospel writers arranged and assembled the apostolic preaching (their own or that of others) into individual forms for different audiences and for different purposes. This explains the differences, etc. The gospels are ordered and arranged by these various ones by inspiration for their own various purposes. And to ignore that fact is to miss the individual beauty of each one of the gospels. When we try to mass them together to make them fit, we are doing something entirely antagonistic to what God intended.
- A. The gospel writers did use sources (e.g. Lk 1:1-4), but their sources were the ministries and eye-witness accounts of the word (apostles and prophets, etc.).
1. This does not preclude the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit did it in the way He wanted.
 - a. Each used his own individual vocabulary, but the process of compiling and gathering, audience analysis and using their thinking was guided, overseen, directed and molded by the Holy Spirit of God so that the outcome was exactly, exactly the way in which God intended.
 - b. Just because they used sources does not mean God did not guide them into all the truth.
 - c. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 Paul is claiming that his words (or message) are coming from the Holy Spirit. That is exactly what is said. But, should we infer from that that the Holy Spirit gave Paul a new vocabulary and revealed to him the exact words to say?
 - d. Maybe our idea of “mechanicalness” goes too far. What is printed on our pages is exactly what God wanted on the pages!
 2. The gospels are not newspaper reports, but the living gospel.
 - a. They are written in their individual way to convert the soul, to teach Gods truth and to convey the example and the mind of Christ to men.

- b. They do not intend simply to report facts (though they do), but to relay things which will have an effect and meaning in individuals lives.
- 3. Hebrews 2:2-4; Galatians 1:11-12; 2:2,6-9.

Conclusion:

There are kernels of truth in the Synoptic Problem, but it is the untruths which destroy the theory.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW **Introductory Material**

The first gospel is traditionally ascribed to Matthew Levi, a tax collector (publican) whom Jesus called to be one of the twelve - Matthew 9:9-13; 10:3. After the list of apostles in Acts 1:13, Matthew disappears from the history of the New Testament.

IRENÆUS, *AGAINST HERESIES* 331:

“Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews...while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundation of the Church.”

DATE OF MATTHEW

The date of the gospel of Matthew is unknown. Because of naturalistic presuppositions, liberals date the book of Matthew after A.D. 70 because it contains specific references to the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in that year. They give no allowance for the possibility of anyone (including Jesus) to be able to predict the future.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW **INTRODUCTION**

THE GOAL: To convince the Jews that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah.

THE PLAN: To present the teachings of Jesus in large sections and discuss the works of Jesus (emphasize His power) in between each sermon section. Here are some examples of how Matthew goes about reaching this goal:

I. Jesus' lineage is what was required of the Messiah.

Chapter 1 proves that the lineage of Jesus goes back to David. The Messiah was going to come through this seed. Matthew will clearly establish that Jesus is of this lineage.

II. Jesus and John the Baptist fulfill numerous Old Testament prophetic passages.

The last of chapter 1 and all of chapters 2 and 3 deal with the miraculous birth of Jesus and the preaching of John the Baptist. What John and Jesus are doing Matthew is going to say is “pleroo” or “fulfilling” what was prophesied in the Old Testament.

This word occurs 13 times in Matthew and means “fulfilled.” This word occurs mostly in the first several chapters. We can see the importance of this. Jesus is fulfilling that which the Old Testament was saying. This is a very important word. We will find that this word has the idea of *wrapped up or completed*. We also see that “pleroo” is used by Matthew almost exclusively as a double fulfillment prophecy. It was fulfilled in the Old Testament and fulfilled in a more full way in the New Testament. Note this example:

He quotes Hosea 11:1 - “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” Hosea is using that particular passage in prophesying that God is going to bring His people out of “Egypt” (literally, Babylon) back into the land, around the time of Cyrus - 536 B.C. Matthew quotes this and refers to when God tells Mary and Joseph to return from Egypt to which they have fled to escape the wrath of Herod. This, then, is the second time the passage was fulfilled. The second time has more full meaning or a more significant meaning, because it involves the Messiah.

This is why the purpose of the book is to prove *that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah*. This is what would really impress the Jew. So the fact that Jesus is fulfilling prophetic scriptures would be very beneficial to the Jews who were looking to those scriptures as their authority concerning their Messiah.

III. The sinless nature of Jesus supports vital qualifications required of the Messiah.

In chapter 4 Matthew deals with the sinless nature of Jesus. He gives us a lesson on worship. In Matthew 4:10 Jesus says to Satan, “You shall worship only God,” yet Matthew uses this same word for worship and demonstrates how Jesus was worshiped. When we read Matthew we must conclude that Jesus is God, because both accept worship.

IV. Jesus established Himself as the Master Teacher, which would have been an expected qualification of the Messiah.

Compare Matthew 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1. The similarity of these passages is the word “finished.” “When He had finished these words,” or along this line. To the Jew it would be important to establish the Messiah as a master teacher. Matthew does just that with five speech sections.

- A. Matthew 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount (followed by 7:28 “When He had finished these words” - a phrase that is used to conclude each speech section).
- B. Matthew 9:36-10:42 (11:1, “*When He had finished*”).
- C. Matthew 13:1-52 (13:53, key phrase).

- D. Matthew 17:22-18:35 (19:1, key phrase)
- E. Matthew 23:1-25:46 (26:1, key phrase).

What we want to do is discuss the contents of these next five sections. What, if anything, is happening in these passages? It is obvious that Matthew has some structure and organization. He has a **goal** (to prove that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah) and this goal is achieved with these speech sections. In looking at each of these speech sections, what will be the predominate topics that Jesus focuses on and emphasizes?

1. Jesus' focus is on the "kingdom." When we look at each of these sections we will see the emphasis on the kingdom. This word occurs fifty-six times in the gospel of Matthew, most of them in Jesus' speech sections. Of these fifty-six times, thirty times it is called the "kingdom of heaven." Those who do our harmony of the gospels combine these passages and note that Mark and Matthew both say this. So what about this, is it the same thing? The Jews are looking for a strong, earthly Messiah and they are looking for the kingdom to be in Jerusalem. But Jesus talks about the fact that the kingdom is "of heaven." He is trying to get them to see that they are missing the point of what the kingdom that is to come is all about. Jesus will emphasize this kingdom of heaven and what it is all about. The Jews would have expected the Messiah to talk about this very thing.
2. The second word emphasized by Jesus is the word "Father." This word is used sixty-one times in the gospel of Matthew (and over ninety times in the book of John) and Jesus uses it fifty-six of those times. Jesus is coming in order to reshape the Jews' thinking about the Father, even about the idea that He is a Father. They are not looking at God the way He really is or in the way they ought to be thinking about Him. Seventeen times in the Sermon on the Mount, He will say, "Your Father in heaven." In chapter 11:27 Jesus says, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father...no one knows the Father except the Son..." Jesus has come to reveal someone we cannot know unless He reveals Him to us. Jesus focuses so much on reshaping their view of the Father. This is interesting. We are more accustomed to this (seeing God as Father) and it may not be unusual, but the Jews had a history that made them lose sight of the loving nature of God. Note Malachi 1:1-2. "I have loved you, and yet you say, how hast Thou loved us?" This book is showing the frustration the Jews had with God. Some of the books – Isaiah, Hosea, etc. made promises that when they returned to the promised land they would be blessed beyond belief.

By Malachi's time they have given up and no longer believe God loves them. For four centuries after Malachi, this idea kept festering. They were not being blessed and the intertestamental period was horrible for the Jews. The Jews are the most confused people on the face of the earth. Jesus is starting from practically nothing and He is going to try to introduce their Father to the Jews.

Sixty-one times in Matthew, and in John over ninety times, Jesus talks about the Father and this is very important. See the material in the notes on "Jesus and the Father" on the Sermon on the Mount. What is Jesus teaching us about the Father in the Sermon on the Mount? See the material on "The Father."

V. Jesus' miracles prove that He was the Messiah.

What do we find between these speech sections? The miracles. Why? Because they prove who Jesus says He is. The word Matthew uses to show what the miracles prove is the word authority.

- A. Matthew 7:28-29 - He taught them as one having authority, not as their scribes.
- B. Matthew 9:6 - the Son of Man has the authority.
- C. Matthew 28:18-20 - Jesus was authoritative in His teaching and verified this in the miracles He did. He was the Master Teacher and this is what was expected of the Messiah.

VI. The Messiah would have many followers.

What else would you find between these speech sections? The calling of the apostles to FOLLOW Him. This is another key word in the book of Matthew. The word follow occurs twenty-four times. The word disciple is used seventy-two times. This is the word which means "follower." The total is ninety-six times in the concept of following. Jesus is going to teach exactly what it means to be a follower. People are physically following Him, but Jesus is going to teach them what it really means to follow Him and that includes the twelve apostles because they must follow as well. Another thing we will see is the idea of "coming" to Jesus. This word occurs fifty-two times in the gospel; and thirty-eight times they are coming to Jesus. There will be a time later on to spend with this. This is an incredible study: those coming to Him for information, those coming for healing, His enemies coming to trap Him...different reasons for coming to Jesus.

Some other words that are important: worship - eleven times, prophet thirty-seven times.

KATA MAGΘAION CHAPTER ONE

¹The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

He begins with his arguments (proofs that Jesus is the Messiah) from the very first verse. If Jesus were truly the Messiah, then he would have to have the proper genealogy. So Matthew, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is going to deal with this very important obstacle first.

Genealogy - history of the origin of Jesus Christ. How did He come to be? What he says is that He is the son of **David**, the son of **Abraham**. "Son of" means "descendant of." Very, very important and significant to establish that Jesus was of the lineage of **David**.

For the genealogy through Mary see the account written by Luke. This is Joseph's genealogy. A Jew would never care about the genealogy through a mother, even though Joseph was not the father of Jesus, it would be important to the Jew so Matthew shows this lineage. The Greeks would know that Jesus was not the son of Joseph so they would not care about the genealogy of Joseph.

Genesewv - book of history of the origin of Jesus Christ.

There are two connections made which are absolutely vital to the Jewish mind. Those are the connections of Abraham and David. **Abraham** (Gen 12:1-3; 15:4-20; 17:21; 22:17-18; 26:4; 28:13-14; 35:10-11; 50:24-25). Solidly in the Pentateuch was the idea that in the seed of Abraham would the nation of Israel be blessed.

Son of **David** - ("son of" or "descendant of") - also extremely important (2 Sam 7:12-13). The Messiah was going to be a king like David (Isa 9:6-7). The Jews did not think of a spiritual kingdom at all, especially from Daniel 2 and Psalm 110. What Matthew does in his genealogy is to establish a solid relationship between Jesus and the two main figures of importance and prominence as far as the Jewish mind was concerned.

²To Abraham was born Isaac; and to Isaac, Jacob; and to Jacob Judah and his brothers; ³and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar; and to Perez was born Hezron; and to Hezron, Ram; ⁴and to Ram was born Amminadab; and to Amminadab, Nahshon; and to Nahshon, Salmon; ⁵and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse; ⁶and to Jesse was born David the king. And to David was born Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah; ⁷and to Solomon was born Rehoboam; and to Rehoboam, Abijah; and to Abijah, Asa; ⁸and to Asa was born Jehoshaphat; and to Jehosh-

aphat, Joram; and to Joram, Uzziah; ⁹and to Uzziah was born Jotham; and to Jotham, Ahaz; and to Ahaz, Hezekiah; ¹⁰and to Hezekiah was born Manasseh; and to Manasseh, Amon; and to Amon, Josiah; ¹¹and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹²And after the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel; and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel; ¹³and to Zerubbabel was born Abiud; and to Abiud, Eliakim; and to Eliakim, Azor; ¹⁴and to Azor was born Zadok; and to Zadok, Achim; and to Achim, Eliud; ¹⁵and to Eliud was born Eleazar; and to Eleazar, Matthan; and to Matthan, Jacob; ¹⁶And to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Beget = ἐγέννησεν = born - "...through Isaac your descendants shall be named" (Gen 21:12).

NAMES IN THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Abraham	Genesis 12:1-3; 17:7; Galatians 3:16
Isaac	Genesis 21:1-3; 26:4; promise repeated
Jacob	Genesis 25:25-26; 28:13-14 (also named Israel)
Judah	Son of Leah - Genesis 29:35
Perez	One of twins begotten as result of an incestuous relationship between Judah and Tamar his daughter - Genesis 38:12-30
Hezron	Son of Judah - Genesis 46:12
Ram	Ruth 4:18-19 - son of Ram
Amminadab	Ruth 4:19
Nahshon	Ruth 4:20
Salmon	Ruth 4:20
Boaz	Ruth 4:21 - Husband of Ruth
Obed	Ruth 4:21
Jesse	Ruth 4:21 - Father of David
David	Ruth 4:21 - King of Israel

KINGDOM OF JUDAH

Solomon	Tenth son of David, second by Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 12:24
Rehoboam	2 Chronicles 9:31
Abijah	(Abijam) son of Rehoboam - 1 Kings 14:31
Asa	1 Kings 15:8
Jehoshaphat	1 Kings 15:24
Joram	1 Kings 22:50; 2 Kings 8:16
Ahaziah	2 Kings 8:25
Joash	2 Kings 13:1
Amaziah	2 Kings 14:21
Azariah	2 Kings 15:1
Jotham	2 Kings 15:7

Ahaz	2 Kings 10:1
Hezekiah	2 Kings 18:1
Manasseh	2 Kings 21:2
Amon	2 Kings 21:18-19
Josiah	2 Kings 22:1
Joahaz	2 Chronicles 36:1
Uzziah	(Young's, 1019) also called Azariah, 2 Kings 15:1 separated by three generations from Joram
Jedoniah	1 Chronicles 3:16
Shealtiel	Father of Zerubbabel - Ezra 3:2
Zerubbabel	Ezra 2:2 - led the people out of captivity
Abiud	Only in Matthew 1:13 (possibly a grandson)
Eliakim	Only Matthew 1:13 and Luke 3:30
Azor	Only Matthew 1:13-14
Zadoc	Matthew 1:14
Achim	Matthew 1:14
Eliud	Matthew 1:14
Eleazar	Matthew 1:15
Matthan	Matthew 1:15
Jacob	Matthew 1:15
Joseph	Matthew 1:16

By whom = ἐξ ἧς - is feminine, thus it cannot refer to Joseph, but must refer to Mary. Luke's genealogy traces Jesus through Mary. According to law, Joseph was legally the father of Jesus, so Matthew takes the overall perspective from Joseph's family line. Yet, he makes it clear in verse 16 that Jesus was not begotten from Joseph.

17Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ fourteen generations.

Fourteen generations. In studying this genealogy it is found that Matthew is telling us that there are not literally fourteen fathers and sons, but that for the ease of memory, these were divided into three groups of fourteen. This way people (especially Jewish boys) could memorize them and would know they had all the names included by counting to fourteen. In Jewish genealogies, they did not care how they lined up (uncle, etc.).

Matthew breaks it down. From Abraham to David is 14 generations; from David to the deportation is 14; and from the deportation down to the time of Christ is 14. Jesus was the last of the third group of 14, which would fit in with their genealogy. What he says is, "was called Christ," and then calls Him Christ again in verse 18. Once again, Matthew has not proven that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ, but he is beginning to offer some interesting proofs. The Jews would always have objections (as in the gospel of John when they say, "He came from the wrong place").

Christ = Χριστου = “anointed one” - a function or position. “Jesus” is a personal name. “Lord Jesus Christ” means Jesus of Nazareth who is Lord of all who sits on the throne of David. Later “Christ” became almost the only name used because of Christian acceptance of Jesus as the Christ. To the Jews, Jesus and Christ had no connection at all.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew has yet to prove that Jesus is the **Christ**. But he continues to build his case. Thus far he has shown that (1) Jesus descended from Abraham; (2) Jesus descended from David; and (3) Jesus’ genealogy is one that falls within the three grouping of 14 generations. With the genealogy established, Matthew can now move on to further proofs of Jesus’ Messiahship.

His mother, Mary, was betrothed to Joseph, but before they came together (had sexual relations), she became pregnant. So the child is obviously not Joseph’s. She was found to be with child by the **Holy Spirit**. Very few passages show what the Jews thought about the Holy Spirit, so at this point they would not really understand what the Holy Spirit is. Yet they would have certainly understood that there was a force that was the “spirit of God” which empowered Samson and Saul, etc.

19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.

Disgrace her. In the Mishnah (Jewish traditions concerning the Laws of Moses) there is a Sotah (a discussion) on “the suspected adulterous.” In this Sotah it describes a certain rite to be followed to determine if a woman had been sexually unfaithful (like the bitter waters test in Num 5:11-31), where the belly would swell if guilty. The betrothal was a strong commitment. The Law of Moses gave the husband the right to have her stoned. But what Joseph could have done was to make a public spectacle of her and drive her out in shame. A righteous man like Joseph would be disgusted with the thought of a woman he was going to marry having premarital sex. Nevertheless, he did not want to disgrace her or publicly embarrass her but he could not in good conscience marry her. So, his best option was to divorce her. Joseph could have publicly embarrassed her and humiliated her.

Put away secretly. Joseph did not want to openly disgrace (Num 5), but as a righteous man, he could go through with the marriage and thus stain his family name. As a merciful man he did not want to disgrace this woman he loved.

²⁰But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”

Angel appeared = miraculous involvement - a divine plan being worked. What is significant about this is we have had an incredible period of silence (about 400 years, from Malachi until now) and Matthew is going to emphasize *dreams*. We will be talking a lot about this in the first few chapters.

ON THE SILENCE OF THE PROPHETS

During this intertestamental period they knew they did not have any prophets. Notice the following uninspired historical works:

1 Maccabees 4:46.

“So they pulled down the altar and laid down the stones in the mountain of the house, in a convenient place, until a prophet should come and decide (as to what should be done) concerning them.”

1 Maccabees 9:27.

“And there was great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the time that a prophet appeared unto them.”

1 Maccabees 14:41.

“And the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a faithful prophet should arise.”

“From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.” Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8.

“This statement is both correct and in accordance with our books. For in the latter it is recorded that Nebuchadnezzar, in the 18th year of his reign, devastated our temple, that for fifty years it ceased to exist, that in the second year of the reign of Cyrus the foundations were laid, and lastly, that the second year of the reign of Darius it was completed.” Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.21.

These passages show that the Jews knew the difference between a true prophet of God and the false prophet. They knew that there were no true prophets from the time of Malachi to the time of the New Testament. So, the appearances to Zacharias and Joseph are significant.

Note: Apparently Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was the first to have been spoken to by God over this 400 year period of silence. He was the one who was serving in the temple and the one who tarried in the temple. It is somewhat unusual he would do this, because the people waited outside for a blessing. They believed that he was in the presence of God and those he blessed (immediately after coming out of the temple) would receive a special benefit. This is a good foundation for the fact that John the Baptist was so popular.

The Jews believed there were several mediums through which God spoke to men:

1. **Casting lots** (Prov 16:33).
2. **Urim and Thummim** (Ex 28:30). These stones, kept under the breast-plate of the High Priest, were promises that God was going to communicate to his people. The Hebrew words mean “lights and illuminations,” indicating that God was going to cast light on the question His people were asking him.
3. **Dreams and visions.** These were the most common. Dreams occur when a person is sleeping, visions when the person is awake.

By Matthew’s saying this took place **in a dream** shows that it was a recognized form of revelation from God. This is miraculous, God’s involving Himself in the lives of the people. Notice that Joseph is considering this, but has drifted in sleep and has a dream and the angel releases his anxiety. **“Do not be afraid.”** Afraid of what? There are two things Joseph might be afraid of:

1. The ridicule from without - by accepting a woman who is an adulteress.
2. By marrying a woman who might be untrue (again).

21And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.

Jesus = Ἰησοῦς = YEHOSUAH (also from same Hebrew root as the names “Joshua” and “Hosea”) - the Lord is Savior - (highly symbolic). He was to save the people from their sins. This was God’s plan from the very beginning.

22Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

Fulfilled = πληρωθη, one of the recurring ideas in Matthew. This is the first occurrence of this word which occurs thirteen times in the book of Matthew. The word means “fulfilled.” What Matthew is recording is exactly what the Old Testament prophecies. This has taken place so that what was said might be **fulfilled**. It was the Lord who said

it. He just happened to say it through the prophet. This is a common fact and we need to remind people of as we teach them in both the Old and New Testaments. Some believe this is just the opinion of the writer. So we must emphasize that it is **the Lord** who is saying these things.

THE LEVELS OF MEANING IN SCRIPTURE

1* **Literal, historical, contextual meaning:**

Basically this means that it was prophesied and it would be fulfilled one time. For example, Ezekiel 26 and the prophecy of Tyre or Isaiah 53 and the prophecy of Jesus. Examples of this type of prophecy is Matthew 2:6 (Mic 5:2); Matthew 3:3 (Isa 40:3); and Matthew 10:10 (Mal 3:1).

2* **The full or spiritual meaning – double fulfillment:**

This means that a passage from the Old Testament is going to find its greatest fulfillment or realization in the New Testament. Examples of this in Matthew are 2:15 (Hos 11:1) and 2:18 (Jer 31:15).

3* **Allegorical meaning:**

Galatians 4:21-31 (symbolic) - Sarah = free woman, Hagar = Jews continued to remain enslaved to the Law (Isa 11:1 - branch or shoot).

4* **Double fulfillment & type - double or antitype:**

An example in the book of Hebrews is the tabernacle as the type with the church as the antitype.

Question: If a Jew, without any outside help read, "Out of Egypt I called My Son.", how would he interpret it?

Answer: It would be a promise that God would once again deliver His people out of captivity or bondage.

Question: If a Jew, by himself, read Jeremiah 31:15 in its context, how would he interpret it?

Answer: Babylonian captivity.

God recognized this but He always had a plan. God sent a revealer or teacher to teach man - Jesus was that teacher. Without His coming there would have been no realiza-

tion of the full plan of God. The apostles did not understand the full meaning of the scriptures until after the resurrection when Jesus opened their minds.

Question: How did Matthew know that Jeremiah 31:15 was fulfilled?

Answer: His mind was opened and Jesus explained to him its fulfillment.

²³Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, "God with us."

This quotation comes from Isaiah 7:14. The historical context of Isaiah 7:14 is this: during the time of the divided kingdom (during the ministry of Isaiah), two kingdoms (Israel and its king, Pekah; and Syria and its king, Rezin) were warring against the kingdom of Judah and its king, Ahaz. Ahaz, showed a definite lack of faith in God and decided to run to Assyria for help, even though God promised him protection if he would just trust. Isaiah tried to reassure him by telling him that the two smoldering firebrands are these two kings (Rezin and Pekah) and that they are about to "go out;" they will be gone, thus no longer a threat to Ahaz. Therefore, God says their plan will not come to pass.

In order to reassure Ahaz of God's resolve to help him, He allowed Ahaz to ask for any sign he might like. Ahaz refused to "test the Lord," but in actuality he had already made up his mind and it was not to do what Isaiah and the Lord wanted him to do. Therefore, Isaiah said the Lord would give him a sign anyway -

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken (Isa 7:14-16).

Jesus is, in a very special way, the fulfillment of this prophecy.

From Matthew's use of this passage we can derive a number of Biblical truths:

1. Jesus was born of a virgin (Mt 1:25; Lk 1:34).
2. Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy (Isa 7:14).
3. Jesus is our Immanuel (Jn 1:1,14).

There are the two predominant viewpoints concerning Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14

1. Single-fulfillment (Isa 7:14 applies only to Jesus).
2. Dual-fulfillment (Isa 7:14 was fulfilled in a limited sense in the Old Testament, but in a much fuller sense with Jesus' coming).

²⁴And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife,

Joseph believed what the angel said and does, in fact, marry her even though she is with child. We need to give this great man credit! He demonstrated a tremendous amount of faith as well as courage. How much ridicule did he endure? Did he bring shame on his family? Those are questions the Bible does not answer.

25 and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

This is the verse which proves she was a virgin. As the marginal reading will attest, the Greek literally reads “was not knowing her.” The same is true in Luke 1:34 - “know no man.” Why is the virgin birth so important? (1) It demonstrates supernatural intervention into the affairs of man in order to save man (Jn 3:16); (2) It explains how Jesus could be God, since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit; and (3) It explains how Jesus could be man, having been born of a human mother (Heb 2:14). As Joseph was instructed, he named the child **Jesus**. As noted in 1:21, the name “Jesus” means “savior.”

CHAPTER TWO

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

Herod - see lineage information in the notes. Herod was made king of the Jews by a Roman Senate in 37 B.C. according to Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, pgs. 1, 282-285. He reconstructed the temple and was a friend of Caesar.

LOCAL RULERS

1. Archelaus (6 B.C. - 4 B.C.).

He received Judea, Samaria and Idumea. His rule was so oppressive that the Jews and Samaritans joined together in sending a delegation to Rome to request his reign be revoked. Augustus deposed him and banished him to Vienne in Gaul.

2. Herod Antipas (4 B.C. - 39 A.D.).

He received Galilee and Perea. He was the one who stole his brother's wife and later had John the Baptist beheaded. He was also the one before whom Jesus was tried. He was banished to Lyons in Gaul where he died.

3. Philip (4 B.C. - 34 A.D.).

He received the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis (Lk 3:1). His territory included the northeast corner of Palestine. On the north it bordered Abilene and on the south it bordered on Decapolis. It included the ancient Bashan and the Ilauran and the country lying round the base of Hermon. Philip, unlike the rest of his family, was a very kind person and ruled his kingdom well. He built the city of Caesarea Philippi upon the ancient site of Panias and named it for the emperor and himself. He died in 34 A.D.

4. Lysanias.

He received Abilene, so named from Abila, its chief city. He was not a member of the Herodian family. After his death, his domain was added to Philip's. Then upon Philip's death, Herod Agrippa received Philip's expanded domain.

Roman Procurators 6 A.D. - 42 A.D.

1. Pontius Pilate was the sixth (some say the fifth) procurator of Judea and held office from 27-37 A.D. (some say 26-36 A.D.).
2. Herod Agrippa I – 37-44 A.D.
3. Roman Procurators – 44-66 A.D.

When Herod Agrippa I died, the government of Judea reverted to procurators among whom were Felix (Acts 24) and Festus (Acts 25).

Herod Agrippa II – 48-66 A.D.

Herod Agrippa II was only seventeen when his father, Herod Agrippa I died. Therefore, Judea was placed under the care of procurators until the Jewish rebellion of 66 A.D. Although Herod Agrippa II never ruled over Jewish territory, he did have a kingdom in the vicinity and figures in New Testament history (Acts 25:26). In 48 he received the kingdom of his uncle, Herod of Chalcis, and in 53 Claudius gave him the old tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias.

Josephus, *Antiquities*, pgs. 27, 317.

After Jewish envoys tried to persuade Caesar Augustus of the wickedness of Herod the Great and the subsequent wickedness of Archelaus who killed 3,000 Jews in the temple crusades, Necholus defended Herod and the right of Archelaus to be king. After hearing both sides, Caesar dismissed the council and a few days later appointed Archelaus not king indeed, but ethnarch of half of the territory that had been subject to Herod and promised to reward him with the title of king if he really proved to be able to act in that capacity. The rest of the territory he divided into two parts and assigned

them to Herod's other two sons, Philip and Antipas, the latter of whom had disputed the right to the whole realm with his brother Archelaus.

Magi = magoi; priests - wise men - usually experts in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other arts. (See Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, pg. 486.) Traditions from various early writers have them as three kings (wise men), yet scripture is silent in regards to their number or stature other than that of magi.

East - of Persia or Babylon.

Matthew is the only gospel to record the visit of the magi. This account fits well with the purpose of Matthew, because he wants to show how the Jews were skeptical that Jesus could be the Messiah, but others were not. These wise men, with all their training, were able to clearly see that this child was special.

2“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.”

Where is ... King? Herod was also called “king of the Jews” (v. 1) and he would not have been interested in sharing the title with another. The Old Testament clearly prophesied that the Messiah would be king (Jer 23:5; 30:9; Zech 9:9), although not the strong-armed military ruler that the Jews expected.

Worship = προσκυνησαι (προσκυνέω) - to kiss the feet of or fall at the feet of - not necessarily worshipping although the context usually indicates clearly whether worship is intended (instead of an act of respect). This word occurs 11 times in Matthew (1:8; 4:9; 4:10; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 18:26; 28:9; 28:18). **Worship** is a key concept in Matthew, with its major focus found in 4:10. These magi priests are coming to worship Jesus and are not ashamed to say so! The magi seem to have expected all Jerusalem to be worshipping this newborn king. They must have been surprised that Jesus' own people did not recognize Him as being the Messiah.

3And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Chief priests used in its plural form it included: members of high priestly families who were members of the Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court) - including the ruling high priest, those who had been deposed and adult male members of the most prominent priestly families.

Herod...heard it. Herod was a man so full of suspicions that he kept Jerusalem filled with spies. Herod felt Jesus was going to take over his kingdom and throne. The Jews, on the other hand, would be very happy to see the Roman government destroyed by the powerful, militant Messiah, especially the Zealots. They were the militant sect of the Jews who were waiting for the militant Messiah to come.

Troubled. Since the people in Jerusalem knew what kind of man Herod was (he had a reputation of killing any who would oppose him), they feared what kind of response Herod might have to this news about a new king. From the first part of the 1st century, there were Jewish uprisings and Jewish revolts trying to throw off Roman oppression - much Jewish blood had been shed. All involved recognized that this talk of a new king was “Davidic Messiah language” which meant Jewish war - the like of which had never been seen and, in fact, came about in A.D. 68-70. Jerusalem (and Masada sometime later) was destroyed. So they were all very much afraid of what Herod might do.

4And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born.

Scribes = copiers of the Law, interpreters among Pharisees - had places in the Sanhedrin court. They would be most knowledgeable of the scriptures concerning the birth of the coming Messiah. They were thinking about the promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7.

Christ = anointed one. Thinking of the promise to David, Herod knew that with the coming of these foreigners guided by a star, and from the teachings of the Old Testament, his only conclusion could be that this new king could be none other than the Christ (Messiah).

5And they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet,

The Jewish leaders at least knew enough of the scriptures to know what they said about the birth of the Messiah. They knew that a little town a few miles from Jerusalem was going to be the birthplace of the Messiah. They also knew that what was **written** in scriptures by the prophets was inspired.

6And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, Who shall shepherd My people Israel.”

The Old Testament specifically predicted the very town the Savior was going to be born in! This quotation is from Micah 5:2. Notice that he does not use the word “fulfilled” here. Why not? Because that would have been inconsistent with the way Matthew is using this particular Greek word.

Rulers = princes - governors - people in authority. In verb form this word is used to describe military leaders.

7Then Herod secretly called the magi, and ascertained from them the time the star appeared.

Ascertained. He pressed the magi for the time when star appeared. If he had openly professed a desire to worship the new king, all Jerusalem would have been aware of his hypocrisy.

⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and make careful search for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, that I too may come and worship Him.”

There is no reason to think the magi doubted the sincerity of the king. However, it is possible that when they saw the lack of interest of the people in Jerusalem, they may have sensed that there was not widespread support for the Christ-child.

⁹And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was.

Even though some speculate as to how God made this happen (see notes on “The Star Theory”) this is just another example of God doing what ever He wants to get His will accomplished.

¹⁰And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

The magi appreciated the workings of God in their lives. They rejoiced because of the direction they were receiving from God. They were also happy to have an opportunity to see this special child.

¹¹And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Gold. Precious metal - in raw form, coin or finished into jewelry, etc.

Frankincense. A white gum with a very pleasant odor, obtained from several kinds of Arabian trees.

Myrrh = σμύρναν - same word as “Smyrna;” produced or traded in this city - was a resin gum from a bush, the “Balsam Odendron Myrrha;” aromatic and used for embalming (Rev 18:13; Jn 19:39; SoS 3:6).

This showed their belief in Jesus as king, because only those of royalty received such fine gifts.

¹²And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way.

In a dream the magi are told what to do. Joseph had a dream also (1:20), showing again the miraculous intervention of God. His plan is being brought about.

2:13 The third dream.

14And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt;

It was 100 miles to the Egyptian border; 200 to Nile River.

15and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled saying, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son."

Once again we see the word "fulfilled." This tells us that this is a double prophecy. Hosea 4:1 is another occurrence of the word "fulfilled" (πληρωθη). To Matthew the word **fulfilled** has within it the idea of God's purposes coming to pass - His preordained plan is worked out - that the spiritual meaning of these Old Testament words is coming to pass in the life of Jesus.

16Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

Time ascertained. Luke says the night Jesus was born shepherds came from the fields to the stable to see the child. Matthew gives no indication of shepherds. This could indicate that Jesus was two years old for 2:11 says they came into a house not a stable. The scholars estimate Herod killed 12-50 boys, considering the area's estimated population.

17Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying,

Fulfilled - eternal plan - Ephesians 3:11 (3 different types of prophecies):

Verse 6 - direct,

Verse 15 - symbolic (but with a dual fulfillment) and

Verse 18 - double or dual fulfillment.

18"A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Because they were no more."

This is also a dual fulfillment prophecy. See notes under "Levels of Meaning in Scripture."

Ramah was a town in Benjamin. The original quote from Jeremiah 31:15 refers to Babylonian captivity.

19But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,

Dream. This is the fourth time an angel of the Lord has appeared. These continue to demonstrate human events with supernatural intervention.

Herod died at age 70 (37th year of his reign).

20“Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.” 21And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee.

This is the fifth time an angel of the Lord has appeared in a dream. This region was ruled by Archelaus from 4 B.C. to 6 A.D. Josephus, *Wars* 2, pgs. 94-97 says, “...he was a bad fellow with main stream of political action.”

2:23 See Judges 13:5-7 - only place in the Old Testament where we see a parallel passage. In the fullness of God’s plan it was to be a Nazarite who would save people from sin. It is also possible that the connection is to Isaiah 11:1, where the word for “branch” is the Hebrew NETZER, a word from which the name “Nazareth” comes.

CHAPTER THREE

In Luke 3:1 we learn the date of when all this is taking place. If this is the 15th year of Tiberius, we are looking at approximately 28 years after the event in chapter 2. These years cover a long duration of time, which is worth mentioning. The gospels are not interested in a moment by moment history of Jesus. They give us very well organized life of Jesus with particular events and teachings in order to teach and support their truths. The work of the Holy Spirit is seen here in that we are given only that which is necessary even though we would love to know more. There are writings in the late first century that give stories of Jesus, one of which is His forming a pigeon of clay, then bringing it to life. Obviously, that is the sort of thing that is a part of the false account of the childhood of Jesus. There are many who have the hunger to know more, but all we have is what has been preserved by the Holy Spirit in the words of the book.

1Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The word **repent** is a compound word made up of two words in the Greek – μετά and νοείτε - words meaning “to change their minds.” The preaching of John demanded change, just like the preaching of the prophets in the Old Testament. That is what John is doing here. He is called “the Baptist” because God is the one who gave him the commission to baptize (see Mt 21:23ff). Jesus places the rulers in a dilemma about the authority of John’s baptizing. They chose not to answer because they would have indicted themselves. The answer which is correct is, “It is from God.” Although there were practices of baptism among the Jews before John, it took on new meanings with the teachings of the gospels.

John wants them to change - repent - because the **kingdom of heaven is at hand**. **At Hand** is ἤγγικεν. It means to “approach” or “to draw near.” Those who were hearing John would understand this to mean several things. Is it near in time or in location? Matthew is going to answer this question on the nearness of the kingdom. But these to whom he is preaching would not understand this. Never the less the fact that it is “at hand” is basis enough for people to start thinking about their lives.

³For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.”

Isaiah 40:3 is what is quoted. John had a very specific work to do - that was to prepare the people. This verse is quoted because John is coming and calling people to repent. But, this phrase is symbolic of those in ancient times who would prepare the road for their king, seeing to it that there would be no obstacles on the road to impede the king’s travel. John, in a spiritual sense, will prepare the hearts and minds of these people for the coming of Christ and he did that beautifully!

⁴Now John himself had a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather belt about his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Notice the comparison of John to Elijah - 2 Kings 1:8; and he is, as we will see, a fulfillment of prophecy. One thing that has always been confusing is, that in John 1:21 where the people ask, “Are you Elijah?” and he replies, “I am not.” “Then why are you baptizing?” They did not understand his authority. John says he is not Elijah but in Matthew 17:10, after Elijah and Moses have appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus says that John is Elijah. Now, they had anticipated a *reincarnated* Elijah and John knew that was what they were expecting. In Malachi 4:5 John was the *spirit* of Elijah the one to come and to restore the things before the coming of the Messiah. Because Elijah did not die but was taken up into heaven, they believed that he would actually come again. That is why John says that he is not the one they are looking for. In Matthew 11:14 Jesus says, if they care to accept it, he is the Elijah to come. Matthew is making a conscious effort to tie John with Elijah. John was an outdoors man who did not seek the comfort of an office. He was a sacrificial man who sought after souls.

⁵Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan;

The Greek word *πασα* is used for **all**, but here does not mean every single one. It would not be correct to assume that *every single person* in all that area would be coming, but there were a great number of them that would have come to him. The problem is not in the Greek, but in the translation, because we understand “all” as being every single one. The context would determine whether it would mean “all.” The Greek word used here would be used to mean “all,” but the context determines this. This particular word is often used in an exaggerated way to show a large number, not being technically precise meaning everyone. Luke 7:30 tells us lawyers and Pharisees rejected God’s purpose - some, but not all.

Josephus tells us that the popularity of John was so great that Herod Antipas feared an uprising. (*Antiquities* 18.5.2.) They were baptized in the Jordan where there was much water (see Jn 3:23).

⁶And they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

Difference in Baptisms

John

Jews only

Of repentance for forgiveness of sins, Mark 1:4

Brought Jews back to old covenant

Looked forward to Christ
Matthew 3:11

Not followed by Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Not in the name of Christ

Not in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Gospel

All nations

Of faith and repentance for forgiveness of sins

Brings all to new covenant

Looks back to Christ

Followed by Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In the name of Christ
Matthew 28:18-20

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The early church did baptize in the name of Jesus - Acts 2:38; 8:35,36; 10:48. Paul said that there is only one baptism (Eph 4:4). That one baptism must be water baptism - 1 Peter 3:21 and all of the examples in Acts 8:36. In Acts 18:25 Apollos knew only of the baptism of John even though Christ's baptism had already been taught and practiced. Therefore, he needed the "way of God taught to him more accurately." In Acts 19:1-7, which follows the teaching of Apollos, those baptized with John's baptism (that is after his death and the teaching of Christ's baptism) were told to be baptized again (Acts 19:5). Do not use this to teach that those who were baptized during the time of John the Baptist were baptized again. (See John notes.) All of those in Acts 19 were instructed to be baptized again because it had taken place after the institution of the baptism of Jesus. We know this because partly of where it occurs in the book of Acts. John's ministry was to prepare people for the Christ, not to be baptizing in the name of Christ. The "one baptism" spoken of in Ephesians is the baptism of Christ.

And they confessed their sins. This was not a new thing. In the Old Testament confession was done with a sin offering (Num 5:7). It was also necessary for salvation (Psa 32:5; 51:1ff; Prov 28:13; Ezra 9:6ff; Dan 9:5ff; in the New Testament see 1 Jn 1:9; Rom 10:9-10). In confessing their sins a public declaration was made that they had made a pact with the Lord. They declared publicly that they were no longer going to practice sin.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them,, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were not going to change anything. John refers to Malachi 4:5-6. This passage also announces the Christ to come as well as the Elijah. It shows the coming of the Messiah was not going to be all blessings. The Jews thought that His wrath was for the Gentiles only.

Vipers = snakes. Scholars think this applied to a particular snake in Palestine; 2-5 feet in length, 1 inch thick, with a flat head, a yellowish color with long brown spots and very poisonous. A wilderness boy would know all about these snakes. What John means is that these Jewish rulers were full of guile, malice, cunning and venom. The phrase "**wrath to come**" is a very interesting topic to study. Paul, in Romans 2:4-5, talks about a day of wrath and a revelation of wrath (the anger of God) coming against non-penitent hearts (cf. Rom 1:18; 5:9; Eph 5:6; Jn 3:36; 1 Thess 1:10; Rev 6:16-17).

⁸Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;

Baptism without **repentance** is worthless. People have to bring forth "**fruit**." Fruit is another way of saying *acts of righteousness*. There have been some who, whenever the Bible talks about fruit, believe it refers to winning others to Christ. But this is not necessarily accurate. People have to bring forth acts of righteousness (Isa 3:10; 10:12; Jer 17:10; Mt 7:16,20; 12:33; 21:43). We know as Christians we must have the fruit of

the Spirit (Gal 5:22) but Luke gives a better insight to what John taught. There are three groups who will ask the question, "What shall we do?"

1. *The multitudes* - Luke 3:10-11 - Let him who has share.
2. *Tax gatherers* - Luke 3:12-13 - Do not collect more than ordered.
3. *Soldiers* - Luke 3:14 - Do not take money by force, accuse anyone falsely, be content with their wages.

A good parallel for this is James 2:14-26.

⁹and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father;' for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

John is saying that it takes more than being descended from Abraham to be pleasing to God. As an indication of the way the Jews thought their relationship to Abraham benefitted them consider:

Quotations from the Talmud

"Abraham sits next to the gates of Hell, and doth not permit any wicked Israelite to go down to it."

It represents God as saying to Abraham:

"If thy children were like dead bodies without sinews or bones, thy merit would avail for them."

"A single Israelite is worth more before God than all the people who have been or shall be."

"The world was made for their (Israel's) sake."

The Merits of the Fathers, Mekilta Beshallah 4:30 (cf. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 140:2).

¹⁰And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Axe is at the root. This illustrates the fact that the judgment has begun and it is against every non-productive **tree**. John is saying their delay can bring about death. If one does not bring forth fruits for repentance, it could mean death. The axe represents

God's judgment upon men. The Pharisees and the Sadducees are so wrapped up in what they are doing, they were not doing God's will. They knew it, but were not doing it.

11As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John is going to talk about two things.

1. The purpose of his baptism - to get them to repent and to prepare them for the coming kingdom;
2. To clear up the misunderstanding that he was the Christ. He was only preparing for "He who is coming" (Mal 3:1), a Messianic prophecy.

I am not fit to remove His sandals. In wealthy Jewish families slaves carried their owners' sandals. John says the one coming is so much greater and mightier than himself that he is not even worthy to take off His sandals.

Holy Spirit and Fire. This is a passage that has caused much confusion.

1. Some have assumed that Jesus was not going to baptize with water. There are a number of passages that show this is not true and that the baptism of Christ is not dealing with anything but water - Acts 8:36.
2. With the Holy Spirit. Acts 2 shows what it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and in Acts 11:15 Peter shows that it occurred on Cornelius' household as it did on them in the beginning. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred twice.
3. Many (mostly in Pentecostal assemblies) have prayed for the baptism of Holy Spirit and fire, but that is not what they really desire. The Greek word for **fire** is πυρί. In verse 11 we read of the baptism of Holy Spirit and fire. In verse 10 we read that the trees which did not bear good fruit were cut down and thrown into **fire**. That is judgment. In verse 12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand...and He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." This is judgment. We cannot make **fire** in verses 10 and 12 mean one thing, and then in verse 11 mean something else. So he is talking about two aspects of the baptism of Jesus. This has nothing to do with the cloven tongues of fire in Acts.

Verse 12 is most likely talking about Revelation 20:15, "thrown into the lake of fire." The fire in Matthew in all three verses means the same thing - JUDGMENT. Jesus is going to have two aspects to His ministry; do that which saves men or do that which causes them to be lost. The same action will cause some to repent, while causing others to

harden their hearts and not repent. The idea of purification by fire is wrong, because that would be different from what is being talked about in this context.

12And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Winnowing fork - like a leaf rake or pitchfork, used to throw the wheat up into the air after it was harvested and piled on the ground. The chaff, which is light, the breeze would blow away. The grain, being much heavier, would fall to the ground. The phrase “unquenchable fire” lays to rest two false doctrines:

1. *The doctrine of universal salvation* - God will save everyone,
2. *The doctrine of annihilation* - one will no longer exist. An “eternal fire” is not needed if punishment is going to last for only a little while, but this fire is going to be “unquenchable,” indicating that the judgment will last as long as the fire does. Compare this with Matthew 25:46.

13Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?”

John recognized and knew enough about Jesus that he, as a sinful man, needed forgiveness of sins that was associated with His (Jesus’) baptism.

15But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him.

This is a difficult verse for many to understand. What is meant by this is that Jesus, knowing that He was to be the sinless Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, had to do what was required by God. In seeing Jesus express the need to be baptized, how much more the need for us to be baptized? We need to have our sins washed away. Jesus needed to only because it was a commandment of God and He would have sinned if He had failed to obey what God had commanded man to do. God is ushering in a new age. Baptism was not something that was commanded during the Old Testament. Jesus was baptized only because it was a command of God. People needed to obey what John taught, because it was God’s law. Jesus did this to complete righteousness. Psalm 119:172 is a good illustration of this, “Let my tongue sing of thy word, because all of thy commands are righteousness.” That is what is being done here by John the Baptist. Obviously God expected people to understand this because in Matthew 22 Jesus asks if this baptism was from man or from God.

Then he permitted Him - thus showing that Jesus was baptized.

16And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him,

The Greek word used to illustrate that one thing is similar to another is ὡσεὶ. It is like a dove, not literally a dove. Luke 3:22 resolves all doubt - the Holy Spirit took the “bodily form like a dove.” It was not a dove, but it was the form of one.

We are compounding evidences that Jesus is the Messiah and what we have found in 3:1-12 is the fulfillment of a forerunner to the Messiah. John was the fulfillment of the Elijah to come. It is almost as if Matthew were causing the reader to wonder about who this is. In chapters 11 and 17 he will tell us that John is this Elijah. The baptism of Jesus is so filled with Messianic prophecy the Jew would not misunderstand this.

Isaiah 11:2 says, “And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him...” - a passage the Talmud clearly says is Messianic. All of these passages given in the Old Testament are clearly stated in the Talmud as Messianic. So the Jew would understand Jesus’ baptism and the Spirit’s descending upon Him. Luke, in Acts 10:38, says Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and Matthew tells us that Jesus did His miracles by the Spirit. This gospel is so full of references concerning these prophecies and the Talmud say these passages are Messianic.

17and behold, a voice out of the heavens saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

The fact that a voice came out of heaven is significant for us although the debate goes on whether anyone heard the voice or not. What is important in Matthew is when things happen in heaven. Later in Matthew the people will ask for a sign from heaven, because they believed the Satanic powers could do nothing in the sky (Mt 16:1). This verse would be one more evidence to a Jew. “My beloved Son.” There are three things stated here about Jesus:

1. *He is a Son* - Psalm 2:7 - clearly a Messianic passage. See Hebrews 1:5 and Acts 13:33.
2. *He is beloved* - Isaiah 42:1 - “My chosen one in whom My soul delights...” The Son is going to be loved.
3. *He is well pleasing* - Isaiah 42:1; 44:2 - Again, all Messianic fulfillment.

The three things said about the Son all have descriptions proving Jesus is the Messiah.

In Psalm 2:1-7 David refers to God’s Son as “His Anointed.” Jesus became the Messiah when He was baptized and God’s Spirit fell upon Him. It was at this point He was anointed and the fact that God says He is well-pleased means that Jesus has

fulfilled all His expectations of Him and that He is sinless. It is not until Matthew 28:18-20 that Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." When we talk about the anointing, we need to spend some time studying the Old Testament to understand this. 1 Samuel 10:7 - Saul was anointed, but did not take the throne until later. 1 Samuel 16:13 - the same thing takes place with David, who takes the throne much later.

First Jesus was anointed, the ministry followed, and the authority came after His resurrection. In Acts 10:38 Peter says, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power and how He went about doing good..." Peter clearly ties this all together. It was after the resurrection that Jesus received all authority. It was all a part of God's plan. Jesus was one who was so anointed and had a ministry yet to fulfill and there was a time element to take care of first. Luke 3:23 tells us that Jesus was about thirty years old at this time. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit descended as a dove then led him to the wilderness to be tempted in chapter 4:1.

CHAPTER FOUR

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

The fact that He is led by **the Spirit** indicates it is God's intention that Jesus undergo these trials, these temptations. He is led into a place where He knows He is going to be tempted. God will not do the tempting, but allows Him to be tempted.

****See additional information on Satan.*

²And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

It seems a little odd to most that Jesus would fast for so long and **then** become hungry. We need to understand that our bodies work a certain way to appreciate this. When our stomachs start growling we associate that with hunger, but that is just the emptying of the stomach of what food is left. The body does not need food at that point. Experienced fasters can easily fast for this long a period of time. When it says, "He **then became hungry,**" shows what happens during the fasting period. At first, the body uses its storehouses (fatty tissue) if not given food. Then, when this is all used, the body starts feeding off muscle. When this happens, true **hunger** pains begin and the body literally consumes itself and the pain is severe. This passage shows us that Jesus is an experienced faster but, after 40 days and nights, His body was entering into a stage where it was beginning to consume muscle. Since the body, at this point, craves food more than at any other time, it is a part of the evil plan of Satan to wait until this moment to tempt Jesus. Satan likes to tempt us during our weakest moments.

Note about fasting: While the New Covenant does not command fasting, Christians still see tremendous benefits in fasting. (Also note: Mt 6:16 Jesus says “And whenever you fast...” assuming that spiritual people will fast.) Note the benefits of fasting:

1. When we fast we still have bowel movements, because the body is cleansing itself. Fasting is good for a body. Our food is so full of chemicals, we store them up and they cause us problems. A cleansing fast is a way of processing all these things out of our systems.
2. In addition, fasting is a positive experience spiritually. Usually the faster devotes the mealtime to spiritual activities, thus aiding his spirituality.
3. Also, there is the benefit of self-discipline. Fasters have to learn to deny themselves one of the most basic human needs - food. When they are able to accomplish this successfully, they are able to see just how strong they can be in controlling their desires.

³And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

The **if** here is in a first class conditional sentence and more accurately means “since.” The devil does not doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. It should be translated, “Since you are the Son of God.” So, since you are the Son of God, Satan says, you have power to turn these stones into bread and do something about your hunger. Satan is attacking the area where Jesus is the weakest. This is still Satan’s favorite temptation with the poor. If God loves us so much, why are we always worrying about food - why are we always hungry? People need to remember that physical/material blessings are not an indication of God’s love (note Lazarus in Lk 16). Jesus was not going to use a miracle to satisfy His physical need.

⁴But He answered and said, “It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Deuteronomy 8:3 is what is quoted. God’s will is more important than food. Jesus did no selfish miracles, neither did Paul (2 Cor 12), nor any of the other miracle workers (Epaphroditus, Phil 2:25-27; Trophimus, 2 Tim 4:20).

⁵Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

The second temptation. Scholars have long debated as to the location of this trial. It was on some high place of the temple. Some think it was near the Kidron Valley and some think it was on the opposite side of the temple - the West Side - which is called the “pinnacle.” The reason to bring Him here was so Jesus would have a long way to fall, thus making it clear to all that a miracle had taken place.

⁶and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will give His angels charge concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’”

If - meaning “since.”

Notice that even Satan can quote scriptures - Psalm 91:11-12 is the reference. But, even though Satan can quote scripture, he misapplies it. “Go ahead. Jump. The angels will be there.” One commentator wrote that the Rabbis considered the Messiah as one who would stand on the pinnacle of the temple, light would radiate from Him and He would float down to the people. This scripture could be the basis for this, but no one knows with certainty.

⁷Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Satan knew it would be a sin for Jesus to tempt God in this way. This quote is from Deuteronomy 6:16. The people lacked for water and accused Moses of having brought them out to die. They demanded that Moses give them water to see if God was really with them. They tested God to see if He was in their presence. Jesus was not going to demand that God perform a miracle because of some foolish action of His own.

Illustration: Many say, “It is just not my time to die.” It may be that God expects you to live a certain length of time, but if you decide to lie down in front of an oncoming train, your time will change. It is significant that in Jesus’ time of trial He did not look for visions, etc. to give Him strength. When He was tempted, He did not yield! Jesus relied on the **written** word. Jesus fought temptation as a man (Phil 2:6-7) and He used that weapon which God has given to man (Eph 6:17) - the word of God, the sword of the Spirit. Eve started out on the right path, but did not stay on it and gave into the temptation presented to her by Satan.

⁸Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory;

Kingdom is a key concept in the gospel, so we need to consider this verse carefully. The kingdom would be a temptation because of the pride and glory (albeit vain), of such power. Jesus could have reasoned: “Since I am to be a king anyway, why not go ahead and do this? So what if I do commit just a little evil? I can do a lot more good later.” A lot of people have done evil with some sort of warped sense that good will come from it (e.g. tell a lie with the belief that good will result, etc.).

⁹and he said to Him, “All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

Here is another key word, **worship**. The wise men worshiped Jesus and Jesus is now asked to fall down and worship Satan. This was a large offer in the sight of Satan who is, in fact, king of this world. But it was a small one in the sight of Jesus, who made the world. He is the creator of this world. Satan may offer people great things today. He does, in fact, tempt in order to seduce them into temptation and Satan's offers may appear great to children of the world, but they are small to us who are going to have the glories of the life which is to come (Rom 8:17-18) the heirs with Christ (Phil 3:7-8). This is the way we need to look at temptation. We need to see not the physical point of view, but the spiritual. We receive some pleasure now, but we will have an eternity of untold pleasure if we remain faithful to God. If we can look at things through spiritual eyes, then we will have a proper perspective. Paul says it like this. "The mind of the spirit is set on the things of the spirit, and the mind of the flesh is set on the things of the flesh, so we need to have a spiritual mind" (Rom 8:4-14).

¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

Jesus calls the devil "Satan" which is the word that means "enemy" or "adversary." Jesus sees him exactly for what he is. He does not have the best interest of Jesus in mind. Nor does he have our best interests in mind as he continually tries to tempt us to sin. Satan, if he understood God's plan, would know that one sin on Jesus' part would destroy the plan of God for saving mankind. He came to Jesus with the three most probable areas where Jesus might fall.

We give Satan more power than he deserves. He is not omniscient, he does not know everything, and he does not know what is in our minds. The only way he knows we have weaknesses is by observation. James 1:13-14 say we are enticed by our own lusts. Satan, by observation, knows where our weaknesses lie, but to say that he has power to operate within our minds is something he cannot do, because if he knows what is in the mind, he possesses power of the divine - which he does not!

At the same time, we do not want to underestimate his power! He is a roaring lion as Peter tells us (1 Pet 5:8). If, through observation, Satan knows that we have wandering eyes when we see a woman immodestly dressed, he will provide immodestly dressed women, giving us the opportunity to see more. Our God has given us the ability to avoid temptations, not allowing their desire to dwell in our minds. If we have carnal thoughts when we are alone, that is our own doing. Satan has nothing to do with that. It is the lack of self-control. We have to deal with those problems. Look at Micah 2:1 - devising evil in their minds while in bed. Did Satan know what they were thinking? No, but he knows people have lustful desires. We yield to a sin because of *our own* lusts, not because Satan caused us to do it. A person could have demons removed but, they could return (as in Mt 12:45), showing the power an individual can have over temptation and sin.

Did Satan know that he would destroy the plan of God if Jesus sinned? Perhaps. He might have discovered this from the Old Testament scriptures. It is possible, however, that he just wanted to entice Him to sin, just as he wants all men to sin.

We also need to appreciate the fact that this was a true, legitimate temptation to Jesus. The Hebrew writer emphasizes that Jesus endured the full force and power of Satan's temptations (Heb 2:10ff). This was done so that He can come to the aid of those who are tempted (Heb 4:16-18). Still, Jesus really did want to have some bread. He "hungered" the text says. Yet, no matter how much Jesus wanted bread, He was not going to yield to temptation to get it. The point is this: Jesus knew the power of temptation. When Satan suggested that Jesus do this, Jesus wanted to do that, but He let it stop there. He did not pursue and sin. It had to be a temptation, something He really wanted to do or the passages in Hebrews would not be valid. Temptation and sin are two different things. Who knows more about temptation, the one who yields, or the one who resists? The one who resists. The temptation is no longer a temptation once the person sins. Jesus had the full force of temptation coming at Him and He knew how hard it was to resist those things (see 1 Cor 10:13). "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man." We can draw upon that same power, and resist temptation too! If we do not, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

***See article: *The Temptations of Jesus*

The goal is set before us in one little Greek word. *Téleios*. The word is translated "perfect" or "mature." That is the goal of God for His children (Jas 1:2-4). When we think about temptation and the way it works with us, when we yield, the next time temptation comes, we are a little bit weaker. It has a progression so that we become like those in 1 Timothy 4:1 who ended up with seared consciences. If the practice of yielding to sin continues we reach a point where "it is impossible to renew them to repentance" (Heb 6:6). On the other hand, the way we reach maturity (the *téleios*) is by denying the temptation to sin and the next time it comes we are a little bit stronger and the next time we are stronger still. Illustration: To many, during our teen years, drinking might have been a great temptation. However, after continually denying the temptation to drink, we found ourselves so strong that it is no longer a temptation! And, we can grow stronger in all other areas. Satan will not attack us where we are strong, but in the areas where we are weak. God, though, wants us to be perfect. Perfection is the Christian's goal. We scar our spiritual selves when we give in to temptations.

In athletic contests, it is important for one to attack his opponent's weaknesses. When one does that successfully, victory is more likely. This is the way Satan works. We become weak in certain areas, then he attacks us in those areas in order to defeat us. But God gives us the armor to wear (Eph 6:10ff) - armor Satan's darts cannot penetrate. He will never overcome this! Education in God's word will help us in dealing with temptation. James says to resist and Satan will flee from us (Jas 4:6). He will not leave if we do not resist. The word is the thing that works powerfully against temptation. "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa 119:11).

David believed in the power of the word. This provides a good reason for the memorizing of scripture. If God's word is in our hearts and we think of it when being tempted we can - and will - overcome. The word, implanted, is able to save (Jas 1:21).

Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only. Note that Jesus was one who received worship (Mt 28:9,17; Heb 1:6), but also said you shall worship *only* God. This is a clear indication that Jesus is God (Jn 1:1; 20:28). In verse 8 Satan speaks of the kingdoms of the world but Jesus' entire focus is on the kingdom of heaven. This is as clear as it gets in the difference between God and Satan. Jesus is interested in the kingdom of heaven and Satan in the kingdom of the world. God's plan is being worked out. Jesus is proving Himself to be the Messiah. We have the genealogy, the miraculous birth, the saving of Jesus' life from Herod, the magi, the sending of the prophet, the anointing of Jesus, the confronting of temptation by Jesus' enemy and His succeeding.

11Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

This is one more fulfillment of Jesus being the Messiah (Isa 53) as we see that Jesus is the atonement for sin, having no sin Himself. Some of the Jews had a problem understanding the Messiah being sinless, but others understood. In Isaiah, God laid upon Him the stroke that was due everyone else. In 1 John 2:15-17 we see that there are three basic categories of sin: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life. All of these were present in the temptations of Jesus. (Also, all were presented to Eve in the Garden of Eden.)

Lust of the flesh - turn these stone into bread.

Lust of the eyes - all these kingdoms will be yours.

Pride of life - all these angels will come to rescue you.

Luke adds (4:13) that Satan left until an opportune time (left Him for a season). It is incorrect to say that Satan tried one time and then gave up. He came back for more attempts to get Jesus to sin. But, each time, he failed. Notice the logical order. The suffering came first, then **the angels** came to comfort. So it is with us. Now we fight the battle, but now is not the time to grow weary (Gal 6:9) for the resting comes later. This has always been the order of things in God's plan. As the Hebrew writer says, there is a Sabbath rest later (Heb 4:1-6).

12Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee;

Not much more is told about John until chapters later when, in chapter 14 of Matthew, we learn about some of his struggles. We are not studying chronologically in the book of Matthew. The significance here is that while John is imprisoned, Jesus is active in His ministry. He is doing all the things He is supposed to do.

13and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

This is the Sea of Galilee. Nazareth is between the Sea of Galilee and Mediterranean. Jesus has gone east. Capernaum is on the northernmost edge of the Sea of Galilee.

14This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, 15“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - 16The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned.

This is Isaiah 9:1,2 and is another example of *pleratha* (fulfill). Something wonderful in God's plan is being fulfilled. Great and wonderful!

Those sitting in the shadow of death - people who are spiritually on the brink of destruction and Jesus is coming to bring light to the people. He is God's mercy and love. Matthew does not tell us all the ways this is fulfilled. The ones in darkness and sin were about to be led into the light of God's love and forgiveness.

17From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

If we look back at 3:2, this is exactly what John preached. This connects Jesus to the ministry of John. In John 3:26 John's disciples are concerned about the leaving of the people to Jesus. They believe that Jesus' popularity is greater than that of John and they are concerned that this is not according to the plan of what they have heard from John. Yet Jesus and John were working together. John prepared the way and therefore Jesus was able to pick up where John left off, preaching the good news of the kingdom of heaven.

18And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

This is the first occurrence of one of the key words in Matthew - **follow**. It is not just Matthew's intention to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, but also after proving that truth, to show what people need to do about that truth. If He is the Messiah, people need to follow! And how do they do that? This will be one of the great lessons taught throughout the book. Here are all the passages that contain this key word: 4:20,22,25; 8:1,10,19,22-23; 9:2,9,19,27; 10:38; 12:15; 14:13; 16:24; 19:2,21,27-28; 20:29,34; 21:9; 26:58; 27:55.

We find the concept of “following” twenty-five times. In several verses “following” is extremely important. In ancient times when one found a teacher who really impressed him, he would leave his occupation to follow that teacher. In the application, we have to decide whether Jesus is the Messiah. If we determine that He is, then we must then decide whether we want to pay the price it will take to follow (Mt 16:24).

There is much that has taken place before this that Matthew does not record. We ought not to suppose that Jesus suddenly comes and the people immediately follow. This is unrealistic. What we see in the gospel of John gives us a more complete picture of how one was invited to follow. Jesus already had the testimony and endorsement of John the Baptist. This would have greatly encouraged the people to follow. Then we have word of mouth. For example, Andrew and Peter have had exposure to Jesus on other occasions and have heard him teach. In John 1:40ff Andrew brings Peter to see Jesus. Why would they, having only a basic knowledge of Jesus, leave everything? And do not forget that Peter is a married man which would lay upon him more responsibility. Curiosity might be part of the reason, but also they had a misconception of Jesus’ being the Messiah of an earthly kingdom...a physical kingdom. The Jews had envisioned that He would have a select group around Him, which would mean tremendous wealth and power, so desiring to be a part of this earthly kingdom could be a reason for them to follow. If Peter was thinking about leaving his profession, it would have been because he anticipated tremendous benefits. His interest in personal benefits is seen in Matthew 19:27 where Peter steps forward and asks a very logical question - “Behold we have left everything...what will there be then for us?” What is in it for us if we follow? Peter had already had (as the rest of the disciples) an idea as to what they would receive, but in Matthew 19 they are beginning to see they are not going to get what they thought.

In John 21:3-4 Peter says, “I am going fishing.” Then Jesus, in verse 22, teaches Peter the story of love. “Do you love Me more than these?” “Feed My sheep” (“Get to work!”). If Peter is thinking of going back to fishing for fish, he has missed the point. In Luke 5:1-10 Peter is still a full-time fisherman and Jesus says, “... let down your nets.” A large quantity of fish was taken up. When Peter saw this he said, “Depart, for I am a sinful man.” Jesus says from that point on He will make him a fisher of men. He told Peter what the future held. Nevertheless, the disciples anticipated positions of power and reward. This is further illustrated by the account of James, John and their mother in Matthew 20:20-28.

Mark 1:16-20 gives us another account of the calling of the disciples. There are two basic reasons why Christ chose the lowly and the unlearned (but not ignorant!) to be His disciples:

1. Their minds would be freer from prejudice and more ready to entertain new truth. Can you just imagine Jesus choosing the scribes and Pharisees - the “know-it-alls” - to leave all they had to follow Him? Jesus knew those who would be teachable. It is not very rewarding trying to deal with those who “know it all.”

2. The strength of the gospel was made more apparent by the weakness of its ministers. See Acts 4:13. "...they were uneducated and untrained men..." 1 Corinthians 2:3-5. "...in weakness and in fear and in much trembling..." 2 Corinthians 4:7. "...treasure in earthen vessels..." (cf. Zech 4:6).

²⁰And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. ²¹And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. ²²And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

The invitation is given and they accept it. Why would they do this? Because they see the value in following Jesus. Certainly this adds credibility to the character of Jesus. Those who saw and heard Him were the ones who believed and followed Him. The fact that they **immediately** followed shows that they were ready for the call.

²³And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Jesus is teaching in places where the religious people would go and is revealing Himself to those who would be of the more religious elite. Parallel this with Luke 4:15. This is the first time Matthew uses the word **gospel** in his book. Gospel means "good news," and 24:14 says this gospel is to be preached throughout the whole world. The Sermon on the Mount is an excellent illustration of the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus teaches in the synagogues.

"Healing every kind of disease, every kind of sickness among the people." There was no illness that Jesus could not heal. This is a significant point that Matthew will develop throughout the book.

²⁴And the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

The repetition of healings is done for the sake of emphasis. Matthew does not want us to lose sight of the tremendous power Jesus displayed in His healings. How was He able to do these? Why did he not have even one single failure? The point is there was no one who had anything that was wrong that Jesus could not handle - even those diseases the doctors would have no idea how to help. Jesus could heal those. Even those who had demonic spirits which had inhabited their bodies, Jesus could heal.

The Bible teaches us in a number of places a significant lesson; for example, 1 Peter 2:6 quotes from Isaiah 28:16. "Behold I lay in Zion a corner stone, and he who believes

in Him shall not be disappointed (put to shame).” Paul also makes issue of this point in Romans 9:32-33; 10:11; Ephesians 2:20. The point is this: Do whatever it takes to come to Jesus! These people who were beset with various medical problems probably went through great difficulty just to get near Jesus. It was not enjoyable to travel when they were sick, especially when having to walk or ride on the back of an animal (perhaps in bad weather and for several days!) What would they find when they finally made it to Jesus? They certainly were not disappointed! Thus, there is a *spiritual* application which is made on the basis of a *physical* phenomenon provided by Jesus’ miracles. It made no difference what was wrong, Jesus could take care of the problem. That is why it is mentioned that He healed **every** kind of disease and sickness. If He can heal physically, He can heal spiritually. So then if one comes to Jesus, he will not be disappointed.

²⁵And great multitudes followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

Beyond the Jordan would be the east side. So even there the word has spread and the people are coming over to see Him.

We are about to begin the first of five speech sections. But first let us begin with the healing sections. These two go through together and are significant.

First, note all of the healing sections in Matthew:

1. 4:23-24
2. 8:16 Jesus healed all who were ill.
3. 9:35 And healing every kind of disease and sickness.
4. 12:15 Jesus aware of this... and He healed them all.
5. 14:14
6. 14:35-36
7. 15:30
8. 19:2

There are eight healing sections and between each are five speech sections. In the speech sections Jesus will emphasize the “kingdom” and the “Father.” After the speeches come the healings. Why this pattern? Because Matthew provides a solid basis for following Jesus. The miracles draw the people to Jesus and the teachings

show them what is required of them to be a part of the “kingdom of heaven” and be considered children of the “Father” in heaven.

Therefore, Matthew presents this pattern:

1. Miracles,
2. Follow,
3. Teaching,
4. Follow and
5. Miracles.

This is the cycle Matthew uses. The miracles and the teaching go hand in hand. The miracles are what got the people to follow, then He would teach them. But after having been taught, they may not be sure whether they wanted to follow Him, so He would do more miracles, then they would follow, and He would teach. All along He is teaching them what it means to follow Him. So this cycle in the gospel is important. That is why we study the healing sections. Eight times Matthew emphasizes the “healing” of everybody. As they follow, they learn more about the spiritual healing.

CHAPTER FIVE

The application of chapter 5 is that there are many who go from place to place but are not truly disciples (devoted followers). They need to learn. We have people today who follow Jesus from “place to place.” They go to church regularly, but their daily lives do not show they are true disciples. During the week they do not live the way a disciple should.

¹And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ²And opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying,

This section closely resembles Luke 6:20-49, often called “the Sermon on the Plain.” This is called “the Sermon on the Mount.” There are a lot of parallels, perhaps demonstrating that Jesus preached the same things more than once. There are things in the Sermon on the Mount which are scattered throughout the gospel of Luke, in fact, in at least eight different chapters.

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

******See sheet on this beatitude.***

Blessed = μακάριοι. Some have translated this as “happy” or “congratulations to.” This is not accurate. This is a word that means a person is blessed because they are right with God and approved of by God. They are doing the things that please God and know they have done His will, therefore the ones on whom God’s love rests.

Psalm 1 - One is blessed because his delight is in the law of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 33:29 - Israel is blessed because they are a people saved by the Lord and God is with them.

Psalm 32:1 - Blessed are those who have been forgiven.

James 1:12 - Blessed are those who have endured.

Poor in Spirit. There are ones who are poor, ones who do not have much materially. These “poor” are poor in spirit, they know they are lacking in things spiritual. Whereas the proud and haughty and self sufficient do not know of needs. They are content and happy with the way things are (the Pharisees for example). A person who is poor in spirit recognizes his desperate need for God. In Luke 6:24-25 Jesus pronounces a woe upon the rich because they feel no need for God. Here is one who is poor, not financially, but in spirit.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. All of the spiritual riches are in the kingdom. When a person sees his spiritual need and turns to God, God supplies that which is needed.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

****See additional notes on this beatitude.*

Mourn - over their own failings, their personally falling short and for the evil in the world.

Comforted. They will be comforted when they do something to receive forgiveness. Mourning is a sign of penitence (Joel 2:12-13) through which forgiveness is received. (1 Jn 1:9 - God is faithful and just to forgive us.)

⁵Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Gentle = humble (meek). It does not have the implication of weakness in it. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth (Num 12:3). Humility means *subject to the will of another*. So, in actuality, a humble person is one who has tremendous strength; one who has been able to subdue and subject himself and then voluntarily give of himself to others, getting “self” out of the way. One of the early writings of Greek uses this word as a bridled horse. Strength under control.

Inherit the earth. While premillennialists apply this literally to the inhabited earth after judgment, it is probable that Jesus has one of two concepts in mind:

First, He could be referring to our inheriting the “new heavens and a new earth,” as in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1. “But according to His promise we are looking for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” Why would Jesus say it this way?

Second, Jesus could be referring back to promises made in the Old Law in Deuteronomy 28:1-25. The land promise was given to God’s people and as long as they did His will they would receive that promise. The application would be this: submit to His will or you will not receive His blessings.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Hunger and thirst for righteousness. A person who does not grow thirsty or hungry is either sick or dead! So a person who does not hunger or thirst for righteousness is either spiritually sick or dead.

Righteousness means doing God’s will, what God has declared as right. It is not something we hear in attending the assemblies. It is something we do and are! Christians hunger and thirst after pleasing God. Matthew 6:33 is an excellent expansion of this teaching... seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. Jesus was not interested in physical food, but His food was to do the will of Him who had sent Him (Jn 4:31-34). He demonstrated what “hungering for righteousness” truly means.

Shall be satisfied. Physical meals satisfy for a while, but there comes a time when we need more. The manna from heaven had to be gathered everyday. So our spiritual appetites need a continual feeding and God promises that food is there and readily available. He will provide what we need. God promises to satisfy our spiritual appetites.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Merciful. A person who is merciful is one who gives, or does, something for another at no cost to the one who received it. This is directly connected to love and forgiveness. You cannot receive mercy unless you are merciful (6:12). This is more than just forgiving someone. In 6:2 we find a repetition of this word translated “mercy.” “When you give alms” - literally “do an act of mercy.” The merciful, those who do acts of charity for others, can expect to receive mercy for themselves.

They shall receive mercy. By the kinds of things they share with others, God will see to it that they, themselves, will be benefitted.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Pure in heart = clean, holy. The **heart** in the Bible is often the mind, the thinking apparatus. Doing the will of God must go deeper than actions. It has to be in the heart (sincere, genuine) and not just for show. The Pharisees were called “white washed walls” in Matthew 23:25,27. Jesus wants His children to be more than that. Hebrews 12:14 is another reference to this.

For they shall see God. See Hebrews 12:14 “...the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” In 1 John 3:2, being able to see God is going to be based on one’s being pure. 1 Peter 1:14ff - “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” God calls us to be holy and if we are going to stand in His presence we must be pure! And when we are we can rely upon seeing God. In contrast, Isaiah 59:1-2 says, “And your sins have hidden His face from you.” Our sins keep us from seeing His face.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Peacemakers. Jesus deals with this in 5:21-26 - talking about strife between people. At this time the Jews are approaching the time of the Jewish wars. Assassinations are being carried out by Zealots. There is desire for blood and the Jewish society is splitting into sects. Jesus says that those who create or make peace are blessed. Making peace requires effort...often tremendous effort. The Greek word is “they do peace.” They do, or make, peace by doing what is required for peace, either verbally or in action.

Sons of God = taking on the characteristics of the Father. When we do this, we become like our heavenly Father. God is a God of peace (1 Thess 5:23) and He hates those who destroy peace (Prov 6:19). Note also that there is “no peace for the wicked” (Isa 48:22; 57:21). Jesus is also called “the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6; Jn 14:27).

¹⁰Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Persecuted for the sake of righteousness. If we do the will of God and suffer for it, then we will inherit the heavenly kingdom. This is not talking about persecution for things we do which are unrighteous. Peter deals with this in 1 Peter 2:20 - there is no credit if you sin and suffer for it, but if you do right and suffer, this is right before God. Romans 10:3 is a good parallel. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Jesus said, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you” (Lk 6:26). So, there is a persecution that goes along with righteousness. In ten verses we have talked about the **kingdom of heaven** twice. As expected, the Messiah has much to say about the kingdom.

¹¹Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

“On account of me” these things will happen:

1. **When men revile you.** 1 Peter 4:14 - If we are reviled for the name of Christ, we are blessed. This has to do with the idea of a verbal persecution, but it often turns into the physical abuse. So the second thing is:
2. **Persecute you.** This can be verbal or physical, but most likely Jesus means physical persecution here.
3. **Say all kinds of evil against you falsely** = the verbal persecution and the forms it takes. It hurts us when we are the objects of false accusations.

¹²Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We are talking about being happy here on earth. The blessedness we now enjoy is something that manifests itself in outward rejoicing, because we are promised a great reward in heaven. There may be no reward on earth. The reward He has in mind is not worldly. Romans 8:28 is a good parallel to this. This passage does not mean that all things will work out good in this life. Romans 8:18 teaches the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that He will reveal. One can love God, and truly be a servant, yet nothing works out good. Lazarus died a sick, starving man, but he was righteous (Lk 16:16). We are happy because of what we have in the life to come, not because of a promise of having things now, although there are verses that show God will take care of us now; for example 6:23-24.

Persecuted the prophets before you - the way it has always been and the way it will always be. People will always persecute God’s prophets. That is just the way it is!

¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

Salt in the ancient world was used in two basic ways, both of which have spiritual applications:

First, salt was used to *make food taste better*. “Let your speech be, as it were, seasoned with salt” (Col 4:6). Let your words “taste good,” be pleasing to those who hear them. Jesus seems to have this use in mind, since He uses the word “taste.”

Second, salt was also used as a *preservative*. When food, such as meats, were packed in salt, they would not spoil so quickly.

Christians are God's "salt" in that they are to be the ones who make this life, this world, a better place to be in, more "palatable." If our lives are not making this world a better place, then we are not doing what God wants us to do. We have to be the ones to make the difference! What good there is in the world today is because of Christianity; our laws, the hospitals, the charitable organizations and the various individuals who do good deeds are those who are influenced by God's law. Christians try to be kind and helpful, like the "good Samaritan." Is it not curious that the atheists make fun of Christianity? It has been through the Christian influence that everything good in this world has come. Did Madeline O'Hare, who worked so hard to wipe out Christianity, know that it was Christianity that built the hospital she went to when she became so ill? Christians are those who have influenced the world for the good.

We know that we, the church as a group, are to do good works but sometimes we forget or overlook the fact that *I am* the one to make the difference. Too often we do not give ourselves the credit for what we can do to make the difference. Francis Schaffer, the noted contemporary philosopher, indicted the church as a "no show" in several periods in American history; e.g. during the sexual revolution, the increase of wealth and its frequent misuse, oppression (slavery), etc. The church was not a significant force against these evils. Christians are to speak out so there will not be approval for something illegal in God's eyes. But the Christian must stay within what the law will allow it to do. The problem today is with the authority of the Bible. People do not give it the respect that it owns and demands.

14You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

The purpose of **light** is to enable people to see. Christians are also God's "lights." We want people to see the truth and our lights, our lives, should reveal God's truth.

A city set on a hill. People can see it from all directions.

15Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lamp-stand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Think of the foolishness of lighting a lamp and then hiding its light. A lamp is lit so people can see. Why, then would one cover it up and put out the one thing which would help others to see? Christianity is to be that way. No matter where a person might be in the world, he is to show others the light of his Christianity. Jesus now shows the practical application of this.

16Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Let your light shine - for whom? Before men, for the purpose - distinctly - **that they may see your good works**. We want people to see the light, so we put it in a place where they can see it. The church, if it is to be the light, must be in a position to show

others what it is and what it teaches (1 Tim 3:15) - a pillar and support of the truth! The church is what lifts up the truth so everyone can see it. If the church is not doing anything to let others see the truth, then they are not letting their light shine. And if an individual is not doing those things, he is not letting his light shine. There is a big difference between “shining your light” and “letting your light shine.” We are not to do things so as to be seen by men as, Jesus says in chapter 6, or to receive glory from them. We are to be people who demonstrate righteousness and we need to be mindful in that we do shine so that men might see. If our Christian deeds and lives are always secretive, then we can not fulfill this passage. The city is set on the hill, people see it and are drawn to it. The reason we let our Christianity show is so people will see it and be drawn to Christ.

Glorify God not ourselves. Many men - and women - have been caught in the trap of desiring to receive accolades from others for their services. But, they are to glorify God in the doing of their deeds. Motive is what He is talking about. Let your light shine - so others can see the deeds, but give the glory to the Lord. People need to be involved, and active, and use their light to motivate others. Paul used the Macedonians as an example; their tremendous sacrifice in giving first of themselves to the Lord and then the money they sent (2 Cor 8:1; Phil 4:15-16).

17Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

This is the Greek word *pleroo*, fulfill. Having already discussed this, one can readily understand what Jesus is saying here. He came to fulfill, to complete, to “wrap up” the Old Testament because the Old Law was incomplete without the coming of the Messiah and all He was to do.

18For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

Jesus clearly states there will be a time when the smallest letter or stroke will pass away and that is when “all is accomplished.” Seventh Day Adventists use this verse to teach the Old Law will not pass away until the heavens and earth pass away. Not true! The heavens and the earth would have to pass away before the Old Law would pass away *without being fulfilled*. But Jesus did, in fact, fulfill it!

God’s Law could not, and would not, be removed until it had done what it had been sent to accomplish. Paul declares this in Galatians 3:21-29. Verse 24 is the key - the Old Law was the tutor to lead us to Christ, to be justified by faith; and now that faith has come we are no longer under the tutor. The Law was to bring us to Christ and once it has done that, then we no longer need it.

Jesus says, that **until all is accomplished**, nothing is going to pass away. The Seventh Day Adventists have separated the Law into two parts: the Ceremonial and the

Civil. They believe that what was nailed to the cross was the ceremonial law. It cannot be proved that there was a distinction or that these two parts existed. For example, note Luke 2:28ff. Mary has come to offer a pair of turtledoves. Some have caused confusion concerning the "Ceremonial Law," or the "Law of the Lord." Seventh Day Advocates say this was a Ceremonial Law and one that was done away with by Christ. But Luke calls it a "Law of the Lord" (v. 39), which would fall under their "Civil" designation. There is no distinction; the Law is one package. How did a Jew know to remember the Sabbath day? He did not know how to do that except to go outside of Exodus 20. There is no Sabbatarian who can answer this question, "What do you do on the Sabbath?" They also cannot prove that the Ten Commandments were given "in the beginning." Deuteronomy 5 proves the Law was given "...not...with our fathers, but with us..."

Passages which indicate that the Law was to abide forever use the Hebrew word *olam* which is also applied to incense, the priesthood and several other things. Sabbatarians say that the passage dealing with the stones written on by the finger of God means forever but if that is true, then all these other things were to last forever. *Olam* means a specified period of time, known only by God. Man has no right to say that God must remove a law, only God can decide when to do so! So, the Law was to exist for an undisclosed period of time. God did not tell those at Sinai that this Law would last for only a period of some 1,400 years, but He knew that it would. They had no understanding of time. Ecclesiastes 1:3-4 state that the earth will remain *forever*. The Jehovah's Witnesses also teach this doctrine. The word is again *olam*, a specified period of time known only to God. What man could ever declare the heavens and the earth to be forever? No man! God only is the One to make such a declaration, and if He so willed it, the heavens and earth would last forever. Please notice these things the Old Testament declares will be "forever" - *olam*.

1. Exodus 12:14 - The Passover,
2. Exodus 30:8 - Incense,
3. Exodus 29:42 - Burnt offerings,
4. Exodus 40:15 - The priesthood and
5. Leviticus 3:17 - The peace offering.

It could have been temporary but, also, it could have been everlasting. If God had wanted it to be everlasting, it could have been that way. God wanted them to understand that the Laws He was giving them would hold true for them, their children and their grandchildren. This explains why Jesus had so much difficulty moving the people away from the Old Law.

JESUS' VERBAL INSPIRATION VIEW

Matthew 5:18

When considering the Law, Jesus says, not the smallest letter (yod, Hebrew marking) or the smallest stroke (tav, Hebrew letter) shall pass away. Jesus is showing that he subscribes to the word for word inspiration. There was not anything written that was not supposed to be and what was written was there because God wanted it to be! And, none of it would pass away until all would be fulfilled.

19Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The word **annul** is translated “relax” or “break.” The Rabbi’s counted 613 commandments in the Old Law and made some more important than others. Jesus is saying that whoever relaxes (regards more lightly - 16:19; 18:18) will still be in the kingdom, but will be **least** in the kingdom. This does not mean that, since they did not think one command as important as another, they decided not to obey it. They still obeyed it, but they felt it to be less significant than other laws (see Mt 23:23).

But whoever keeps. The person who really wants to be considered **great** in God’s kingdom is going to have to treat the Law with the respect it deserves. We should not read into this that if one neglects and misuses God’s word he will be in the kingdom, but just not as high up on the “social ladder.” We are not going to be worth much if we do not take serious consideration of God’s Law. If we want to be worth something to God we will keep His Law and teach others to keep it also.

This is the third and fourth time that He mentions the kingdom of heaven.

20For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus began on one level (that of the scribes and Pharisees) and now He brings the people to the next level. If they do not respect all of the commandments and teach others to do the same, then they are on the same level as that of the scribes and Pharisees. The most startling teaching is seen when Jesus says that if they do not surpass the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, they will not even make it into the kingdom!

This is the key verse for the Sermon on the Mount; the thesis statement or the central idea for the entire Sermon. Every sermon and every term paper needs to have one statement that specifies what is trying to be communicated. That is what this verse is for Jesus. The scribes and the Pharisees were “top drawer,” an elite group that set the standard everyone looked up to and tried to copy. These are the ones in Matthew 23 who wore broad phylacteries (a box containing scripture) on their arms. They were

made to cover the whole forearm, thinking this made them more righteous. On their heads were bands holding boxes with scriptures inside: "As frontals on the forehead..." (Deut 6:4-9). These were things done to emphasize (and demonstrate) their righteousness, but such righteousness was not genuine. Their righteousness was hypocritical. According to Romans 10:3ff they tried to establish their own righteousness and set their own standards, not recognize God's. Still, this would be a very surprising statement by Jesus. These are the religious elite, the top men of the religious world and Jesus says that people need to be better than they; doing daily what God wanted done, but what the scribes and Pharisees were not doing.

***See breakdown of this next section

Each new contrast will begin with, "You have heard it said, but I say to you. It is what they have done with the Law that Jesus is going to criticize. The first contrast is:

CONTRAST #1 - Anger

²¹You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'

Here is revealed the problem the people had. The common people did not read the scriptures and that is why He says **you have heard**. They heard the Law and the interpretation of the Law from the scribes and Pharisees. This is a good example about the need for Bible study. These people were being taught the Law, but with Rabbinic tradition. They received an interpretation from the Pharisees. They should have studied for themselves.

Not commit murder. The first of these two statements comes from Exodus20:13 and is a part of the Ten Commandments. **Liable to the court** comes from Deuteronomy 16:18. Jesus shows that there is more to these laws than the simplistic interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees.

²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca', shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool', shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

But I say to you. Jesus taught as one having authority (Mt 7:28ff).

Guilty before the court. Jesus arranges the sin of anger into three categories:

1. *Silent anger.* One is angry with his brother, but keeps quiet or to himself. The Pharisees had said if one committed murder he was liable to the court, but Jesus says even if one is angry, then he is guilty.

2. *Railing speech.* If one would say “Raca” (fool, empty head, a good for nothing) - verbally angry, Jesus says, he shall be guilty before the supreme court, the Sanhedrin.
3. *Bitter reproach.* Saying, “You fool” will make one guilty enough to go into the hell of fire. The word “fool” may not sound as bad as “a good for nothing” to us, but this word is a strong expression of contempt. Many translators believe this is like our damning someone today; wishing the worst thing upon them, striking out with words of condemnation; words guilty enough to go to hell for.

A sin has stages, but God notes it in its “seed” form. It begins with a silent burning anger, then grows. The one who becomes angry pursues the anger, then begins to wish the worst possible thing to happen to his enemy. It is in the heart where one loses control and the loss of control can result in losing one’s soul. Jesus says the true righteousness is *from the inside*. A person should have been able to see right through the Pharisees’ hypocrisy (Mt 7:20). They had an *external* righteousness, but Jesus’ teachings go beyond the external actions and into the heart.

²³If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

Continuing His thoughts about anger.

²⁴leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

We should realize that with God a proper relationship with each other is more important than the worship itself. 1 John 4:19-21 says, “We love because He first loved us. If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar.” John is saying we cannot love God without loving one another and if we cannot get along with one other, we cannot love God.

Imagine trying to worship God, but God says, “I do not want your worship. Leave that and first go take care of the problem with your brother and then come present your offering.” This is someone who has a problem *against you*, then you go and make reconciliation. We cannot have strife with one another and have fellowship with God. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” There are times when people will be angry with you and you do not know why. But you should make an attempt at reconciliation. 1 Timothy 2:8 - “I want the men to pray...without wrath or dissension.” Many in congregations are in the situation where there is so much strife that one sits on one side and the other on the opposite side hating each other. But Paul says no, you cannot do that. God does want you to come back and worship, but Jesus is showing that there are some things more important. A right relationship cannot be had with God when a wrong relationship exists with a brother.

25 Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

Still in the discussion of anger.

26 Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent

This is an interesting discussion and easier to understand when we recognize this is part of **CONTRAST #1 - Anger**. The one who fuels strife is going to get in further trouble. Here is one who is being taken to court, perhaps because he did not earlier control his anger. On his way he encounters his opponent at law. How should he act?

Make friends quickly. Here is the opportunity to defuse the situation, so endeavor to make friends. This shows the logic of controlling our tongue and our feelings. “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Prov 15:1). By making friends, the anger is defused as well. Proverbs 22:5 says, “Do not associate with a man given to anger...”

You shall not come out until you have paid the last cent. You will get what you deserve. The Bible is full of passages constantly warning to be careful about one’s words (see Mt 12:36-37). Be careful about your words. You will have to give an account.

CONTRAST #2 - Adultery

27 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery;’

Exodus 20:14. This is exactly what the Ten Commandments say.

28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Once again, Jesus is going beyond what the scribes and Pharisees taught. The word **adultery** is “moikeuo” which means sexual relations outside the bounds of a marriage contract. Also, a single person having sex with a married person is adultery. The Pharisees were teaching that the actual act is sinful. Now we have Jesus’ contrast.

I say to you...already in his heart. Jesus says a man who even **looks** at a woman for the purpose of lusting has already committed the adulterous act. God created the normal male and when he sees an attractive woman sometimes sexual desire can be stirred. But this is where he must draw the line between proper Christian behavior and what is not. If he continues to look, and then fantasizes, he is guilty of committing adultery in his heart. Nothing is sinful in the initial looking, but to go further is to lust and

sin. Who is going to commit murder? One who has uncontrolled anger. One who is going to commit adultery is the one with uncontrolled lust. Mental discipline is essential! The Bible often calls this “self-control.” “I have made a covenant with my eyes, how can I lust?” (Job 31:1). Job would not let this happen. We must not let this happen!

***See *Rocky Mountain Christian, Sept. 80 Series, “As I see it.”*

If a woman sees her husband lusting, can she divorce him for adultery? The answer seems to be “no” for the following reasons:

1. Jesus adds the phrase **in your heart** which separates it from the actual act of adultery.
2. This is not the same as “the act” of adultery, which requires two people (Jn 8:4).
3. The sin of adultery requires the two becoming one flesh (1 Cor 6:16).
4. Logic: Should we put everyone in jail who has been angry (thus guilty of murder?). Also, has not every person lusted to some extent, including women?

This is not to minimize the import of this passage. God will hold accountable those who lust. To Him, the sin of lust has the same consequences as the act of adultery. Christians must control their thoughts (Phil 4:8).

²⁹And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Right eye (and hand - v. 30) was regarded by the Jews as the most precious.

Continuing our discussion of lust, He says, “If it causes you to stumble, tear it out.”

³⁰And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

Here He adds the **right hand**.

***See Article: “*Man Chops Off Hand.*”

The point Jesus makes here: it is better to lose the dearest thing in life than to lose one’s soul. Matthew 16:26 says, “For what will a man be profited, if...forfeits his soul?” Jesus is talking about the earnestness with which one should pursue the sinless life. A

literal execution of this would turn the church into a hospital. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 commands us to “Abstain from every appearance of evil.” The plucking out the eye or cutting of the hand will not keep a person from doing these things. So the literal execution will not solve the problem, but the person should be ready to rid sin from his life. So, our most prized possessions are not worth the loss of our souls. Do what ever it takes, give your all to keep from sinning!

CONTRAST #3 - Divorce

³¹And it was said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of dismissal’; ³²but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Again, notice the formula Jesus uses. He is plainly dealing with the same thing - the righteousness of the Pharisees in contrast to what Jesus says. In the Mishnah is a section called “Gittin.” In it is “Bills of Divorcement” with the three schools of thought discussed here:

1. *Shammai* school of thought - taught that a man could not divorce his wife unless he found her to be unchaste.
2. *Hillel* school - taught even if she burned the food a man could divorce his wife (see Deut 24:1).
3. *Akiba school* - taught if a man found one fairer than his wife (“no favor in his eyes”) he could divorce her.

The school of Shammai agrees with Jesus’ teaching. Mark chapter 10 approaches divorce from the woman’s viewpoint. Divorce was allowed in Judaism and it involved a simple process in which the person being divorced from would receive a certificate (called a *get*). There was no thought about the sanctity of the marriage relationship or the consequences of this action. This certificate, which was placed into the woman’s hands, read “Go, thou art free to marry any man” (Gittin 9:3). The certificate protected her from being charged as an adulteress if she should remarry. Jesus is going to go beyond the liberties provided by the Mosaic Law. His teaching concerning divorcing and remarrying will be far more rigid, as will be seen here and in Matthew 19:1-9. Jesus comes with His authoritative decree - “Everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity makes her commit adultery.” In effect He is looking at two major points:

1. It is assumed the woman will remarry. The husband, who has exposed her to this fate, must bear some of the responsibility by divorcing her. But, only if he is divorcing her for reasons other than **unchastity** - sexual unfaithfulness, fornication. Thus, Jesus contradicts the teaching of the

scribes and Pharisees by saying that the divorce should not take place at all, unless fornication has occurred.

2. Jesus wants the man who divorces his wife to think seriously about the consequences of the act. There are two direct consequences:
 - a. He might force her into an adulterous situation - because she would likely remarry without having a God-approved reason. However, if he divorced her because of adultery, it would be her own fault. Equally, it would be her sin (of adultery) if she chooses to remarry - even though she did not have the scriptural right to remarry.
 - b. He might end up in a marriage himself that is adulterous, by marrying someone who has been put away by another (and therefore is not free to marry again).

If you are guilty and you are divorced, you must live the single life or find a way to be reconciled to your mate (1 Cor 7:10-11).

You can see from this, and the section in Matthew, the way the Law was manipulated to fit what they wanted. Notice the way the question is asked in Matthew 19:3, "...for any cause...?" This shows the evil intent of the scribes and Pharisees. They would like the freedom to divorce for any reason. Jesus will not agree with their evil and self-centered motives.

There are those who argue that once a divorce occurs the marriage bond is broken. This passage will not allow such a conclusion. Jesus says that **whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery**. How can it be **adultery** if she was no longer bound to another? It cannot. Therefore, in the eyes of God, she is still bound. To marry another would be to commit adultery.

CONTRAST #4 - Vows (5:33-37)

³³Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.'

The word **oath** has to do with vows or pacts (Lev 19:12; Deut 23:21; Num 30:2; Eccl 5:4-5). What these passages are teaching us is when one does make an oath, or a vow, he had better keep it because God is witness to the words that proceed out of his mouth and He will hold him responsible for what he said he would do. Exodus 20:7 is one of the most misunderstood passages. It is talking about swearing by the name of the Lord, making a vow, but then not doing it. A person is then taking His name in vain. It got to where the *form* of the promise was the most important aspect of making a vow. The way it was said determined whether it had to be fulfilled or not. Matthew 23:16-22 - "Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the

temple, he is obligated.” A man would say, “I swear by the temple I will repay you.” But he did not repay the debt. Then he would say, “Oh, but I swore by the temple, not by the gold of the temple.” Jesus is teaching to not make false vows, but fulfill your vows to the Lord. Do not make the promises and then not keep them.

³⁴But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’, or ‘No, no’; and anything beyond these is of evil.

There are a lot of things to consider here:

1. Christ and Paul took oaths. (See Mt 26:63-64; 2 Cor 1:23; Rom 1:9; 1 Thess 5:27; Phil 1:8; 2 Tim 4:1ff; 1 Cor 15:31; Rev 10:5-6.) What Jesus is doing is showing that oaths are ultimately referable to God. A Christian’s word should be his bond. (Every man’s word should be his bond!) If we say “yes” then people know we will do what we said. In Matthew 23 the people were trying to manipulate the law. Jesus says truly righteous people will keep their word. Righteous people are trustworthy people, not having to “swear” by or upon anything.
2. He shows that oaths are ultimately referred to God in the end. Any oath or promise automatically involves God.

CONTRAST #5 - Revenge (5:38-42)

³⁸You have heard that it was said, ‘an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’

This is a quotation from the Law of Moses (Ex 21:34; Lev 24:20). The original intent of this Law was to cause a person to think seriously about what he did before he did it. If, in a fit of rage, one struck another, damaging his eye, then the attacker would lose his eye. Or if, by throwing a rock which causes another to lose an arm, then that is what will happen to the one who threw the rock. “Look before you leap.” “Think ahead.”

The scribes and Pharisees had turned this into a law of revenge. The intent of the original law was for a sentence to be meted out by a recognized court judge, who would listen and determine if the “eye for an eye” was the proper justice. The Pharisees saw this as a license for personal revenge.

³⁹But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

We saw this illustrated by Jesus Himself. He was mistreated, but He did not respond with personal revenge, even though He had the power to do so.

Resist means “to stand against.” This is not dealing with self-defense; a life-threatening situation. In Christianity there are two responses to have when someone mistreats you.

1. *Forgive and*
2. *Let God take the proper revenge* (Rom 12:14-21). “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. So, we need to leave justice in the hands of God. As we read on in Romans 13 we see that God has authorized the government to enact punishment. It is acceptable, then, for the Christian to use the government if justice needs to be meted out.

⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

Here is one who virtually wants to take everything you own. Give it to him without thought of revenge. A society that is of the mind-set to seek revenge is one plummeting to self-destruction. That is what is happening in our world today; someone does wrong to another and he feels he must take revenge into his own hands.

⁴¹And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.

This was governmental oppression, because the law of Rome was that the Roman soldier could require a person to carry his baggage or armor **one** mile. The Jews had mile markers along the roadsides to the inch from their houses. When they reached that inch, they dropped the baggage. Jesus says, if they require you to go one mile, go **two**. Imagine the surprise of the soldier! One going the extra mile; not thinking of revenge and standing on his own rights; but showing a different spirit - serving instead of being served; showing an altogether different attitude. The concept of going two miles - that “extra mile” - provides some tremendous spiritual lessons for us today. Consider the following:

GOING TWO MILES

Matthew 5:41

1. **SOME WALK THE FIRST MILE AND NO MORE.**
 - A. There are those who will do just what God requires - and no more.
 - B. They want to get by doing the minimum.
2. **SOME TRY TO WALK THE SECOND MILE BEFORE THEY FINISH THE FIRST.**
 - A. There are those who want to get the honor of the second mile without walking the first mile of service.

B. We must do all what God asks us to do in that first mile.

3. SOME WALK THE FIRST MILE TWICE.

A. Some are so legalistic in their thinking that they do what God demands, but they also try to do what has been done again and again.

B. Once a person does what God requires (e.g. has been baptized), he does not need to do it again and again.

4. SOME WALK BOTH THE FIRST AND THE SECOND MILES.

A. There are those who are concerned about what God wants them to do.

B. These are the ones who also want to “go above and beyond the call of duty.”

C. They do this because of their love for God (Eph 4:1; 5:2; 5:15f.).

⁴²Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Jesus is talking about the positive side of giving; not giving grudgingly because forced to do so. We are called to be good stewards (2 Thess 3:10) and are to give as we are able to one who is in need, while we have opportunity (Gal 6:10). Ephesians 4:28 talks about the reason we work - so we have something to share with those who are in need.

The Old Testament Law on borrowing was such that there was not supposed to be interest charged when one loaned money to brethren (Lev 25:36; Deut 23:19ff; Ex 22:25). Jesus talks about this same principle in Luke 6:34 - “And if you lend to those from who you expect to receive...” In this context Jesus is talking about “patting ourselves on the back” in thinking we are sacrificial by lending to others. But, even the sinners (Gentiles) do the same thing, so we are not doing any differently than they. Christianity should be a step above that. Jesus is including the possibility of our not even getting back our original investment.

When a principle is established by God in the Old Testament, there should be something to that principle. To apply this today: if I know of a brother in need and have the money to lend to him then I should lend it without interest. A genuine need should not be charged interest (Lev 25:36). Deuteronomy 23:19-20 talks about charging a foreigner interest. Exodus 22:25 is another that deals with this according to the Law. “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, ...you shall not charge him interest.” So, should Christians help fellow Christians by lending money without

interest? This is what God expected from his people under the Old Law. It was acceptable to charge the foreigner (e.g. non-Christian) interest, but not your brother.

CONTRAST #6 - Vengeance (5:43-48)

Pharisees

1. Love your Neighbor
2. Hate your Enemies

Jesus

1. Love your Enemies
2. Pray for your Persecutors
3. So you can be like your Father

⁴³You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

This is unique to the sixth contrast because in Leviticus 18:19 **hate your enemy** is not part of the Old Law. So this was an expansion, or an addition, to the Law.

⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

The word **love** is “agapata” (same as in Eph 5:25 where husbands are told to love their wives). It is a purposeful type of love. Love, defined, is doing whatever is in the *best interest* of the other. We choose to do that. We do everything in our power for others’ best interests (1 Jn 3:16-18). Christians are to also love their enemies. We make our best efforts for them. We love, because we have the enemies’ best interest at heart. We do what is best for them. We make our best effort. The application for this is clear for Christians. There are many who stand as enemies of Christianity and the Lord’s church. The Christian reaction should be one of love and kindness. This is how Jesus responded to His enemies. So should we. When you love someone you should pray for him or her. It is difficult to hate someone for whom you continually pray.

This is the illustration of going the second mile. The second mile is the mile of love. God wants us to serve not from compulsion, but from love.

Pray for those who persecute you - bring the name of that person before God, praying for God to help, bless and forgive them just as Jesus did on the cross.

⁴⁵in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Sons. When the Bible talks about being sons of the Father it is really talking about the idea of characteristics. Since a Christian must have the characteristics of his Father in

heaven, then he needs to love his enemies and pray for his persecutors. How does God love? The example is here.

He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

God blesses not only those who are His, but those who are not His. Some use this passage to illustrate the “supposed” answer to prayer by those outside of Christ. God does bless all, but those blessings do not indicate God approves of all. Some may be evil and unrighteous. According to Proverbs 15:9,29, “If one turns his face from the law, even his prayers are an abomination to Him.”

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?

If we do the same as the unrighteous do, then are we any better than they? If you love me, it is easy for me to love you. What is special about Christians is that we love and do good to those who do not like us and are not nice to us. As a matter of fact, the very ones who are trying to do bodily harm to us are the ones we should love. If we love only those who love us, we are no different from them.

47 And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Greetings are expressions of friendship. The Gentiles greeted those they knew, but not those they did not know. Jesus is saying it is easy for us to love our “inner circle.” Being friendly is something Christians should be to all; out going, reaching out, talking. How many times did we become friends with people by just talking to them - those we knew, as well as those we did not know?

48 Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

This is a passage that is easily misunderstood. Many think we are to reach perfection, but there is no way we can (Rom 3:10,23). In context, this is talking about having perfect *love*. We can love as God loves. When we love our enemies as much as we want God to love us, then we have fulfilled verse 48. When He talks of the perfection of the heavenly Father He is talking about perfect love. Our love is worthless if we show no more than the Gentiles. Romans 13:8 - “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.” 1 John 4:19-21 - “We love because He first loved us.”

CHAPTER SIX

1 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

Righteousness is something we do in Matthew. But it is not something we do in Romans, it is something we are because of what God has made us. God makes us “righteous,” “justifies” us in Romans. This is not how Matthew is using this word.

There are four areas of righteousness Matthew is going to discuss.

1. *In Alms (6:2-4).*
2. *In Prayer (6:5-15).*
3. *In Fasting (6:16-18).*
4. *In Materialism (6:19-33).*

Beware. This warning should provoke some serious thought about practicing our righteousness before men to be **noticed** by them. We need to be careful about why we do what we do. We need to note what is being done and how it is being done. Why are we doing these things? To be noticed by men?

Reward. Our Christian deeds should be done only because we want to glorify our Father in heaven, not because we want to receive glory from men. This helps us to understand Matthew 5:16 which says let your light shine. Now Jesus tells us the people not to practice them before men. What is the difference? The difference is the *reason*. It is for the purpose of receiving glory for their acts. They want men to see and give them glory and when men receive that glory then their Father in heaven will not reward them. If we do good deeds and someone sees what we have done and they glorify God, then that is what Jesus wants. If what we do for the Lord is done to be seen of men, then we are stealing glory from God. We take away from Him what is due to Him, not us. According to 6:19-21 we want to lay up treasures in heaven.

²When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Alms. This word is from “eleeos.” We discussed this in 5:7 as meaning “merciful.” The New American Standard Version reads “acts of charity.” This is what we are talking about. Note the times this word occurs (Mt 5:7; 6:2; 9:13,27; 12:7; 15:22; 17:15; 18:33; 20:30-31; 23:23). What Jesus is talking about is something someone does for someone else, which ranges from the giving of material goods to forgiving. It is significant in Matthew that following Jesus requires His disciples to conduct themselves in a certain way, and that is to give. They (we) must be a giving people, charitable people, forgiving people. Thus, it could be said that a person who is very selfish is not a disciple of Jesus. One who has, but does not share, has missed the point of discipleship.

Someone who does something for someone else, and announces he is doing it, wants others to see. Jesus says:

They have their reward in full. There is tremendous sadness in this, because God had hoped to reward that person. But, since they already received their reward from others, God no longer intends to give any. Would you not rather have God's reward instead of men's reward?

³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing

Our giving is not for public knowledge - to be seen. It is done out of love for God and a desire to serve Him. The expression concerning the left hand not knowing what the right hand does is a figure of speech, emphasizing the attitude of secrecy God's people have when it comes to service.

⁴that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

God sees and knows. Note the sections talking about **Father**, which will be covered at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The point here is, God is the one whom we want to see us and there is nothing we can do that He will not see or know. The key is in our attitude - the attitude that all is done for God's glory. We can see in this that there is a variety of things one can do privately, while others lend themselves to a public nature. There are times when my helping someone else should be a personal deed while, on the other hand, there may be a time when helping would be a public deed. Jesus is trying to show a balance and stressing the reason why a person does what he does. We can let people know that Jesus is doing things through others without mentioning names and, in doing so, we give the glory to God.

It is sad we have reached point of not glorifying God, but the man. But, we need to see what is done. We need to praise God for these people and their good works, but not glorify the people themselves. We must not rob God of the glory that is rightfully His by praising people for the works they do.

⁵And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

He does not say "and if you pray." He assumes that righteous people will pray!

Not as the hypocrites. The two most public places in Jerusalem were the **streets** and the **synagogues**. Their praying in those places was done in order to be seen by men. They were hypocritical because they only pretended to be righteous - praying only to be seen by men.

Reward in full. Did you know you receive a reward for saying prayers? What is the reward God gives? The hearing. He is the One who will hear the prayer. That is the ultimate reward we want.

⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Jesus is not saying we cannot pray publicly, but the righteous have a private prayer life. We know God sees and hears even in our **inner chambers** with no one else around. As a child of God we speak to our Father. He likes it when we talk to Him alone.

Will repay you. He is going to respond to our prayers. 1 John 5:14-15 - "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us..."

⁷And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

Again, the assumption His disciples will be praying. The Gentiles loved to repeat the same things over and over again; **repetition** as the Muslims use, rosaries and prayer books. Jesus is letting us know how the Father feels about prayer. We should not use *meaningless* repetition. A prayer can be repetitive and still have meaning. Offering thanks for our food could turn into vain repetitions, but if we are mindful of the fact that God is the One who gives all things and we are thankful, He will not condemn our prayers. We do need to think about our prayers; the context, the content, the attitude we demonstrate when we pray.

They suppose. This is the reason for their repetitions, to invoke the gods to hear them.

⁸Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.

Certainly, at first glance, we can see the all-knowing nature of God. He knows before we ask a single word. He knows what it is we are about to say. So, then, why pray if God already knows? Prayer is for *us*! Prayer is for *our* benefit. If we do not pray, we do not show our faith in God.

Why pray, if God already knows what we need?

1. *Because we are commanded to pray.* It is the will of God that we pray (see Mt 6:9; 1 Thess 5:17; Phil 4:6; Rom 12:12).
2. *Because we are told we will receive when we ask* (1 Jn 5:14-15). There is a good illustration of this in 2 Kings 19. Hezekiah worried that the king of

Assyria will do to his kingdom what he had already done to the Northern Kingdom of Israel - destroy it. Hezekiah then prays to God. Notice the prayer. Then notice God's answer. "Because you have prayed about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you." If Hezekiah had not prayed to God, then God would not have responded. But, he did and God did!

3. *Because it is good for us.* It brings us closer to God. It is good to verbalize what we feel. Confession is good for the soul. It is good for us because it helps us prioritize our lives and get things in their proper perspective. We pray, knowing that God knows what we need.

This is comforting in that while we feel inadequate in prayer, not fully able to express what we feel, it makes no difference because God knows - especially when we are grieved. Maybe we cannot verbalize how we feel, but God knows. This is comforting - Romans 8:26ff.

⁹Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.

This is often called the Lord's prayer, but it is actually the *disciples'* prayer.

In this way. This is basically a pattern of the content of prayer.

Our Father. We must appreciate the fact that we are addressing our heavenly Father - recognizing and identifying the relationship that exists between our God and ourselves. Jesus wanted the Jews (and us) to see God as the Father. A good example is that of the ideal relationship with our earthly fathers - our "Dads" - with no reservations about talking to them about whatever it is. God is the perfect Father for us to come to in this way.

In Heaven. Jesus makes a clear distinction between our earthly father and God. He is our Father *in heaven*. He is our Father, not "our Dad" - a term used in somewhat of a less than honorable relationship. There needs to be balance in how we are approaching.

Hallowed = special, above all names. It is sanctified, holy, reverend. Jesus wants us to begin our prayers with praise; acknowledging, recognizing and stating verbally that God is great, that His name is the greatest and that His name is above all names. He is the Only One. Hallowed be *His* name. We are not just addressing anybody. This is the Almighty God! God is One who demands respect. His name is Hallowed and that is what we must acknowledge as we begin our prayers.

¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

This is Hebrew parallelism. **Thy kingdom come** and **Thy will be done** are saying the same thing. When God rules as king, His subjects submit themselves to His rule, to Him. What Jesus is encouraging us to pray here is that God's expressed will for mankind be done on this earth. That is why He says, "On earth as it is in heaven." The angels in heaven do what God wants. They are in total submission to God. Jesus knows this because He has been there and has experienced their answering the beckoning call of God. Christians should develop the attitude of the angels. When God says, they do. Thus, the emphasis on **Thy will** being done. That is also what Jesus prayed in the garden (Mt 26:39).

This is not specifically asking that the church would come. It has little to do with that. It is a prayer that God's *rule* would take place on the earth. "Thy will be done" is present tense, a continuous action. We want it to be done as much before the church as after the church. So we pray for God's will for man be executed by man. It is God's will that the church be established and in that sense it is true, but the general meaning is that God's will be done on earth. There is nothing unscriptural about praying this. We should pray that God rules on earth as He does in heaven.

Notice as we move into the fourth element of the prayer, we express our concerns and needs. The order Jesus teaches is a lesson for us. Unfortunately, we usually begin with our needs and concerns. Jesus does not teach us this way. We should (1) praise God; (2) pray concerning God's work and then (3) pray for our needs.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

What is interesting about this part of the prayer is not so much that we ask for needs, but ask for **THIS day** our daily bread. This refers to the Jews' wandering in the wilderness. God provided daily the manna they needed. They were to learn to trust God day by day and not stockpile things so they did not have to worry about God's blessing them for the next month. Everyday we should turn to God in our needs. Our affluent society has destroyed the power of this statement. Imagine living in an environment with the stomach crying for food and you have no idea where you are going to get it. It is then you fall down and ask for food for only today. Today I will ask for the Lord's blessing. This expresses humbleness (see 6:33-34). The application is hard to apply in affluent societies. But we must recognize that God can remove His blessings. We must be grateful that we have what we do have and our God has given it to us.

¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

We expressed a physical, personal concern and now we express a spiritual concern. We need God's forgiveness and we are able to approach Him for it because of the past tense of the following second phrase:

Have forgiven our debtors. We come to God asking Him to forgive us, only after we have already forgiven others.

13And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.'

Numbers 6:24-26 is the prayer of Israel for spiritual protection, which is the last element of the disciples' prayer. The Greek text has the definite article, "deliver us from *the* evil." So it could mean to keep us away from the Devil. It really does not change the meaning, whether Devil or evil. We are appealing to God to help us to stay away from anything that will take us away from His word and His will. 1 Corinthians 10:13 assures us, "No temptation that has overtaken you..." And 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3, "...pray for us...that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men...from the evil one." Paul says God will do so and we need to pray that He will. This is an element in prayer we rarely ever hear - keep us from evil. We hear the asking for forgiveness and that God will keep some things away from us. God helps us by keeping Satan out of our path. He will also help us by keeping us out of Satan's path.

Thine is the kingdom. This is probably not a part of the gospel of Matthew. It is not in the best manuscripts, but does not teach something that is wrong. In Luke 11:2-4 we have this prayer repeated and this ending is not in that prayer. It is not found anywhere in the New Testament. This is an insert, probably by some scribe who was copying the text. Our earliest manuscripts do not have these words. Note the Greek text apparatus on verse 13. The experts give the reading without the "For thine..." passage an {A} reading - and this means that they are 98% sure that what is said is actually what was written in the original.

14For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Jesus expands on what He mentioned earlier. The "**for**" refers to what He said in verse 12. Jesus is laying down a very common, but very powerful, Biblical truth: being forgiving. God's people should be characterized by this, whereas those in the ancient (and current) society were characterized as people holding grudges. Christianity is that which allows someone who has done something against us to be forgiven (Col 3:13), bearing with and forgiving one another. And we are this kind of people: Ephesians 4:32 - "forgiving each other just as God in Christ..."

Luke 17:3-4 says, "...and if he repents, forgive him." Does the Bible require us to forgive a person if he does not repent? If someone sins against us and has no intention to repent, we are not required to forgive him. Notice Jesus in saying what He did from the cross. "Father forgive them." The people did not receive forgiveness until they obeyed what Peter taught in Acts 2:38. Jesus is expressing His attitude and willingness to forgive. This is the way we should be.

If a person is living in sin and we just forgive that sin without requiring that person to do what God requires - "bring forth fruit" - then we are not encouraging them to do what God requires. Consider an example of church discipline. In Matthew 18 Jesus tells us what to do to encourage others to get their life back on God's path. That is the purpose of discipline. The passage in Luke says if he comes and repents, then you forgive him. That is what God does with us when we come time after time to ask for forgiveness. That is what is seen on the cross. Jesus desired that they be forgiven, but they would not be forgiven until they did something that showed they were willing to repent of what they had done to the Christ. See what Peter says in Acts 2.

15But, if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

We need to be a forgiving people and develop the God-like attitude. This must be done in order to receive God's forgiveness for ourselves.

16And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

The Law of Moses required fasting once a year - on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16; Num 29:7). The purpose of fasting was the denying the body food for a specific reason, such as mourning or for study and meditation. Fasting is that which has a spiritual emphasis. And since it has this, our fasting is a matter between us and God, it is not to be announced to others. It is done by choice, by Christians who want to spend time denying the physical to focus on the spiritual. It was a part of the early church life - Acts 14:23.

In order to be seen by men. They do not take care of their physical appearance so that everyone can see that they are fasting.

They have their reward in full. They will not receive any reward from God for this. The Pharisee, in Luke 18:12, bragged about his self-righteous attitude and his fasting two times a week.

17But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face

Jesus assumes that they will fast. No place in the scriptures shows that fasting is commanded. It is strictly a voluntary thing. Jesus was talking to people who fasted regularly as a part of their life style. It would be good for people today to fast. For more on this see notes on Matthew 4:2.

Anoint your head - take care of yourself so people will not be able to tell you are fasting. Besides, they do not need to know anyway. This is something between the person fasting and God.

18so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Just do it. Nobody needs to know you are fasting and God will repay you.

19Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

This is the beginning of the fourth category: *materialism*. A constant concern in the first century was the protection of wealth. There were two areas of their wealth they worried about; clothes and money. Clothes would be destroyed by moths and money would rust. Their houses were made of mud, which could be dug through and easily broken into.

20But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

The real emphasis in life is doing the will of God, practicing our righteousness to be seen of God. When our righteousness is approved by God, and not done to be seen of men, then we are making a deposit in God's "heavenly bank." Our emphasis should be on spiritual things and doing things with spiritual purposes. Our deeds do have a way of being "stockpiled" because He says:

Lay up for yourselves - do it, and do it again, having the security of not ever losing that reward. It is guaranteed in God's "bank."

21for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

If we are spending our lives and energies on earthly things, then our lives are not what God wants. We cannot spend all our time on earthly things and say that our hearts are with God. This is a revealing passage because you can tell a person's love and interests by looking at his treasures. Almost everything people do shows where their treasure is. Whatever that treasure may be - money, boats, houses, etc., that is where our hearts lie, because that is where our interests lie.

22The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

If money is the topic in verses 20-21 and money is the topic in verse 24, then verses 22-23 are also talking about money. This helps us in interpreting what is a difficult passage for many.

The lamp of the body is the eye. The eye allows images inside the body.

If it is clear...light. “Clear” = “sound” or “healthy,” allowing us to see things correctly. Christians see money as a tool to help further the Lord’s work and to meet our basic needs: not something to lavish upon ourselves. If the eye is clear, it sees things in the proper perspective.

If your eye is bad...darkness. “Darkness” in the Bible represents sin and ignorance. This is what Jesus is talking about. We will not see things the way they should be and, as a result, will be filled with things that are ungodly. When we see clearly, we have that attitude of Job - the Lord gives and takes away.

If in darkness...how great. Seeing things from a wicked point of view, one grows darker and more evil. One may start out with a clear eye, but it can become dimmer and dimmer until it is full of evil; greed, sin, money hungry, as those in 2 Timothy 3:2 (lovers of money). One must be careful.

No one can serve two masters. The one who has a clear eye is serving God; the one who has a dark eye is serving Satan. No man can serve both God and Satan.

You cannot serve God and mammon - wealth, property or money. If the whole of one’s life is wealth, then the whole body is corrupt. There are people who are able to become rich, perhaps because of a wise investment or an inheritance, but in every society, to obtain a lot of money, people have to do a lot of work - overtime, weekends, etc. What we love is what we give our devotion and attention to; not what we say we love, but what we show we love. Very few people will say they love money and hate God. I may say, “I love God.” Do I? Why is it that I cannot attend worship because I am working overtime? Why is it that when we have a gospel meeting or when we have a special contribution, I am not willing to help? What we do shows what we love. We cannot serve God and money. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 says the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil and those who desire it pierce themselves with many griefs. We long for it, work for it and the next thing we know we are in darkness. If the eye is lusting for wealth, then that lust will darken the soul. It will corrupt the heart. If the eye is allowing in the light of God’s word, then the soul will be full of God’s truth. The heart will reflect the clear, bright teachings of God’s Word.

²⁵For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, ad the body than clothing?

“But I have to work to feed and clothe my family and take care of them.” Jesus says: **Do not be anxious for your life.** This is the first of *five times* Jesus uses the word **anxious**. Verses 25-34 discuss anxiety - Jesus’ focus in these section. We see the word in 25,27,28,31 and 34.

Do not be anxious - “stop being anxious.” Anxiety is unnatural concern, generally over things we should not be concerned about, especially these three main categories:

1. Food,
2. Clothing and
3. Shelter.

Jesus talks about the basic human needs. We should not be concerned about these. This is easier said than done! These three are basic to human existence. Yet, those who are spiritual recognize that God knows we need these things and will take care of them.

Is not the life more than food and clothing? This is talking about priorities - putting things in their proper prospective. Is not life more than meal to meal and paycheck to paycheck? We worry too much about all these things! It is not our place to worry about these things, that is God’s job. Avon Malone said, “A life without God is reduced to paychecks, weekends and cheap thrills.” In John 4:34 Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”

²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

Birds of the air:

1. Do not sow,
2. Do not reap and
3. Do not gather into barns.

They never plant, they never harvest and they never stockpile for later. This is referring to one’s treasure. The birds do not do any of the above and yet the Father in heaven takes care of them. God provides all they need.

Worth much more than they are. The crown of God’s creation is man and woman. Everything was created for them. Because of this, they are obviously that which is most valuable to Him. So, as Jesus will say in 7:11, “If you then, being evil, know how to give

good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" So God, our heavenly Father, is One willing to give to His own.

27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?

A cubit measured somewhere between 18 to 24 inches. The American Standard Version says, "the measure of his life." The King James Version reads, "unto his stature." No one, through worry, can increase either his height or his length of life. Some people worry about their health all the time and, in fact, probably shorten their lives because of it.

28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,

Anxiety about clothing falls into two categories:

1. Will it be sufficient?
2. Will it be fashionable? Popular? Stylish?

Observe. "Toiling" and "spinning" represent worrying. Here is the idea of fretting over how to be properly attired. The lilies of the field are some of the most beautiful on the face of the earth, yet they do not worry or work to do it.

29 yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 30 But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?

With God it is nothing at all to beautifully clothe the grass of the field, but suddenly they are gone; the flower is faded and the grass is burned up. With God this is nothing, because He can bring it back if He so chooses.

So arrays or "so clothes." God has made the fields and flowers beautiful. They are beautifully "dressed." If God can do that with something He intends to quickly destroy, will He not provide for His children's needs even better?

Little faith. This is the first of five times Jesus will talk about "little faith" (8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20). These are people very weak in faith. **Faith** is the idea of trust or reliance. So Jesus is talking about fretting about, worrying about or having an anxiety about clothing and shelter. We have to work, but we have to trust in God as well. He will take care of the things by giving us work, but our focus must be on serving Him. Notice the contrast between *little faith* and *great faith* in Matthew (e.g. 8:10).

³¹Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’

Not be anxious. He has already told us why: God will take care of these things. It is foolish to say that God does not know or that He does not care about these things for us. It is also foolish to say God is powerless to do anything about it, because He is supreme in power. He made us and He knows our needs. He cares about us and He will help.

With what shall we clothe ourselves? A person may ask this and not sin. It is the anxiety that makes this sinful. We need to learn to trust God.

³²For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

God has not missed a single **thing**, He knows about every single need we have. We can let go of any concern and **seek** something vastly more important: verse 33.

³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

This is the key: **righteousness** (5:20). Righteousness is the central idea in the sermon. It is impossible for a person to be righteous while at the same time anxious about food and clothing. **Seek first “His kingdom”** and **“His righteousness”** are synonymous. This is what we are to seek.

Seek is in the indicative active which is a *continuous* process. We must continue to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. It is a day after day striving, just like one who seeks for daily food. We pray for bread and trust God will answer that prayer, so now we will focus on something else - something spiritual.

His kingdom - His rule. He is not talking about His church, but about seeking first the rule of God in the affairs of men.

Many say the **kingdom** is synonymous in *every* case with church. This is not true. The kingdom is *the rule of God*. That is what Jesus has been talking about. But the kingdom “on earth” is most likely the church, because we have one - and only - one kingdom on the earth and that is the church. When we talk about people of the world, they cannot be in God’s kingdom and not be in God’s church. But could a person be in God’s kingdom and not be in the church? Are not Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom? The kingdom of God includes all of the people of God. Dead or alive. So when we talk about the kingdom we have to examine whether or not we are talking about the church, the living kingdom on earth or whether we are talking about His over-all rule. Here are some examples that need to be considered:

1. Parable of the tares Matthew 13:37-43 - After the judgment has taken place and the Son of Man gathers out of His kingdom...kingdom of their Father. The kingdom, after the judgment, cannot be talking about the church.
2. 2 Peter 1:11 - The eternal *kingdom* will be abundantly supplied. This is not the church. This is the rule of God, the kingdom of God. To accept His rule - His kingdom - will secure your entrance into the eternal kingdom. This explains why "Thy kingdom come" should not be narrowed to mean only the church. This is not only what Jesus is talking about. We are to continually seek His kingdom. Certainly there are passages where the kingdom and the church *are* the same, but the context has to so determine. Note:

Matthew 18:16ff - The kingdom and the church are the same.

Colossians 1:13 - "...transferred us to the kingdom..." This is the church. Mark 9:1 is talking about the church. There were some who actually witnessed the establishment of the church. The kingdom (church) came with power when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:4ff) and the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff).

We are seeking first the rule of God and:

His righteousness. We have seen what are acts of righteousness according to God: alms, praying, fasting, the proper use of material things. When handled properly, we are following the righteousness of God. Remember 5:20 - it must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. So the meaning here is, seek first His rule and doing what He wants and all these things will be provided. Do His righteousness. Not man's, but God's.

All these things is the food, clothing and shelter. Remember, this is the general principle. Lazarus (Lk 16) and those mentioned in Romans 8:31ff did not receive all of these blessings because it was the plan of God for their lives. We do not know for certain what God has planned for us (Eccl 9:1). We are to be obedient and let God do what is best for us. We should remember that He loves us regardless of what befalls us (Rom 8:39).

³⁴Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Therefore is referring to the fact that God can take care of the things man is normally anxious about.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow is something we must deal with when it gets here. Worrying about it will not change it.

Each day...own. Each day has its own trouble. To say that God will remove trouble from those who seek first, fails to see what He is talking about here. God will not remove trials. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness (Mt 5:10-11).

Trouble = κακία which means evil, turmoil or bad things. We concern ourselves with the troubles of today, but do not worry about those troubles. "Worry pulls tomorrow's cloud over today's sunshine."

There seem to be three main points Jesus is making about worry (from 6:25-34).

1. *Worry is - unavailing* (vv. 27-28). It does not accomplish anything. It just does not work! Worrying is worthless!
2. *Worry is – unnecessary* (v. 30). It is unnecessary because God has promised to provide. Why worry about things that God will take care of?
3. *Worry is - unbecoming* (v. 32). All these things the Gentiles eagerly seek. God's children are not showing a very good example to the world when they worry or are anxious. Be anxious for nothing (Phil 4:6).

CHAPTER SEVEN

¹ "Do not judge lest you be judged.

Do not be someone who passes or makes judgments. The word **judge** is "*krinete*" which means to condemn or to judge as guilty. It is very typical for men to feel differently about others' sins. They do not like it when others judge them, but they think it is acceptable for them to judge others.

In Romans 2 Paul condemns the Jews because they condemned the Gentiles for doing the very thing the Jews were doing. "Therefore you are without excuse... practice the same things." You say one will go to hell for being a liar, but you lie. (Hypocrisy.) The Jews were passing judgment and not looking seriously at their own lives. They were, in fact, committing the same sins as the Gentiles!

We are not in the judging business. James 4:11-12 is as plain as it can be! "Do not speak against or judge your brother... You are not a doer of the law and not a judge... there is one Judge." Does this mean that we are not to judge at all, never or in any situation? No! Consider a number of passages:

Matthew 7:18-20 - "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit...so then you will know them by their fruits." A judgment is made as to whether a tree is good or bad by the fruits it bears. This is the way we are to see if individuals are good or bad, by the fruit they bear. We have to make judgments about the kinds of fruit a person is producing.

John 7:24 - Judge with righteous judgment, not according to appearance. Jesus says we need to judge - but the basis has to be of righteousness. God has made the judgment, we are just examining the fruit and saying what God has already so declared.

Galatians 6:1 - If one sees a brother overcome in a trespass, he must make a judgment to do what Paul says here to do. The spiritual one is to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. We judge them as condemned, but go to restore such a one.

Matthew 18:15ff - How can the church ever disfellowship if they cannot judge one to be in sin?

A judge looks at the evidence and then makes a judgment - guilty or innocent. We do the same in Galatians 6:1 on the basis of evidence. We judge them, we do not condemn them, but we do have the right to pass the judgments God has already made.

The application we have falls into two categories:

1. *We do not make judgments outside of what God's word has already said.* For example, a preacher telling one he is going to hell if he is not baptized. God has already said that one has to be baptized to be saved - 1 Peter 3:21. When someone declares a judgment and I repeat what was said, I am not the judge, but a reporter. If, in a district court the judge declares someone is guilty, I am not the judge if I repeat what he has said; I am merely "reporting" the fact. We do not put ourselves in the place of the Judge when we tell someone what God has already said. However, if God has not spoken we should not make a determination.
2. *Jesus is talking about judging a person's intentions.* What does a person intend; what is a person thinking? What was his attitude when he did this or that? For example, if a man misses Sunday evening service someone might say, "He is probably off hunting." Later it is learned he had stopped to help a motorist whose car had a flat tire. He missed worship by being a good Samaritan. One opened his mouth and stated a judgment even though he had no evidence. Those are the types of judgments we need to be careful of.

John 3:17 - "For God did not send the Son... to judge the world..." The world is judged already because it does not believe. The word "*krino*" is translated either "judged guilty" or "condemned." That is what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:1. We are not in the condemning business. Here, in John, Jesus is saying they are condemned already.

Romans 14 portrays those who are strong in faith judging those who are weak in the faith. They were judging on things that were outside of the scriptures. We have to use the guidelines given by God or we will end up in confusion and condemn ourselves by our own standards, which are not God's.

²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

The way you judge, you will be judged. If our judgment is harsh, critical and very narrow in the amount of leniency, then we can expect the same type of judgment from God toward us.

Your standard. Our lack of mercy and compassion on others will mean that same lack of compassion and mercy for us from God.

³And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

The truly righteous do not have time to be pointing their fingers at others. This presents a ridiculous picture as we try to visualize it; one person with a log in his own eye trying to get a speck out of his brother's.

⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye', and behold, the log is in your own eye?

Jesus, as the master teacher, is being thorough in His application about judging. If we were to stop here, we would think we should never say anything to people about the things they are having problems with. Jesus tells us to clean up our own lives first, making sure we are looking out for our own spiritual witness.

⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

He does not say we should not be concerned about our brother. He is telling us to deal with our own problems, then we will be better able to help others deal with their problems. We cannot influence others for good when our own lives confess sin and error. Jesus says we are "two-faced" if we are this way (as in v. 5). We blame others for their problems when, on the other hand, we have so many problems we are not really capable of helping someone else.

From a practical point of view, those who wrestle with their own weaknesses and learn how to conquer those weaknesses are better able to help someone else. A "speck in the eye" is a relatively small problem, especially compared to the problems of the one with the "log." When I have worked through my own weaknesses, then I am better able

to help someone else. Jesus is not saying to wait till we are perfect before we can help someone else. Otherwise Galatians 6:1 could never be fulfilled.

Clearly...to take the speck out... Too often we judge, but we do not try to genuinely help others. We are told to confess our sins to one another (Jas 5:16) but we rarely do that. So, we do not know about each other's weaknesses. We feel we are alone and we go through things alone spiritually because we do not tell others. The church has to be more open in helping each other, but with love and gentleness. "We are not to see through people, but to see people through."

⁶Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

"Pearl" is the same word as in Matthew 13:45-46 - the pearl of great price. The Pharisees are doing this with the message of Jesus. They do not consider it to be as valuable as it really is. Sanctified food is that which is good for humans and dog food is that which is not for human consumption. One should not give that which is holy to the dog to eat. The spiritual application is, there are some that are so far gone, we waste our time trying to give them something they do not perceive as holy. A pig will walk on anything, whether it is a pearl or a rotten apple. Matthew 15:14 - let them alone.

Matthew 10:13-14 - "If the house is worthy...but if not, let your greeting of peace return to you... shake off the dust of your feet." Do not keep preaching to those who do not want to hear what you have to say. Titus 1:15 teaches, "...to those who are defiled... their conscience are defiled." Let us look at this from two perspectives:

1. The Pharisees hearing Jesus may be becoming angry at Jesus' words (especially since they have set themselves up as judges of the people).
2. The lesson for the people is to examine their own hearts and determine whether that which is laid before them (Jesus' teachings) is truly holy or not.

⁷Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

Jesus is specific about man's relationship with the Father. This is so important! In the Greek language these verbs are "linear." One must continue to ask, to seek, to knock. In Luke 18:1-8 is the parable of the persistent widow. She got what she wanted because she kept on asking, not because she asked only one time. Keep asking, because if you ask once you might not receive but, in context of 1 John 5:14-15, it must be according to His will. If it is in accordance with that, it may be your persistence that determines whether you get it or not. Jesus is teaching about the loving nature of the Father, but their responsibility is to not give up. It is a personal thing to decide whether

to give up or not. Again, in 1 John 5, it is assumed you know God's will. You cannot ask God to forgive your sins if you are not willing to repent and be baptized. You can ask all you want, but if you do not repent and be baptized then you will never receive forgiveness. That is what 1 Peter 3:21 is all about.

It shall be given you. He does not say it "might," but it "shall." What might one seek for? The Messiah and the kingdom. If they keep seeking they will find. It may be, upon the first observation of Jesus, they reject Him as such, but if they keep seeking, they will find the Messiah they are looking for. If one really desires to find truth, he will find it!

James 1:5 - Ask, receiving wisdom, to understand trials. When there are things we want to know about, we want answers. God is the One to give wisdom. If one is seeking truth, he is going to find it. There is no one who has lived, or will live, who wanted to know truth and did not find it. A person is not eternally damned because I never preach the gospel to him. God will raise someone up if I do not want to do that. If my neighbor wants to know the truth and I do not give it to them, God will find someone who will, but I will be held responsible as a poor watchman Ezekiel 33:6. "Seek and you **shall** find." It will never happen that one who is seeking will not find because another failed to preach to him.

The asking, seeking and knocking also include prayer which is evident from verses 9-11. There are answers to prayer. Keep on seeking, asking and knocking and you will receive. If one wants to know, or wants answers, then Jesus encourages them.

⁹Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

Certainly no loving father would do such to a son! Neither would our Heavenly Father. Perhaps Jesus is attacking the negative attitude the scribes and Pharisees had toward God. They did not see God as a loving Father because of the captivity and all the trouble they experienced since the return from exile (cf. books of Haggai and Malachi).

¹¹If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Even evil men still have some good in them. They do care for their own. Equally, God cares for His own.

Your Father who is in heaven gives what is good to those who ask Him. Notice the qualifier - that the Father gives what is good to those **who ask** Him. Why? Because He is our Father and fathers like to give good gifts to their children. James 1:17 - every good thing and perfect gift comes... He is consistent in giving what is good and every-thing that is good in our lives has come from the hand of God. We sing the song, "Count your blessings," and have a great list of good things. Jesus encourages

us to pray. What can you name that He does not have the power to answer? Anything we ask, He can give.

12Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus has been talking about the way God responds to those who come to Him and how He is One to do good for them. We want good done to us, so this is what we ought to do for others. We want good gifts, so we should consider what we should do for others.

This is called the *golden rule* and it is, as many have said, a very simple, but very powerful teaching. Why? Because, in obeying this one verse, we could solve all of the woes of mankind! If all would approach life in this way, think of how much better this life would be. What is it you **want** done to you? Do that to others (Mt 6:14-15).

The Law and the Prophets. This sums up all of the teachings of the Law and Prophets (cf. also Mt 22:37-40). “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and your neighbor...”

13Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it.

Jesus encourages people to enter by the “narrow gate,” even though He has not explained what the narrow gate is. Jerusalem had a number of gates, some wide and some narrow. The most popular were the wide gates on the broad path. One would not want to travel the narrow road, especially with robbers, wild animals, etc. The gates were a part of walls, designed for defense so they did not have many wide ones. The people would be familiar with gates and Jesus makes a spiritual application for them.

The gate is wide...destruction. This is a road one does not want to be on, even though it is well traveled. It is well traveled because it offers the easy path and is comfortable. It is the broad way, the path of least resistance. It is the way to **destruction**.

Many are those who enter by it. There is a great number of people in the world, but the majority are not going to be saved because they are choosing the easy path. Think about this in regard to basic Christian living. Which is easier, to use the paycheck for self or to give large amounts to Christian work? Which is easier, to make some calls and visits or to stay at home and relax on the couch? Examples in life show us it is easier to do things Satan’s way. This is the direction the world takes – the easy road, the broad way. Christianity demands self discipline and self denial.

14For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

Narrow = "strait" in the King James Version. The word means "difficult" or "very hard." The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was a narrow, winding, rocky path which went up hill. Aside from the fact it was a difficult way, the ascent was rapid. These people would be aware of the difficulties in traveling such a road, so they would understand this.

Few are those who find it. Few are those who travel on it and, He says, "**who find it.**" One would have to be looking for it to find it. Once he did find it, he had to remain on it. It is a sad Biblical truth that of the billions who have lived through the centuries, only a few will see eternal life. There are many religions today that are teaching all religious people will be saved. This simply does not go along with the teachings of Jesus.

¹⁵Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

The first century world (as is ours) was full of false prophets. Thus, those who are going to be righteous are going to have to be alert. False teachers do not announce to all, "I am a false prophet." They come in the disguise of a sheep - soft, harmless, gentle. Paul warns the elders in Acts 20:28-29 to be on their guard for the flock because savage wolves will come into the church. Jesus is warning the people to beware of false prophets. What is important is the way they approach. They look peaceable, loving, kind, gentle, having all the attributes of being good friends. Satan is a cunning snake and he knows the best way to persuade people to believe what is not true. Do they know they are false prophets? Some do, as those described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, but others are just misled, self-deceived. Many other passages warn about false teachers:

Philippians 1:10ff - preaching from envy and strife. What they are teaching is true, but not for the right reasons.

1 Timothy 1:7 - those who make assertions about what they do not understand.

1 Timothy 4:1ff - teachings of demons will be taught.

2 Peter 3:16-17 - those who twist and distort the scriptures. There are many who believe in that what they are doing is correct. But many are doing it because they are deceitful.

Matthew 24:24 - deceiving, if possible, even the elect.

2 Corinthians 11:14 - Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

2 Peter 2:1 - false prophets among the people.

Inwardly...wolves. In Jesus' illustration the false teachers want to tear the people to pieces. A ravenous wolf is one so hungry that it rips and tears to shreds to feed itself. There are no good intentions in these false teachers. They have only evil on their minds. There are those today who give credit to false teachers. They will say, "But they do so much good." But, if their teachings are going to send people to hell, what difference does it make if they do some good deeds?

16You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?

Jesus will say again in verse 20, "**You will know them by their fruits**" - a significant point.

Grapes...are they? The one who plants expects to harvest fruits from what he has planted. He does not expect to go to a thorn bush and reap beautiful grapes. We must look at false teachers through God's eyes and not our own. If one obeys a false teacher he is not a child of God, but a child of Satan.

17Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

We do not say, "At least it is bearing fruit." If it is bad, it is bad; it is good for nothing.

18A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit

A good tree cannot produce bad fruit. A good Christian cannot produce bad fruit. On the other hand, a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. A false teacher cannot produce good fruit. What kind of fruit are we bearing? Are we good or bad trees? Good fruit is that of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23; love, peace, patience, etc.). These are the things people should see coming forth from us.

19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Rather than to leave the illustration without an ending, Jesus concludes by saying the rotten trees will face God in judgment and will be cut down.

Matthew 3:10 - John says the same thing. The axe is laid to the tree and thrown into the fire.

20So then, you will know them by their fruits.

This is how you can tell. Jesus tells them the way to identify a false teacher. He says their **fruits** determine how we can tell them. So we need to be fruit inspectors! We have to judge what one does; is it good or bad?

21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

The word "**Lord**" is "kurios" in the Greek. It is a significant word in the gospel of Matthew. This word is often aligned with YAHWEH in the Old Testament Hebrew. "Adoni" is the Hebrew word for "Lord." So Jesus is saying, "**Not everyone**" who says to Me, kurios, kurios. This is interesting, because Jesus is claiming authority for Himself. Now He is saying, you might say to ME, Lord, Lord. Master, ruler, controller, are all in the meaning of the word "Kurios."

Romans - 10:9-10 - We have to confess Jesus as Lord.

Philippians - 2:10ff - Everyone tongue will confess.

Just saying the words is meaningless. We will not be able to enter the heavenly kingdom just by verbalizing the Lordship of Jesus. What we do is say, "Lord, Lord" and then **do the will** of the Father who is in heaven.

Many say that faith is all one needs. But Jesus does not agree with that. He said one must **DO** the will of the Father and the New Testament is His will. It is His will we do good works, Ephesians 2:10. If we do not do His will, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

We do not do the works to *merit* salvation, but we do them because our Father in heaven has commanded us to do them. And, because we cannot do them perfectly we are guilty (Jas 2) of breaking the Law - law breakers. Since this is true and all sin, we need God's grace. That is the only way, we cannot earn our salvation, but that does not mean that we are not expected to do our best to do what God expects us to do. Grace is extended to those who are *trying* to do what God wants even though they cannot do it.

Romans 6:1-3 - No one should think that he can continue in sin and expect that grace to abound. Many believe once saved, always saved, but that is not true. We cannot continue in sin and abound in grace.

We do have to act upon the word of God and His commands and Jesus is going to illustrate this in Matthew 7:24-27.

James 2:14-26 - faith alone is insufficient. One must work the works of God.

22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

The last time we saw MANY was in verse 13 (the wide gate). So the multitudes who took the broad way believe they deserve salvation, even though they have not been

obedient. There will be individuals on the day of judgment who will be surprised when they receive condemnation.

Three categories are mentioned of those who were doing things in **YOUR** (Jesus') name. But, because they are doing something wrong Jesus says He does not know them.

1. **Prophesying in YOUR name** - They were not promoting themselves. Their prophecies were done by the authority of Jesus.
2. **Casting out demons in YOUR name** - They did not attempt to take credit for casting out demons. They did it by the authority of the name of Jesus.
3. **In YOUR name perform many miracles** - The working of miracles was done through the authority of Jesus and His powerful name.

Many think they were not truly performing miracles. If not, then neither was Jesus. "Works of power" is how it reads in the Greek and is the same terminology used to describe the miracles Jesus performed. This is also similar to Hebrews 2:3-4 - signs, miracles, works of power. These are what the apostles and Jesus did; miracles, something supernatural. We do not think about this often. On one hand we believe there were those who were demon possessed, but we do not realize there were miracle workers who were satanic in origin. In the scriptures God's power and Satan's power are often demonstrated during the same periods of time. For example, during the time of Moses, Satan was also allowed to demonstrate his power through the court magicians (Ex 7:11). They were not merely performing "tricks," but were actually working miracles, as was Moses. In the first century Christ and the apostles performed miracles. False prophets also worked miracles and, as Jesus says, in HIS name. But that they were not doing them right.

Matthew 24:24 - "...will show great signs and wonders." Jesus says false teachers will come performing miracles just as they had seen Him and the apostles do. Satan's miracles are not the same. Jesus' miracles were greater; not different in some circumstances, in the number and in the magnitude. God was still forcing the people to examine what He taught to see if it was true or not. Jesus' miracles confirmed that He was from God because they were greater, just as Moses was able to go far beyond what the magicians taught.

Zechariah 13:2 - Prophecy - "I will cut off the name of the idols...and I will remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land." He is going to remove the true prophets and when He takes them out of the land He will also take the unclean prophets as well. This is all talking about the Messianic period of time. This is in that day, the day of the Messiah. The time will come when these will be removed.

1 Corinthians 13:8ff - There was to be a time when the miraculous would cease.

There are no supernatural miracles performed by either God or Satan today. Satan's influence does prevail in our society, but the supernatural has been removed. Miracles had a purpose and that purpose was to confirm God's word (Mk 16:20; Heb 2:1-4). There was a supernatural influence in the first century. False prophets were performing great things in Jesus' name so that the people would think they were from God. But Jesus warned them, and us, to watch them they would know the false prophets for what they were by the fruit they produced. They were doing great things, but their lives were not obedient to God's will.

The Law of Moses talks about false prophets. In Deuteronomy 13:1-2 if a person made a sign or a wonder that came true, but then he said, "Let us go after others gods," God says, do not follow him.

1 John 4:1-6 - They must teach in accordance with what the apostles were teaching.

²³And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

There were some not **known** by Jesus even though they did things in His name. They knew Him, but He did not know them.

Depart from Me. As a result of not following God's law, they were not known by Jesus. They are not going to be allowed to stay in the presence of Jesus (1 Thess 1:7-9). The opposite is true. One who practices His, He knows. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." We express our love to Him by our obedience.

Acts 19:13-14 - The seven sons of Sceva were attempting to cast out demons in the name of Jesus.

Proverbs 14:12; 16:25 - "There is a way which seems right." It is significant that this occurs twice, maybe to catch our attention to consider the possibility that one can think he is sincere and yet be wrong.

The sincerity of these men in Matthew 7 is not under discussion, but rather what they are doing. They may have thought it was right, but it was not right. Many today see all the good things being done in the name of Christ and would take offense if you implied they would be lost. Look at these who are doing the same things. They are not doing the will of the Father. These appear to be doing what is right, but are not. There are many in the denominations seeking the truth and Jesus says if they are seeking, they will find it. But if they are not, then they will not find the truth. The reason is because they are not seeking. Is truth knowable? If it is not, then we have no way of judging what is right and wrong. If we are not doing what is right, then we better change. If we are doing what is right, then the other side better change. Who are WE? There are

only two choices. We are either the church of the first century or we are a denomination among denominations. If we are not the church Christ wants us to be, then we have no right to exist. Jesus is going to condemn religious people who are not doing what God wants done. How many churches will that include?

Ephesians 2:19-22. Christ is the chief corner stone. A church has to be built upon the foundation (teachings) of the apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief corner stone. There are no other alternatives.

24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

We have not really left the point of verse 21. The one who does the will of God will enter.

All who **hear** and **act** (“does” is literally the word, same as in v. 21). We are listening to Jesus as He presents this sermon. His will and the will of the Father are the same. He is the spokesman for God. John says He is the Word of God (Jn 1:1). Jesus is what God wants to say to us.

Everyone. Jesus includes every possible hearer listening to these words. “He who has ears, let him hear” (Mt 13:9). God has given us the instruments with which to hear and understand what has been given. The responsibility to act upon what we receive is totally up to us. This is usually taught to children, but is a very important point for adults. Wisdom is exercised when a house is built on a solid foundation. Are we going to build on something that is solid? The one who hears and acts is the wise man. We want to have a lasting quality about ourselves so that when the storms of life descend, we will stand strong.

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house, and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

This is describing the most violent attack on a human structure. The reason it stood is that it was founded on the **rock**. If someone hears the word and acts accordingly, he will not have to worry about the troubles of life because of what his life is founded upon.

26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

The one who hears and does not act accordingly is a foolish man who builds his life upon that which is unstable and insecure.

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.”

If we desire to be characterized as being wise, then we will obey Jesus' words. If we want to be fools we follow the ways of the world. Building a house on a sandy foundation is stupid, because all it will be demolished when storms come and all the effort put into it will be wasted. You can build the most expensive, elaborate home and spend a lifetime doing it. That is the way it is in our lives. We must build on something solid - God's will and not something unstable of the world. We sing a hymn by Edward Mote in which the chorus declares, "On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand." What a beautiful and easily remembered, conclusion to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount!

28 The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching;

This is the first part of a key phrase - "**when Jesus had finished....**"

Amazed at His teaching, the reason being...

29 for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus came demonstrating power and authority in His teaching. **Authority** is a key concept in this gospel. If Jesus is (and He is) the Messiah, He will (and He does) exercise authority. Jesus demonstrated authority in His teaching in chapter 7. Now, in chapter 8, He will demonstrate authority over the natural and spirit realms by the performing of miracles, yet another proof that He is the Messiah.

There are Seven Groups of Two's in Chapter Seven.

1. Two judges (1-5). One with the log and the speck or the one who first removes,
2. Two evil listeners (6),
3. Two fathers (7-12),
4. Two gates (13-14) or the two ways,
5. Two teachers (15-19),
6. Two trees (15-19) and
7. Two builders (24-27).

CHAPTER EIGHT

As mentioned earlier, Matthew has a cycle or pattern in his gospel, emphasizing the miracles, followers, teachings, followers, miracles, but not necessarily in that order. In verse 1 the multitudes **followed** Him, because of the miracles done in chapter 4 and the impressive teaching of chapters 5-7. Now, Jesus will confirm His claim to be the Messiah by a series of powerful miracles. We will call chapters 8 and 9 “the miracle chapters” because they are both filled with His miracles.

Notice the organization of chapters 8 and 9 - the miracle chapters.

a. *They both contain five miracles.*

b. *They both contain a miracle section. (8:16; 9:35)*

c. *They both deal with specifics in miracles.*

In chapter 8 we find every possible category of supernatural miracles. In chapter 9 we find every possible category of physical disease and its healing.

In chapter 8 Jesus shows His power over:

1. The leper (1-4) - power over the *external world*.
2. Centurion's servant (5-13) - power over *time and space*.
3. Peter's mother-in-law (14-15) - power over the *internal world* (the unseen).
4. Demons cast out (16,28-34) - power over the *spirit world* (the demonic realm).
5. Great storm (23-27) - power over *Nature*.

There is no miracle that would not fall into one of these general categories. Jesus demonstrates His mighty power in every single category. This is the structure found in chapter 8, thus showing that Matthew is not interested in chronology.

***¹And when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.
²And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”***

Leprosy was clearly one of the most dreaded diseases of the Biblical times. It is a skin disease that slowly eats away, layer by layer, the flesh until a person bleeds to death. Even today in leper colonies a leper's flesh is bandaged, giving it all the protection possible. It was possible for a person to be cleansed of leprosy (Lev 13-14).

Leprosy was usually very contagious (although there are some types that are not). It seems the type most discussed in the Bible was highly contagious. God said anyone touching a leper would be unclean. Lepers were to do two things:

1. Cover themselves, (especially their mouths, to keep from spitting on any one).
2. Announce loudly, as they went their ways, that they were unclean.

It is possible to have leprosy on just a hand or arm or it can cover a major portion of the body.

Bowed down. This is the word for "worship." This leper knew enough about Jesus to know He was worthy of worship.

If you are willing. We can almost feel the pain, the loneliness, the rejection and the isolation of this man. He knows Jesus has the power to heal him, but does not know if He is willing to do so. In reading the pitiful plea of the leper, we can almost see him reach out to Jesus. Would Jesus also reject him?

³And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

He touched him. How long it had been since the leper had been touched? Lepers were not people privileged to experience the joy of human touch. To have Jesus reach out and touch him was a demonstration of love and compassion he had never seen before or at least for a very long time.

Did this make Jesus unclean? The multitudes would be watching and asking themselves this question. They will see that Jesus was not made unclean, because His holy touch causes the unholy to be holy. That is what Jesus does with us. He touches us in our unholiness, and through that touch, we become holy.

Jesus does not give a long teaching, but simply says, "**I am willing, be cleansed.**" Although Matthew does not use the word "authority" here, the proof of Jesus' authority is clear, because all He has to do is speak and it comes to pass. What would this miracle look like; a recreating of flesh? It must have been a marvelous event to behold! We do not know how the cleansing occurred, but the word "immediately" is significant. As Matthew writes, his readers have to be impressed with the fact that **immediately** it

came to pass, again emphasizing the authority of Jesus (and perhaps showing that this was not a trick).

⁴And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”

Why not tell anyone? There are four suggested reasons.

1. Perhaps He was not wanting greater numbers to follow Him for the wrong reasons.
2. It might cause problems for the man himself and Jesus wants to keep him from having more rejection in his life. Compare John 9:34 - the blind man being evicted from the synagogue.
3. It would emphasize the miracle, not the teaching. He wants the teaching to be the main focus (Mt 12:15ff).
4. It would arouse Jewish opposition (Mt 21:15). This goes along with a point made frequently in the gospel of John - “My time is not yet come.” Jesus had a certain time table. Others could have, perhaps through their promotion of Jesus, rushed His ministry. Jesus did not want that.

Show the priest. According to Leviticus 13:49 and 14:2 this is what the Law required. Jesus was telling him to do what Moses commanded. (Note: Jesus clearly believed that Moses wrote this. He did not subscribe to the theories that doubt Mosaic authorship.) Even though Jesus was bringing a new law, He never taught to not obey the Law of Moses.

⁵And when He had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, entreating Him,

This is up in Galilee, near the sea of Galilee.

Centurion - a Roman officer over 100 men. While this is a parallel with Luke 7, this is not a parallel account with John 4:46ff, where there are some major differences. A centurion was, of course, not Jewish. He was a Roman who considered the Jew inferior. His being Roman would require a great deal of humility to approach Jesus for help. But he was willing to humble himself. In addition, he must be given credit for having seen (and believed in) the power of Jesus.

⁶and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering great pain.”

Lord...great pain. This word Lord is κύριε. He begs and entreats Jesus; really humbling himself by coming to Him. He demonstrates an attribute we do not see in

Roman leaders - compassion for others. He is concerned about his servant. This is not the norm. He has a good heart and is one who can “swallow his pride.”

⁷And He said to him, “I will come and heal him.”

How great a distance are we talking about? In Capernaum or outside? It does not make any difference to Jesus, He is willing to make the trip. He instantly expresses a willingness to go.

⁸But the centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

He does not presume upon Jesus’ time. Also, he does not want to presume he is worthy to have a man such as Jesus to come to his house. Everything about the centurion is that of meekness. He is a very powerful man, but still very humble. He also demonstrates an incredible knowledge of the power of Jesus.

We have seen nothing up to this point to tell us that Jesus did not have to be present to perform a miracle. How did the centurion know this? We do not know. He recognized authority when he saw it and he saw it in Jesus.

⁹For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”

Jesus marvels.

¹⁰Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such a great faith with anyone in Israel.

Jesus says this to the ones following, not to the centurion. The multitude following Jesus from place to place is challenged to think about what this man has done.

I have not found such a great faith with anyone in Israel. This is a rebuke against Israel, because this centurion sees in Jesus what they are not seeing; His authority, His confidence, His power. He sees in the centurion faith, belief and trust. He has a greater trust in Jesus than anyone else in Israel. This is what is being demonstrated. This is one of the few times Jesus marvels at the faith of someone else.

¹¹And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;

This refers to the Jewish idea of a great banquet after the day of judgment against the Gentiles. The Jews believed that the Messiah would come, defeat the Romans in a

great war, and set up a Messianic kingdom in Jerusalem; a kingdom similar to that of David's kingdom.

12but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Once again He addresses the multitude. Those coming from "east and west" are people other than Israelites. Such a thought would be repugnant to the Jews! To think of Gentiles sitting with them at a table with men such Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be very repulsive.

The "kingdom of heaven" here is not the church. Why? Because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are in the kingdom, but not the church. But the **sons of the kingdom**, the Jews, the ones who should have inherited this kingdom are going to be put out. They will not be wanted there.

Outer darkness. Matthew uses this phrase two other times in the gospel (Mt 22:13; 25:30). Outer darkness is similar in meaning to being outside of the camp, outside of the fold, outside of salvation, outside of the kingdom. It certainly does not convey a pleasant place. Ultimately Jesus is referring to Hell.

Weeping and gnashing of teeth is a recurring phrase in Matthew: 13:43,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30. The weeping may be because of the tremendous pain, but it may also be inner pain, because of their own foolishness and the rejection of Jesus. The gnashing (gritting and grinding) of teeth is the best idea of pain. This will not be a place of comfort. This terminology stands in great contrast to the table of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This was the idea of the kingdom to the Jews; relaxing and eating, in peace and much prosperity. Now the Gentiles are going to receive it while the Jews will be cast into a place of great pain.

13And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very hour.

So the centurion, because of his faith, is going to receive what he asked for. Notice that the servant was healed **that very hour**; he was healed instantly. Jesus could heal over time and space. (This is our second example of Jesus' healing.)

14And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in law lying sick in bed with a fever.

This is the text proving Peter was married - you cannot have a **mother-in-law** without having a wife. We also know there were others who were married.

1 Corinthians 9:5 Paul said he had the right to lead about a wife as the other apostles and Peter also said he was an elder (1 Pet 5:1). A man must be married to be an elder in the Lord's church (1 Tim 3:2).

15And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him.

This is the second time we read that Jesus "touches." We also see an instant result from the touch of Jesus' hand.

She arose, and waited on Him. What do we do when Jesus touches our lives? We are forgiven, so we serve like Peter's mother-in-law did. We serve because of love, because of gratitude for what has been done for us.

16And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill.

We see power with the "word" of Jesus. Jesus healed "all." There was never one He could not heal. Matthew does not let us lose sight of why? The next verse tells us.

17in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases.'

Fulfilled - the divine plan of God is coming to pass through Jesus (see Isa 53:4).

18Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side.

Again, He is drawing attention. In the introduction to the gospel, it was pointed out how *following* is a KEY theme. Now, for the first time, Matthew is going to help us see the significance of being a follower. It means more than just going from city to city with Jesus. Note:

19And a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

Follow. This is a man of some power in the Jewish society. We might be impressed with the scribe's willingness to follow Jesus wherever He goes. Yet, it is clear from Jesus' response that the scribe had a different concept of what "wherever" meant; what it would actually entail. Are we prepared to follow Jesus "wherever He goes?"

20And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Therefore, to be a follower of Jesus a person must do two things.

1. *Count the cost of being a follower.* “Teacher, I will follow You wherever you go.” But Jesus asks, “Have you thought about this? Foxes and birds are better off than I. I do not even have a place to lay my head.” Was the scribe thinking about a kingdom of luxury and wealth? Probably. Jesus says to count the cost.
2. *Prioritize* - Jesus must come first. Notice the comments on verse 22.

21 And another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.”

It is interesting that Matthew calls him a **disciple** (follower). The word **disciple** just means “follower,” but there is a difference between a follower and a true disciple. That is what Jesus is going to talk about.

22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

Note Matthew 6:33 - Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The disciple has to prioritize. This man is going to have to do this. Seek *first* the kingdom of God.

There are some who think Jesus is being uncharacteristically cruel here to not give the man time to go back to bury his dead father. We know, however, that the dead were buried on the same day they died, so this man would have been taking care of such duties if his father had truly died. His father may be ailing and he wants to tend to him until his death, *then* he will come to follow Jesus.

What if the father survived another 3½ years? The man would have missed the entire ministry of Jesus! Now is the time to be a disciple! There is no waiting until “this” happens or “that” happens. It has to be now! This is one of four sections which tell us what it really means to follow Jesus.

Notice the application of this for us today. Every one who wishes to follow Jesus is going to have to count the cost. He is going to have to prioritize. Is there anything more important than Jesus? If so, then our priorities are not in proper order.

23 And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

Followed Him. He just told the two men who came what they would have to do and the next thing we read is people are **following** Him. This is significant and Matthew does not want anyone to miss this. Jesus says we need to count the cost and prioritize. These disciples say they are willing and they *act* as if they were willing. They do not realize all “following” means, but they are doing it. They know they will not have a comfortable place to sleep and the family will have to take second place. But still, they follow.

24 And behold, there arose a great storm in the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves; but He Himself was asleep.

Jesus is exhausted.

25 And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"

Remember at least four disciples are fisherman. They know what to do during storms, but they do not know what to do in this "great" one.

We are perishing. They are facing death and know Jesus can save them. There is another lesson here. If he can save physically, He can also save spiritually. If one comes to Jesus during the storms of life with its trials and hardships, Jesus can save.

26 And He said to them, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm.

Jesus said the centurion had great faith. Here the disciples are accused of having little faith. This is not unfair, especially if they had considered what Jesus had just finished saying in the Sermon on the Mount. God will take care of them. They should know this.

He arose...calm. In verse 16 He cast out the spirits with the word. Now we see He has control over the natural world with words. If Jesus could create it with a word, then He can control it with a word. That is what Peter is saying in 2 Peter 3:5ff.

Questions are significant in Matthew's book. Pay attention to all of the questions that will be asked. Most will not be answered. Why not? He wants us to ask ourselves the same questions and then come up with the answers to them.

27 And the men marveled, saying, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

What kind of man is this? Notice the question is not answered. As we study we think about this. These are experienced seamen. In all of their lives have they never witnessed such a storm and in the snap of the finger it is over! What kind of man is this, indeed, that even the winds and the sea obey Him? They had seen Him heal, but they had not seen this before. So what kind of man is this? As readers, can we answer the question?

The **great** calm which followed was equal to the **great** storm's fury.

28 And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road.

This begins the fifth and final miracle. This will demonstrate power over the spirit world.

Look at the parallel in Mark 5. This is offered as an example of the “synoptic problem” (see introduction). We have *two* men here and only *one* in Mark. Probably the answer is easily solved. In Mark, one of the two is the predominant speaker or figure and the other is secondary; whereas Matthew just mentions that there are two men. This is not a corruption, it can be explained. Mark just focuses on the one of the two. We do the same today when we talk about events.

Mark, in his gospel, gives us more information about the violence - not being able to be bound and so on. The implication is they are so powerful because of the possession by that which gave them great strength. These men are totally controlled and destroyed by Satan.

29 And behold, they cried out, saying, “What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

Neither question is answered. Both are important.

1. **What do we have to do with You, Son of God?** They recognized (because they are a part of the spiritual world), the One true God and that Jesus is the Son of God. They have nothing to do with Jesus. They are totally of the demonic realm, not of the good spiritual realm. This helps us in chapter 12 when Jesus is accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub. They are not of Jesus’ ministry or on His side. They are opposed to all that Jesus is trying to accomplish. This is the rule of God contrasted with the rule of Satan - a major conflict taking place between the forces of the evil and the forces of good. In Luke 17:21 Jesus says, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” - certainly Jesus’ coming with all power and authority. Jesus’ power is greater than that of Satan. If we submit to Jesus, as James says in 4:7, Satan will flee from us.
2. **Have you come here to torment us before the time?** What time? And how did they know He was going to torment them? By recognizing Jesus, they knew His authority and that He is the one they will have to answer to in judgment. The demons know they are going to have to suffer for they are hopelessly corrupt. The Hebrew writer makes the statement that Jesus does not give help to the angels, but to the children of Abraham (Heb 2:16). Once the spiritual beings have turned away they cannot come back as God’s angels. Having witnessed all the power and glory (in creation) and then to turn away, they will not have a second chance. Demons are

angels gone bad (Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4-5). It is hard to know why because the Bible does not really say. These demons know there is an appointed time that they are going to have to suffer.

³⁰Now there was at a distance from them a herd of many swine feeding.

Jesus is not in the land of Palestine, but on the other side of the Sea of Galilee in the land of the Gadarenes.

³¹And the demons began to entreat Him, saying, “If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.”

This is a first class conditional sentence, meaning “since you are going to cast us out.” A demon did not want to be without a habitation and these particular ones would rather be in pigs’ bodies than in no bodies at all. They knew Jesus was about to cast them out; that is why He came - to demonstrate His power over evil and the powers of darkness. (Mt 12:43ff - “seeking rest” is to find other bodies to inhabit).

³²And He said to them, “Be gone!” And they came out, and went into the swine, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. ³³And the herdsmen ran away, and went to the city, and reported everything, including the incident of the demoniacs.

Jesus granted their request to go into the swine. The swine went berserk, rushed down an embankment into the water. There seems to have been an ancient belief (no way of knowing for certain) that the only way a demon could be destroyed was through drowning. What seems to add some credence to this is in Mark 5:13 and Luke 8:33, all of which emphasize that they were **drowned** in the sea or **perished in the waters**.

Luke 8:33 - “And demons came out...and were drowned.”

Matthew 12:43 - “...it passes through waterless places seeking rest.” Can we make something from this information? What we do know is that Jesus demonstrated a power to rule and the power to destroy. Is it possible the reason Jesus allowed the demons to enter into the swine was so He could clearly demonstrate His power to destroy them? Whatever, Jesus is responsible because He knew what was going to happen, He allowed it. Jesus is the Lord of creation and, because of that, He can use it as He so chooses.

³⁴And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they entreated Him to depart from their region.

Probably they were afraid of His power, not because (as some have conjectured) that they were afraid there would be further destruction of their livelihood. Whether they wanted Him to leave for materialistic reasons, or because of His power, they should

have been asking questions about this Man. When the people saw Jesus, there was something that made them afraid. Mark writes 17 verses on this event, whereas Matthew writes only 6 verses. Mark tells us, “And they came to Jesus and observed the man...in his right mind...and they became frightened” (5:15). The people feared Jesus’ power, “And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region” (5:17).

CHAPTER NINE

This chapter contains five miracles. They are all physical miracles and consist of:

1. A paralyzed man (1-9),
2. A dead girl (18,22-26),
3. A woman hemorrhaging (19-21),
4. Blind men (27-31) and
5. A dumb (deaf) man (32-34).

In these, we have the *exterior* ailments (blind, dumb), the *interior* ailments (paralysis, hemorrhaging) and *death* - three categories with five examples.

¹And getting into a boat, He crossed over, and came to His own city.

This would be Capernaum (Mt 4:13).

²And behold, they were bringing to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven.”

There are two interesting points here:

1. The “they” in this verse cared so much about their friend they were willing to carry him to where Jesus was. It is significant for supposed “miracle workers” today to note that Jesus healed because of “their” faith, not the faith of the man being brought to Him. Those “miracle workers” who claim the healing will fail if one does not have enough faith need to note that the one who was healed did not need any faith!
2. Jesus did not say the man was healed, but that his sins were forgiven. Jesus is teaching that it is more important to be whole spiritually than physically.

³And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This fellow blasphemes!”

They accuse Jesus of blasphemy because only God can forgive sins.

⁴And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? ⁵For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, and walk?’

Again, no answer is given, but the one that is easier would be “your sins are forgiven” because one could not prove whether it happened or not. Jesus again uses the physical to prove He can take care of the spiritual.

⁶But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” - then He said to the paralytic - “Rise, take up your bed and go home.”

Jesus proved the one by doing the other. He accomplished the more difficult (take up your bed), thus proving He was capable of doing the less difficult (forgiving). Jesus’ **authority** is being demonstrated here. The argument has been offered by some that the thief on the cross did not have to be baptized, therefore neither do men today. This verse, however, can contribute to our understanding of that event. Notice:

1. He (the thief) lived under the Old Law, therefore the law on baptism did not apply to him.
2. Jesus had the authority to forgive sins. If He wanted to do so, He could. But when He ascended to heaven, He left a plan of forgiveness. Peter teaches this in Acts 2:38.
3. It cannot be proven that the thief was not baptized. Perhaps he was baptized with the baptism of John or the baptism performed by the twelve disciples.

⁷And he rose, and went home. ⁸But when the multitudes saw this, they were filled with awe, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Multitudes saw. They are filled with awe, hardly able to believe what they were seeing. They glorified God because they could not help but feel joy for the healed man.

Given such authority to men. Matthew is trying to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. This would be an important section in accomplishing that goal. People are impressed with Jesus. The multitude stands in contrast to the scribes (in v. 3) who were accusing Him of blasphemy.

⁹And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he rose, and followed Him.

It does not surprise us that Matthew would include his own calling. There are a number of points about Matthew, as a person, included in these notes. There are a number of quotations from the church fathers about this Matthew. The Bible tells us he was a tax collector - a Jew employed by the Romans to collect from his own people. This occupation was the scorn of many Jews because of:

1. Their pure hatred for the Romans and any who worked for the Romans.
2. The natural despising of paying taxes.
3. Tax collectors who were often dishonest; over-charging what a person rightfully had to pay to the Roman tax structure. John the Baptist told the tax collectors to collect no more than they were required to (Lk 3:12-13). The tax collectors were padding their own pockets at others' expense.

The unique blend of disciples is a worthy of our consideration; Zealots, fishermen, tax collectors, etc., - men who worked together side by side, with all the natural animosity between them. Jesus is able to bring harmony and unity to the most diverse individuals.

¹⁰And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

Here we have friends dining together. The number includes many tax gatherers and sinners. Sinners would be the irreligious or non-practicing Jews. They are not interested in religion even though they are Jews. Jesus is “partying” with the “low life” of society. This is the objection the opponents raise. There is a good application for us in our own lives when we talk about being “in the world but not of the world.” Jesus came to seek and save the lost and that is just what He did. It is not easy to do that and remain pure from worldliness, but nevertheless that is what He did - and what we must do.

¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your teachers eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?”

Jesus is not acting like the typical Rabbi, who would not associate with such men as these. They want to know why Jesus does such a thing. Jesus addresses this in chapter 11:16-19: “But to what shall I compare this generation...John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, ‘...a gluttonous man and a drunkard...’” They criticized John for not doing a thing, then criticized Jesus for doing this very thing. Jesus says they cannot be satisfied no matter what He does!.

12But when He heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."

He draws an illustration from every day life. Physically ill people need help (doctor), and the spiritually ill need help (Jesus). The purpose of Jesus in His ministry was to reach out to those who are sick - physically, yes; but more importantly, spiritually.

13But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'

Learn. Obviously they had not studied enough because they had not learned what they should have learned. There would have been some who could have quoted this part of the scripture (Hos 6:6). Knowing what this says and understanding it are two different things. The word "compassion" is "eleos" (as in 6:1 "beware...acts of mercy") or acts of compassion or righteousness. It is translated "compassion" but Jesus is saying what God wanted all along is for them was to reach out and help people. To the Jews Jesus is saying this in response to their insensitive questioning of His eating with the sinners. None of the Jewish leaders would have said that the sinners were not sick. But they would not be the ones to help them. They are following the letter of the Law, but the spirit of the Law is being neglected. He wants them to get away from heartless religion to a heart-felt religion.

Sacrifice = ritual correctness, the letter of the Law.

Not...the righteous, but sinners = self-righteous like the Pharisees whom He did not come to call; people who were not even aware they were lost and desperately needed Jesus. A doctor cannot help someone who will not come to him for treatment. Repentant sinners know they need help.

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

The question being asked contains no animosity. It is a good question. John said we are all working together, but You are going about it differently and we want to know why that is. Jesus then answers in the next verse.

15And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast."

Fasting is often a sign of mourning. John's disciples fasted, the Pharisees also, but the disciples of Jesus were not. The disciples of John seemed more aligned with the Pharisees and this did not make sense. All of the fasting was good because they were looking for deliverance from God, but now that deliverance is here - the bridegroom is present - so it is not a time for the attendants (the apostles and disciples) to mourn, but

to be merry. The deliverer, their Messiah, Jesus, was in their midst and they did not recognize Him! Days will come when mourning will be acceptable; when the bridegroom - Jesus - is taken and crucified.

16But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. 17Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins and both are preserved.

If we look at this in context it is easier to understand. The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus to fit into their old mold of doing things - the way the Pharisees did them. They were comfortable with the Old Law and they had their own ideas about the plans and the intentions of the Messiah. It is not that they felt this old garment (Old Law) did not need a "patch" here and there. The Old Law was not perfect, but they did not want to throw it away. Jesus has, however, a totally new set of commandments. Jesus is not going to try to "patch" the Old Law, He is going to replace it with a new law.

These two verses are some of the most misunderstood passages of the New Testament. There are those who try to use these verses to justify disregarding Biblical instructions concerning the organization of the church, the role of women, instrumental music in worship, etc. The argument offered is that those things are an "old garment" and need to be thrown away. Such an application of this section is a "twisting and distorting" of the Scriptures. Jesus gave us that which will always be relevant until He returns (Heb 13:8; Gal 1:8-9; Jude 3).

18While He was saying these things to them, behold, there came a synagogue official, and bowed down before Him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live."

This Jewish man was a ruler of the synagogue and very important. Nearly every community of any size would have a synagogue, which was the central place of meeting in that town or city. Therefore, to be a ruler of that central place, was a tremendous position of power and prestige. It is not a small fact this powerful man is worshiping Jesus. He knows worship, because he sees it in the temple. He oversees this worship everyday in the synagogue.

Daughter...will live. This is demonstrating tremendous faith. He is jeopardizing his position in the synagogue, but he does not care. His daughter is dead and he knows this man can do something about it.

Just died indicates he went directly to Jesus when she breathed her last. There is urgency in that this has just happened and that Jesus can yet do something about it.

She will live. Not perhaps, but she will live! This man has been a good student of the scriptures and his eyes are not blinded like many of his contemporaries. He knows the hand of Jesus can heal for he has seen it too many times to doubt.

¹⁹And Jesus rose and began to follow him, and so did His disciples.

Right in the middle of the conversation with John's disciples, His own disciples, and the Pharisees, Jesus just gets up and goes! But, He is interrupted.

²⁰And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak;

What suffering this woman must have endured! Twelve years of internal pain and cramping had to have been a continual source of misery for her.

Touched the fringe of His cloak. Numbers 15:38-39 talks about the tassels on the garments "to remember all the commandments of the Lord so as to do them and be holy to your God." This is probably what she is touching on the garment of Jesus - fringe or tassels. The Septuagint uses the same word we have here. In Matthew 23:5 the Pharisees lengthen the tassels of their garments. Jesus' garment apparently was edged with tassels. There was nothing wrong with that. It was the lengthening of the tassels that He condemned in Matthew 23.

²¹for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I shall get well."

She is thinking, "I do not even need to bother Him. I just need to touch one of those tassels and I will get well!! This was the same kind of faith the synagogue official showed. She believes she will be healed.

²²But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." And at once the woman was made well.

She believed Jesus could heal her and, in fact, He did. It was her faith that healed her. She was not disappointed; she took the opportunity and was healed. We could isolate each of the miracles and make the same point. We see in Matthew's presentation that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah and he tells us Jesus would be the miracle worker prophesied about (Mt 8:17). This point is being expanded upon and we are presented individual illustrations showing that Jesus is the One who took away their infirmities.

The people watch Jesus and through observation believe that He can help them and then they do something about it. They act upon their belief. Matthew is trying to get the Jews to believe Jesus is their Messiah, but they must *do* something for Him to be able to help them. If He could heal their physical diseases, there is no reason for them believe that He could not heal their spiritual diseases.

All who were ill or demon possessed who came to Him were healed. They came to Jesus were not disappointed. We believe that Jesus can heal our spiritual ailments. He can and we will not be disappointed. But, we have to *act* to receive the blessing.

23 And when Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players, and the crowd in noisy disorder,

When Jesus gets there it is absolute chaos.

Noisy disorder would be the weeping, mourning, the crying out, etc. Our society is on one side of the spectrum as the Jewish society was in the mourning. With the Jews, the mourning was compared to the tragedy. The greater the tragedy the greater the mourning and the crying. You can imagine the amount of this that would be going on with the daughter of this great man. The flute players would be those hired to do this.

24 He began to say, "Depart, for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him.

Girl = κοράσιον = "little girl," a small girl younger than one of marriageable age.

They were laughing at Him. They are professional mourners and they know a dead body when they see one. This shows that they were not genuinely grieving. The parents certainly would not be laughing at a time like this. But those hired to mourn would think Jesus crazy to make such a statement. This is not the "soul sleeping" as some teach. Note the reference of Jairus' daughter in Luke 8:41ff specifically verse 55. Also note the reference in Lazarus being raised from the dead (Lk 16).

25 But when the crowd had been put out, He entered and took her by the hand; and the girl arose.

No trickery here; He just took her by the hand and instantly she is well.

26 And this news went out into all that land.

Raising someone from the dead is certainly news worthy. You did not see this every-day!

27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

In John 9:39-41, after Jesus heals the man born blind, Jesus makes the statement about those who are truly blind. It is not those who cannot see with their eyes who are truly blind, but those who cannot see with their hearts, their spiritual eyes.

Have mercy on us. This is “eleos,” mercy, act of charity. They are asking to have their sight restored.

Son of David. They are calling Him the Christ, the Messiah; two blind men who can understand that Jesus is the Messiah. That is truly significant!

28 And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”

We ask the same. “Do we believe that Jesus can do this?” Based on what we have studied we would say yes, but our hearts are more open than most of the Jews who would be reading this. They would still have their doubts about Jesus, but these two men say, “Yes, Lord.” Here we have more who believe.

29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “Be it done to you according to your faith.”

If we come to Jesus in faith we are going to be rewarded.

30 And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See here, let no one know about this!”

See Matthew 8:4 for the possible reasons not to tell anyone.

31 But they went out, and spread the news about Him in all that land.

They do not maliciously ignore what Jesus has said, but are so happy and excited they cannot keep quiet about this. This is what we are about in our Christian faith. It should be hard to keep quiet about our Lord.

32 And as they were going out, behold, a dumb man, demon-possessed, was brought to Him.

This is the fifth and final miracle in this section. In chapter 9, all five miracles are based on faith; whether faith of an individual, or the faith of family or the faith of friends.

1. The faith of the friends of the paralytic.
2. The faith of the synagogue official.
3. The faith of the woman with a hemorrhage.
4. The faith of the blind men.
5. The faith of those who brought the dumb man to Him.

In all of these cases it is *faith in action*.

³³And after the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the multitudes marveled, saying, “Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel.”

The people had just witnessed these incredible and undeniable miracles. They are without comparison. In Matthew 7:22 others work miracles, but not like the ones of Jesus. The multitudes are not simpletons who can be easily swayed. They are marveling because they have actually seen these things happen. To believe the naturalist is to make these people appear as fools. The naturalist would say that Jesus is just tricking them. The multitudes and Matthew were eye witnesses.

The Pharisees repeat their typical skepticism:

³⁴But the Pharisees were saying, “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

They have to come up with an explanation. They believe that something supernatural has happened, but refuse to give the credit to God. So that leaves one alternative. This is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit according to what Jesus says in Matthew 12:31-32.

³⁵And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Chapter 9 includes every kind of disease and sickness. Jesus can handle them all. Jesus is teaching and uses the miracles as a basis for teaching them.

³⁶And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.

Compassion is an attribute (Isa 53) that would be indicative of the Messiah. In Matthew 14:14 - “And when He went ashore, He... felt compassion for them...” Of course we have already seen in Matthew 9:14 that God desires compassion. We will see this again throughout the book of Matthew.

³⁷Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

There are so many people coming to Jesus. Not only are they suffering because of physical ailments, but verse 36 says, “They are distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.” The word in the Greek is “harassed” and “oppressed.” This could come from both from the leaders of the Jews and from the Romans. The people do not

have good leadership and care, and they are discouraged. Jesus' heart goes out to them. He uses this point to teach the disciples:

The harvest is plentiful. There is a great lot of work to do and not many to help in it. Therefore,

Beseech the Lord. More workers is a worthy - and needed - thing to pray for!

CHAPTER TEN

In John 4, after the Samaritan woman goes back to tell her people about Jesus, the disciples return and Jesus says in verse 35, "...lift up your eyes...the fields...are white for harvest." In His compassion for the multitudes coming to Him, He says, "Look at all the work there is to do. Pray to the Lord to send helpers, but now I have some work for YOU to do." It is not in the scheme of God for us to pray that the Lord send forth workers and then we not go out and do the work ourselves. Pray about it, yes, but also get out and do it!

¹And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Power = ἐξουσίαν given to the apostles over the unclean spirits...the same terminology as in 9:35. This has been called the "limited commission" as opposed to the "great commission" in chapter 28.

²Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-gatherer; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

There have been studies concerning the listing of the apostles and why Peter's name is always listed first. While we have no way of knowing, we do know that Peter, James and John are among the favorite apostles of Jesus.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans:

The reason is found in the next verse.

⁶but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus knew that the gospel would be preached to the Gentiles soon enough. He tells them in Acts 1:8 how the gospel is to be spread. It is not that Jesus does not care for

the Gentiles as well, but the time will come for them. It is God's plan that the Jews receive the gospel first - Romans 1:16 "...to the Jew first and also to the Greek." For the present, the Jews are where they are to devote their time. There is only a short time in the ministry for Jesus, so the message needs to go to God's people first.

⁷And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

The kingdom is near. It is close. Jesus has them preach the same message John preached (Mt 3:2) and He Himself preached (Mt 4:17). With what John was able to accomplish in preparing the people, God desires to give His own people the first opportunity to hear the gospel, then the Gentiles will hear it. Paul makes a point in Romans that the teaching was to the Jews first but, because of their rejection of it, they would be cut off and the Gentiles grafted in (Rom 9).

⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give.

He enumerates four types of works. They have witnessed His healings and they know it can be done. Jesus assures them miracles can, and will, happen!

Freely received, freely give. They had not earned His gifts, therefore they must not make others earn them. Do not deny them to anyone. Matthew has already underscored the fact that Jesus healed everybody; all of them. The disciples must do the same.

⁹Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts,

Healings could have been an incredible money making opportunity for the disciples. If they already had some money with them, that was all right. The main point is that they do not need to go home to secure some "travel money." The people they help will supply them with all they will need.

¹⁰or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

The ones they preach to will be supporting them, so there has to be some restraint exercised as to what they are to receive from those who are healed. The workers are to travel light and allow the people to support them "on the job."

1 Corinthians 9:14 - Paul says the worker ought to be supported.

1 Timothy 5:18 - "You shall not muzzle the ox..." and a laborer is worthy of his wage.

Galatians 6:6 - "...share all good things..."

It is a part of God's plan that His men be supported for preaching the gospel. There are some who will refuse to support them or encourage them in their work. Jesus prepares them for that kind of rejection.

11And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it; and abide there until you go away.

He does not tell us what He means by **worthy**, but from the earlier ministry of Jesus they would have a good idea of who was worthy and who was not, because of those who have opened their honest hearts versus those deceitful hearts of the Pharisees. It is good to ask who the spiritual people are and stay with them in the cities to which you are going. In a small village the apostles would know the spiritual ones willing to receive them.

12And as you enter the house, give it your greeting. 13And if the house is worthy, let your greeting of peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your greeting of peace return to you.

It was a Jewish custom to bless a house as they entered into it. They would stand on the threshold and make a blessing. Jesus makes a spiritual application. The apostles were instructed to show their host families proper respect and courtesy. They were to teach them and share the blessings of the Lord's gospel. If a family were willing to receive the word, they derived the blessings it offers. If not, the blessings the apostles offered the family would come upon themselves.

14And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Perhaps this second clause helps us to better understand "worthy." If they do not welcome you or heed your words.

Go out...dust off your feet = a gesture of rejection; "I want nothing to do with you and you have nothing to do with me." Paul actually did this in Acts 13:51.

15Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

A city's, an entire group's rejection of the truth, is something that brings the wrath of God upon them. For example, Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared if there had been 10 righteous people found in the midst. Since there were not, the cities were destroyed. So Jesus lets the apostles know they are the representatives of God, they are preaching God's message and if they are rejected then the people will face the wrath of God.

More tolerable for the land...than for that city (Mt 11:21ff). If the miracles Jesus had done in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented. Many people who witnessed Jesus miracles did not repent, therefore their punishment will be greater. This supports the doctrine that there are degrees of punishment in Hell.

16Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.

The apostles are portrayed as sheep - harmless and gentle, while the wolves represent the world - unfriendly and cruel.

Shrewd = wise, cautious; especially in avoiding danger.

Innocent = harmless, pure; not provoking others in any way.

Stay away from evil (1 Thess 5:22) but do that which you are sent to do (Mt 10:1).

17But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues;

Beware of men. This verse must be somewhat surprising to them. They go into a city, heal the sick and cure the lepers, thinking they will be welcomed and loved. Instead they are persecuted and beaten - even in the synagogues!

18and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

The adage is true, "to be forewarned is to be forearmed." They know this will happen and it should not surprise them. Their enemies will bring them before governors and kings, because of what they are teaching. Being brought before governors and kings is for the purpose of punishment by death.

19But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak.

He promises them miraculous power that will enable them to say what needs to be said in that hour when it needs to be said. This promise comforts them and will relieve their fears in the days that are yet to come.

20For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

They were instruments of God. It will be His Spirit that speaks through them. This provides a good example of how inspiration works. When God's apostles and prophets

spoke, it was the very words of God that came out of their mouths (1 Thess 2:13; 1 Cor 14:37; 2 Pet 1:20-21).

21 And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death.

Jesus is going to talk in some length about this in verse 34. But He is preparing them to know just how intense persecution is going to become; so intense that family members will fight against one another, even to the point of death! Religious differences will be such that one person will want another person to die and he will deliver him or her up for this very purpose. In some cases it will succeed.

Cause them to be put to death. In the Greek it would be better rendered and “put them to death.”

22 And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

People who would normally like the disciples, befriend and help them are going to turn against them, the only reason...because of Jesus. Here is the key:

The one who has endured... will be saved. One must have the attitude of “sticking in there,” of “seeing it through.” There is no reward for the one who endures for just a while and then gives up (see Mt 24:9-13; Rev 2:10; 2 Tim 4:7).

23 But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.

The apostles were not to throw away their lives. They were to preserve them by proper means - going where they could do the most good.

You shall not finish going...Son of Man comes. This is another difficult phrase. It has three interpretations.

1. The destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24:29-31).
2. The Son coming into His dominion as King on the day of Pentecost.
3. The final judgment.

Jesus, the Son of man, coming in the glory of His Father (16:27). This is used in the context of the final judgment.

In Matthew 24:28-30 the coming of the Son of Man refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. "You shall not finish going through the cities of Israel..." There is a time limit. So it would be the coming in His dominion or in the destruction of Jerusalem. Either would be acceptable alternatives to be applied to this.

24 A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

Whatever treatment the master receives, his disciple or slave ought not to expect better. As disciples of Jesus Christ we ought not to expect or think we deserve better treatment than Jesus received. When we suffer the humiliation and rejection that comes from being faithful, we should rejoice to be treated as He was (Jn 15:20-21).

25 It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.

If they receive the same as their Master, they can expect such treatment.

Beelzebub = "Beelzebub" = "king of the flies." If the head of the house is spoken of this way, the rest of the family will be also (9:34).

26 Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

Therefore = because of what transpires in the previous verse.

Do not fear them. This would be the tendency, but do not fear. The word "fear" is used four times in the next five verses.

Everything will come out and the truth must be made known. God sees all that happens and evil doers will be held accountable for all they do and say.

27 What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light, and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

Their private instructions were to be publicly proclaimed.

28 And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Men have power, but it is limited. In our society the worst anybody can do is to kill us. Jesus says this is not the worst. He knows our bodies are nothing but temporary shells.

Fear Him who...in hell. This is “gehenna” - eternal punishment. God has power no man has - therefore, we need to fear Him. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;” (Prov 1:7).

Many are confused about this instruction to fear God because of 1 John 4:18 - “There is no fear in love.” Many believe we should not have any fear. But the Bible teaches us that fear is a part of growing to maturity. John is talking about that perfect love which casts out fear in the judgment. God is One to be feared!

Hebrews 12:29 - “For our God is a consuming fire.”

Hebrews 10:31 - “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

It was God who, on Mount Sinai, frightened the Israelites. Read Exodus 20:18-19. In verse 20 Moses says, “Do not be afraid; for God has come...that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.” When someone fears the wrath of God it shapes their behavior. As parents we see this in our children. They obey because they fear the punishment if they do not. But when they are older they obey because of love and not fear. That is the way God deals with us. We grow and mature to where we obey Him. Our relationship with God should be this way so that we can grow and mature to the level of love Christians need to have.

The word **destroy** does not refer to total annihilation. There are too many passages which prove punishment lasts forever. Matthew 3:12 talks about a fire that cannot be quenched. Jesus says the worm does not die (Mk 9:44 see also Mt 13:42; 25:41; Mk 9:48). Satan cannot destroy the soul; he does not have that power.

²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

A sparrow is not really worth much, but God knows and loves them so much. If one falls to the ground, He is aware of it. Therefore, how much more is He aware of, and caring for, His children?

³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

This is a beautiful illustration that God is aware of even the most minute part of our being. That is how much He knows us and loves us.

³¹Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Do not fear. Do not fear men because of the tremendous love of the One who has such power. This completes this section.

32Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

Jesus has been talking about the fear of men. Fear makes men do things they would not normally do. Only God knows the number of men and women, young and old, who have shrunk back because of fear. Jesus says that in spite of what men may do, if we are willing to confess Him before men, we can rest assured that He will confess us before the Father. He is offering a tremendous assurance that if we acknowledge Him as Lord in every aspect of our lives and depend upon Him for salvation, then He will stand for us (Rom 10:9-10). Jesus, in Matthew, is talking about a lifelong commitment, a daily confession with one's life and words.

33But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

The opposite is true as well. "Deny" is the opposite of "confess." We can deny Jesus in two ways:

1. By verbally declaring we do not follow Him.
2. By silence. A person who does not openly declare allegiance to Jesus, but instead says nothing is, in fact, denying Him.

The one Jesus is going to represent is the one who confesses Him. The one who is active, confessing with his mouth and with his life. Remember in His Sermon on the Mount, to those who practice lawlessness Jesus will say, "I never knew you." He will not claim to know them (2 Tim 2:12b). 1 Peter 3:15 commands us to make a defense to give reason for the hope within us. People want us to verbalize why we act the way we do.

1 Peter 2:12 - keep our behavior proper before God.

Matthew 5:16 - see our good works.

34Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

The people were expecting a strong-armed Messiah to come and establish the Davidic kingdom. Jesus said not to think that. "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Jesus again points out the cost of following Him.

35For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

This is from Micah 7:6. Jesus is stating that what He is going to do is of such magnitude that it will divide families right down the middle because family members will not be agreed to who this Man is. Jesus came, knowing this would be the case, but so be it! People have to make decisions, and some decisions are very difficult. We do not want our own household to be our enemy, but that often happens if we obey the gospel. We cannot allow our loyalty to our families cost us our eternity in heaven. Only God knows the number of people who have forsaken Him for their families.

³⁷He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

This is the first of three times He uses the word **worthy**. How does one make himself worthy of Jesus? If one takes the “faith only” approach, there is no way. But Jesus says differently. “If you love father or mother more than Me, you are not worthy of Me.” So allegiance to Him must be stronger than to those who are closest to us on earth. The love a man has for his son or daughter is so intense and strong that it is hard to describe in words, but he cannot love them more than Jesus or he is not worthy of Him. A person might say, “We are not going to argue about Jesus in this house! If you feel that strongly about it, I will not follow Him.” If so, Jesus says that person loves family more than Him and is not worthy of Him. How can a true disciple in a household not talk about Him to those who are not following; loved ones he desires to be saved? How fortunate it is to live in a family in which every one is a Christian!

Worthy of Me. Whom do we love more? Jesus or family? It is obvious that the love for Jesus should outweigh that of any earthly relationship. He does not say that the love for Him will eliminate the love for others. Jesus was the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6; Jn 14:27), but He is not talking about peace between people; He is talking about the inward peace Christians have in their hearts because they know they have a good relationship with God. We may have external conflicts, but at the same time experience God’s internal peace; the peace which allowed men like Justin Martyr and others to be persecuted to the extent of torture and death.

Sword = a symbol of conflict and not a literal sword. This sword is His word and what we are going to use if we are His disciples.

³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

This is the third time He uses **worthy**. He is talking about each one taking up his own cross. This is the first occurrence of the word “cross” in the book of Matthew. While one may not have conflict in the family, he still has sacrifices to make. Jesus uses an illustration that would be familiar to those who often witnessed crucifixions; that of the one being crucified having to bear his own cross. Why would they carry their own crosses? They were forced to do so as part of their sentencing, just as Jesus was forced to do.

Christians must voluntarily carry their own “crosses” - whatever is considered disgraceful, trying or burdensome as we follow Christ.

Follow after Me. We cannot follow after Jesus without bearing a cross on our backs. There are many who try to follow without the cross, but cannot do it. We must count the cost and that cost may be in the losing of our lives. Luke 9:23 adds the word “daily.” This is an on-going process. Jesus is not referring to a one-time thing. Other parallels are:

Romans 12:1 - we are to be living sacrifices, but sacrifices none the less.

Galatians 2:20 - the way we should view our Christianity.

³⁹He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.

If we emphasize our own material welfare we lose out. When we do only what we want to do, then we lose our eternal life in heaven. But if we are willing to forego the temporal to obtain the spiritual, we will attain heaven. If we emphasize the kingdom, we win in the end. This is prioritizing. Which is more important: me and what I want to do; or Jesus and what he wants me to do? Satan wants us to buy into the selfish, self-centered philosophy, but the great rewards are in following Jesus.

⁴⁰He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

This refers to the Father. If a person wants a relationship with God, he must accept God's Son. But he cannot do this unless he accepts those whom the Son has sent. Jesus is telling them they are not going to get what God has to offer unless they first accept the disciples. It is crucial as we study, and try to teach others, that we understand the authority of the apostles. We have to receive both the teaching of the apostles and of Jesus in order to receive the blessings of God. The reason is, there are some today who say we need to just focus on Jesus and not listen to the apostles. But we cannot focus on Jesus and ignore those Jesus sent. If we do not receive Peter's and Paul's teachings, then we do not receive Jesus.

Ephesians 2:20 - “...you are of God's household...Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone...” Everything God has built was built on the foundation laid by the apostles. (This includes men like Luke, Mark, James and Jude; not of the twelve apostles, but ones inspired and who delivered God's word to men.) If you are in the pulpit, preaching the Bible and people do not like you, they are still responsible for hearing the message. If they reject the message because of the messenger, they lose Jesus and the Father.

⁴¹He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

When anyone receives a prophet as one who speaks for God, he welcomes the One who sent him - God Himself. And, he is going to receive the same reward as the prophet. So not only the ones out there doing the work are going to be rewarded, but also those who receive them. Receiving implies two things:

1. Showing hospitality, encouragement and, perhaps, financial aid (vv.12-14) including hospitality of homes.
2. Accepting the message taught.

⁴²And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward."

Little ones = "humble folk" (footnote in the New American Standard Bible) = someone in a lower station than others; His servants who are dependent upon, and trust in, Him. The gift itself is not important. It is the motive in giving it.

Hebrews 6:10 - "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." This indicates that one may not have much to give, but just about everyone can give a cup of cold water to someone. He takes the least expensive thing one can give and says that when it is given as an act of Christian love, God sees and He will reward that.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

¹And it came about that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Jesus had just told them to pray for workers (9:38) and now He is sending them out to do the work! Preachers who encourage others to go out and be evangelistic, are they doing it? It is important to tell others to evangelize and then get out and do it yourself.

²Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples,

Matthew mentions the imprisonment of John three times; 4:12; here and again in 14:1ff. John heard of the works of Christ, so His reputation is spreading even to prisoners locked in jail cells. He sends word by his disciples to ask a question of Jesus.

³and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

Once again the use of the question (as a teaching tool) in Matthew and a most important question.

Expected One = Messiah. “Shall we look for someone else?” There are *four possible explanations* as to why John asks this.

1. He was wanting Jesus to declare His Messiahship more directly.
2. He was having doubts in his own mind that Jesus was truly the Messiah, perhaps from his being in prison and the depression he feels.
3. He was wanting his disciples to now follow Jesus.
4. He perhaps was wondering if his task as the “preparer” was over. If it was, he could suffer the consequences of Herod’s rash oath (chapter 14) in peace.

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see:

The disciples of John are being addressed. Jesus categorizes what they will witness:

1. The blind receive sight,
2. The lame walk,
3. The lepers are cleansed,
4. The deaf hear,
5. The dead are raised and
6. The gospel is preached to the poor.

⁵the Blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

The “miracle sections” include these same types of miracles. Matthew recorded actual accounts of all of these happenings. Numbers one and six of the above list have Messianic implications (see Isa 35:5ff; 61:1ff).

How is this an answer to John’s question? Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament scriptures! He is doing things which manifest the truthfulness that He is the Messiah. It is interesting that He does not say, “Go back and say, ‘Jesus said clearly that He is the

Messiah!” Jesus is making people think. Is He the coming one? Go tell what you see and hear about all these things taking place and decide for yourself, just like all of us have to do.

6And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me.”

This could be read, “And blessed is he to whom I shall not prove to be a stumbling block.” The “blessed” were the ones who understood the works that Jesus was doing and did not take exception to the way He went about doing them. The Jews, scribes and Pharisees did not like the way Jesus did things. They wanted Him to declare plainly who He was. They did not like His associating with sinners or the way He violated the traditions of the Jews. To them He proved a stumbling block, therefore they were not blessed.

7And as these were going away, Jesus began to speak to the multitudes about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?”

He is talking about John’s preaching in 3:1 and the people who came out to hear him. What did the reed represent? One who was easily influenced or did not have a lot of stability; changeable and inconstant.

8But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces.

Maybe they had a preconceived idea John would be from a kingly line, wearing the clothes that those in kings palaces wear. John was a man of the wilderness - the desert; wearing garments of leather and camel’s hair (3:4).

9But why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.

Some may have expected someone different and rejected John because he did not fit their expectations. But those who went to truly see a prophet, perceived much more than a prophet. Verse 10 explains why he was more than a prophet.

10This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’

There was a prophecy made about John in Malachi 3:1. How many are there about another prophet? There are none. John was the subject of prophecy and a very significant prophecy at that! He prepared the way for the Lord! That is why he was more special than the others, surpassing Isaiah, Ezekiel and even Moses. Except for Jesus, he was the greatest of them all.

11Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Jesus offers more praise for John than any other person. Although we are not blessed with seeing what John did, this is an indication he did his job and he did it well. What a tremendous statement Jesus makes about John! There are none born of women greater than he.

Yet he who is least...greater than he. Notice three observations from this:

1. John was not in the kingdom. (Jesus is speaking of the church here.)
2. The kingdom (church) and its establishment was yet future. John preached in Matthew 3:2 the kingdom is “at hand” or near. It had not arrived yet. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says “I will (future) build my church,” and in verse 19 “I will (future) give you the keys of the kingdom.” The establishment is yet in the future. If it had been in existence at this point, then John would have been in it. (Note: This is a good example of letting the context determine if we are talking about the church or the overall rule of God. In this context this has to refer to the church. John was in the kingdom of God, but not in the church.)
3. All who will be in the kingdom (the church) will have a position greater than that of John (will be more blessed). He died long before the church was established. There is a special blessing for those of us who are in the church of Christ! We are blessed in the same way Peter is talking about in 1 Peter 1:10-12. Too many times we think of rewards, not blessings. Those of us on this side of the cross are blessed more than those before the cross, because we have the gospel! The prophets and angels wanted to see this age but did not get to. But we are blessed! We get to see how God’s plan unfolded from the beginning of creation.

John did not get to see the spread of the church to all the world; all the exciting things on the day of Pentecost. We as Christians are “greater,” or more blessed, because we get to see all the things that John did not get to see. We know this is not reward, because Jesus said there are none greater than John.

12And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

This has offered some difficulty to students of the Bible. Jesus puts us in a time frame - “from John until now” (possibly a period of only about one year). And, since John’s time

until “now” (when Jesus is talking), the kingdom has been suffering violence and violent men take it by force. There are two possibilities to what this means.

1. In the NASB foot note, “is forcibly entered” is used instead of “suffers violence.” This could mean that those who accepted John’s teachings were so desperate to be a part of the kingdom that they made as great an effort to enter it as angry men do when they storm a city (Lk 16:16).
2. It may also mean people are trying to establish and manipulate the church the way they want it to be. Jesus says not to do this (as in Jn 6:15 when they tried to take Jesus and make Him king “by force”). People cannot force the kingdom to be a certain way. The church was in the process of being built and many were trying to establish it their way instead of what God wanted it to be.

Perhaps a good example of this is found in Matthew 20:20-21 where the mother of James and John tried to obtain the authority for her sons to sit on the right and the left hand of Jesus when He came into His kingdom. The kingdom had not yet been established, but in the process of its being built, there were some who wanted to make sure they had a position of high rank.

¹³For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

We have no way of knowing what all the prophets and the law had prophesied. All the Old Testament looked forward to what John began. There was to be a major change with John’s preaching and when he arrived it was the initiation of the “last days.”

¹⁴And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come.

This is referring to Malachi 4:5. The Jews had in mind the reincarnation of Elijah. That is why John says in John 1:25 that he is not Elijah. They were still confused in Matthew 16:13. Some were saying that He (Jesus) was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. They were really obsessed with the idea of reincarnation.

Matthew 14:2 - Herod said that this is John the Baptist risen from the dead.

Matthew 17:9-13 - The apostles had seen Elijah and Jesus said that Elijah had already come. They understood that He referred to John the Baptist. He was the “Elijah to come.”

The World Wide Church of God believed Garner Ted Armstrong was this Elijah to come, but this was certainly not true! Jesus clearly tells us that John the Baptist was the Elijah to come!

¹⁵He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus will repeat this at least two more times (Mt 13:9,49). “God gave you the apparatus with which to hear, but do not just *listen*. Also understand. Did you hear what I just said about John? He is the Elijah! Since that is true, then I am the Christ.”

16But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children,

Some children want to play with others, but the others do not want to play.

17and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge and you did not mourn.’

Some are enthused about doing whatever is suggested, but there are always some who are not going to be satisfied with any suggestion. They are contrary - finding fault with whatever is offered.

18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’

Neither eating nor drinking. He did not please the people because he did not “associate” socially.

19The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

Eating and drinking = doing just the opposite of what John did, Jesus was rejected because of His “excess.”

Neither man could do anything to please any body!

Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. The wisdom behind John’s teachings and Jesus’ salvation will be justified in the lives of those who understand and obey. Each man has been given a unique work to do and each will accomplish that work!

20Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.

People who do not *want* to believe, *will* not believe! They had seen such tremendous displays of power that should have brought about their repentance. But they did not. They saw those miracles but still did not believe that they were true miracles or in the one performing them.

21“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sack cloth and ashes.

Woe = a warning. Watch out, be warned Chorazin and Bethsaida! Tyre and Sidon are Phoenician cities; Chorazin and Bethsaida are Jewish cities. As we study Acts 21:3 and 27:3, we learn that Tyre and Sidon readily received the gospel. So history proves what Jesus said about those cities. They were happy to receive the gospel. The people in Chorazin and Bethsaida had witnessed the same miracles but they are not willing to repent. He rebukes them to think seriously about what they are doing and what is happening around them.

22Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. 23And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

Capernaum was the most favored of cities because Jesus made it His home (Mt 4:13). But they are not going to be exalted in the eyes of God. Instead they shall descend to Hades. Hades is destruction, desolation, death. They will become dead cities. Why? Because they did not believe and repent.

24Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

This is talking about the eternal **judgment**. Sodom was destroyed about 1900 B.C. (Gen 18 and 19). All of the condemned cities here, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum are cities that were destroyed in the next 30 years. Today they are ruins. Degrees of punishment are proved from this scripture, e.g. “more” tolerable.

*****See the article by Cecil May: “Are There Degrees of Punishment and Reward?”**

Luke 12:47-48 teaches there are degrees of punishment. 2 Peter 2:21 says, “For it would be better for them not to have known the way...” Better in what way than to not have known? Better to face God in judgment not knowing, because they will receive a lesser degree of punishment.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 teaches that all who do not know God will be punished.

25At that time Jesus answered and said, “I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes.

Babes = the apostles, disciples who are free from prejudice. They are teachable. God is thankful that there are those who are like this.

Wise and intelligent = the intellectuals who, because of their own wisdom, have been unable to see the simplicity and beauty of what Jesus is trying to say. He has already said in verse 15 he who has ears to hear let him hear and will say it again in 13:14-15. He also quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10 - "Keep on listening, but do not perceive." God has given every one the opportunity to hear and believe, but they do not because of their own wisdom and intelligence. From this verse we learn that we also need to be humble and teachable, free from prejudice and not full of preconceptions or we, too, are not going to hear and understand...just like the Pharisees.

26 Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.

Jesus sees the wisdom in what God does by laying something before those who are child-like with the excitement, joy and enthusiasm in their embracing of the truth.

27 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

God made certain Jesus was fully equipped with all things necessary to fulfill His mission to do the job and God made sure that He was fully equipped.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - "All scripture is profitable...that the man of God may be...adequate, equipped (or thoroughly furnished) for every good work." With God's word you do not lack anything to accomplish the will of God.

Except the Father. The Father is the One who perfectly knows who the Son is.

Except the Son. The Son is the one who perfectly knows who the Father is. John 1:18 - "The only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." The only way people can come to God is through Jesus. John 14:9 - "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

We cannot come to know the Father unless Jesus reveals Him to us. "No man has seen God..." (Jn 1:18) and, since we have not seen Him, we cannot know Him. But we can know what has been revealed since Jesus came to reveal the Father. The Jews do not have a concept of God as the Father. They do not know Him.

28 Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

The yoke the Pharisees laid upon the people - traditions of the elders and the ceremonial laws - was something impossible for them to bear (Mt 23:2,4).

I will give you rest. If only they would come to Him, and learn His ways, they could be freed from that burdensome yoke.

29Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.

Jesus removes one **yoke** only to replace it with another. However, His yoke is easy to carry compared to the heavy yoke the people were forced to bear. These would be comforting words. People were really trying to be righteous. They believed the scribes and the Pharisees to be the teachers of God's Law and they believed, that to be pleasing to God, they had to do what they taught. But Jesus says, let Me show you something about the Father; something much better. You do not have to bear this heavy load to please Him.

Gentle and humble in heart. See the notes in chapter 5 on "the meek." Jesus is loving, humble in heart; in perfect submission to God's will. We can learn more from a humble person than one who is proud and boastful.

Rest. They could not do everything the Pharisees were binding on them to do - "...a yoke which neither our fathers...have been able to bear" (Acts 15:10). They could not keep the Law of Moses perfectly. But in carrying Jesus' yoke, they could find eternal life (1 Jn 5:13).

30For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

Easy. This word makes for a good study. Many have not given consideration to what Jesus means by "easy." 1 John 5:3 - God's commandments are not burdensome. God does not give us work so difficult that we cannot do it. The word "easy" implies the fact that it is a pleasant, joyful sort of thing, something we are glad to do - the second mile of love. We carry the yoke because we want to do it. The yoke Jesus wants them to have is one they gladly bear. They had to (and we must) wear His yoke to find rest. With Jesus' yoke they found grace, peace and joy. So shall we (see Phil 4:7; 1 Pet 1:8).

CHAPTER TWELVE

1At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

In chapter 8 a scribe said, "I will follow you wherever you go...." Not only did Jesus not have comfortable places to sleep, but here we see that the disciples are hungry. They have given up the comforts of the regular income and having food to eat. They are sacrificing.

Deuteronomy 23:25 - The plucking of the grain was allowed by the Law of Moses.

2But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

This was not an unlawful act according to the Law of Moses, but was so according to the traditions the elders bound on the people. Their zeal for the Sabbath made them go beyond the actual letter of the Law and forbade anyone to do anything on the Sabbath. Jesus will give five arguments to show how they had misapplied God's Law.

³But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions;

***See article: "*Matthew 12 And Situation Ethics*".

Have you not read? This is a rebuke. Of course they had read!

⁴how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

Jesus makes reference to 1 Samuel 21:6. It is called the "show bread" or the "loaves of presentation" because it was publicly set out. What David ate was bread that had been removed, not that which was freshly baked and ready for the table. But still, according to the Law of Moses, it was to be eaten only by the priests (see Lev 24:5-9).

The Pharisees would never have condemned David's eating of the bread. They would never say David broke the Law. But now they are finding fault with Jesus' men because they broke the law of the uninspired traditions of the Jews. David clearly violated Law, but they do not condemn him. Jesus did not sin, but they convict Him. The Pharisees are inconsistent.

⁵Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent?

Second argument. Here again is the biting rebuke of Jesus. "Have you not read...?" The priests were to do a lot of work on the Sabbath (Lev 24). For them it was the busiest day of the week. But the Pharisees taught that one cannot work on the Sabbath. The priests broke that teaching every week! Activity for the work of God was allowed and acceptable.

⁶But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here.

This is *argument #3*. The Greek literally reads "something" greater is here, rather than "someone," as found in some translations. Jesus is not referring to Himself, but rather to the kingdom of God (cf. 12:41-42).

What made the temple great, the stones or what was done in the temple? The preaching by the apostles about the kingdom is greater than the temple. The Pharisees cannot see what is most significant - what is really important. All the Old Testament

prophecies point to this right here, the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom and the Pharisees are worried about the picking of grain on the Sabbath. They have missed the whole point of what is happening.

⁷But if you had known what this means, I desire compassion and not a sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent.

This is *argument #4*. Notice the biting rebuke, “If you had known what this means...” Once again He quotes Hosea 6:6 (cf. Mt 9:13). The form is nothing if the heart is wrong. God wanted sacrifice but, more than that, He wanted the heart.

Matthew 23:23 - He condemns these same Pharisees in their merciless treatment of the people.

His fourth argument is that they were breaking God’s law by being merciless. The disciples should have received mercy and compassion because they were hungry. But instead they receive criticism and condemnation.

You would not have condemned the innocent. The apostles were innocent. They had not broken any of God’s laws, only the traditions of the scribes and the Pharisees.

⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

This is the *fifth and final argument*. Jesus is referring to Himself. He is the ruler or the Master of the Sabbath. Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, is going to offer the proper interpretation of Sabbath Law. The Sabbath Law did not demand that one go hungry.

Mark 2:27 says, in addition, that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. What laws God did give for man on the Sabbath were for the directives of man. God did not place men in the position to start adding to or taking away from God’s Sabbath Laws.

See Daniel 7:13. They understood the “Son of Man” terminology had Messianic indications. Jesus is giving them the rebuke they need to hear. If Jesus is the Messiah would He not have the right to explain the Sabbath Law?

⁹And departing from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰And behold, there was a man with withered hand. And they questioned Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” - in order that they might accuse Him.

They know Jesus works miracles and try to provoke Him into healing the man because they want to accuse Him. If He breaks their traditional Sabbath Laws, then He is obviously not the Messiah. The Messiah would not be a law breaker.

11And He said to them, “What man shall there be among you, who shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it, and lift it out?”

Only one sheep would be valuable if it is all you have. Is there anyone who, if he had but one sheep, would not break their traditions to reach down and pull it out? They would know, if they were honest with themselves (and they probably had done this very thing), that they would certainly reach down and save their animal. They would probably do it even if it was not their only one, but do it even if they had hundreds of sheep! This is a good illustration of their hypocrisy. They break their own traditions, but do not allow others to do so.

12Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

“So then,” is the conclusion: **“It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”** The Pharisees make it a matter of doing or not doing. Jesus shows that what you do is important. It is lawful to do good. Cotton Mather said, “The ability to do good imposes an obligation to do it.” There is a parallel in Matthew 5:23-24 in presenting the offering at the altar...go and make peace and then come to present the gift. There is something that needs to be done, therefore take care of that matter. It is not that the worship activities of the Sabbath are to be neglected, but you need to be thinking about doing good and not worried about keeping traditions.

13Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” And he stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.

The man’s hand is healed instantly! Jesus follows His own teaching: if there is good to do, He is going to do it.

14But the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

They are blind. They do not comprehend the power and the significance of the man who could do this. They have been rebuked and humiliated. Their pride is hurt and they counsel together to find a way to destroy Him. Their authority has been brought into question and they are going to do something about it.

15But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed Him, and He healed them all,

This is the fourth “healing section.”

16and warned them not to make Him known.

Five times in the gospel of Matthew Jesus commanded people not to make Him known (8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9). This is the third time. See the notes on 8:4 as to why Jesus is doing this.

17 ***in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, might be fulfilled, saying,***

This tells us why Jesus warned them not to make Him known. Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 - the longest quotation of the Old Testament in the book of Matthew. This explains the reason for Jesus being secretive.

18 ***“Behold, My servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.***

The Messiah would possess God’s Spirit and that Spirit would manifest Himself in miracles and teaching.

He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles = to the nations. He will let people know about right and wrong and the accounting they will have to give before God. Verses 19-21 give us some specific insight as to why in verse 16 they were not to make Him known.

19 ***He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone here His voice in the streets.***

Reasons for the “Messianic Secret:”

1. *He will not quarrel* - by not making Him known is saving Him from future confrontations with the Pharisees.
2. *Nor cry out* - humbly and quietly working at His own business. It is not Jesus’ intent to “blow His own horn.”
3. *Nor will anyone here His voice in the streets* - Jesus’ ministry was not for self-promotion. He came to seek and save the lost. He was interested in finding those who were searching for the truth.

20 ***A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory.***

4. *He is not here to harm or destroy* - **“Until He leads justice to victory.”** Jesus is not going to destroy that which is almost gone. “A battered reed” is close to being gone and He is not going to break it. “A smoldering wick” is almost gone, but He will not put it out *until* He leads justice to victory.

He will heal and restore, but on His own time table. John emphasizes this in his gospel. "My time is not yet come" (7:8).

21 And in His name the Gentiles will hope."

This is securing the victory when the Gentiles have hope in Him. This is significant because the Messiah was to be a humble, gentle, kind individual who would heal. Jesus is certainly all of those! Isaiah 42 was thought by the Jews to be a Messianic passage. He would be kind to His own people, but also provide hope for those who are not of God's chosen people (the Jews).

22 Then there was brought to Him a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw.

What a beautiful illustration of Jesus being the one with the Spirit of God. Jesus is healing everyone in verse 15 and here is another illustration of that.

23 And all the multitudes were amazed, and began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

They are trying to find reasons to prove that Jesus is not the Messiah, the son of David. What more do they expect the Messiah to do? In John 7:31 they say, "The Messiah will not perform more signs than this one, will He?"

24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons."

They respond this way because they are grasping at straws. The people are asking a sincere and an educated question. The Pharisees need a response and they need one fast. So they say this.

Notice, they could not deny a miracle had been performed, so they sought to reduce its effectiveness by crediting it to Satan. Since the power to cast out demons was invisible how would one know from whom it came? How could you prove it was not from Satan? Later unbelievers after the 1st century said that Jesus was a magician and that what He did was the slide of hand (cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69, Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.28).

Jesus is going to respond with a series of arguments to show that a person can reason this out and realize that it was not from the power of Beelzebub.

25 And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?

Argument #1. It is purely illogical to think that Satan would work against his very purpose. His is to have control over man and his mind. Why rob himself of his greatest achievement. It is not that Satan could not do it, it is that he would not do it.

Any kingdom...laid waste - note Satan has a **kingdom**. A kingdom must have to have a king, with subjects, a law and a territory. These four things Satan has if he has a kingdom. That is noted here in these two verses. Revelation 2:13 shows where Satan's throne is; where Satan dwells.

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges.

This is the *2nd argument*. Would they indict their own sons?

Who are their "sons?" There are two possibilities:

1. Their physical children are disciples of Jesus and among those who are working miracles.
2. In a more general sense, the children of Israel are their sons.

The point is, are you going to indict these others as well as being workers of Beelzebub? They would be their sons. Are they prepared to accuse them as well?

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

This is the *3rd argument*. Jesus is basically saying, "If, in actuality, I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then what does this mean?" It must mean that He is the Son of David, the Messiah and that God's kingdom is gaining victory over Satan's rule.

29 Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

This is the *4th argument*. Satan is the strong man in this illustration. A robber will not rob a strong man unless he first ties him up, so Satan must be bound or he will use his power to oppose what Jesus is doing. He cannot stop Jesus from casting out demons, even though he tries his hardest. Satan is watching Jesus take demons out of the bodies he has possessed and he cannot do anything to stop it.

30 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Neutrality is impossible! There are only two kingdoms and everyone is in one of those two kingdoms. Deuteronomy 13:13,18 - if a man prophesies and it comes true, but he then says, "Do not serve God," you know the prophecy was not from God.

31 Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

Blasphemy = speaking against something or someone. Saying words meant to harm.

Blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. It requires an especially hard heart to say that Jesus healed through Satan's power. The one who says this is rejecting clear cut evidence and ascribing a miracle to Satan.

32 And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.

One cannot call God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit a demon without possessing a heart that is very, very corrupt. If you are going to speak against the Holy Spirit then you are past the point of return. This would be like those of Hebrews 6 - they are beyond repentance.

It is not possible to commit this blasphemy today. Mark 3:30 is a parallel account. This blasphemy is guilty of an eternal sin, because they were saying, "He had an unclean spirit." It was seeing what they saw and saying what they said that made it blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. People today might foolishly say the words, but they cannot say it based upon seeing the miracles of Jesus. There is no one who can do both today, thus they cannot commit this sin.

Age to come. Forgiveness for them will not happen now or ever. They will not ever be forgiven.

***See article: "The Sin Against the Holy Spirit."

33 Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

Only the rotten tree will produce rotten fruit and their hearts are so rotten they are speaking these things against Jesus. This verse is also an appeal for them to be honest. If it is a good tree then call it a good tree. If I am good, then say I am good. My works show I am good.

34 You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

These people were wicked; like poisonous snakes, with corrupt natures (3:7).

For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. They were so evil, they could not call something that was truly good, good. Why? Because what was in their hearts is so hopelessly evil, nothing good could come out of them.

³⁵The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil.

The treasure is what a person values in his heart. They value evil men and evil things. What a man does and says (“brings forth”) is a clear indication whether he is a good man or an evil man.

³⁶And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.

Words indicate the feeling of the heart. Jesus says one will not speak what is not in the heart. That is why men will render accounts for what they say.

³⁷For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.”

Compare Matthew 15:11-20. Judgment will be based upon a man’s words. Those words will either prove him to be a righteous man or an evil man.

³⁸Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” ³⁹But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

A sign is asked for so that they may appear to be open minded. But Jesus knows their hearts. They are not asking for evidence to judge rightly, but they are an evil and adulterous generation. They are not open minded; they merely want to be entertained.

The sign He gives is the sign of Jonah. Jesus believed Jonah to be an authentic person, a prophet and the account of Jonah’s being three days and nights in the fish’s belly.

⁴⁰for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

That is going to be a sign! Jesus is giving a very veiled look into His death and eventual resurrection. As Jonah came forth alive from the fish, so also will Jesus come alive after three days in the earth.

Matthew 27:63 reads, "After three days..." Matthew 16:21 reads, "on the third day." In Mark 8:31 we see, "After three days..." According to Hebrew idiom, any part of a day could be counted as the whole day and night. So, to the Jews, this was not a contradiction.

For further study, see: John Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, vol. 3, pgs. 210,11.

Bible examples of the way they accounted time (Gen 7:12,17; 1 Sam 30:12-13; 1 Kgs 12:5,12; Esth 4:16; 5:1; Mt 27:63-64).

⁴¹The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Jonah preached approximately from 760-800 B.C. He preached to a pagan Gentile city, Nineveh that did, in fact, respond to the word of God. Now someone greater than that prophet is in their midst and they ignore or reject Him. "Something greater" is the same terminology as in 12:6 - referring to the kingdom of God. The message of Jesus is greater than the message of Jonah. Jonah did not perform miracles for the people of Nineveh, but they responded. Jesus is preaching the message and performing miracles, but they are not responding to what He has to say.

⁴²The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

1 Kings 10:1ff - the queen of Sheba. Sheba is located in the very southern tip of Saudi Arabia. She will stand with the people of Nineveh because she went to great lengths to hear wisdom speak. These individuals have Jesus in their very midst and they do not want to hear Him at all.

⁴³Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it.

Jesus uses this as an illustration, not as a doctrinal thesis on demons. It is true that an unclean spirit was at rest when it was inhabiting a man. But, when it goes out of a man, it seeks rest again but does not find it. Refer back to the earlier discussion on "waterless places."

⁴⁴Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

The demon decides it is going to re-inhabit the man (the dwelling place, the house) that it was in before.

45Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.”

Upon finding the dwelling swept, in order and vacant, the demon proceeds to bring in seven more demons even more wicked than itself. The application is found in this **evil generation**. This has reference to the growing wickedness of the Jews. They may have done some external, temporary reformation, but not in true repentance and righteousness, so they were worse off than before.

Today when we work with people and bring them into Christ, we need to help them fill their minds and their time with spiritual things (cf. Phil 4:8 - think on these things). They are accustomed to doing other things, but now they need to accustom themselves to spiritual things.

The unclean spirits could not have re-entered the man if his heart had been inhabited with the Spirit of God and His righteousness.

46While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

His brothers are named in Matthew 13:55, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas.

47And someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.”

They assumed Jesus would immediately stop what He was doing and run and see His family.

48But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” 49And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold, My mother and My brothers!

“Flesh and blood” ties bind tightly, but true kinship is with the ones with whom we work for common ideals. Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him (Jn 7:5). They did not support what He taught and did. Jesus considers the disciples His family for many of them - like Himself - had sacrificed family for God.

50For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Blood kinship is not nearly so important as the spiritual kinship. Kinship comes from obedience, from doing the will of God (7:21).

People need to make a choice, either to follow the will of God or one's own personal family. We are to hold Christians in higher regard than our non-Christian family.

Galatians 6:10 - "Do good to all men, especially the household of faith."

1 Timothy 5:8 - God wants us to hold our family in esteem, but not above those who are trying to hold to Jesus.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

¹On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea.

This is in Capernaum and would be by the Sea of Galilee.

²And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was stading on the beach.

People continue **following** Jesus. This begins the third of five speech sections (13:1-52).

³And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;

"Parable" is from the Greek word which means "to place beside" or "to compare together." The word is actually a transliteration of the Greek word παραβολαις. Παρά means something that is around or beside and βολή is the placing. We set something beside something else. We make a physical placing to result in a spiritual application. Jesus is endeavoring to make a spiritual application to them.

See article for more information on parables.

This is the first of seven parables. Chapter 13 is accurately called "the parable chapter."

⁴and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.

In the ancient world the sower would carry a sack filled with seeds. He would take a handful of seed and just throw it, scattering it. These people would have seen and done this very thing. They were well aware that there were four things that would happen to the seed, one of which was flocks of birds followed the sower to eat the seed.

⁵And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil.

They would have seen seeds fall on a rock and not ever take root.

⁶But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away. ⁷And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

They were aware that when the seed fell on the different soils, some would grow and produce, but some would not. The largest portion would fall onto good soil, thus producing a good crop. All of it is called good soil, that which produces fruit.

⁹He who has ears, let him hear.”

Jesus uses this terminology in Matthew 11:15. One needs to listen and think about what was just said. The way one hears determines the way one receives. All must be good listeners.

¹⁰And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

Them = those outside the circle of disciples. They were used to Jesus teaching this way so are puzzled.

¹¹And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

To a certain extent, the disciples understood the “mysteries”; they had been revealed to them so they could spread the message. But to “them” is was not yet revealed because they were not ready to receive it, nor were they to preach it.

¹²For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

If we take our opportunities and use them, then we will be given greater opportunities. But if we neglect them, then even those opportunities will be taken away. As good Bible students we want to see this in context with what is being spoken.

To you it has been granted = more opportunities given to them by Jesus. If they do not use them, even those will be taken away from them. This happened with Judas Iscariot. What he had been given was taken away.

13Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

They see and hear but do not really understand because of their “heart condition.” They are blinding themselves.

14And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not receive; 15For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them.’

This is from Isaiah 6:9-11. God knew people would reject the message because they had hard hearts, but Isaiah went ahead and preached it anyway. Isaiah asked, “How long shall I preach?” This is the context of these previous verses: preach until there is nothing left or no one left to listen!

The people were made worse, then, for hearing, because having heard and not responding made it worse than not hearing it at all. Notice, the individual has the responsibility.

You will keep on hearing, seeing...and not understand. Why not? Because the heart is dull. They do this to themselves. If the people would only soften their hearts, if they would hear, see and turn, then God would heal them.

16But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

The disciples are truly listening, with open minds and hearts. They are very teachable.

Blessed = approved and right with God; blessed because they used their ears and eyes. They saw and they heard!

17For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

You are seeing it and you are benefitting from it. You are blessed because you can be a part of something that the men of old wished they could have been a part of and could have seen (cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12).

18Hear then the parable of the sower.

As in verse 9, now He invites those who are the disciples to hear

19When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

In the parallel accounts in Mark 4 and Luke 8, neither have the phrase “does not understand it.” This is unique to Matthew. Men hear the words of the kingdom, but do not see any value in them, so Satan comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

Notice the word was sown **in his heart**, in his mind. He knew what was said. In Mark 4:15 Satan comes and does whatever he can to remove the word out of people.

20And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

The person hears truth and accepts truth, but does not have a commitment to the truth or doing what is right. Therefore, persecution is able to destroy his shallow faith. He does not stubbornly rebel against the truth, but lacks the earnestness and determination to stay with the truth. One with a strong faith uses trouble to strengthen him, not to defeat him.

22And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Here is one professing Christianity, but the power of his religion is eaten away because he wants the best of both worlds. He wants the power of the world, specifically the deceitfulness of riches. This ought to underscore the tremendous influence that money has and how it stands in contrast with spirituality (1 Tim 6:9-10).

How are riches **deceitful**? They become the object you worship. You put your faith in them rather than God. You think it is yours, not God's. Inherent in deceit is the fact of a lie. This is what riches will do. They deceive us into believing things that are not true (cf. Psa 52:7; Heb 3:13; 1 Tim 2:14; 6:17).

23And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Notice that with the last example he was still professing Christianity, yet was not fruitful. The one who hears and understands will bear fruit.

Hundredfold = one hundred times as much.

*** See article: "The Sower."

LESSONS

1. ALL TEACHING HAS GOALS. Sowing is done for the purpose of obtaining direct results. We must keep this in mind when we realize our responsibility to teach the word of God.
2. THERE ARE FOUR KINDS OF SOILS (PEOPLE). Soil represents the people. This can be very practical information. When we work with people we must remind ourselves that a particular individual falls into one of these four categories.
3. DO NOT BE A STINGY TEACHER. The sower sowed freely! He grabbed a handful of seeds and let them fly! He was not concerned where the seed was going to land. Nevertheless, some seed was sown even on non-productive soil. God wants all four types of people to hear the word and we should never judge the heart of the hearer.
4. SOME NEVER UNDERSTAND. It is important that we realize it is not that they cannot understand, but that they do not because they have not prepared themselves to receive and understand God's word (Isa 6:9-10). These people have closed hearts and they do not use what God has given them to understand it.
5. SOME HAVE NO STRENGTH. They are like the rocky soil. They hear and receive the word, but fail to let it take root in their hearts so it can grow. They are new converts and need to be taught and led.
6. SOME FEIGN RELIGION. These are the ones who receive the word but remain unfruitful. He does not fall away; he just never does anything! This is not true religion. True religion is productive, fruit bearing. True religion results in the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22). James 1:27 tells us that true religion is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. These are ones who are not genuinely converted or religious.
7. SOME HEAR AND PRODUCE. They genuinely do grow and are very productive. Bearing fruit in Christianity is something that demonstrates itself in more than one way. Many think it is only bringing people to Christ. "Bearing fruit" is when we are producing something. The fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5 are good examples of the kinds of fruit a good Christian will bear. Since God's kingdom is a vineyard, think of the various things a person does in the kingdom to encourage productivity. Maybe one is already a Christian but has fallen away and someone comes to encourage him. This person is bearing fruit! He is involved in saving a soul! We influence hundreds of lives. Success is not measured by baptisms alone, but also by what is being done.

24He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

The phrase **may be compared** is found ten times in Matthew, two times in Mark and two in Luke. It is a phrase important to Matthew. Since the Jew was so interested in the kingdom, it is logical that Matthew would include what Jesus said about the kingdom.

To a man...field. The seed is good and the man sowing the seed is interested in a productive crop.

25But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away.

There are some farmers who know exactly what Jesus is talking about. When times are competitive, a man may sabotage a neighbor's crop to keep him from reaping much produce so that his own crop would be worth more. The tare is a weed that looked like wheat until it matured, then one could tell the difference.

26But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’

He had taken precautions to assure that the seed was good, thus it surprised the servants to see the tares in the field.

28And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’

The slaves want to immediately resolve the problem. However, they do not fully realize the damage that could be done by immediate action.

29But he said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. 30Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

The interpretation begins in verse 39.

31He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

Mustard seeds are extremely tiny, but grow into a tree of significant size. So the kingdom of heaven is one that starts small but ends up very large. According to Daniel

2:44-45, the stone cut without hands will destroy the statue and establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, but will endure forever. God's kingdom will permeate the whole world (cf. Col 1:23).

³²and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

Compare Daniel 4:12. These are the spiritual blessings being talked about here. God's people will find refuge in the kingdom.

***See article: *“The Mustard Seed.”*

³³He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.”

Now He illustrates something for the ladies. Three pecks, or measures, of meal or flour were usual for making bread. The leaven quickly spreads. So in this brief parable, Jesus talks about the permeating effect of the kingdom.

³⁴All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable,

We are not to presume this is the only way Jesus spoke to the multitudes. Before this series He had addressed them in other ways (e.g. Mt 5-7) and after this He will speak differently (e.g. Mt 23). But, Matthew is saying, on this occasion - and this one only - Jesus spoke to them in parables.

³⁵so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.”

He is quoting Psalm 78:2, which is a Psalm of Asaph. So Jesus is calling Asaph a prophet. When a man was a spokesman for God, he was a prophet. There are two elements to this passage:

1. The Messiah would speak in parables. Jesus is now fulfilling that prophecy.
2. The Messiah would utter things hidden from the foundation of the world. Jesus is revealing the eternal purpose of the church and salvation. He is unfolding God's plan. Ephesians 3 is a good parallel text.

³⁶Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.”

Jesus does not reprimand them in response to this question, but immediately begins to give them the answer. Even though they did not understand, they wanted to. They are truth seekers. They should be commended for their desire to know. He has already explained the parable of the sower. So they are confident that Jesus will explain more, and He does.

37 And He answered and said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

******See article: "The Tares."***

THE TARES

ELEMENTS OF THE PARABLE

1. SOWER-----SON OF MAN
2. FIELD-----WORLD
3. GOOD SEED-----SONS OF THE KINGDOM
4. TARES-----SONS OF THE EVIL ONE
5. THE ENEMY-----THE DEVIL
6. HARVEST-----END OF THE AGE
7. REAPERS-----ANGELS

38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

The tares are the sons of the evil one. The followers of Satan are going to be gathered up and be burned with fire (cf. 2 Pet 3:7). Fire is God's element of judgment in the end.

End of the age = the judgment day.

41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

The angels are the reapers. The reapers come and gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness. The Son of Man is the sower and the sower is going to send for the reapers.

Stumbling block is the idea of offending to the point of causing one to fall away. This particular word translated “stumbling block” is in 11:6; 13:41 (here); 13:57; 16:23; 18:7-8.

Commit lawlessness = a person who does not abide by the law. He is a law breaker. This person does just what the law said not to do. Jesus said in Matthew 7:23, “Depart from Me, you who commit lawlessness.”

42and will cast them into the furnace of fire; and in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Compare 8:12; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30. These are depictions of people who are in torment. They are in tremendous pain. They lived for self and pleasure in this life, so must answer for those choices and suffer in the next.

43The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Matthew distinguishes between **the kingdom of the Son** (vv. 41; 16:28; 20:21) and the **kingdom of the Father** (vv. 43; 25:34; 26:29 also see 1 Cor 15:24ff).

Notice that the kingdom of the Son exists prior to the separation of good and evil in verse 41. In 1 Corinthians 15:24ff Jesus is going to give the kingdom back to the Father. The kingdom of the Son is the church. The kingdom of the Father is the overall reign of God, not specifically the church.

Daniel 12:3 is quoted - “shine forth as the sun...” The righteous are the ones who will be bright shining lights in God’s kingdom as they were in the kingdom of the Son. They were not those who caused stumbling blocks, but they were law abiders and as a result they will receive their reward.

LESSONS

1. **SATAN ACTS WHILE MEN ARE “SLEEPING.”** The metaphors that the Bible uses to describe Satan are true. He is portrayed as a snake in Genesis 3, the cunningness of Satan. He is a prowling lion seeking those to devour in 1 Peter 5:8. He is a schemer in Ephesians 6:11. In this parable he acts while men are sleeping; that is the way he works. He is scheming and crafty. The lesson is for us to be on our guard as Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8. We have to be like Paul in writing to the Corinthians: not ignorant of his (Satan’s) schemes (2 Cor 2:10,11).

2. **SATAN IS SUBTLE.** Sometimes men do not recognize his influence until it is too late. What damage Satan had done in this parable was not immediately evident. He likes to do things that show themselves later on. Matthew 7:18-20 - one does not know the tree is rotten until it fails to produce fruit. So it is with the work of Satan. People make a pretense of righteousness, but indeed are evil. 2 Timothy 3:5 says they hold to a form of godliness, but they are bad (cf. 2 Cor 11:14).
3. **GOD'S PEOPLE HATE SIN.** The servants of the land owner are very distraught about the fact there are tares. They wanted the field pure and wanted something done about it. That is the way the harvesters of God will be. They will try to get rid of the evil. We need a healthy attitude toward sin, hate what God hates and love what God loves (Rom 12:9 - "Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good").
4. **ONE MUST CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES BEFORE TAKING ACTION** (i.e. tearing out the wheat). One must do things the way God prescribed; whether in disfellowshipping or whatever. The servants would have gone into the field and torn up every tare, but would also have torn out the good wheat with them. The land owner wanted to save every stalk of wheat possible.
5. **UNTIL JUDGMENT COMES, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE FOUND PRETENDERS AMONG THE LEGITIMATE SONS OF THE KINGDOM** (cf. vv.47-50). Just because someone makes a claim to be a child of God does not mean he is (cf. 1 Tim 5:24-25). The deeds of some men are evident while some are not, but all things will be made evident. All will be revealed. As far as we know, some people who appear as "wheat" to us will prove to be "tares" in the judgment.

Note: Romans 16:17 and 2 Thessalonians 3:8ff are passages which tell about turning away from unruly. Also 1 Corinthians 5:1ff - discipline in the church. If someone does not conform to the New Testament teaching, the church is to take action.

1. The servants wanted to go and rip up the tares.
2. The landowner's way was to wait until harvest so as to not tear up the good wheat.

We are to do things God's way in the church. The process of disfellowship as found in Matthew 18:15-18 is the way we are to do that. If we do it anything other than that, then we are going to tear up some of the wheat - destroy good souls. This is a very important lesson for us in the church!

The world is divided into two camps: sons of the kingdom and sons of evil one. When talking about the sons of the evil one of the world, verses 38-39 say the angels will come and harvest them and they will be burned up.

44The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

The kingdom of heaven. This is the ninth time we have this phrase in chapter 13.

Even today bags of coins are found buried in fields of Palestine. This is a way they saved back then. The treasure in the field belonged to the field's owner. So if the man was a man of integrity at all, he would buy the field so he could have the treasure in that field. The fact that the text says he "sells all" indicates the great price he paid in order to buy the field.

One should be willing to sell all for the kingdom! There is nothing more valuable! It is a treasure worth far more than whatever one must give up to obtain it (cf. Mt 6:24; 8:18-22; 10:37-39; 19:21).

45Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

In the first parable, the treasure (kingdom) was found by accident and it might be paralleled to John 4:28ff (the Samaritan woman). She was not looking for it but found it anyway. In the second parable, the man was a pearl hunter. He was looking for it. This would be like the Eunuch in Acts 8, one hungry to know, seeking to know. Both parables have the same basic truth in the end: a tremendous cost was involved! But if one really understands the kingdom, he realizes just how valuable it is. He is willing to do whatever is necessary or pay whatever the cost to obtain it.

47Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind;

There are different types of fishing equipment used to catch fish (from the hook to the dragnet). The dragnet was used to scoop up everything.

48and when it was filled they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away.

This parallels the parable of the tares in that there was a mixture of good and bad.

49So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, 50and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the judgment with its separation of good and evil (cf. Mt 25:32ff. He will separate them as a shepherd separates his flocks).

1. The GOOD in the various teachings of Jesus are called sheep, good fish, wheat.
2. The EVIL are called tares, goats, bad fish.

⁵¹Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes.” ⁵²And He said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

The head of his household has modern material at his disposal as well as old material. So the scribe who is a disciple can take the new teachings and the old teachings and come forth with valuable information for those whom he teaches: valuable because Jesus says it is a **treasure**. A scribe should be able to see how Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament. He sees the new and compares it with the old.

⁵³And it came about that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there.

This is finishing the third speech section.

⁵⁴And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers?”

Jesus' wisdom and powers should have persuaded the people of Nazareth that He was whom he claimed to be.

⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

Jesus and His family were all well known in the town. They know He had been brought up in a carpenter's home, and had not attended any of the Rabbinical schools, so how did He get so smart? Another question that is not answered.

Where did this man get all these things. This is an excellent question. We have seen evidences of the answer through 13 chapters. Those who were truly students would know that according to the Old Testament prophecies (cf. Isa 42:1). Jesus received them from God, because they promised that He would have the Spirit of God. They were so familiar with His humanity they could not see His divinity.

⁵⁷And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.”

In verse 41 Jesus declared how He would gather all “stumbling blocks.” The same word is used here for **offense**. They are stumbling because of Jesus.

A prophet is not without honor...household. This is an interesting study in human nature. Anger is an outlet when no other option is left. They cannot deny the teaching or the miracles. They do not understand it all, but stumble - take offense at what Jesus says and does - rather than look at the evidences and believe.

⁵⁸And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

This is an excellent verse to prove a point made earlier. Miracles were designed to produce belief and if they would not produce belief, then they were not done. Jesus did not do many miracles in Nazareth because the people were prejudiced against Him. He gave them enough proof for belief, but left them in their unbelief. (This is a good illustration of the casting the pearls before the swine.)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

¹At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus,

Herod Antipas (see introductory material for more on this Herod) the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, the miracles and His teaching and preaching.

²and said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead; and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

Jesus’ works were viewed as those of a prophet rather than of the Messiah. Why would this be true? They were still thinking of a physical kingdom, not spiritual. Herod certainly would not consider Jesus to be the Messiah.

³For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴For John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” ⁵And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they regarded him as a prophet.

The multitude regarded John as a prophet and he had a great following among the populace. He told Herod he could not have Herodias because her first husband, Philip, was still living. Herod’s first wife was also still living. We know this from history.

⁶But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.

Salome was the niece of Herod.

⁷There upon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

Her wanton dance caused Herod to make a rash oath.

⁸And having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹And although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests.

Herod had to keep his word so as to not be embarrassed in front of the guests. He did not want to appear as weak by breaking his oath. His guests probably wanted John dead as badly as Herodias.

¹⁰And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl; and she brought it to her mother.

Now the voice of Herodias' enemy has been silenced. She must be relieved about that.

¹²And his disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

Did they believe this news would kindle the wrath of Jesus? We do not know what was on their mind but, nonetheless, they felt Jesus should know.

*** See additional material on this marriage.

*** See article: “Justifying Unscriptural Marriages” by Hugo McCord.

Herod and Philip were brothers. Herodias was married to Philip, but divorced Philip to marry Herod. Many say the marriage to Herod was incest. John declares, “It is not lawful for you to have YOUR brother’s wife.” That is where the sin lies.

Those who argue that baptism washes away all sin, and that one ought to remain in the state he was called, need to consider this passage. Why did John not tell Herod to be baptized? Baptism requires repentance (Acts 2:38). For Herod to repent he would have had to put away his wife. This is what John told him to do. Baptism will not make an unholy relationship a holy one. Herod’s marriage to Herodias was wrong, whether Herod was baptized or not. So, he could not be baptized and “stay in the state,” that is, in an unscriptural marriage.

¹³Now when Jesus heard it, He withdrew from there in a boat, to a lonely place by Himself; and when the multitudes heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities.

Jesus was wanting to get away by Himself for a little while, but so many are interested in Him that He is not going to get that opportunity yet.

14And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick.

He is giving of Himself to others. This is the self-emptying image of Christ. Many times we say, "I deserve some time alone!" But Jesus did not think that way. He was a giver, not a receiver.

He healed their sick. This is another healing section. This is #5 of our healing section. Jesus felt compassion and demonstrated that by healing the sick. Compassion was an attribute of Jesus (Mt 9:36).

15And when it was evening, the disciples came to Him, saying, "The place is desolate, and the time is already past; so send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!"

It was growing late. The disciples felt the people needed to be dismissed so they can go to buy food, but Jesus tells them to feed the people.

17And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."

This was hardly a meal for one man. The loaves were not very large.

18And He said, "Bring them here to Me." 19And ordering the multitudes to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes,

This is done in such a way that every eye will witness what is happening. He blesses the food, which is significant. The fact that Jesus appeals to God and a miracle happens is significant. It proves He is from God.

20and they all ate, and were satisfied. And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets.

The Greek word for "basket" is "a large container."

21And there were about five thousand men who ate, aside from women and children.

This miracle is found in all four gospels (Mk 6; Lk 9; Jn 6). When the Holy Spirit has all four men include the same miracle it must be significant. Matthew makes no Messianic application to this, perhaps because it was so obvious that it did not need comment. The Jewish understood what the Messiah would do.

Exodus 16:13-21 - Messiah would be a type of Moses and Moses fed the children in the wilderness.

Psalms 78:19 - "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" This refers to the wanderings in the wilderness. What did God do? What did Jesus do?

1 Kings 17:8-16 - Elijah fed the widow and her son.

Outside the Old Testament there was a tradition that men would feed on manna in the Messianic age (2 Baruch 29:8). These people would not have missed the Messianic implication.

22 And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitude away.

The apostles had wanted Him to send the people away in verse 15. He does that now, but only after He has given them something to think about - a significant miracle.

23 And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

This is what Jesus had wanted to do in verse 13 after hearing that His friend and relative had been brutally put to death. Why did He isolate Himself? To deal with His grief? John tells us because of this recent miracle, Jesus knew the people wanted to make Him king. Whatever the reason...He prayed!

24 But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

A stadia measures about 600 feet.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.

The fourth watch would be 3 to 6 o'clock in the morning. The disciples were probably exhausted after fighting the contrary winds.

26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

What did they see? Some spirit from the dead? Nevertheless, they are afraid. Would we not be just as frightened if this happened to us? Jesus is calmly walking huge waves tossed by high winds.

27But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” 28And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

Peter was a very impulsive individual. This is the first of five events in Matthew that feature Peter. The other four are confession 16:13ff; transfiguration 17:4ff; the incident concerning the tax money 17:24ff and denial 26:69ff.

29And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”

Peter was one who had enough faith in Jesus to believe that this could be done. Remember in chapter 10 that Peter himself worked miracles. It is another matter for him to do what he has seen someone else do. Certainly with the strong winds, and the high waves, for someone to go out onto the sea now, his chance of survival is nil. But Jesus is doing it, therefore Peter thinks he can do it. This is an important lesson for us.

1 Peter 2:21 - Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example.

Believing in Jesus and seeing His power should encourage us that we can do great things as well. That is stepping out on faith, trusting, believing in His power. We should free our lives of anxiety and free ourselves of the worry. Then we will see that we can deal with trials and temptations because God will help us through.

Peter does what so many of us do. **He became afraid.** Satan’s number one goal for those whose eyes are fixed on Jesus is to get those eyes focused elsewhere. Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus. When we fix our eyes elsewhere we “sink” and can be drowned in Satan’s evil.

When we do falter, God has not left us without a life line to grab on to. Peter is sinking and crying out for salvation. “Save me, Lord!” Jesus is the one who saves. (We see here another illustration of a physical example with a spiritual application.)

31And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’

Fear creates doubt. Doubt leads to failure. Since Jesus could calm the storm (8:23) the purpose of this account is explained in verse 33.

32And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 33And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”

They worshiped Him saying, “You are certainly God’s son!” There was no reason Matthew would recount the calming of the storm, except that it is a demonstration of the

growing of the faith and the understanding of the disciples. We learn with them. They saw the calming of the storm, but now there is another lesson to be learned. Earlier they asked, "Who is this man...?" Now they are not asking that question, but they are answering that question. They are ascribing a special nature to Jesus. He is the blessed Child of God, the only begotten Son.

This has a similar pattern to what happens to Peter in Matthew 26. Here, like there:

1. Peter confesses unwavering loyalty to Jesus. Let me come out on the water and
2. Then there is fear. Peter, a disciple, experiences fear.
3. He fails and he sinks (in Mt 26 he denies).
4. Then he weeps or shows remorse of some kind and he is restored.

Once again, the use of the interrogative in verse 31 is significant. "Why did you doubt?" Walking on water is such a small thing to what you could do with a little more faith. Doubt often deals a death blow in doing great things for the Lord. We doubt our own abilities or those of a congregation. Doubting can keep us from doing great things for the Lord.

³⁴And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

Gennesaret is north west of the Sea of Galilee, between Capernaum and Tiberius.

³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick;

People recognized Jesus wherever He went and as soon as they did they brought all their sick to be healed.

³⁶and they began to entreat Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured.

These people are demonstrating growth in their faith. The woman in 9:20-21 believed that if she could touch just the fringe of His cloak that she would be healed and Jesus complemented her on that. These people demonstrate that same kind of faith. This is a great lesson with spiritual application.

Just reach out and touch the Savior. He has the power to heal spiritually. Later the people would lay their sick in Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15) and carry aprons and handkerchiefs from Paul's body to their sick ones (Acts 19:11-12). This is the sixth healing section in Matthew.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

¹Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem, saying,

The most powerful men from Jerusalem are now becoming involved.

²“Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

They accused the disciples of breaking the law in chapter 12 (without success) and now accuse Jesus of breaking tradition. The Pharisees believed traditions were revealed to Moses by God, then orally passed on to the elders from one generation to another. They were considered equal to the Law. This tradition of washing hands before meals was found in the Mishnah. Yadaim is the section in the Mishnah (the word Yad means “hand” and “im” is plural). The disciples are not washing their hands according to the *tradition*.

³And He answered and said to them, “And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

They believed that traditions were equal to the law. Jesus counters that the scribes and Pharisees break the Law of God to obey traditions. These traditions stand against the word of God. Men have always tried to make their words equal to God’s words.

⁴For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’, and ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.’

1. The first phrase is from Exodus 20:12.
2. The second phrase is from Exodus 21:17 (not a part of the ten commandments).

Although they may not have been guilty of the second quote (because this is easily identified), their craftiness in the way they were treating their parents was just as bad as cursing. That is why Jesus speaks these consecutively.

Honor is a word which carries more meaning than we ordinarily ascribe. When we teach our children, their idea of honor is “to do what they (their parents) say.” This word is not “obey.” The word is “honor,” and means not only to obey, but to possess an attitude of willingness to obey, to submit to the desire of the parents. God requires these commands throughout life. Here were adult men breaking these commandments! They were to honor their mothers and fathers for as long as they lived, caring for them in their old age and/or difficulties.

⁵But you say, ‘Whoever shall say to his father or mother, “Anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given to God,” ⁶he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And thus you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

Given to God = “corban.” Corban is a key word in the book of Leviticus (occurring eighty-nine times). (The Jewish treasury was called the “corbana.”) The scribes and Pharisees taught the younger people that there was a way for them to avoid God’s commands to care for their parents’ needs. All they had to do was to claim that what ever the parents asked for in the way of aid was “corban” or consecrated to God. According to their tradition - not God’s Law - this released the children from their God-given obligations.

Invalidated...tradition. The rabbi’s said that their tradition was “a fence about the law” (Aboth 3.14). They believed a person was better able to stay within the commandments by following their traditions. Jesus says traditions stand opposed to the Law of God.

⁷You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ⁸‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

This is from Isaiah 29:13. They are two-faced. They are hypocrites! They pretend to be righteous, but their hearts are full of evil intentions. They were manipulating God’s commands for their own benefit. We call this “lip service.” The sound of their words is pleasing, but their hearts are not in them. Jesus demands clean lips and clean hearts!

⁹But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’”

According to the scriptures there are three types of worship.

1. There is vain worship as discussed here.
2. There is ignorant worship as in Acts 17:23.
3. There is true worship, John 4:23-24. That is in spirit and truth.

The word “vain” means empty, useless. One might as well not be worshiping at all because it means nothing. God said in Isaiah 1:13ff - “Bring your worthless offerings no longer...I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will ...not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.” (cf. Mic 6:6-8).

We are to pray as Jesus taught, “Thy will be done.” We are to do God’s will in His reign. This includes doing God’s will in worship. That is why Jesus said, “...those... must worship in spirit and truth.”

Precepts of men = nothing more than men's opinions. But in their minds they are not opinions, they are "doctrine." How foolish it is to try to bind what we think on others!

10And after He called the multitude to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand."

Jesus has been speaking with the leaders, but now has something to say to the crowds. He is going to demonstrate what He told the disciples in verse 14, "Let them alone." He has rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for what they are doing and now wants to use this to say something of value to the multitude.

Hear and understand. There is no legitimate reason for them not to understand what Jesus is saying (cf. Eph 5:17).

11Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

The word "defile" means "to make common." Bread eaten with dirty hands is not going to defile the bread or the eater. But traditions, words of men that contradict the Law of God, those defile the man! Doing things contrary to God's Law will make men common or unclean, defiled before God.

12Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"

Offended = "caused to stumble" (13:41,57). It upset the disciples that Jesus had offended these respected men from Jerusalem. Like many today, their respect for men outweighed their zeal for truth. The false teachers needed to be exposed for taking people away from salvation.

13But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up."

Every plant = teaching, doctrine. Any teaching, practice and church not planted (authorized) by God is going to be rooted up (destroyed). God planted His Law, not their traditions (Mt 13:24-30).

14Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind, and if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

Every error will be dealt with by God. Jesus and His disciples could not (and we cannot) waste time with men like this to the neglect of the multitude. Jesus did not do this, He taught the multitude. This is what Paul tells Titus in regard to false teachers - Titus 3:10-11. "Reject a factious man...knowing that such a man is...self-condemned." This is not disfellowship. Walk away from them; do not waste your time with them.

We today, as did the disciples, will have encounters with false teachers. If we are obsessed with dealing with these, we miss our opportunities to save others. We need to influence those who can be influenced.

15And Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain the parable to us." 16And He said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also?"

Once again Jesus challenges them to think. There are truths in God's word that are buried treasures and they are not going to be unearthed without diligence, study and hard work. The Bible can be understood! Some of what Paul wrote is hard to understand, but can be understood if we are willing to do some work. If we are untaught, we twist and distort His words to our own destruction (2 Pet 3:14-18).

17Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?

Physical food enters into and passes out of the body without affecting man's spiritual condition.

18But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

The things that come out of the mouth reflects what is in man's heart and do affect one's spiritual condition.

19For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

No one has ever committed any of these things without having a corrupt heart. Therefore look at externals (what is done). "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt 7:20). These are the things which truly defile a person (cf. Gal 5:19-21).

20These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

The scribes and Pharisees were so concerned with these externals that they were not focused on the internal, spiritual things. The spiritual were the focus of Jesus. In Matthew 5, remember the contrasts made by Jesus (e.g. "You have heard it said, but I say"). Jesus goes to the heart.

21And Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Now He is going into Gentile regions northwest of Palestine. He is going not to preach, but to get away (cf. 10:5-6 they were to preach to the lost of Israel).

22And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."

This is astounding! A Gentile woman, outside of Palestine, recognized Jesus and even called Him the **Son of David**. She is begging for mercy (she wants Him to do something for her).

23But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to Him and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us."

This is a test of her faith. From the disciples' viewpoint this woman was drawing attention they thought they were to avoid. The disciples wanted Jesus to grant her request so she would go away and they could be rid of her.

24But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "

He was not sent to those who were not Israelites. It was part of the divine plan that Jesus' personal ministry be limited to the Jews. They were the chosen race and should be the first to receive the benefit of the gospel and its preaching.

25But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"

She does not give up, but bows in worship to Him, begging Him to help.

26And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Jesus is not trying to insult her. Jesus did not approve bigoted Jewish prejudices. Jesus is merely making a point from a domestic happening - a common meal. Dogs wait until the meal is completed, then they get scraps. At this the children (the Jews) are being fed and the dogs (the Gentiles) would have to wait. She does not take offense to what Jesus says but adds to His statement.

27But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters table."

Now she really shows her faith in knowing what Jesus can do. She is persistent because of her faith in Jesus and because of her love for her little girl. She will not give up because she knows this man has the power to do something for her. She replies that while the meal is in progress there are crumbs that do fall and the dogs scoop them

up. She recognizes that Jesus came to the Jews, but could He not let a crumb fall for her? This is tremendous faith!

28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

Here is another passage in which a person is noted as having "great faith." The centurion in 8:10 had great faith and now the Canaanite woman has great faith. It is interesting that both are Gentiles. He talks about "little faith" in 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; 21:21 and all of these were directed to Jews.

29 And departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up to the mountain, He was sitting there. 30 And great multitudes came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them,

This is the seventh healing section.

31 so that the multitude marveled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

The new age is being initiated by Jesus. These miracles demonstrate that He is truly the Messiah.

32 And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

Compassion - 9:36; 14:14; 15:32 (here); 18:27; 20:34. For three days the people have followed Jesus and have nothing to eat. Jesus' compassionate spirit of love will not allow Him to see them suffer. Jesus promised in Matthew 6 one's physical needs will be supplied by God. Here they are being supplied by the servant of God, Jesus.

33 And the disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in a desolate place to satisfy such a great multitude?"

Why would they doubt after the feeding of the 5,000? One possibility is that they were so often hungry themselves that they rarely looked for special miracles. They have experienced much discomfort and sacrifice to be a disciple. "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You" (Lk 18:28).

34 And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." 35 And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; 36 and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke

them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn, to the multitudes.

Jesus has the disciples do the giving because it is something they need to do, even though they personally have not produced it. There is joy in sharing. Later they will give (as in Acts 20:35).

Gave thanks = “blessed” used earlier; thanking God for the food.

³⁷And they all ate, and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full.

As in chapter 14:20 with the 5,000, “they all ate and were satisfied.” This has a spiritual application. When one comes to Jesus for feeding, he will be satisfied. He will not need more nor want more. There is completeness in Christ. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that she would never thirst again.

³⁸And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

The number given in the previous miracle was 5,000. Those who subscribe to the synoptic problem of the scripture writers using a common source, have a definite problem with Matthew recording first 5,000 and later 4,000. Matthew shows these were two separate and distinct miracles.

³⁹And sending away the multitudes, He got into the boat, and came to the region of Magadan.

This is on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

¹And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Him asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.

They are coming with the purpose of finding accusations, grounds for killing Jesus.

They want a sign **from heaven**. This is significant. They have asked for signs before, now they are asking for a sign that could come only from God. They believed the forces of evil had no power in the heavens. Their hearts are not right and they do not want to learn anything. They just want to accuse Him.

²But He answered and said to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ ³And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?

They were able to read the weather signs and accurately predict what would take place within the next twenty-four hours or so. But the “signs of the times” were something that was totally escaping them. Why give new signs to those who miss the ones that already exist? Why work miracles for those who are not going to see the purpose and significance of the miracles?

⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” And He left them, and went away.

A sign will not...Jonah (cf. 12:39-41). They have seen the signs of the times already. If they were true truth seekers, they would be able to see them and discern the truth. The same could be said of our time. We are good at predicting the weather, but we do a terrible job of discerning the signs of the things going on around us. We need to be more prepared to see the ugly head of evil when it is raised.

⁵And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread. ⁶And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷And they began to discuss among themselves, saying, “It is because we took no bread.”

They think Jesus is chastising them for forgetting to bring the food.

⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up? ¹¹How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹²Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Although He said nothing different, they now understood. How did they derive that particular understanding from what Jesus said? Because they are thinking spiritually now and not materially (physically). They are trying to look at things through spiritual eyes.

To say that the teaching was like **leaven** shows that the Pharisees were too skillful to be accused openly of false doctrine. They taught doctrines that slowly but surely led to destruction; gradually permeating society and bringing the people into condemnation.

Matthew 23:3 - “...therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds.” This requires much observation and caution.

Luke 12:1 is somewhat of a parallel, but the leaven there is the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The people need to be careful of the penetrating, persuasive influence of this type of men. They are very powerful.

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

Who do people say? This has been the underlying question being asked all along. What do the people say, not the scribes and Pharisees.

Four possibilities are suggested.

1. **John the Baptist.** 14:2 Herod thought this.
2. **Elijah.** Malachi 4:5-6 promised His coming (Mk 6:15, Lk 9:8). The Old Testament taught that Elijah would be the prophet to usher in the Messiah.
3. **Jeremiah.** The apocryphal writings indicated that the one who would usher in the Messiah would be Isaiah or Jeremiah. That is why they are mentioned here. Those who wrote during the intertestamental periods said that He would be Isaiah or Jeremiah (cf. 1 Macc 14:41). It is clear from Josephus that these were not considered GRAPHE (inspired writings, scripture), but were important to the Jews and were read more as devotional materials.
4. **Or one of the prophets.** Same reference as Jeremiah or Isaiah.

Popular opinion expresses Jesus is not the Messiah.

¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Another penetrating question. What about **YOU**? The disciples were with Him enough. If they were honest they would offer a correct judgment. (And if we, as readers, were honest, we would also be able to correctly answer the question.)

¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

What did Peter mean when he said, "Thou art the Christ?" He believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the anointed one. He is that which is specifically referred to as the Divine King. Psalm 2:6-7 "His anointed" (cf. 2 Sam 2:4-7 - the anointing of a king).

“Thou art the Christ” was a significant confession by itself. But Peter adds, “The Son of the living God.” Peter surpasses any popular theory that would ascribe deity to Jesus. He has been thinking and he has come to an indisputable conclusion that Jesus has to be the divine Son of God.

Peter made a two-fold confession: Jesus is the Christ (referring to His *office*) and He is the Son of God (referring to His *divinity*).

17 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

Simon Barjona. “Simon” is an alternative name for “Peter.” “Barjona” means “son of Jonas (or Jona) which was Peter’s father’s name.

Because flesh and blood...heaven. Peter had no miraculous vision or was he inspired to make this statement. Peter was one who did what the Pharisees and Sadducees did not do. They did not see the signs of the times. Peter stands in stark contrast to them and he did see the signs of the times. God was giving a message to the people, revealing who He was through the teachings and the miracles and Peter saw and understood.

John 5:36 - God did works through Christ and by those Peter could tell who Jesus was.

Blessed are you. Jesus is not elevating Peter above the other disciples. He is just the one who spoke up first; he is in the right relationship with God because he has been able to understand God’s message. Peter was the one bold enough to step forward and declare it and Jesus is pleased with that.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

PETER = πέτρος = a pebble or a stone.

UPON THIS **ROCK** - πέτρα. This means a large foundation stone, a huge bolder.

Matthew 7:24 - The wise man built his house on a “petra,” not a “petros.”

The “rock” is the confession of faith Peter made, not Peter himself. On what authority is Jesus going to build His church? The fact that He is the Christ, the son of the living God. That makes Him qualified to build a church. That is why no one else has the right to build a church. The confession is underscoring Jesus’ authority. Since He is the Christ and Son, He has the right. This is the significance of what was said, not that the church would be built on Peter.

I WILL BUILD = it is going to be built by Jesus, not anyone else.

MY CHURCH = ἐκκλησίαν = “called out.” It takes on the meaning of a group, a gathering or an assembly. Jesus uses a common word for a gathering of people (cf. Acts 19:41 where the group - or the gathering - was dismissed). The Hebrew word is *kahal*, this is ekklesia; nothing more than a group of people. Jesus says, “I will build MY gathering or group.” Faith in Jesus makes us a group, otherwise we would be scattered. 1 Corinthians 3:11 - no other foundation but Christ. Jesus will have His own assembly, He will be the bonding factor.

AND THE GATES OF HADES WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

Hades = the power of death or the underworld. **Gates** completes the picture. When one dies he goes through the “gates” of death, never to return. What Jesus is going to do cannot be stopped.

There are three possible interpretations as to what Jesus is referring to by “it.”

1. He is referring to Himself. If this is the meaning, then Jesus is saying that although He will die, the gates of the grave will not be able to lock Him in. He will live again. The problem with this interpretation is that Jesus uses the Greek feminine (αυτης) translated as “it” instead of the personal pronoun “me” - the gates of Hades will not prevail against me.
2. He is referring to His plan. Jesus had frequently spoken of the preaching of the kingdom as “it” or “thing” (Mt 12:6,41-42). If this is the meaning, then Jesus is saying that nothing will hinder the establishment of the kingdom.
3. He is referring to the church. In the context, this interpretation is preferable. Jesus is saying that the church will never die (cf. Dan 2:44). He uses the Greek feminine (αυτης) translated as “it” in this verse. Jesus was referring to the church so He used the word “αυτης” (feminine) since church (ἐκκλησία) is a feminine word and is the “bride of Christ” (Eph 5:23ff).

¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

To Peter, and to Peter only, Jesus declares I will give you “the keys of the kingdom.” A key is used to open the door of something. He will have the keys to open the door of the kingdom of heaven, the church. Peter did this in Acts 2:38ff when he preached the first gospel sermon. It was that sermon that flung open the door to allow people into the church of Christ. Remember: God added them to the family of the saved, not Peter (Acts 2:47).

Revelation 1:18; 3:7 - Jesus has the keys. He holds the keys in the ultimate sense. But He is going to let Peter use them because Jesus is going to go to the Father. (Also note Mt 18:18 as a parallel of the last phrase of v. 19.)

Whatever you shall. Here is an example of where knowing a little bit of the Greek language can be a tremendous benefit. The Catholics claim Jesus gave Peter all authority. This is how they get the idea of “the Papacy.” But the tense of this phrase is, that what Peter is going to do is something that has *already been done*. “Shall have been bound.” This is the “perfect tense” in Greek. Peter would reveal that which God had already established in heaven. He opened what God had already made law, not establish something new. According to Ephesians 3 and 1 Peter this was done from the foundation of the world. This shows that in God’s plan there are things bound on men. If they were to be pleasing to God then they are going to have to conform to those things. Also, there were going to be some things that “will be loosed” (things the people will not have to do: offer sacrifices, burn incense, make trips to Jerusalem, keep the Sabbath Laws, etc. - the Law of Moses).

Jesus repeats these identical words in Matthew 18:18, giving the power to all the apostles. 1 John 4 - John speaks to the apostles’ authority. We are responsible for obeying what the apostles taught.

20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

It would, at this point, give the people the wrong idea. He wants to tell them in His own time. The disciples need to grow in their own understanding of Jesus being the Christ.

Compare Acts 1:6 - “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom?” They still do not understand fully. For Him to tell, at this time, that He is the Christ would not be a good idea.

21 From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

From that time. After the confession of Peter, Jesus begins to emphasize His coming suffering. If the disciples believe Jesus is the Christ, then they need to let the Christ teach them about the eternal plan of God. This plan was for Jesus to suffer and die. Thus we find an increase in “suffering” texts. There are at least twelve specific suffering texts from this point until the crucifixion.

And be killed. They had concept of a “suffering Messiah.” They thought in terms of a powerful leader, a strong-armed Messiah. If they had had a better understanding of texts like Isaiah 53, they would have better understood the meaning of a suffering leader.

22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

Again the impetuous Peter steps forward. It seems he considers what Jesus is saying as words of discouragement and admitting the possibility of failure. Peter states, “We are not going to let this happen to you!” Peter wants Jesus to know that he and the others will fight for Him. They do not intend to let Jesus be put to death!

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Peter was a dedicated, nationalist Jew and willing to fight for his leader. In calling him “Satan” Jesus means he is God’s enemy, opposing God’s divine plan for the church.

Stumbling block to Me = you will keep Me from doing what I came to do. Jesus knows His purpose. He is the Lamb of God and it is necessary that He die.

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

This verse is one people often do not understand. Jesus teaches an important lesson. If He is the Christ, and people truly believe He is, then they need to learn that He must lead. He is the One to direct and guide. This is a key “following section” in the book of Matthew. (This is the second following section. Our first was in Mt 8:18-22).

There are four steps in becoming a disciple:

1. “If anyone **wishes** to come after Me” - This has to be an expression of desire, will. It is a conscious, thought out determination that this is what I want to do.
2. **Deny self** follows desire. It is learning to say no to the strongest cravings of our earthly nature. Deny “self.” If you want to follow Jesus you have to get “self” out of the way. This is very hard to do, for any age and in any society. Why? Because we are so conditioned to serving ourselves. Galatians 2:20 - “I have been crucified with Christ...Christ lives in me.” Paul is saying that he has had to totally redo or remake himself into Christ in his body. Everything he wanted, or might like to do that Christ does not want him to do, he has to remove it from his life - deny self. This is what Jesus is saying, deny yourself. In chapter 8 we discussed prioritizing and counting the cost of following Jesus. This is the first step - denying self in order to make Jesus number one in our lives.

3. **Take up his cross** = counting the cost. The cross is an instrument of pain, suffering and death. The verb is “take up.” You take up your cross. This is intentional; a purposefully picking up the cross, assuming for yourself and taking on a burden that you know is going to cause suffering. 2 Timothy 3:12 says we will be persecuted. When we decide to follow Jesus we have to count the cost, and that cost can be suffering, pain and maybe, even death. Luke 9:23 adds the word “daily.” Take it up daily; it is a continuous thing. Paul says in Romans 12:1-2 we are to be a living sacrifice. Take up “HIS” cross. Everyone has his own. We do not bear a cross together. Every disciple has his own cross to bear. Now we do help each other, Galatians 6:2, but we have our own burden to bear and we have to bear it (cf. Gal 6:5).

4. **Follow**. There are those who suffer for Jesus, but not in a way Jesus has asked. It is imperative that men follow Jesus according to *His* instructions in the gospel. Man must follow Him His way, on His terms. “Follow” is a key concept in Matthew’s gospel. Men may physically follow Jesus from place to place, but a true follower is one who goes where Jesus leads Him. Today Jesus leads us to be a part of His church, to be faithful, to lead others to Him.

²⁵For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.

If someone is trying to attain for himself the “good life” - comfort, security, ease - then he will lose his life all together...all that is *truly* life (cf.10:39). A person who works hard for the materialistic life can achieve it. But Jesus is saying that material things are not really life. Followers of Jesus who make Him and heaven their goals will find real life in this world and the next.

For My sake. This is the key. Many have given their lives for earthly causes, but there is no cause greater than God’s cause. There is no cause that offers the rewards that this one has. God’s benefits are truly “out of this world!”

²⁶For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

This helps explain verse 25. He is talking about the one trying to save his life with material possessions. What will he gain if he is so incredibly successful that the world is his? Suppose a man were able to attain everything. What value would all those things be if he lost his soul in the process? This is a penetrating question, especially for the Jew who is looking forward to the earthly kingdom. It is also a powerful thought for us because of the “money-hungry” society we live in. The soul is the most precious possession anyone has (and he received that freely from God). Men do a lot of crazy

things to protect their fortunes, but do nothing for their souls which are immensely more valuable.

What will a man give in exchange for his soul? The answer is, disgustingly, very little, in terms of the world we live in. Many forfeit their souls for hardly anything of any value. Moses was one who was not interested in the passing pleasures of sin. But he was one who endured the ill treatment of his people for he was looking toward the reward (Heb 11:24-26). We should have the same attitude Moses had. If one believes sin condemns, and that one will go to hell for what Revelation 20:8 says, then he forfeits his soul by telling a lie. Exchanging your soul for something like that??? It is foolish to do so! We need to understand what is truly valuable!

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.

There is no doubt about it, He is going to come! And, when He comes, He will come with the glory of His Father. This will be a time for all to see that Jesus was His Messiah. The Father is going to glorify Him at that time as never before! All who doubted, disbelieved and disobeyed will see as Paul says in Philippians 2:9-10 - "Every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is lord, to the glory of God, the Father."

Angels = the harvesters in the parable of the tares (see also 25:31; 1 Thess 4:13-18, 2 Thess 1:7-9). Angels play an essential role in the judgment

According to his deeds. This is the basis for judgment. The idea of recompense has to do with "pay back" (cf. Rom 2:6, 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:12; Jn 5:28-29). What a man does is going to be the basis upon which he is judged. If he has tried to gain the whole world then he will be paid back for that pursuit.

28 Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Jesus is talking about His coming in judgment, the day of judgment, the ultimate end. But they are still thinking about an earthly kingdom of the Messiah. So Jesus is going to give them some information concerning the kingdom. He says that some will not die before the kingdom comes to pass (Mk 9:1). Some will not taste death until they see the kingdom come **with power**. Compare this with Acts 1:8 in the apostles receiving **power** from the Holy Spirit. This statement is made in response to their question, "Is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom?" Please note:

1. Some will not die till the kingdom comes and the kingdom will come with power (Mk 9:1).
2. Power came when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8).

3. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2:4).
4. Therefore, the kingdom came on the day of Pentecost. Some of those to whom Jesus was speaking were, of course, still alive when the day of Pentecost came (like the disciples, for example).

This goes back to the fact in verse 18 that Peter would receive the keys to the kingdom. The disciples never really understood this until after they received that power from the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

¹And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves.

He takes the three fishermen with Him. These three were the leaders for the twelve, apparently a part of an inner circle of disciples and especially close to Jesus.

²And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

The word “transfigured” is the word from which we get “metamorphosis.” Jesus went through a “changing.” We experience a change when we become Christians (Rom 12:1-2). The mind goes through a change.

1. His face shone like the sun, and
2. His garments became as white as light.

An incredible radiance shines forth from Jesus. Daniel 7:13-14 give significance to that which is taking place here. Jesus is the heavenly being that appears in glory in Daniel 7.

³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴And Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

In his desire to erect three sacred tents (tabernacles), he wants to equate the three. He already confessed Jesus is the Christ, but now wants to put Him on the same level as Moses and Elijah. He still lacks a full understanding of the significance of Jesus.

⁵While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

God interrupts before Peter is finished speaking.

In Matthew 3:17, when Jesus was baptized, God spoke these same words - "well pleased." Neither Elijah nor Moses is God's beloved Son. God says, "Hear Him!" - Jesus.

The Old Testament is divided into two main categories:

1. Law – Moses.
2. Prophets - Elijah.

These two appear with Jesus, but we are to hear Him - Jesus, not Moses or Elijah. John 1:1 - Jesus is the Word, the Logos. Hebrews 1:1-2 - God now speaks to us through His Son. Jesus is the one to listen to, "My Beloved Son." This is impressive to the disciples, as Peter talks about it in 2 Peter 1:16-17. They were eye witnesses of His majesty when He was transfigured (cf. 1 Jn 1-3). Peter uses this as proof that the gospel is not a conjured, cleverly devised fable.

Three times God speaks from heaven:

1. Matthew 3:17 - at the baptism,
2. Matthew 17:5 - at the transfiguration and
3. John 12:28 - glorified His name and will do it again.

Notice again Psalm 2:7, which we discussed in Matthew 3:17. The anointed one was the Beloved Son. This is a clear Messianic text. Peter confessed Jesus as the Son of God and God confirmed it by declaring, "This is My Beloved Son."

⁶And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid.

That is very typical when someone has a heavenly vision or is confronted with a supernatural event. Daniel, Ezekiel and John (Rev 1) did the same thing when they saw the glorious figure of deity.

⁷And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid."

In Matthew 14:27 He told them to not be afraid. Jesus does not want man to be afraid, but to learn to trust Him.

⁸And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone.

They no longer see Moses or Elijah. There is only one to look at now and that One is Jesus. He is the only one they (and we) ought to focus on. The text is emphatic in saying that He was the only one there.

Deuteronomy 18:15 is a prophecy of “one like Moses.” How would they know these men were Moses and Elijah? The text does not say.

⁹And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”

Son of Man is the term Jesus uses for Himself (Dan 7:13). It confirms He will die and will be raised. This is suffering text #2.

¹⁰And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

Why ask this? They had just seen Elijah! The scribes who copied Old Testament scriptures, especially Malachi 4:5, would know that it prophesies that Elijah would come. Perhaps they thought the appearing of Elijah fulfilled this prophecy.

¹¹And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things;

What does Jesus means when He says, “restore all things?” John the Baptist was the forerunner, preparing the people and restoring righteousness so the people would be better prepared to hear the Messiah. Jesus does not say what the “all things” refers to, but whatever John did, he did restore “all things.”

¹²but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”

He says Elijah **already came** - past tense. John had come in the spirit and power of Elijah and the people mistreated him and put him to death.

This is suffering text #3. The Son of Man will also suffer at their hands and He will be killed.

¹³Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

Matthew 11:14 says that John the Baptist was the Elijah.

¹⁴And when they came to the multitude, a man came up to Him, falling on his knees before Him, and saying, ¹⁵“Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water.

The word **mercy** again. There is a parallel account in Mark 9:14-28. This is a type of situation when all parents' hearts go out to this father. A son is sick, which is bad enough in itself, but the fact that the child is constantly exposed to life threatening situations is especially hard. Mark 9 shows clearly that it is a demon possession. It repeatedly (often) threw him into the fire and into the water.

16And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.”

In chapter 10 the disciples had the power to heal and cast out demons. They had authority over unclean spirits. They had previously been successful in casting out demons, but now are unable to do so. Jesus becomes somewhat irritated.

17And Jesus answered and said, “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.”

Jesus has only a limited time and He knows it. It is very important that people grow strong in their faith. He wants them strong in that faith before He leaves. The disciples did not have enough faith to successfully cast this demon out, as Jesus explains in verse 20.

18And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him and the boy was cured at once.

Matthew did not say earlier the boy was demon possessed, but now he verifies it. Something difficult for the disciples to do was easy for Jesus.

19Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” 20And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you.

Notice again the “littleness” of their faith versus “great faith” in the gospel. The great faith was in people who believed Jesus could heal from a great distance (as the centurion in chapter 8). The disciples believe that Jesus was the Christ and grow in that faith.

Mustard seed...move from here to there...impossible to you. Their faith is not yet where it needs to be. Contrast this with Acts 16:16. Paul knew the Son of Man. He had no doubts. The disciples had to grow more in faith. Jesus is talking in a hyperbole, in the sense that no miracle would ever be performed that would not accomplish a purpose. So what purpose would moving a mountain have in the confirming of a man and his message? The power they have is great - so great that they could say a

mountain “be moved” and it would happen. But Jesus is not intending for them to literally displace mountains. It would not serve His purpose. They are the ones who are going to preach the gospel and the only time God allows the supernatural to be a part of the working of man is to confirm the message. It does not apply to us today, because that time has past.

21But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Most manuscripts do not contain this verse. In all probability it was not a part of the original gospel of Matthew.

22And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; 23and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.

This is suffering text #4. Also, verse 22 is the beginning of the fourth speech section which continues through chapter 18. Their response this time is not as it was in chapter 16. They are deeply saddened about what they have just been told.

Their sadness could stem from:

1. They have grown to love Jesus very much.
2. His death would destroy all of their hopes for an earthly kingdom. If He is going to be killed He will not lead them to victory over the despised Romans.

Even though He says He will be raised on the third day, they are still sad. They just do not understand the significance of God’s plan.

24And when they had come to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter, and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?”

The Law of Moses required every male twenty years old and older to support the temple with this annual tax (Ex 30:13; 38:26).

25He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?”

Jesus immediately begins to discuss this tax with Peter even before he had an opportunity to tell Him about the conversation with the tax collectors.

26And upon his saying, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “Consequently the sons are exempt.

The temple was God's (the king's) dwelling place. Jesus was the Son of God (the king), therefore exempt from paying taxes. God's (the king's) family members were also exempt from paying taxes. The disciples were sons by adoption, so exempt also. But, failure to pay would have been misconstrued as rebellion.

27But, lest we give them offense, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.

Offense, i.e. cause them to stumble. The temple tax was two drachmas per person. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.312 makes reference to this custom. A **stater** was worth four drachmas. "You will find a stater." How providential! That was just the amount needed to pay the taxes for both Peter and Jesus.

Note: Jesus is not willing to give offense. This is a good passage for those who want to insist upon their "Christian" liberty. They say "in Christ we have rights and we have liberties." Jesus could have stood on His rights and said, "I am not going to pay it." But He did not want to stand on His rights. He was more interested in His impression on others. He was not wanting to cause offense. Christians today should be glad to give up their "rights" (for example, the eating of meats in Rom 14) for the sake of others.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

The disciples continue to envision an earthly kingdom. With Peter's confession in chapter 16, and the transfiguration in 17, it is logical that this kind of discussion would arise among the disciples.

2And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,

Child = παιδίον. This child is used as an illustration.

3and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus stresses the humble spirit a child possesses, a child who yields his will and submits to that of his parents.

4Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Humble = subjecting yourself to the will of another. Followers of God place their wills under the authority of God. This is humility as opposed to pride and is in sharp contrast to the disciples' self-seeking attitude each one desiring to be the greatest in the kingdom. 1 Peter 5:6 - "Humble yourselves...that He may exalt you at the proper time."

Greatest in the kingdom. How does one become **great** in God's kingdom? Not by forcing his way into prominence. Greatness comes possessing the "servant attitude." The kingdom of heaven here refers to the overall kingdom of God rather than a reference to the church.

⁵And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

Jesus had earlier applied this to the disciples (Mt 10:40), but now does so with the child. In Matthew 25:35-40 Jesus uses the illustration of hunger, thirst, etc. - "...to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." The word "receive" implies there are many ways to help, from emotional support to financial support.

⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Now Jesus changes the word from child (παῖδιά) to little one (μικρῶν). By using μικρῶν here it seems Jesus is referring not so much to a child, but to a beginner in the faith, a new convert. A **millstone** was large enough that it required a powerful animal such as a donkey or ox to move it.

Who believe in Me, to stumble. If someone is inclined to follow Jesus and a person does something to persuade them to do otherwise, then Jesus says it would be better for that person to be drowned in the sea.

⁷Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

Example is always a concern with God's people. Jesus pronounces a definite woe to anyone who is a bad influence (cf. Rom 14:13; 1 Cor 8:9-13). Anyone who causes another to stumble is going to face the angry wrath of God.

⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire.

Jesus uses this same illustration as He did in 5:30. He is talking to Christians, because all others will be cast into hell anyway. Here is one who is making some strides in the

right direction, but stumbles because of a weakness of the flesh (lust, for example). Life (eternal life) is more valuable than anything else. All have to be careful to guard against stumbling.

⁹And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell.

Now Jesus uses the **eye** to illustrate His point. He also uses the word “gehenna” for **hell**. Gehenna was where the city’s refuse was burned (compared to our garbage dumps) and located southwest of Jerusalem. The fires never went out. In Old Testament times this was where the pagan god Molech was worshiped (2 Chron 28:3; 33:6). This thoroughly disgusting place is contrasted with eternal life in heaven.

¹⁰See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.

Little ones = μικρῶν, new believers.

Acts 12:15 shows the people believed one’s angel could be confused with the man himself. Peter is knocking at the door. Rhoda goes back to tell the others, but they think it is his angel. There are many intertestamental passages about guardian angels (cf. Tobit 5:6,21; Testament of Levi 5:6). Hebrews 1:14 shows us that angels do service for the saints. This passage does not teach that children have guardian angels. Such a doctrine is not Biblical. (If such were true, since so many children suffer cruel deaths, then where are their “guardian angels”?) This passage is an example of God’s loving care and concern for His children, the new believers (children in the faith). God has assigned angels to minister to and do service for the saints (Heb 1:14).

Continually behold the face of My Father = close association. This is a way of expressing God’s listening to, being with, protecting and saving His children.

¹¹For the Son of Man has come to save that which is lost.

Compare with Luke 19:10.

¹²What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?

What do you think? This is a good question for us to ask as well. Jesus emphasized the importance of the individual rather than the masses. Maybe Christians should think about one soul at a time. The caring shepherd thinks about the value of one lost sheep. The caring Christian thinks about the value of every lost soul. It would be wrong for a shepherd to think the sheep is deserving of whatever happens to him because he

wandered from the flock. Equally, it would be wrong for a Christian to not attempt to restore a fallen brother or sister because he or she chose to wander away.

13And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

Sin does not diminish the value of a person in God's eyes. He gave His Son for people like this and He wants them back. He wants all people to repent (2 Pet 3:9) and to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Since God wants no one to be lost, if we are responsible for making one stumble, we will pay the price.

14Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

“Little ones” is μικρῶν again. Christians should focus on the one lost sheep and exert the energy to find him. The shepherd left the ninety-nine because they were safe. He did all that was necessary for their safety so he could go and look for the lost one. Where did he leave the ninety-nine? On the **mountains**. Sheep are very dumb, but are also very protective. It is a fact that when sheep sense trouble they push their young into the middle of the flock, circle them with their backsides to the outside and they start kicking like crazy! The group is very protective and a sheep is more likely to survive if it stays in the group. It seems that in our churches today, we want our preachers to spend all their time with the “ninety-nine,” but that is not Biblical. An evangelist should spend his time seeking and saving the lost. The pastors (elders) are to watch over the flock. The preacher does not have that responsibility. The congregation needs to be involved in the caring of the “ninety-nine.”

15And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

There is an interesting textual variant in this verse and we do not know which is the better reading. The United Bible Society gives, “If a brother sins against you” a “C” rating, meaning they are 70% sure the “against you” is not in the original. So we do not know if it is any sin or a sin against you. If one is knowledgeable of the sin, he has a responsibility to take action. Jesus outlines a *4 step process* in how to do this, because God does not want anyone to perish. With that as a thesis, consider verses 15-17. When a brother sins:

1. **Go and reprove him in private.** The word “reprove” is the same as 2 Timothy 4:2: “Reprove, exhort...” showing him the error of his way. One should do this, Jesus says, “in private.” There is never any Biblical permission for telling someone else about what one may have learned about another's sin. In telling, that also becomes a sin - the sin of gossip. But often times that is what happens and before long someone has his reputation ruined and his pride so hurt by the gossip, that the church has a diffi-

cult time restoring the person. Jesus teaches to reprove him **in private**. If he listens, you have won him. Often the person will be grateful about the way you approached the problem and the way you handled it. Private sin is to be dealt with in private. Public sin must be dealt with publicly. The brother was lost because he was in sin and as long as he was in sin, he was outside the fold.

¹⁶But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

This is the negative.

- 2. Take others with you.** Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 19:15 (see also Deut 13:12-18). The purpose and intent of the Law of Moses was that one could not be tried and convicted upon the word of only one person. There had to be two or more witnesses. Every fact had to be confirmed. Therefore, if you are the only one who knows of the sin and you have gone to the individual but he is not going to repent, then you take two others (even though they have not seen the sin). They go with you and confront this person as to whether he did (or did not do) what you claim. Hopefully he will admit it. What if the brother denies it? According to the Law of Moses, if the facts cannot be confirmed, the matter is to be dropped as far as public discipline is concerned. 1 Timothy 5:24-25 - God will eventually reveal all, including that which is secret/ unknown to man (cf. Eccl 12:13-14). Understand this, the matter is not dropped between the witness and the sinner. If you know that another is in sin, but the sinner has denied it to witnesses, you still should remind him whenever you are together and help him to see that he needs to make it right. Disfellowshipping is not to be done if there is only one that has something against this brother and no other witnesses exist.

¹⁷And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

- 3. Tell it to the church.** When the facts have been confirmed, but the person in sin still refuses to repent, make it public. Tell it to the church, the *ekklesia*. This is the power in numbers. The one who is in sin and is confirmed to be in sin, is overwhelmed by the love of an entire community encouraging him to come back and change his life. If that does not work:
- 4. If he refuses to listen to the church, “Let him be to you a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.”** He is no longer considered to be a part of the church. He is an outsider and no longer part of the family. How does the church feel about these? Do they isolate themselves from him? No! They try to

win him back to Christ. Just because this person is no longer recognized as a part of the church, he still needs salvation.

18 Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Compare 16:19. The plan Jesus just outlined for the disciples has *already* been established in heaven by God. They (the apostles) are just to activate God's plan for winning back a sinning brother. They are not establishing the steps of church discipline.

19 Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

The apostles are going to be asked for many things. Those who ask must first be children of God (1 Pet 3:9ff; Jn 15:9), asking according to God's will (1 Jn 5:13-15). In context, this is illustrating children of God asking the apostles if they can disfellowship an unrepentant sinner.

20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."

This still refers to the "two or three witnesses" mentioned in verse 16. Why have these two or three gathered together? In order to try to win back a sinning brother. When such a collective effort is taking place, Jesus is **in their midst** - that is, He is supporting their effort. They are doing this for Christ and has to do with important decisions dealing with an erring brother.

"The decision of the community, acting through its recognized officials, regarding what is justifiable in its members must be regarded as final. Its ratification in heaven is promised. The man who defies it has defied Christ and he has cut himself off from fellowship" (Jack P. Lewis, *Matthew*, vol. 2, p. 57).

Here are some examples of how this particular passage has been misused.

1. A family decides to miss Sunday morning services and take a day trip into the mountains where they will have a period of devotion and worship. They justify their absence by saying, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I (God) am in their midst." Such an application has absolutely nothing to do with this verse! The context is not even speaking about worship in any way. It is not scriptural for families to decide to go and have their own devotionals, forsaking the assembling (Heb 10:25). The purpose of the assembly is to provoke one another to love and good works and to apply this verse to that is wrong.

2. Article in the *Rocky Mountain News*, March 28, 1991. In this article a church of Christ minister said, "Christ is my lawyer." He was appearing in court before two or three Christian witnesses, claiming Christ was there to be his defense. He, too, misused this verse.

21 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

We are still talking about forgiveness and restoration. Forgiveness was the point in verses 15-17. The Talmud limited forgiveness to three times. Perhaps Peter thought himself magnanimous in more than doubling that; even in making it the perfect number seven.

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

This is a play on words to show there is no numerical limit. We do not keep an account of forgiving someone 490 times and then say on 491, "Sorry, I cannot forgive you anymore." We forgive and we forgive and we forgive some more. That is the way it should be. Luke 17:4 - forgive each day.

23 For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

The parable of the unmerciful servant is unique to Matthew.

24 And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents.

The New American Standard Version's footnote says this is about \$10 million in silver content, but more in buying power. In today's economy the debt would be more like \$16 million. According to Matthew 20:2 the pay for a days work was a "denarii" which was equivalent to 18 cents a day. A debt of \$16,000,000 would take about 200,000 years to repay. The point is, this poor man has an unbelievable debt that he can never pay.

25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.

The selling of wives and children was allowable under the Law of Moses (Ex 21:2; Lev 25:39; cf. 2 Kgs 4:1).

26 The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.'

There is no way to pay everything, and he knows it, and the king knows it. So, the king was moved with the man's willingness to attempt to pay although he was well aware that he would never be able to do so.

27 And the Lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

Compassion reflects the very compassion Jesus feels throughout this book. The lord forgave him the debt. This is an incredible act of compassion!

28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'

Fellow slave = a peer, an equal who owes him about 18 dollars. This really shows the magnitude; \$16,000,000.00 versus \$18.00.

29 So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'

His words were the very same that he himself said just hours before. You would think that would kindle some memory in his own mind how that he received mercy earlier.

30 He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

Commentators have often noted that it would be difficult for a man in prison to pay anything. So even though in prison he would try to have someone pay it for him. If there is no such person, he could stay in prison indefinitely!

31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

They were grieved for the one suffering as well as for the sin of the oppressor. It is troubling when such oppression and indifference occurs between people.

32 Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me.'

Note: His debt was forgiven because he **entreated** his lord. This demonstrates: (1) The importance of asking for forgiveness and (2) our Lord's willingness to forgive us (cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10).

33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?'

Mercy (ἐλεησαι) for others is taught often in the scriptures and, because of that, we had better listen. How many times does the Bible say we should forgive before God will forgive us? Can we expect God to forgive us and us not do that to others?

God is represented as the king and we are the servants. We ourselves could never pay the debt of our sins. God paid it for us in the death of His only begotten Son. This is God's grace given down to man.

³⁴And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

"Until" will never come. He has no hope of ever paying the debt.

Now Jesus makes the application.

³⁵So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Notice the terminology **from your heart**. A person can say he forgives but still hold the grudge. That is not the kind of forgiveness God wants from His children. He wants us to forgive in the same way He does, with heartfelt forgiveness - forgiveness from the heart. Forgive...and forget! This is hard to do, but God has given us the power to forgive and that is what we are to do. If we are unforgiving people, then we will face an unforgiving God. How important it is to be forgiving!

CHAPTER NINETEEN

¹And it came about that when Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee, and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan;

This is the conclusion of speech section #4 (note "finished these words").

²and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

Followed. As more people follow Jesus, the pressure to kill him increases.

This is healing section #8.

³And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?"

***See: "An Exegesis of Matthew 19:1-12."

The Pharisees test Jesus in reaction to the huge crowds following Him and the miracles being performed. What a hardness of heart being demonstrated by the Pharisees! Here is a man doing so many wonderful miracles and all they can think about is killing him. Yebamoth 14.1 teaches a man could divorce his wife, but a wife could not divorce her husband. Yet Mark 10:12 assumes a woman could divorce a man and Paul assumes this in 1 Corinthians 7:10-13. Since in Deuteronomy 24:1 divorce was allowed in the Law of Moses, then the question has to do with the *basis* of the divorce. They are not asking if it is lawful to divorce, but if it is lawful to divorce **for any cause at all**.

Gittin 9:10 records the teachings of three Rabbis: Shammai, Hillel and Akiba who each interpret Deuteronomy 24:1 in different ways, focusing on the phrase “because of indecency in her.”

Shammai - says “indecency” is sexual unfaithfulness.

Hillel - “some” (“dabar” in Hebrew) “indecency” in a thing so trivial as burning the toast.

Akiba - “she finds no favor.” If he found one fairer, he could divorce his wife.

Jesus responds with three arguments.

⁴And He answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,

1. Jesus refers to Genesis 1:27; 5:2. He bypasses the Law of Moses with an earlier statement of God (and this out weighs the later one, because it was God’s original statement concerning marriage). God made one man for one woman for life. Since He made only one male and one female, they were destined for each other.

⁵and said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?’

Compare Genesis 2:24 - this is the same thought. One man and one woman to leave their parents to become permanently united.

2. The two shall become one flesh, consequently they are no more two but one flesh. The bond of “oneness” began with Adam and Eve and continues through all generations. A married couple is one in purpose, one in sharing and one in body (cf. 1 Cor 6:16 - “one flesh” in sexual relationship). Divorce breaks that unity.

⁶Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

3. What God has joined together, let no man separate. These men were searching for reasons to divorce. Josephus talks about many cases where men were trying to find ways to divorce, or were expressing their desires to divorce. *Antiquities* 4.8.23 (253).

1 Corinthians 7:10 - The wife should not leave her husband, but if she does leave, let her be reconciled. Where does the Lord say this? What Paul is referring to is Matthew 19:6. The word there for **leave** is the same word here (χωρίζω). This is not talking about a separation as is common today (such as a “trial separation” where they do not officially divorce, but live separately for a time). This is referring to a divorce. It is also talking about divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:10. Man should not seek ways to divorce or to separate what God has joined.

⁷They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her?”

It is obvious they understood fully the meaning in Genesis 2:24, but they also understand Jesus is against their plans for divorce therefore, they appeal to the words of Moses.

⁸He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

Jesus admits divorce was permitted, but says it was not in God’s original plan for marriage. It was only for a temporary duration and was not to become the norm. The Pharisees infer that if Moses allowed divorce (Deut 24:1) then it must not have been unlawful. (They should have been more concerned with Gen 1:27; 2:24!) One should not make a point about the difference between the Pharisees word “command” (v. 7) and Jesus’ word “permit” (v. 8) because in the parallel account in Mark 10:3,4 the words are reversed.

The Old Testament records that God did occasionally allow some things He did not like. He did not want the people to have a king, but allowed them one because of the hardness of their hearts (1 Sam 8:6). He hates divorce (Mal 2:16), but allowed divorce anyway. Therefore God’s original intention is seen in the way He established marriage in the beginning: one man, one woman, for life.

⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

*** See: “Putting Away And Divorce.”

Fornication = *porneia* is a broad term that includes such sexual sins as adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and incest. The word **adultery** is the word μοιχευαται from

μοιχᾶω meaning “sexual intercourse with the spouse of another.” It includes one or two people who are married. Basically it means extra marital intercourse. That is adultery.

Jesus seems to agree with the position held by Rabbi Shammai: adultery is committed when a person marries someone else. The Bible does allow the dissolving of a marriage, but Paul says let them remain unmarried. If they marry someone else, Jesus says here they commit adultery. If you divorce your wife and marry someone else, you commit adultery.

Does Jesus say you can divorce for any cause? No! Not for *any* cause, but for one cause. That one cause, according to Jesus, for which a man may divorce his wife is sexual immorality. Does that give him the right to remarry? If a man divorces his wife because she has been sexually immoral with another person, the man does have the right to remarry. He divorced her for one cause: that of sexual immorality.

Mark 10:11-12 prohibits the marriage of a woman who divorces her husband.

Luke 16:18 deals with the marriage to a divorced woman.

The “whosoever” must refer to all people, not just covenant people (children of God). Note the passages in the notes.

¹⁰The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man and his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”

This is a passage that those who espouse the variations of verse 9 have not addressed. The disciples are surprised at the strictness of Jesus. They are stunned at the rigidity of His teaching, so apparently understood it. Any proposed position on the Biblical teaching concerning marriage and divorce must take into account this verse. Is this teaching so rigid that it would cause one to say, “If this is the case, then it would be better not to marry”?

¹¹But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.

Jesus responds to the disciples statement of amazement. The word **accept** means to understand, to grasp, to comprehend. This is accepting the rigidity of His statement in verse 9.

But only those. It is applicable only to those who find themselves in the situation He was addressing. There are those who may not wish to marry and there are those who are happy with their mates. This is not a relevant issue with them.

¹²For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs

who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”

This verse begins with the Greek word *gar*, which is the word **for**. Therefore verse 12 continues the discussion about marriage and divorce and remarriage. There are two ways to approach verse 12.

1. Speaking literally about eunuchs. Jesus says there are three types of eunuchs. Such a position does not address its relevance to the previous discussion about marriage and divorce. Therefore, this position is to be rejected.
2. To understand “eunuch” to be an example. The word “for” lends the evidence to this argument. Jesus uses the example of eunuchs to show the rigidity of His statement. He has never before discussed eunuchs and to do so now does not bear on the issue of divorce.

There are three types of eunuchs:

1. **Those who were born that way.** This is someone sexually impotent from birth, a person who finds himself in a situation that cannot be changed.

Application: There are some who are not ever going to be married. They, perhaps like the apostle Paul, choose to live the single life.

2. **Eunuchs made that way by men.** It was not uncommon in Biblical times for Gentile governments to select strong young men from the general populace for the purpose of castrating them and placing them into the service of the queen. They were castrated so they could not have sexual desire for the queen. These men did not choose to become eunuchs, they were made eunuchs by others.

Application: A eunuch is one who is incapable of having a sexual relationship. If one decides to divorce his wife (but not for sexual unfaithfulness), she has been made a eunuch (figuratively, not literally). Not by her own choice, but by someone else. Jesus said: “he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Mt 5:32). Therefore, she has been forced into a celibate life. This is a very difficult situation. But that does not afford her the opportunity to have a sexual relationship with someone else, anymore than a eunuch made that way by men could be sexually active.

- 3 **Make themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom.** They chose to be celibate for the sake of the kingdom.

Application: Here is a person who, perhaps because of his own unfaithfulness, was put away. So, because of his desire to be saved, does not remarry. Why? Because he forfeited his right to marriage when he chose to be unfaithful. Therefore, he makes himself a eunuch (not literally, but figuratively) for the sake of the kingdom.

Verse 12 should not be separated from the context of 1-11. The point about eunuchs is an illustration of verses 3-11. The New English Bible translates this verse as follows: "For while some are incapable of marriage because they were born so, or were made so by men, there are others who have themselves renounced marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven."

We need to remember the reason why Jesus teaches what He does. He is not saying something that is harmful for us, but this is here because of the good it will bring to our lives. If our lives are pure then the church is more pure and it functions better. There are some lessons to be learned from Ezra 10. God had them separate from the wives and children that were not of their own. That was for their own good. By considering the disciple's response, we should learn to take marriage seriously. We should not enter into marriage carelessly or with little thought. It is a life-long commitment. We need to teach our children more about the life-time commitment and the intent of marriage.

What constitutes a marriage in the eyes of God?

1. Genesis 2:24 - leaving the father and mother, thus an intentional severing of that relationship.
2. Genesis 2:24 - cleaving to one's wife, thus establishing a new, binding relationship.
3. By obeying the laws of the land - thus fulfilling whatever the law says constitutes a marriage (cf. Rom 13:1-7).
4. While some say that sexual intercourse must take place to constitute a marriage, there is no verse which supports this. Even Matthew 19:6 should not be limited to meaning the sexual act consummates a marriage. If such were the case, what about one who is impotent? Could he never be married? What about a man injured in war so that he cannot perform sexually? Is he never going to be considered married? And, if he should "marry" according to the laws of the land and touches his wife (in a sexual way), is he guilty of sin?

¹³Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.

Bringing children to religious leaders was a common practice in ancient times, because the people thought the leaders were blessed and that their prayers were special. Also, touching the child would bring a blessing from God. This shows the high regard people had for Jesus. The disciples consider this an intrusion on Jesus' time.

14But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Perhaps they thought the children would be an annoyance, but He says the **kingdom of heaven** belongs to this type of people, that is, in regard to the attitudes the children have - the attitude that makes up the kingdom. Jesus is not saying children are part of the church. But they are a part of the kingdom of God.

This passage, among others, demonstrates why infants do not need to be baptized. Those who are a part of the kingdom do not have sin (Ezek 18:18ff). The son will not bear the iniquity of the father.

If you humble yourselves and are like these children, then you are a part of the kingdom of God.

15And after laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

Jesus did not disappoint the parents. He laid His hands on the children.

16And behold, one came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

This has a parallel in Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18ff. But this one who comes asks in the singular. What one thing, what *one act* shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?

17And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

In the account in Mark, he says "good teacher" - calling Jesus the good teacher. The man did not thoroughly understand the meaning of "good," but confessed it without thought. He did not understand the impact of the confession. Jesus says not to use the word **good** without thinking about it and the understanding its significance. Why would Jesus say this? Because he needed - and we need - to understand all that is involved in the meaning of His being "good." He is not just good. He is sinless. He is deity.

Jesus tells him if he wishes to enter, keep the commandments. Keep, and *continue to keep*, the commandments.

18He said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false

witness; ¹⁹Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The commands in verse 18, and the first in verse 19, come from the Ten Commandments. But the one about “your neighbor” comes from Leviticus 19:18. Jesus wanted all of the Law obeyed. He is not giving permission to obey some while ignoring the others. In Luke 5:14 the leper was told to go to the priest (Mt 8:4). In Matthew 23:23 Jesus says, “For you tithe mint and dill and cumin,...these...you should have done without neglecting the others.” There are some things more important than others, but not to the neglect of the others. All of the Law needs to be obeyed.

²⁰The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?”

The young man had done some good things and he had made an attempt to obey the Law. Was there something he had left undone?

²¹Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

There are three things he needed to do.

1. Go sell all his possessions.
2. Give the money from that sale to the poor. (Then He inserts that he will have treasure in heaven - cf. Mt 6:19-21.)
3. Come follow Me. Prioritize, count the cost and follow. With this man there was a tremendous cost. Note the next verse.

²²But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.

Here was a young, possessing tremendous wealth, with his whole life ahead of him. In Mark’s account please note:

Mark 10:21 - “Jesus felt a love for him.” This tells us something Matthew does not. This seems to be a sincere question he is asking. He is not trying to find grounds to convict Jesus. He seems to be making a sincere attempt to follow the Law of Moses, but Jesus’ heart goes out to him in love because He knows it will be impossible for the young man to sacrifice his riches to follow Him. He lacks the willingness to “let go and let God.” Would we be willing, if that is what the Lord asked us to do, to sell all we have? Jesus has not asked us to sell our possessions and follow Him over the

Palestinian hills. He has asked us to deny ourselves. Matthew 6:33 - "But seek first seek His kingdom and His righteousness." He has asked us to count the cost.

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

He is not speaking of the church here. To make it into God's eternal kingdom is difficult because of all of the sacrifices and the reprioritizing it takes for a rich man. Not that it is impossible, but that it is hard. Still though, the disciples are really taken back by this statement and what He says in verse 24.

24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

This is a good passage to show that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the same (cf. Lk 15:18,21).

Some teach that the **eye of the needle** was a smaller door in a large city gate. A man could walk through this easily, but a camel would have to scoot through on its knees. There is such a door in the wall of Jerusalem, but it was named "The Eye of the Needle" after the time of Jesus. Jesus is not talking about a gate, but a sewing needle. A camel going through this would be impossible...or would it?

25 And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, 'Then who can be saved?'

Can a camel go through the eye of a needle? No, not without some divine help. These followers had envisioned themselves as being rich someday by being a part of an earthly Messianic kingdom and now Jesus is saying the rich will have a hard time entering into that kingdom.

This also explains another philosophy people had in ancient times. If you were rich you were blessed by God and if you were poor then you were cursed by God. This erroneous viewpoint exists even today.

Isaiah 53:8 - "...who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living..." Also verse 4 - "...we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God..." Who would consider that Jesus was receiving the punishment that they deserved? Did they realize that God was not smiting Him because of His sinfulness? They should have been the ones who to be stricken but instead, Jesus would do that for them.

Job's friends also had a false philosophy about wealth and God's approval. Job lost his wealth, so they believed that God was punishing him. Note Psalm 73. Asaph talks about how the wicked prosper...with the righteous it is not so, they have problems. It

did not make sense to him until verse 17, "Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end."

Who can be saved? If the people God has visibly favored cannot be saved, then who can? They are going to have to completely change their thinking.

26 And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

This further illustrates Jesus is not talking about a gate in Jerusalem. It was not impossible for a man to get a camel to go through a gate. He is talking about something that with men was impossible. God saves us, we cannot save ourselves. Nothing that we do can ever merit salvation for ourselves.

Having said that the rich would have a difficult time entering into the kingdom, He creates some questions in the minds of Peter and the other disciples.

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"

The disciples had visions of being wealthy in the Messianic kingdom. In view of this most recent teaching, that hope seems to be lost.

We do not need to see any reason to criticize this question. It is a logical question. We are virtually doing the same thing. Why do we try to live the Christian life? We want the treasure, we are looking for the reward. Romans 8:18 - we see what is going to be revealed. God knows we long for that reward. That is why in the Revelation we have a glimpse of what is there. We can see what will be there for us if we are willing to pay the price now.

28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Note three significant statements Jesus makes here:

1. The "Son of Man" is going to come in the judgment (Mt 25:31),
2. He will be on His glorious throne and
3. You (apostles) shall sit on twelve thrones. The apostles hoped for earthly thrones; Jesus promises them heavenly thrones (cf. Rev 3:21; 4:4; 20:4). We will reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12a).

Regeneration = παλιγγευεσία. This word occurs one other time in the New Testament (Titus 3:5 where it talks about baptism). This word was a favorite of the Gnostics. They believed in a regeneration - a rebirth - of the world: creation, then a destruction, then a recreation, a destruction and so on. Jesus teaches that there will be a regeneration - a rebirth - of God's glorious kingdom.

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.

Here is a beautiful promise (cf Mk 10:30). Jesus talks about the idea of sacrifice. The young man was not willing to leave his possessions, but Jesus says that all who are willing to do that will receive many times as much and shall inherit eternal life. Mark's translation is more detailed - a hundred times as much now in this present age... and in the life to come, eternal life. If Jesus' followers sacrifice for Him then these are things we will receive in this life and the next.

There is no promise or guarantee of wealth, but there is a promise that when we make tremendous sacrifices God is willing and ready to fill that void with greater rewards. If the young man had sold all and gave to the poor, he would have been filled up and overflowing with far greater rewards. He had trouble seeing that, just as many today have trouble seeing that.

30 But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

In 20:16 this phrase is repeated again. In 20:27 we find almost the same phrase. Prompted by the incident that involved the rich young man, and Peter's discussion, Jesus is going to talk about a reward. When speaking of a reward, there are two possible responses one might have:

1. "I will labor only for the reward." This would be not out of love, not out of true commitment, but just going through the motions for the pay check. This obviously is not what Jesus is encouraging.
2. "Why not wait till the end to obey if most of the reward is in heaven anyway?" Both of these possible responses are answered in the parable in chapter twenty.

CHAPTER TWENTY

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Jesus illustrates what He has just said in 19:30.

²And when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

A denarius is, according to Tobit 5:14, the usual pay for a day's work, about 18 cents a day. The normal work day varied in length depending on the season. Work was usually begun at six o'clock in the morning (cf. bBaba Mezia 83b in the Babylonian Talmud).

³And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;

At nine o'clock he sees others standing idle in the market place where those who wanted to work would gather.

⁴and to those he said, 'You too go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went.

Notice no pay amount is mentioned, just "whatever is right" will be paid.

⁵Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.

At noon and again at three o'clock in the afternoon.

⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?'

This would be about five o'clock in the afternoon.

⁷They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into the vineyard.'

The key is the length of the work day. The men were not working - not because they did not *want* to do so, but because they had received *no call* to work. This verse is used by those who believe in "death-bed repentance." If someone purposely puts off obeying God now with the intention of obeying near the end of his life, he is taking a tremendous risk. God wants us to come when we are called.

⁸And when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.'

Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15 - under the Old Law the laborers were to be paid at the end of each day.

⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.

In verse 2 the landowner agreed to pay this wage. Those who went to work did so agreeing to this amount.

¹⁰And when those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; and they also received each one a denarius. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, ¹²saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.' ¹³But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what is yours and go your way, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'

It seems unfair in terms of the work done and the wages paid. It is not unfair when thought of in terms of grace. The master gave grace to those who worked long hours and those who worked short hours. We can never earn what God gives us, so are fortunate to receive what we do from the Lord - the gift of God is eternal life (Rom 6:23). You cannot earn that, but note that the wages of sin is death.

¹⁶Thus the last shall be first, and the first last."

Not desiring to be first, but just being happy in being a servant and taking the reward our Master gives us.

¹⁷And as Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, ¹⁸"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,

This is the fifth time Jesus has spoken of suffering since Peter's confession in chapter 16.

¹⁹and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."

Jesus knows the humiliation, the persecution and the brutal death He is going to suffer. He tells them now (as at other times) on the third day He is going to be raised up (12:40; 16:21; 17:23).

²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him.

James and John are the sons of Zebedee. The parallel in Mark 10:35-40 says James and John do the requesting, not their mother. Is this a contradiction? Probably all three

are present, but it is actually James and John asking the question through their mother, perhaps to deflect any possible negative response that Jesus might have.

21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left."

Jesus had previously discussed thrones being occupied by the apostles and James and John had been honored by Jesus before (Mt 17 in the transfiguration). Why not ask for the prominent seats before Peter has a chance to do so?

22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

"THEY," not she, said they were able. The disciples refuse to see Jesus as a suffering king, therefore cannot understand that a prayer for glory must be a prayer for suffering as He will. The disciples could not be convinced that Jesus would occupy the heavenly throne of David. They see Him on a physical throne in Jerusalem.

Cup = suffering and death.

23 He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

You shall drink. James was the first apostle to be martyred. (Acts 12:2 by the hand of Herod.)

By My Father. God prepares the rewards and He is going to give them to whom He wills. Jesus is not in the "rewards issuing" business. That is left to the Father.

24 And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

The rest of the apostles would not have been so angry if they, too, had not shared the same spirit and understanding (or lack of) as James and John.

25 But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

This is the third of the three times we have the "first shall be last and the last first" phrase. Jesus is teaching them that worldly greatness is not true greatness. True greatness is found in serving and those who serve are going to be great.

28just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Jesus uses Himself as a perfect illustration. The word “ransom” (λύτρον) is used here for the first time and means to pay a price to purchase something or someone. The text tells us what the ransom price is. His life. Nothing less would be a satisfactory price. All Jesus has to give He is going to give and He is going to give that life for many.

This is the first statement of the purpose of Jesus’ death. He said five times previously that He was going to die. This is the sixth suffering text. He now explains *why* He is going to have to die.

Matthew 26:28 - blood shed for “many” for the forgiveness of sins. This particular usage is not talking about a limited atonement. 2 Corinthians 5:14 and Hebrews 2:9 teach Jesus died for all. However, all will not enjoy the redeeming value of Jesus’ shed blood. Only those who obey the Gospel will receive that benefit. Christ’s disciples should strive to serve, not seek fame and glory.

29And as they were going out from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. 30And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”

These men call Him the Son of David, the Messiah. They are not afraid to proclaim it! They also say, “Have mercy (ἐλέησον) on us!”

31And the multitude sternly told them to be quiet; but they cried out all the more saying, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” 32And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

“What do you want Me to do for you?” An excellent question! The blind men wanted their eyes opened. What do you want Jesus to do for you? Do you want forgiveness and eternal life? Jesus can give it. Anything you want, Jesus can give it to you. All spiritual blessings are found in Him (Eph 1:3).

33They said to Him, “Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.” 34And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

People who can *truly* see follow Jesus. While not being able to see, these men were still able to confess the Lordship of Jesus. This serves as an illustration of what Jesus says in John 9. The Pharisees could see, but they were spiritually blind.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

In this chapter there are recorded five events which upset the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

1. Jesus' triumphal entry (1-11).
2. His casting the traders out of the temple (12-13).
3. His performing more healings (14).
4. His first confrontation with the religious leaders (15-17).

Brief interlude: He uses a demonstration of His power to answer their questions about authority - 18-22; the fig tree that is cursed.

5. His second confrontation with the leaders (23-27).

At the conclusion of these events, Jesus tells *three parables* which convict these religious leaders. Those three parables go through 22:14.

¹And when they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them, and bring them to Me. ³And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

Jesus is preparing for the triumphal entry. But, more important, is the fact that this is prophecy being fulfilled.

⁴Now this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ⁵"Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold your king is coming to you, Gentle, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."

Matthew uses Zechariah's writings extensively in these last few chapters (cf. Mt 21:5, Zech 9:9; Mt 24:30-31, Zech 14:9; Mt 26:31, Zech 13:7; Mt 27:9, Zech 11:12-13). These are not going to be referenced directly, but do have a connection.

Behold your king is coming to you - a Messianic prophecy.

A donkey was considered an animal of peace; a horse an animal of war. There was nothing degrading about riding on such a beast, as some have implied. Donkeys were one of the chief assets of the rich (see Jud 5:10; 2 Sam 16:2; Ezra 2:67; Job 1:3). Jesus will ride on an animal that denotes peace. He is not the victorious strong-arm Messiah.

⁶And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them,

This is a good lesson for every one. Just do as Jesus directs.

⁷and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid on them their garments, on which He sat. ⁸And most of the multitude spread their garments in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees, and spreading them in the road.

2 Kings 9:13 - the people did this to recognize Jehu as king. This is a symbolic act in declaring Jesus the king (cf. Lev 23:40; Rev 7:9; 1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7).

⁹And the multitudes going before Him, and those who followed after were crying out, saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!”

Hosanna comes from the Hebrew names “Joshua” and “Hosea” (meaning “salvation”). In this verse the word is in the imperative form in the Greek language and means, “Save, I pray.” Some translations read “save now.” They are declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, the one who has come in the name of the Lord.

In the highest = representative of the Most High God. They quote Psalm 118:26ff, a clear Messianic passage.

¹⁰And when He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?”

This is a good question. How much has changed, if anything, from Matthew 16 when He asks, “Who do they say I am?” What is their response now?

¹¹And the multitudes were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

They are proclaiming that He is THE prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee, the one would be like unto Moses (Deut 18:15). Whether in their minds they fully understood this is questionable, but they have come a long way.

¹²And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

The temple was the center of Judaism, the seat of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus becomes angry because the people had lost their focus: using the temple as a place to make money rather than as a place of worship.

13And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer;’ but you are making it a robbers den.”

This is from Isaiah 56:7. Matthew does not let us lose sight that Jesus is fulfilling many Messianic prophecies. God’s temple should be a place of reverence, worship and prayer. Instead it has become a place where people are being robbed. Robbers would often hide in caves and if one happened to walk into that cave, he would walk into trouble. That is what is happening to the innocent people coming into the temple. These leaders will take everything they have. It was as if they were walking into a cave of robbers.

14And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

The Jewish leaders were angry because:

1. Worthy miracles are taking place.
2. The miracles are taking place on “their” territory - Jerusalem.

15But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant,

Indignant because of:

1. The wonderful things that He had done.
2. The children crying out in the temple.

They resented the fact that Jesus could work miracles and they resented the attention He was receiving; especially from the mouths of children repeating the praises they heard their parents shouting. Pressure is mounting. They have to deal with this man. Something has to be done!

16and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast prepared praise for Thyself?’”

What are they implying in their question, “**Do You hear...?**” That He should stop what He is doing and stop the children from doing what they are doing.

Have you never read again demonstrates the ignorance of God’s word among the Jewish leaders.

He quotes Psalm 8:2 - “Out of the mouth of infants...Thyself.”

While men may not always be able to see the truth, there are some truths only children can see. These children cry it out, just speaking the truth, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

(This is the first of two major confrontations with the Jewish leaders).

17 And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there.

He spends the night there and returns to Jerusalem the next morning.

18 Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry. 19 And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.

The disciples see this and marvel. Jesus had performed, in their sight, many marvelous miracles, but this one made a special impression on them.

20 And seeing this, the disciples marveled saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?"

Figs were generally present when leaves were in the trees. Mark 11:12-14 tells us that it was not the season for figs. But, since the tree had leaves, it promised of fruit, but had none. So, Jesus puts an end to the tree's false promises. The application of this is that the Pharisees are like this fig tree. They promise much, but have nothing to give, therefore are going to be condemned.

The disciples are stunned! "How did the fig tree wither at once?" They are amazed with the power of this man!

21 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen.

Compare 17:20 for more on the power of faith.

22 And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

All things would be that which, as in 1 John 5:14-15, is in accordance with God's will. Jesus uses the event of the fig tree to demonstrate the power of faith. God would not have worked a miracle if it was against His will. We know miracles have ceased (1 Cor 13:8-9). Miracles are not a part of His will today. Since God no longer works miracles, if we pray for Him to do so, then that is a prayer against His will. It will not be answered.

The power of prayer is that as referred to by James (5:18ff). We need to be men of faith and prayer today.

23And when He had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?"

Jesus demonstrates authority and they come to ask about its origin.

By what authority? "Authority" is a key word in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus had not attended their schools and is not "one of them," not a leader or a recognized Rabbi. To them, He is just "a nobody." The religious leaders do not consider the power Jesus possesses and all the good he is doing. All they are interested in is, "Who gave you the right to do this?"

24And Jesus answered and said to them, "I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

You have asked a question of Me, now I will ask one of you. If you answer mine, I will answer yours.

25The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves saying, "If we say, 'From heaven', He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' 26But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude; for they all hold John to be a prophet."

They are "between a rock and a hard place," on the horns of a dilemma. John did testify of Jesus, claiming Him to be greater than himself. If they give credence to John they must also give credence to the one John said was the Lamb of God.

Sometimes people ask questions to harm, not to help. These men seek to harm.

27And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

By saying, "We do not know" they passed judgment on themselves that they were not worthy judges. Standing before them is one of the most significant figure in all history and they do not even know who He is! How much confidence would the people have for any judgment these men might make?

What do you suppose they had in mind by their question? They believed He would blaspheme if He claimed that His authority was from God. Jesus stood for everything they stood against. If He claims the authority of God, then they can accuse Him of blasphemy and get rid of Him.

28But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.'

This begins a series of parables told to convict the Jewish leaders.

The first is the parable of the two sons. Since they did not know the answer to his earlier question, He wants them to make a judgment.

29And he answered and said, 'I will, sir;' and he did not go. 30And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, 'I will not'; yet he afterward regretted it and went. 31Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, "The latter." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax-gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him. (Some of the translations change the order of the sons.)

A man who has two boys would expect them to work. The application is given in verses 31-32. They are asked, which of the two did the will of the father? They answer this. "The latter." The one who said he would not go, but then went. The scribes and Pharisees are represented as the son who did not go.

Tax-gatherers and harlots represent the second son who repented and went.

John came in the way of righteousness. In verses 25-26 Jesus asked about the baptism of John. John came in the way of righteousness. John's baptism was from heaven.

***See: "*Parable of the Two Sons.*"

33Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey.

This is parable two used to convict the leaders.

A wine press consists of two tubs set at different levels in the ground and connected by an orifice or tube. The grapes are put into the one higher and as the grapes are crushed the juice runs through the orifice into the other vat. The owner builds a wall around the wine press to protect his investment. The tower is erected for the stationing of guards to protect the final product. The point of this verse is the owner took extreme care in making sure that the vineyard had every possibility of success.

34And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce.

In Palestine the vintage season would begin in the fifth year (cf. Lev 19:25).

35And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third.

The slaves represent the prophets of old. Jeremiah was beaten and imprisoned. Zechariah was stoned (2 Chron 24:20f).

36Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

Here the son takes the form of a servant (cf. 20:28; Phil 2:5ff) and does the work the servants were to have done.

38But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' 39And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" 41They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Jesus now gives the application.

42Jesus said to them, "Did you never read the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

He quotes Psalm 118:82. This is one of the favorite verses among the New Testament writers (cf. Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7; Rom 9:33). The rejecting of a stone shows the builders did not recognize a place for that stone. An architect would have stones hewn out and delivered to the building sight. Here the builders receive it, but reject it. From Psalm 118, the rejection of the stone is not going to keep it from becoming the corner stone. Why not? Because God determined from the beginning that Jesus would be the corner stone for the Christian faith and even though the leaders reject Him they cannot not keep God from doing what He planned.

43Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

Jesus takes the religious leaders' judgment reached in verse 41 and applies it to them. The kingdom will be taken away from them and given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

44And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

There are severe consequences in not building on Jesus. You either trip over Him or He falls on you (His judgment falls on you).

45And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

Jesus had clearly communicated to them! Even though it was a parable, they nevertheless were able to make the proper application.

46And when they sought to seize Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet.

Upon their being convicted, they want to seize Him, but are afraid of the multitudes. There is irony in this. Jesus just told them in a parable that the land owner sent his son and now that they understand He is talking about them, they try to seize the Son. He has just “preached on deaf ears.”

*** See: “The Parable of the Vine-growers.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables saying,

The third parable that convicts the Jewish leaders.

2“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son.

A wedding feast hosted by the king, in honor of his son! How exciting!! What a great event!

3And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

Not unable, but unwilling. This parable is told from the king’s point of view. We are given it so we can feel what the king feels. He has sent out the slaves to invite people to honor his son but they do not want to come. This would certainly hurt the king’s feelings.

4Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’

Perhaps they did not understand how great a feast this was going to be. Why would they choose to miss it? They are offered another opportunity to respond to the king's invitation - just as Jesus followed John with another opportunity for the people to come to God.

⁵But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business,

A purposeful, careless, neglect of what the king wants - the presence of the people invited.

⁶and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.

They are tired of the repeated invitation, tired of the king's slaves bothering them. They have things of their own to do. But...

⁷But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire.

Earlier he was only insulted. But now, after they mistreated and murdered his slaves, he is outraged.

⁸Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.'

This invitation is totally indiscriminate. "As many as you find..." no prejudice, invite them all. (This is probably referring to the publicans and sinners and eventually would include the Gentiles.)

¹⁰And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

They obeyed the command. The evil were invited as well as the good and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹²and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And he was speechless.

Wedding clothes = festal garments. When one of wealth invited others *the garments were provided* by the host. The one coming in is showing disrespect to the host by not wearing the clothes he had provided for him. The man is speechless because he is

without excuse for being improperly dressed. That was taken as a personal insult to the king and to the son he was honoring.

13Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Compare 8:12; 13:42,50. A person who presumed to come into the king's feast not properly attired was cast out into a place of punishment. Men today are clothed with righteousness when they obey the gospel of Christ. Failure to obey the gospel will result in condemnation (Rev 3:4-5,18).

14For many are called, but few are chosen."

The call was issued first to the invited guests (the Jews) but they chose not to come. Then it was given to those in the highway. The chosen are those who meet the criteria that the king demands.

***See: "The Parable of the Wedding Feast."

15Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap Him in what He said.

They have been unable to ensnare Him in what He does, because all He does is good. Perhaps they might be able to trap Him in what He says.

16And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.

Did they really believe Jesus could be caught off guard by their younger followers? That He would say something careless to them?

Herodians. People of a political party that supported the dynasty of Herod (see additional notes). Adversity creates strange partnerships. These two groups were usually at odds with one another.

Defer to no one. "We believe you are strong enough that you will even speak evil of the government. You will not back down from anyone."

17Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"

The poll tax was the general tax required from the people by the Roman government. If Jesus declared it was lawful He would alienate Himself from the multitude who opposed the tax.

18But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?"

What might be entrapping about this question? One cannot answer without showing favoritism. If Jesus answers yes then He is going against the Jews and their laws. If He answers no, they will take Him to the Romans.

19Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius.

The tax was such that an entire day's pay was given to the hated Roman government (see notes on denarius, 20:2).

20And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." 22And hearing this, they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away.

Jesus gave an answer that neither group could find offensive. To the Pharisees He said, "Give to God what He is due"; and to the Herodians, "Give Caesar what he is due." "A coin stamped with Caesar's image belonged to Caesar and should be given back to him. A man in God's image (Gen 1:27) belongs to God and should be given back to Him" (Jack Lewis).

23On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Him and questioned Him.

The Sadducees join in with the others in questioning Jesus. Their question is unique to their theological perspective concerning the resurrection (as Matthew points out).

24saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies, having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up an offspring to his brother.'

This is true, see Deuteronomy 25:5. This is called the Levirate Law of marriage. When one dies and leaves his wife with no children, his brother is to take the wife and give her children for inheritance and to take care of her in her old age.

25Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother; 26so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. 27And last of all, the woman died. 28In the resurrection therefore whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her."

If an argument proves too much, it falls apart and no longer can be used. The Sadducees taught that souls die with the bodies and use as command of Moses to try to show the absurdity of the resurrection. If married life continued in the hereafter (next life,

resurrection) many problems would exist because of this situation (real or imaginary) they present. The woman could have only one husband. Which the seven will it be?

29 But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God.

Mistaken = “err” in the King James Version. Their misunderstanding of the scriptures has led them to a wrong conclusion, a wrong belief and therefore a wrong practice. Obviously, a good lesson is, if we do not understand the scriptures and the power of God then we are wrong; we “err.” We are held responsible to know and obey the word (Jn 12:48; Rev 20:11-15).

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

They did not understand that marriages do not take place in the resurrection. There will be no marriages in heaven. Jesus is not saying we will *be* angels, but our relationships will be like those of the angels.

31 But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying,

Once again, our Lord expected these people to be students of the scriptures. Note again, **have you not read**. The Old Testament scriptures applied to them even though they were written centuries before **by God**. Here is inspiration.

32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead but of the living.’

He quotes Exodus 3:6 - the incident of the burning bush, when God spoke to Moses and identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If He is the God of these three, and the God of the living, then they are alive. But the Old Testament records their deaths.

We are responsible to know and obey the scriptures. Those who want us to accept the “new hermeneutic” teach that only the commands are what we are to follow and not the inferences or the examples. The Pharisees and Sadducees erred because they did not know the things concerning the resurrection. There was no passage that said directly “there is a resurrection.” This was a truth *inferred* in the scriptures. They should have been able to know and understand this from the *indirect* information that the scriptures gave.

2 Timothy 1:10 - Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Until Jesus came this was a very vague teaching. It was not God’s plan to talk about these in the Old Testament, but to have Jesus teach this in the New Testament.

³³And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

Give me one commandment that would supersede - and exclude - all the others in the Law. Notice a lawyer, an expert, is asking the question.

³⁷And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

This is Deuteronomy 6:5 and it is the greatest law because it is the foundation of all laws. Everything we do, we do because of love. We love God with:

1. *All our heart* - the emotional commitment to God. Not just going through the motions or paying “lip service,” but obeying because we are emotionally attached to the Lord.
2. *All our soul* - the spiritual part of man, giving all we have to Him. No one else shares the spiritual throne. He is the only One we serve.
3. *All our mind* - the “thinking apparatus” - reason, intellect. We have come to know Him and we love Him.

Love results in genuine obedience. That is why it is the greatest commandment. There were hundreds of commands in the Law of Moses, but if love abides in the heart then all of the other commands will be fulfilled.

³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment.

He gives the lawyer more than he asked for.

³⁹The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Leviticus 19:18 is quoted. Jesus does believe a person should love himself. In understanding that love is the basis for all we do, He tells us how we are to love our neighbor - as ourselves. In Hebrew, the word for “friend” and for “neighbor” is one and the same. In Luke’s account the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asks, “Who is my neighbor?” (Lk 10:30f). Jesus responds by telling the parable of the good Samaritan.

⁴⁰On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus divides the Old Testament into two major sections: the Law and the Prophets. This is a sweeping statement on all of the thirty-nine books in the Old Testament canon.

Without these two commandments, there is no law of God that will be obeyed in the way God wants them obeyed. John says in 1 John 4:19-21, we love because He first loved us and if you say you love God and hate your brother you are a liar. Love is the key to obeying all that God has said.

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David."

Jesus has frequently been called the son of David. This section is significant to Matthew's presentation. Jesus wants to ask a question that will probe their understanding of the Messiah and through whom the Messiah comes. The question is correctly answered. He is the son of David, but...He is much more than that!

43 He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord', saying,

In the Spirit = Jesus' way of saying "by inspiration."

44 "The Lord said to My Lord, "sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet?""

Quoting Psalm 110:1 - the second "lord" refers to the king. If Jesus is the son of David, would David be calling his son, "Lord?"

45 If David then calls Him 'Lord', how is He his son?"

Would David be calling his son, "Adoni" (Lord)? No! Of course not! This is a discussion of superiority. Who is greater; David or the Messiah who comes from David? In Jewish thinking David was the ultimate being and the Messiah is to bring them back to what David had. Yet again, through an *inference* in the Old Testament, the truth comes to light! The Messiah is superior to David. That is why David calls Him "Lord."

46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

They were woefully ignorant of the Old Testament teachings of who the Messiah is and where He comes from. Matthew has gone to great lengths to show Jesus is the son of David and records several occurrences of people calling Him that. He is called the son of David because He comes from the seed of Jesse and through the lineage of David. But the Jews were limited in their understanding, thinking only from the view point of His *earthly* lineage. Jesus wants them to know that He is more than just the physical son of David. He wants them to realize that He is *divine and eternal!*

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

¹Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

The Pharisees are about to receive one of the greatest scathings in all the scriptures! Jesus calls them “hypocrites” because they say they have the authority of Moses, but deny God’s authority by asserting their own.

This is the beginning of the *5th speech section* and it runs through chapter 25. Here Jesus is speaking to the multitudes and the disciples about the scribes and Pharisees.

²saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

They have taken it upon themselves to place themselves in Moses’ position (office) of explaining the Law.

³therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them.

What the Pharisees taught them from the Law of Moses, they were to do. But, they were not to follow the Pharisees’ examples which were contrary to the Law. The Pharisees did not “practice what they preached.”

⁴And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

Matthew 11:28 - “Come to Me, all who are heavy laden...” These are the heavy loads Jesus was speaking of there - not physical loads, but spiritual loads. What kind of spiritual loads were the Pharisees laying on the people? Their own traditions; from plucking grain to washing hands, etc. They burden the people with them, but refuse to carry them themselves.

⁵But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

See 6:1,5,16 - things being done to be seen of men such as tithing, praying and fasting. He lists six things that describe them or things they do.

- 1. They broaden their phylacteries.** The New American Standard Version has a footnote telling us these are small boxes containing scraps of scripture texts, worn for religious purposes. A head band held the box directly between the eyes, or it was worn on the left arm, or both. The purpose was to constantly remind them of God’s word. According to Arndt - Gingrich they were used for protection from harm and/or demonic influences

(pg. 876). Compare Deuteronomy 6:8 - "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead." The Pharisees and scribes wore larger phylacteries than any one else to try to make the people think they had more respect for the Law than they really did.

2. **They lengthen the tassels of their garments.** In Matthew 9:20 we saw that Jesus wore tassels on His garment, but never lengthened them.

⁶And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

3. **They love the place of honor at banquets.** They wanted the "choice seats," the most prominent positions, at any gathering of people.
4. **They love the chief seats of the synagogues.** They liked to be "on the front pews" (cf. Lk 11:43).

⁷and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi.

5. **Respectful greetings in the market places.** They expected to be addressed very, very respectfully.
6. **They like being called "Rabbi."** The Hebrew word "Rab" ("great," "mighty," "powerful") is made into a possessive word meaning "my great one" or "my mighty one." It became a term associated with teachers who were the great influences in Israel.

⁸But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

One = Jesus or God. The Jewish brethren were to be equal in authority, some were not to be superior to others. In 20:25 Jesus criticized the great men of the Gentiles for exercising authority - "lording it over" others. The "great ones" are the ones who want to serve, not the ones to be lords.

⁹And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

The Rabbi's had a clergy system and the **fathers** were those who had risen up in the ranks of the Rabbinic schools. Jesus is not discussing the fathers of physical families, He is talking about *religious titles*. The Catholic church call their priests "Father," and is a clear violation of what Jesus teaches.

¹⁰And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

In chapter 15:14 Jesus talked about “the blind leading the blind,” claiming authority to direct others when they, themselves, should have been followers.

11But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

Is this a command or a promise? Perhaps, both. The truly great person is the one who makes it his business to serve others (cf. 20:26-27).

12And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

This exaltation will come from God, 1 Peter 5:6, not from man. Verse 13 is the first of seven woes.

***See: “Woe To You!”

13But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

WARNINGS OF JESUS IN MATTHEW 23.

JESUS OPENLY CRITICIZES THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES BECAUSE THEY EXERCISED AUTHORITY IN AREAS WHERE THEY HAD NONE.

God is the authority, not the Pharisees.

1. AUTHORITY TO CONTROL WHO ENTERS THE KINGDOM (23:13).

They shut off the kingdom by teaching false doctrines, adding their own traditions and trying to prove Jesus was not the promised Messiah. In doing these things, the leaders themselves were unable to enter.

14Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widow’s houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation.

Compare Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47.

15Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

2. AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTERING THE KINGDOM (23:15).

Son of is a way of indicating nature. To be **twice** a son of hell simply means they have adopted the qualifications and characteristics of the Pharisees and then gone beyond that. They have the characteristics of hell, evil and wickedness, separation from God, darkness. The Pharisees were very evangelistic, trying to convert people to Judaism. When they were successful they turned the convert into one who, even more than before, displeased God.

¹⁶Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated.

3. AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF THE TONGUE (23:16-22).

¹⁷You fools and blind men; which is more important, the gold, or the temple that sanctified the gold?

See notes in 5:33-35. This was a way of getting out of obligations and promises. It made it very difficult to know when to trust one's word. In any society where there is no trust, the very fabric and core of that society will be weak.

¹⁸And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is obligated.' ¹⁹You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

These are two illustrations, gold and temple, altar and the offering.

²⁰Therefore he who swears, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.

²¹And he who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. ²²And he who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

Compare 5:34. You should be people of your word. You should not have to swear by anything to get people to believe you. Society had sunk so low that a person could not trust anyone. Who brought society down to this level? The leaders! The scribes and the Pharisees!

²³Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

4. AUTHORITY IN DETERMINING WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT IMPORTANT IN GOD'S LAW (23:23-24).

The Pharisees failed to appreciate the importance of the temple and the items connected with it, so also did they fail to fully understand and appreciate the Laws of God. They set themselves in the seat of Moses, making some laws of ultimate importance while minimizing other laws. When men put themselves in this position, they take the place of God. In His word, God has placed a high value on things like **justice, mercy and faithfulness**. Yet, the other aspects of His Law, things like **tithing**, are nevertheless to be obeyed.

24 You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Thus, their problems were found in that they neglected some things that were important to God.

1. **Justice** was lost. They determined what was right and fair, rather than allow God to determine these things.
2. **Mercy** was non-existent. They were not merciful to their parents (e.g. corban). Twice Jesus said, "I desire compassion (mercy) and not sacrifice" (Mt 9:13; 12:7).
3. They neglected **faithfulness** in the day-to-day doing of what God said to do. They put themselves in charge of deciding what is right and wrong in God's eyes. They had no authority to do this.

Strain out a gnat. They were troubled with the keeping of small matters while omitting and neglecting the important matters. They were "majoring in minors".

25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

5. AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE WHAT IS CLEAN AND UNCLEAR (23:25-26).

26 You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

Was it acceptable to have just a *little* corruption in their **cup and dish**, their lives? No, it was not! Compare Matthew 5:8 - blessed are the pure in heart. The Pharisees wanted the people to believe they were extremely righteous men, so went to great lengths to appear righteous outwardly, but inwardly they were just the opposite. They were full of corruption on the inside. Jesus says it is necessary to first clean the inside - the heart - then the actions will be clean and pure. 1 Timothy 1:5 - the goal is a sincere, unhypocritical faith. 2 Timothy 2:21 - "Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good

work.” We have the responsibility to keep the inside of our “cups” and “dishes” - our lives - clean!

6. AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHTEOUS (23:27-28).

27Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like white washed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and uncleanness.

The Pharisees wore clothing which symbolized spirituality and holiness (like many religious groups do today). However, such clothing is not authorized by God. He does not want his people to be separated into “clergy” and “laity” groups. We are all equals - brothers and sisters. The focus, then, instead of external signs of holiness is the purity of heart.

28Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Men are poor judges of spirituality. It is easy to fool people. Yet God, who sees and knows all, is not deceived (cf. Gal 6:8f).

29Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’

The Pharisees demonstrated an arrogance concerning their level of righteousness with that of their fathers. They were quick to condemn the fathers for their failure to recognize God’s prophets. But, in truth, they were no different. They, like their fathers, were too selfish and self-centered to recognize the true men of God. This is why they did not recognize John the Baptist or Jesus. It is also why they will not recognize the apostles and prophets of the New Testament.

31Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

They said they would not make the same mistakes the fathers did. However, they are doing this very thing. Therefore they have borne witness against themselves, confessing their guilt.

32Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

They are going to complete their self-condemnation by sending Jesus to the cross.

33You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?

God has determined a sentence of eternal condemnation for those who reject Him and His workers. The Pharisees were leading the charge in this rejection. Jesus had earlier spoken of God's anger with those who lead others astray (Mt 18:6-7).

³⁴Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city;

Jesus predicts what will happen to His apostles and prophets. Truly every kind of persecution man could conceive was suffered by Jesus' disciples!

³⁵that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

The guilt of earlier generations will fall upon them, because of their arrogant statement that they would never make the same mistakes their fathers did. Yet they are making the same mistakes. And, what makes their condemnation more severe is that they have received more than any previous generation. They have witnessed the teachings and miracles of the Son of God. Never has any previous generation received such blessings! Therefore, to him whom much is given will much be required. The full force of God's wrath will be poured out upon this stubborn generation.

Jesus, in this verse, puts His stamp of approval on the entire Old Testament. By his reference to Abel, He refers to the first book in the Hebrew Old Testament (Gen 4:8ff). His reference to Zechariah comes from the last book of the Hebrew Bible (2 Chron 24:21). This, then, is a similar expression to our "from Genesis to Malachi." Such an expression is understood to include all books that fall within these two. Thus, Jesus recognized all of our thirty-nine books of the Old Testament - not the apocrypha or any such "lost books."

³⁶Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

The phrase "this generation" refers to those living during this time - those to whom Jesus is speaking (see notes on 24:34).

³⁷O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Jesus is not expressing joy in this sentence of condemnation. His love for Jerusalem is real. He has labored for this city (that is, the people who made up the city) for generations. See Ezekiel 16 for an expanded example. The unfortunate truth: she was

unwilling to come to God. We today, may equally be expressing that same unwillingness to come to God.

³⁸Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

Everything the Pharisees had hoped for themselves (such as the chief seats in the Messianic kingdom) will be lost. Even worse, the house of Israel will be **desolate** - probably a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (discussed in the next chapter).

³⁹For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Jesus is no longer going to deal directly with these Jewish leaders as He has in the past. Their opportunities have come and gone.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A STUDY IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY (***See: "Matthew 24").

THIS CHAPTER IS USED TO SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING DOCTRINES:

1. The Second Coming of Christ was actually the destruction of Jerusalem and there will be no future comings.
2. Everything in the New Testament (including Revelation) that speaks of the coming of Christ is actually speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This is Max King's "A.D. 70 Theory."
3. The coming of Jesus will be marked by numerous signs mentioned in this chapter. This is the premillennial explanation of this chapter.
 - a. Wars and rumors of wars (v. 6),
 - b. Nation against nation (v. 7),
 - c. Famines (v. 7),
 - d. Earthquakes (v. 7),
 - e. Many will fall away (v. 10),
 - f. False prophets will arise (v. 11),
 - g. Lawlessness will increase (v. 12) and

- h. People's love will grow cold (v. 12).

BACKGROUND

The disciples were showing the beautiful temple buildings to Jesus (v.1).

Josephus said that the temple was:

"The most marvelous edifice which we have ever seen or heard of, whether we consider its structure, its magnitude, the richness of its every detail or the reputation of its High places" (*Wars*, 6.4.8 [267]).

"The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could either astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purist white" (*Wars*, 5.5.6. [222ff]).

¹And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

The work on the temple began in 20 B.C. and was completed in 64 A.D. - forty-six years in construction (Jn 2:20). It was destroyed in 70 A.D.

²And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

Jesus responds that these beautiful buildings will be torn down. In *Wars*, 6.4.6ff [254ff] Josephus describes the razing and the burning of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D.

³And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

The disciples connected Jesus' words with future events related to the Messianic kingdom,

1. **When will these things be?** - This question is obviously related to the words of Jesus in verse 2. "These things" refer to the tearing down of the temple - When will these things be?

2. **What will be the sign of your coming?** - The “*sign* of Your coming” is an event related with question #1 and will occur about the same time.
3. **(What will be the sign) of the end of the age?** - This question is related to the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Jesus will show that there is no sign related to the end of the age.

Jesus immediately begins to give the answer to the first and second questions, which both refer to the same event - the destruction of Jerusalem. He says two things about this great event.

1. It will be a very difficult time.
2. It will be easy to be “misled.” He says this four times (vv. 4-5, 11, 24) - misled into thinking that this is the end of the age. It may seem like it is, but it is not. Do not let anyone mislead you to thinking that it is.

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.

It is your responsibility to be informed so as not to be deceived.

⁵For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.

The people must be prepared for this event! Josephus, in *Antiquities*, 18, claims that many did rise up claiming to be the coming one. In Acts 5:36-37 Judas and Theudas each claimed to be the Messiah (cf. also 24:24).

⁶And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

They will see such troublesome times and perhaps think they were on the threshold of the coming Messianic kingdom. Such an application would be a mistake. This will not be the end of this age or the coming of the Messianic age.

⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Natural disasters will occur, but these things are just the beginning.

⁸But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

They will think the age is ending, but it is not. Their suffering did not end in A.D. 70 any more than when Jesus died. In Revelation 7:14 when asked who are these with white robes, they were “the ones coming out of the great tribulation.” Even in A.D. 96 people

were being martyred. Such things would occur, but do not let yourselves be misled, they are not signs pointing to the end.

⁹Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.

Matthew 10:16-23 - Jesus warned them, but in John 15:18-27 is the more popular passage. Tribulation? Death? Hatred? They had nothing like these in mind; not in the coming, glorious kingdom! This does not sound like the Messianic banquet and honors they anticipated.

¹⁰And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another.

Persecution has a way of determining who is on God's side and who is on Satan's side. It is definitely a "weeding out" process!

¹¹And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.

He warned about the false prophets coming (v. 5) and in verses 23-24 He will warn them again. There are always people who take it upon themselves to interpret the signs. There were many during the Persian Gulf War who said the war was a sign of the end of the world. These sorts of events have a way of bringing out the "prophecy mongers." The tragic part is they will mislead many because there are always those who will believe the things that they say.

¹²And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

This sums up the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem. The love of people lessened, so lawlessness increased. This is why God is coming in judgment.

¹³But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

Endurance is the key to salvation (Mt 10:22). Discipleship is grueling, taxing and gut-wrenching race, but salvation is worth it all. In context this verse is not talking about the end of time, but enduring through all of the false prophets, false signs, love growing cold, lawlessness, etc. Those who persevere through all this will be saved.

¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

There are a number of things to consider in this verse. Jesus teaches that the wars, rumors of wars, etc. will not be the end (v. 6) but the beginning (v. 8). Verse 14 reveals the "end" will indeed come, but only after the gospel has been preached throughout the whole world.

This “end” is not the end of the world because:

1. He continues on from there and discusses the destruction of Jerusalem and warns them to flee.
2. He discusses the tribulation that will come “after” those days (v. 29), the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish religious system as it was known then - the temple, priesthood, sacrifices, offering of incense, Sabbath worship, etc. - everything which made up the Jewish system of faith.

Notice the chronology. First, the gospel will be preached to all the nations. Paul’s letter to Colossians was written in about 62 A.D. In 1:5-6,23 he wrote, “...the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world...proclaimed in all creation under heaven...” So, Jesus prophesied it and, according to Paul, it had been fulfilled. **Then** the end shall come and it did - eight years after Paul wrote that letter. Also, the “end” in verse 14 is contrasted with the beginning of birth pangs mentioned in verse 8. Jesus tells them of a “sign” that will warn them of the coming destruction (v.15).

¹⁵Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

The sign they will see will be the “abomination of desolation.” This phrase occurs two times in the book of Daniel and the word “abomination” occurs three times (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Daniel prophesied the destruction (pollution) of God’s house. It was fulfilled in 167 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes - a king of the Seleucid Empire - erected a pagan altar over the altar of burnt offering, sacrificed a pig to Zeus, then forced the Jewish people to offer up swine daily on his altar (cf. 1 Macc 1:54-64; 2 Macc 6:1-5; Josephus’ *Antiquities*, 5.4).

The parenthesis (**let the reader understand**) in the New American Standard Version is very important. Any Jew who had even a minimal understanding of Jewish history would know what Antiochus did in desecrating the temple and that it was, indeed, the “abomination of desolation.” So, **understand** that this is going to happen again! The temple will be desecrated again and they will witness it. And, when they see it happening, then they need to flee! Luke 21:20 warns that the desolation of desecration will be preceded by the coming of *the Roman armies*. When those in Jerusalem look and see the armies, they need to run for their lives!

¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; ¹⁷let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house;

When the Roman armies are seen, there is no time to waste. One needs to flee immediately. His life is at risk if he tarries.

18and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days!

These are added responsibilities that make mobility more difficult, perhaps just enough to impede the escape of pregnant and/or nursing women.

20But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath;

Roads in winter are difficult to travel. The **Sabbath** was a time when the city was extremely crowded with people and it would be hard to escape because of the press of bodies. According to Nehemiah 13:19 the city gates were closed on the Sabbath, making escape even more difficult.

According to Eusebius, the Christians had predetermined a place to meet when they realized Jesus' prophecy was occurring. They fled for safety across the Jordan to Pella in Perea (one of the towns in Decapolis). This was a one-hundred mile journey through Judea and Moab (*Church History*, 3.5).

21for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.

Josephus was on favorable terms with the Romans and allowed to witness the destruction for the purpose of recording it. He describes the blood-thirstiness of the Roman soldiers; blood was so thick that it ran down the steps of the temple! Josephus describes the horrors which lasted from April to September 70 A.D.

NOTE: Josephus, *Wars*, 6.4.6ff [256-266]; 6.5.1ff [271-272].

Josephus notes: "...of those who perished during the siege, from first to last, to one million one hundred thousand" {6.9.3 [240]}.

Josephus, *Wars*, 5.13 also has some information concerning this event.

All these warnings should prove valuable to Jesus' followers for, if heeded, would save their lives (cf. v. 25).

22And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

The duration lasted from April to September, but it could have been longer. If it had, more would have been killed. As it was, one million one hundred thousand people were slaughtered and that was because it occurred during the Feast of Booths when there was a great number of people visiting the city. There are others who say there were no Christians killed in the destruction of Jerusalem because they believed Jesus and did

what He had said to do. Josephus describes this as the worst slaughter that ever was or could ever be, which was just what Jesus said in verse 21. It most certainly was a great tribulation, but God shortened its duration for the sake of His elect.

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him.

Even after all of these things occur, some are going to come to claim “this one” or “that one” is the Christ. “Do not believe him.”

24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

“Show great signs and wonders” are the same words used to describe the miracles Jesus has been performing. These are supernatural, but done by false prophets (cf. Mt 7:22). Notice again the emphasis on being **mislead** (cf. Eph 5:6; 1 Jn 2:26; Col 2:8; Gal 6:7; Rev 12:9).

25 Behold, I have told you in advance.

“Forewarned is forearmed” is a familiar saying. Later they will look back and remember these were all taught by their Lord.

26 If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness, do not go forth,' or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them.

Once again the misleading statements. The disciples must be those who know better and recognize the false prophets.

27 For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

This is still referring to the destruction of Jerusalem. (Note the reasons to be given later.) Everything through verse 35 is involved with the destruction of Jerusalem.

28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The corpse represents a dead Jerusalem and the vultures represent the false prophets of verse 26.

29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, ³⁰and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. ³¹And He will

send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

This section is most difficult. Some refer to this event as “The Little Apocalypse.” The key to understanding this is to view it as apocalyptic - highly symbolic.

In verse 29 Jesus described what will occur **immediately after the tribulation of those days** using apocalyptic language to draw attention to the importance of these events. It is not to be taken literally, but is illustrating a point. The Bible is filled with of this style of language and books such as Ezekiel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Daniel and Revelation (which is called “The Apocalypse”) are replete with symbols and figures.

Immediately. Apocalyptic literature does not mean that this will happen right away. This literature is not concerned with chronology, therefore this language does not have to be taken chronologically. But what does it refer to, then, in the same time period?

Those days. What days? The days of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The sun will be darkened. Terminology in apocalyptic language.

Note: Biblical apocalyptic language:

1. **Sun darkened** refers to the following events in the Bible:
 - a. Fall of Babylon (Isaiah 13:10),
 - b. Distress of Egypt (Ezekiel 32:7) and
 - c. Day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-31; Acts 2:20). Acts is the best example because Peter declared, “This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.” This included “the sun being darkened.” Did this literally take place on Pentecost? No and no Jew would say it did. It notes a great, significant day, but did not literally happen.
2. **Stars falling** refers to:
 - a. The fall of Babylon (Isa 13:10) and
 - b. The fall of Edom (Isa 34:4).
3. **Coming on the clouds:** Typical apocalyptic phrase referring to the Lord coming in judgment (Isa 19:1; Lam 2:1; Ezek 30:18).

Jesus quotes Daniel 7:13, "...with the clouds...a Son of Man is coming..." The "coming in clouds" refers to His kingly reign and His dominion. The destruction of Jerusalem was not just an act of terror by the Romans, but it was Jesus coming in judgment, "coming in the clouds." God rules the nations. Because of this terminology we do not need to insist that this section (29-31) refers to the second coming of Christ, but that which demonstrates the Lord coming in judgment and His making a pronounced judgment against Jerusalem.

Matthew used the word **coming** in a number of different ways:

1. His coming in the Spirit on Pentecost (Mt 10:23),
2. His coming in the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24:3) and
3. His coming on the day of judgment (Mt 25:31ff).

Thus the entire chapter can be divided up accordingly.

1. Verses 1-35 - The destruction of Jerusalem.
2. Verses 36-51 - The second coming of Christ.

³²Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

Just as one is able to know the seasons from the signs on the fig tree so also, when one sees the signs that He is talking about (the abomination of desolation, etc.), then he should know that judgment is near. These trials and tribulations do not mean that Jesus has abandoned them.

³⁴Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Generation = *genea*, a very important word. Jesus uses this word eleven times in Matthew (11:16; 12:34,39,41,42,45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:33,36; 24:34). It refers to a group of people alive at a particular time and more specifically at the time Jesus is speaking. *This generation*, all you people *alive right now*, are not going to die until you see these events I am describing now take place. The premillennial position maintains that the word should be translated "race" (and is so noted in the New American Standard Version footnote). According to that doctrine, Jesus is saying "the Jewish race" will not pass away until these things take place. The Jewish race has not passed away yet, so there are still things left to happen (the thousand year reign, etc.). This would be the only place it would mean race in the whole book.

Thus, there is no logical reason to have this mean anything other than that these people will personally witness Jesus' prophecy. As one considers this chronologically, it is reasonable. Jesus spoke these words in about 33 A.D. and the destruction of Jerusalem took place in 70 A.D. - just thirty-seven years later. Certainly there would have been many people who heard Jesus' prophecy and lived to witness its fulfillment.

³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

While some things remain stable, others do not. Jesus' words are going to last! And, they are going to last *forever!*

³⁶But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Please notice a distinct change - "But of that day and hour."

There are four reasons to divide this chapter as follows:

Verses 1-35 - The destruction of Jerusalem and

Verses 36-51 - The second coming of Christ.

1. Everything up until verse 36 is preceded by **a sign** (vv. 15,27,30) whereas the second coming has no sign (vv. 36,42,44,50). Before they saw the abomination of desolation, the lightning and the Son of Man coming, etc. But when Jesus comes again, there will be no sign. Why not? When the Romans approached, the people could do something about it (flee). But when Jesus comes again, no one will not be able to do anything about it. Christ's return will truly be the end of all things. We will be found either prepared or unprepared.
2. Jesus was speaking of things that would take place before "**this generation**" passes away (v. 34). Therefore, verses 34 and 35 serve as a wrap up or a conclusion to the first division: the destruction of Jerusalem, verses 1-34.
3. The **use of the demonstrative pronouns** - "those days," "these things" versus "that day." These show a clear distinction between time periods. In verses 33-34 the text says "those days" and "these things," but in verse 36 it says "that day." This also defeats the A.D. 70 Theory that all of chapter 24 is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.
4. The **change from plural "days" to a singular "day."** Before (vv. 1-35) Jesus was talking about events that would take place over a duration of several days. Yet when he answers the disciple's third question (when will

be the end of the age?) He says it will occur on one particular day. Numerous other passages refer to the second coming of Jesus as “the day” of the Lord (Jn 6:39-40,44,54; 1 Thess 5:1ff; 2 Pet 3:10-13).

Beginning with verse 36 is the last speech section. This section is a serious of warnings to **prepare**.

PREPARE

A CONSIDERATION OF MATTHEW 24 & 25

*****24:36-44

The Dangers of No Preparation. The people of Noah’s day were warned, but did nothing to get themselves ready for the flood (cf. 1 Pet 3:20).

*****24:45-51

The Dangers of Delayed Preparation. A slave has assigned work to do, but thinks his master will be away for a long time. Because of that he puts off doing anything and receives a horrible punishment.

*****25:1-13

The Dangers of Partial Preparation. Five virgins did prepare - up to a point, but not well enough.

*****25:14-30

Examples of Proper and Improper Preparation. Three men are given talents to care for. Two made proper preparations and one did not.

*****25:31-41

The Result of One’s Preparation. Reward or punishment will be the result of one’s preparation.

Of that day and hour no one knows. God does have a day in mind. Although the angels surround the throne, they are not privy to God’s plan. Neither does the Son know. Both the King James Version and the New King James Version have omitted the words “the Son.” The evidence for the insertion of this phrase is very good. The United Bible Society gives this a “C” rating, meaning they are 75% sure that it does belong in the text.

If one knows everything (has all wisdom), then one cannot grow in wisdom. Luke tells us in 2:52 that Jesus “increased in wisdom.” Therefore, He did not know everything because, while in the flesh, Jesus “emptied Himself” and was in the likeness of men. Now that Jesus has been reunited with His Father, He knows the day and hour.

A question in regard to the A.D. 70 Theory: Would Jesus be talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in this passage? The whole point of the earlier discussion (vv. 1-35) was to prepare them for that destruction. He gives them clues as to when the destruction would take place. Now, however, (vv. 36-51) Jesus is telling them that this event will come as a total surprise. Also, it does not make sense that Jesus would not know “the day” of the destruction of Jerusalem. If He did not, then the earlier points (such as the abomination of desolation) do not make sense.

It was part of God’s plan for the angels and the Son not to know the time, so is idiotic for men to think they can know! There is very sound reasoning for us not to know and that is because God wants us to live our lives in *constant preparation*. If men knew when Jesus is coming again, they would live their lives however they desired, then “repent” just before the Lord returns.

37For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

Days of Noah. People have always done what they want to do, with little or no regard for the things of the Lord.

38For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

Jesus is not implying that they were engaging in wicked activities. There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, etc. The point is, these activities were their life’s focus. They were not thinking about preparing their lives for eternity, but living just for the “now”.

39and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

Noah, a man of righteousness, preached 120 years endeavoring to get them to prepare, but they did not understand until the flood came. In that brief moment of their deaths they understood, but it was too late. It came quickly and unexpectedly and that is the way it will be with Jesus’ second coming.

40Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

To further illustrate, Jesus says that two friends (companions or co-workers) will be taken at the same time; one is taken (for reward) and one is left (for punishment) (see 1 Thess 4:13-18).

41Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Left in the sense of left for judgment, left to face the wrath of an angry God. Here are two people engaged in the same activities, but one is living a life of being prepared for the Lord's return while the other is not. Jesus says that "in the same hour" **all** who are in the tombs (both wicked and righteous) will face God in judgment (Jn 5:28-29).

42Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

Therefore. Be prepared because...it may be *today!*

43But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

In ancient times houses were made of a clay-type material that could be dug through easily. If the head of a house knew someone was intending to break in, he would make preparation of setting someone to watch his house - a neighbor, a relative or the police. But, since he does not know, then he must take precautions *all the time*. People today do this very thing, locking all the doors and windows before going to bed. They do this in a physical way.

Spiritually we need to be doing the same thing - constantly making sure our lives are in order in God's eyes. That way it makes no difference *when* the Lord comes. We know He is coming, so we live in constant preparation.

44For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

For this reason. Since He is coming, **you** be ready too, because the Son is coming at an hour when you do not "think He will." You might "think," or "have a suspicion" when He is going to return, but He is not coming then. The phrase "thief in the night" occurs only in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. 2 Peter 3:10 says the Lord will come like a thief, but does not add "in the night."

45Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?

This begins the second section in *the dangers of delayed preparation*. This slave's task is to oversee the preparation and serving of meals at the proper times. This servant is:

1. Faithful to fulfill his duty and
2. Sensible in that he has planned everything properly.

We cannot start to prepare at the last minute to meet our Lord. Our lives must be in a constant state of preparation.

46Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

The master comes home to find the slave has done exactly what he was supposed to do and the slave is “*makarios*,” blessed (cf. Mt 5:3ff). This is also true for us. We will be blessed if we are fulfilling our duties when the Lord comes.

47Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

A servant who is given responsibility, and fulfills that responsibility, will be rewarded - both in the physical areas of responsibility **and** in the spiritual areas of responsibility.

48But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’

Not coming for a long time. The word might be better translated “is lingering” (cf. 25:5,19). Jesus uses it in three parables, talking about preparation in view of a *lingering* or delaying master.

49and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;

This slave, who was entrusted with so much, is acting selfishly and irresponsibly. He is also demonstrating a disregard for his equals, the fellow slaves. He spends his time with people who are morally bankrupt.

50the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,

Some premillennialists say we cannot predict the day and the hour, but we can predict the week. But if a slave expected the master to come during *that week*, would he not have been ready? Of course! But he thinks he will be gone for **a long time**. He certainly was not expecting an immediate return.

51and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.

Cutting in pieces = beaten and scourged. The **weeping and gnashing of teeth** illustrates agonizing pain. This servant had been given great authority over his master’s house, but he took advantage of that privilege and became careless, sadistic and a drunkard. Just look at him now...in anguish, despised and rejected.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.

He is continuing the theme of the unexpected coming of Christ. Now we go into the third danger, that of *partial preparation*.

This parable is unique in two ways.

1. Unique to the gospel of Matthew and
2. Unique in that its main subjects are women.

“Virgin” is the word “*parthanos*” meaning girls of marriageable age, maidens.

They took their lamps. Lamps in the first century were two to three inches in diameter and did not hold a significant amount of oil. If someone anticipated being out in the darkness for a long period time they would have to take extra oil.

²And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.

These maidens represent those in the church, which is composed of both good and evil people. There will be some in the church who are prepared for the Lord’s return and those who are not.

³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,

They were foolish because they did not take the extra supply needed to last the length of time.

⁴but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

While they may not have anticipated a long delay of the bridegroom, they thought ahead and prepared for that possibility.

⁵Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.

The word **delaying** is the same as in 24:48; 25:19.

Drowsy and began to sleep. There is nothing wrong with the fact they are sleeping. They are not blamed for that.

⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out and meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the prudent answered, saying, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’

For yourselves. Each one was (and is) responsible for her own preparation. In all likelihood there were shops open at this hour.

¹⁰And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

Those who were ready, those who were prepared, go into the feast. Notice - the door was shut.

¹¹And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’

Lord (cf. Mt 7:21).

¹²But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’

The point is...

¹³Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Because we do not know the day nor the hour, we need to be prepared (cf. 24:36,42,44, 50).

*** See: “The Ten Maidens.”

¹⁴For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them.

Now He discusses the *examples of proper and improper preparation*. This parable is stressing the need for activity while watching. The prudent are those who use their time wisely while waiting for the Lord. They are serving while waiting.

¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

Went on a journey. The disciples were not thinking about Jesus going away.

A talent was equal to 6,000 denarii. One denarius was equivalent to a days work, so this is 6,000 days work. Five talents are given to one, two to another and one to a third. Talents are not abilities, but are better compared to the possessions God has blessed one with. A man must use the abilities God has given him! The possessions (talents) were given on the basis of one’s ability to use those talents. One servant showed the capability to handle the five talents, therefore he was given more than the others.

Each of the men seemed worthy of receiving some talents (and the master's trust). Far too many dwell on what others have been given; so much so that they fail to appreciate what they themselves have been given.

16Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.

He wasted no time, he went immediately.

17In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more.

Meaning immediately; in the same manner.

18But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money.

Parallel this with the treasure buried in the field (13:44).

Notice that while the others "immediately" went to work, the wicked slave seemed to "immediately" bury his. His attitude shows that he was defeated before he started. He never even attempted to do anything with the talent!

19Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

For the third time, **a long time**. He delayed. They knew he was coming eventually. They also knew that when he came he was going to see how they had handled what they had been given. Although he delayed for a long time, the day of his return did come.

20And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.'

He demonstrated his value to the master. He showed he was worthy of having received the five talents.

21His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'

The master says two things about this slave.

1. He is **good**. He had accomplished much with the money he had been given, and had not done so through wicked means.

2. He is **faithful**. He was faithful in executing the duties with which he had been entrusted.

22The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.' 23His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

He has done the same, having gained two more talents. He used what he had been given and, as a result of his faithfully executing his duties, the Lord is going to reward him with far more than he ever expected.

Notice - each was judged purely on the basis of what he did with what he was given; not compared to the others or with what others had.

24And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed.'

Galatians 6:7 - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows this he will also reap." From this servant's perspective the master is a hard man, reaping where he did not sow, demanding more than he might rightfully expect. The point is not that the master did not do any sowing and reaping, but that *he enabled* the slave to do it for Him. He did not demand of the slave anything that he, himself, could or would not do. God has entrusted us, enabled us, to do things. We have abilities and God knows what those are. On the basis of those abilities He has enabled and equipped us so that we might use those abilities to His glory. The real tragedy here is not that the slave was limited to one talent. The tragedy was his failure to use his one talent.

25And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground, see, you have what is yours.'

If that was all the master was concerned about, he could have kept it. This slave was given the lightest responsibility of the three, but it was no more than he could have accomplished if he had *tried*. He was afraid of making a mistake, but his biggest mistake was not using the responsibility he had been given.

26But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed.'

He called the other slaves "good and faithful." This one he pronounces as "wicked and lazy."

1. **Wicked**. Because of his attitude toward, and opinion of, his master.

2. **Lazy.** Because he was unwilling to do anything with the talent.

God expects us to be productive in His kingdom, not just giving back what He gave us (cf. 24:14). He will judge us not for only what we do, but for what we did not do.

27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.

The Law prohibited the charging of interest to fellow Hebrews. Deuteronomy 23:19, Exodus 22:25 and Psalm 15:5 show that it did permit the charging of interest to those who were not Hebrews.

Edmond Burk said, “Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.” This slave certainly illustrates that!

In the church we each have differing abilities and differing amounts of material gifts. There are some who can do more than others and better than others. But this does not excuse any from not doing *something!*

28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten talents.’

What is not used, is lost! Jesus is warning against being lazy, slothful.

29 For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

Think about yourself and what God has given you. What have you gained for Him? We have to be productive! God has equipped us with things that can glorify Him and increase His kingdom. So let us use what He has given us!

30 And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2 Corinthians 5:10 - “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Worthless = non-productive (cf. 24:51; 13:42,50; 22:13). These parables result in reward and judgment. Responsibility is expected.

31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

This begins the final section on preparation: the *results of one's preparation*. "He will come with His mighty angels, dealing retribution" (2 Thess 1:7).

Glorious throne. He will come and sit on the throne for the purpose of judgment. In John 19:13 when Pilate was going to make a decision about Jesus, he sat down. They would stand to hear the evidence and then sit to make the judgment. This is clearer in verse 32.

³²And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

The nations gathered for their judgment will be separated (cf. dragnet - Mt 13:47-48; wheat and tares - Mt 13:30).

In Palestine sheep and goats are shepherded together, but at the proper time (decided by the shepherd) separation occurs. So again we have an illustration of the good and bad mingled together until the judgment.

³³and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left.

The **right** is the favored position. Jesus sits on the right hand of God (Heb 12:2). The left is the unfavored position.

³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

He has some words to say to the group on the right: **Come** - here is the invitation. They are about to receive the reward. They are in the favored position because the Father has witnessed their life, devotion, their commitment.

Inherit gives idea of something passed on from one to another. In 1 Peter 1:4 our inheritance is described as "imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away." They will inherit the "kingdom." Is this a church passage? Will they inherit the church? No. This is another example of where the kingdom is not referring to the church. Each passage must be examined independently and let the context decide whether the word "kingdom" refers to the church or the overall rule of God.

Foundation of the world. In John 14:1-3 we find that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. This shows God's intention to reward the righteous even when He began His creating processes. The reason they will inherit, or not inherit, is given in verses 35ff.

³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;

Jesus lists 6 categories of service to Him.

Some are physical illnesses. Some are circumstances which involve lack of food and drink. These people took care of the Lord's needs, but it was an unconscious type of service. They were unaware that they were helping Jesus. Jesus responds in verse 40, "To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." They did not think of it as service to Jesus. When I give someone who is hungry some food, it is the same as giving Jesus some food.

There are many who claim to be righteous, spiritual people but they do not give to others. But if Jesus were here you can be sure they would be giving to Him. Most of us do not have a lot of material goods or money, but the little that we have would probably be given cheerfully to Jesus if He came to live with us. Jesus is saying that serving others is the same as serving Him. John tells us we cannot love God if we do not love others (1 Jn 4:19-21).

³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' ⁴¹Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

God has prepared a place for the devil and his angels (cf. Rev 12:9; 19:20).

Jesus now applies his illustration to those who do not give to others. For them, eternal fire is reserved. The everlasting nature of the punishment God is going to give is clearly taught here. They served the devil in this life and they will be with him forever in the next life. The reason they receive this judgment is found in the following verses:

⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

They neglected men and, in so doing, had neglected Jesus.

⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

In Acts 9:4 Saul was accused of persecuting Jesus, even though he was, in actuality, persecuting Jesus' disciples. This serves as an illustration of what Jesus is teaching here. They did not recognize the Lord among the needy of the people. They object to

this charge He has leveled against them, because they never saw Jesus hungry or thirsty or a stranger, or naked, or sick, etc. Their surprise is comparable to 7:22. They are attempting a defense as those in 7:23 did. They also call Him **Lord**.

44Then they themselves also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'

They recognize His power and authority - now - on the day of judgment. They had never made Him their Lord, their ruler and the authority in their lives.

45Then He will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

While eternal life is going to be for the righteous, eternal punishment be will be for the wicked. The division and the sentence are final! Of all the things that one might have expected to be a part of the discourse in heaven as to what saved or condemned a person, is it not surprising to learn it is just...serving? However, we must not emphasize this passage to the neglect of others which tell us what to do to be saved.

Every single one who will stand before the Lord on the day of judgment will have had the necessary abilities and possessions to do accomplish these six things; some to a lesser degree than others, nevertheless even the poorest can give a glass of water or visit those who are sick. Jesus does not ask of anyone something he cannot do. Christian action is not to merit salvation. Our judgment will be based upon what we have done and that, simply, is our response to what God has asked us to do. If we truly love Him, then we will keep His commandments. If we are condemned it will be because we did not love Him.

Today in America, the government provides what the poor people need; food, clothing, housing, medicine, etc. This policy does not absolve Christians from obeying Christ's commands to look for, and find, ways to serve our fellow men - especially the household of God (cf. Gal 6:10).

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

1And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples,

Finished all these words is our indication that He has finished this final speech section.

2"You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion."

Passover fell on the 14th of Nisan (March/April).

This is suffering section #7.

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas;

Caiaphas was the son-in-law and successor to Annas. He was appointed high priest by Gratian, who was the procurator who preceded Pilate. He held the same position as Pilate. Caiaphas held office from A.D.18-36.

In the Old Testament only one man served at a time; the office was hereditary and for life. However in the New Testament Roman rulers took it upon themselves to appoint high priests at their own discretion. Between 37 B.C. and 67 A.D. there were twenty-eight men who held the office of high priest. Caiaphas is one of them. These people want to give Caiaphas his due, but also do not want to neglect Annas. That is why both men are involved in the trial. Caiaphas was the recognized high priest by the Romans.

⁴and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him.

There is no doubt they have just one thing in mind. However, they continued to fear the multitude. Therefore they needed to make their move in secret, without the knowledge of the people.

⁵But they were saying, “Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people.”

They realized they could not seize Him during Passover because of the way the multitudes looked upon Jesus. The festival lasted eight days and with so many people gathered, it would a bad time.

⁶Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper,

A leper, according to the law, was forbidden to mingle with the people (Lev 13:45). The thinking here is that Simon had been healed, but was still known as “the leper.”

⁷a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table.

Mark, in chapter 14, tells us this cost more than 300 denarii, which is almost a year’s wage. John tells us her name was Mary and that Judas was the objector to this extravagance (Jn 12:3-5).

She poured...table. This was an act of honor for guests. Psalm 23:5 - "Thou hast anointed My head with oil." Luke 7:46 is a parallel passage.

***⁸But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, "Why this waste?
⁹For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor."***

Judas was not genuinely interested in giving this money to the poor.

¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me.

He is talking to all who are thinking it was a waste of money. She showed love, faith, selflessness. Jesus was worthy of being so honored and this woman is one of the few who understood this. Even the disciples did not understand.

¹¹For the poor you have with you always; but you do not always have Me.

Deuteronomy 15:11 speaks of the poor, their always being among the populace and the many opportunities to help them. This is in response to verse 9. "You always will have them to serve, but you will not always Me with you." This was her one opportunity to do something for her Lord and she took it. Jesus praises her for that.

¹²For when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.

Just as a dead body would be prepared for burial - anointed and wrapped - Jesus applies what she did as symbolic of that act of preparation (cf. Jn 19:39-42).

This is suffering section #8 (since Peter's confession in chapter 16).

¹³Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her."

She is going to be praised for her beautiful example of sacrifice and selflessness. Obviously the gospel includes what this woman did.

¹⁴Then one of the twelve, name Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests,

Notice the treachery of Judas in contrast to the giving, selfless, action of Mary. One of the tragedies in Jesus' ministry was that one of His inner circle would be a traitor to Him.

¹⁵and said, "What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?" And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver.

This was the price of a wounded slave (Ex 21:32; cf. Zech 11:12). Judas' information was just exactly what the rulers needed. Judas would know Jesus' ways and habits and could lead them to the various secret places Jesus would go. He knew of the garden where Jesus went with His disciples (Jn 18:2).

16And from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him. 17Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

The Passover was a one-night observance and the seven days following were the feast of Unleavened Bread.

18And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"

"My time is at hand" is a significant phrase in John. It illustrates that Jesus knows He came to earth to die and now that death is near.

I am to keep...with My disciples. The unnamed man apparently has the means (material possessions) to give and is willing to give to Jesus the use of his home for this Passover meal.

19And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

What Jesus said to do, the disciples did! (Are we so quick to respond?) The Passover preparations can be found in the Mishnah, Pesachim 1:1; 4:1; 10:1ff.

20Now when evening had come, He was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples.

This was a private gathering for just Jesus and His twelve apostles.

21And as they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me."

The Passover commemorated God's passing over the homes that had blood on the posts of their doors. While the apostles and Jesus are thinking about God's deliverance of the people *from* captivity, Judas is thinking of delivering Jesus over *for* captivity.

22And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I Lord?"

They feel in their hearts that they would never intentionally do such a wicked thing.

23And He answered and said, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me.

“Dipped” is based on the word “baptized.” Dipped, plunged His hand down into the bowl. In the oriental fashion bread was dipped into a bowl and to betray one you are eating with shows an extreme hardness of heart, because meals represented closeness, love and kinship in the sharing of the same bowl.

24The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

Even though the Old Testament prophesied that one would betray Jesus, it did not mean the betrayer was not held accountable for his actions.

25And Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said it yourself.”

Jesus answers in the affirmative. The other disciples do not seem to understand what is happening. Judas is genuinely surprised because he is not thinking that what he is doing is bad. When Jesus uses “betrayed” in verse 24, Judas did not even consider that it was he Jesus referred to. He knew he was doing something, but did not think of it as betraying Him.

26And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

The Son of God recognized Him from whom all blessings flow. As was His practice, He gave thanks.

The terminology used here is a “metonymy,” a figure of speech using something to represent something else. The bread was not literally Jesus’ body, but it *represented* it.

27And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you;

He invited all to participate. Did this include Judas? We do not really know. He may have gone by now (cf. Jn 13:26-30).

Matthew records that Jesus took a **cup**. No special significance is given this vessel. Presumably it was one of the four cups drunk during the Passover meal.

28for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Jesus' blood was shed for a distinct purpose - the "forgiveness of sins" (cf. Eph 1:7; Acts 2:38; 22:16). This blood was poured out for many - an expression that could mean:

1. The many people who live,
2. The many who will take advantage of it by obeying the Gospel,
3. All - since the Bible does not support the idea of a limited atonement. Jesus' shed blood was for all (20:28; Heb 2:9; 2 Cor 5:14-15).

Blood of the covenant. "Covenant" is a very important Biblical word. A covenant is an agreement or pact between two or more people. The blood seals or confirms, the covenant we have with the Lord. Without that blood the covenant could never have been established. The first covenant was made effective by blood (Ex 24:8; Zech 9:11); so also is the second. There is no way to have a relationship with God without the shed blood of Jesus (Heb 9:15-22).

²⁹But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

He is reflecting on the Messianic banquet (Isa 25). He is encouraging them that some day they will enjoy uninterrupted fellowship. In whose kingdom will they drink this? The **Father's kingdom**. This does not refer to the church here, but to heaven.

Oftentimes one will offer a prayer at the Lord's table and say that the fruit of the vine is "representing or symbolizing," the blood of Jesus. The Catholic idea of transubstantiation is that the fruit of the vine literally becomes the blood of Christ (after it is blessed). But Jesus says "this is My blood" and then calls it the "fruit of the vine." The fruit of the vine did not change into His blood. It is not literally the blood of Jesus, but it represents that blood.

***See article: "Purposes of the Lord's Supper."

³⁰And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Singing a hymn was a tradition after the fourth cup and the Passover meal.

³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.'

Compare Zechariah 13:7. Jesus is grieved because some will stumble because of Him, but that does not mean He has given up on them. He has tremendous confidence in

the apostles who had been with Him for the last three years and even though they stumbled - and will again - He is willing to forgive.

32But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

This is our 11th suffering text.

33But Peter answered and said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.”

Peter boldly declares he will be different from the others.

34Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before the cock crows, you shall deny Me three times.”

Before dawn, Peter will have denied Jesus three times.

35Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing, too.

Peter was never a coward and was certainly not one not to be afraid. Peter envisioned wielding the sword and dying in the thick of battle; dying while fighting for the Lord, helping take the kingdom.

36Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

“Geth” is the Greek word for “oil press,” and “semane” is the word for “olive orchard.” Jesus is going there to pray.

37And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.

The sons of Zebedee are James and John. Jesus is certainly a man and He is sorrowful. **Grieved** means He was exceedingly concerned and had an inner agitation.

38Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

He wants them to be aware, to be alert, to stay awake. “Keep watch with Me,” if for no other reason than the moral support. They do not even know what they are to be watching for, although Peter may be thinking an army.

Grieved to...death is not talking about the cross, but the present agony of verse 37. Luke 22:41-44 talks about this.

39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

At this point Jesus is wondering if there may be another way for God’s plan to be accomplished.

If it is possible...but as Thou wilt. He is not talking about if God can or cannot, but is it possible, in the working out of Your plan, for this cup to pass from Me? In Matthew 20:21-22 James and John came wanting to sit at His left and right sides in the kingdom. Jesus asked if they could drink His “cup.” This is the cup Jesus was talking about; the suffering. Jesus would rather not drink that cup, but nevertheless had a willingness to yield to His Father’s desire and to undergo the death that faced Him. Our attitude should be the same as Jesus’. What God’s wants is more important than what we want (cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 2:1; Phil 2:5-8,13; Heb 5:8-9).

Hebrews 12:1-3 - Jesus endured the cross. Now it is our turn to run the race and lay aside the sin which easily entangles us.

This is the 12th suffering text.

40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?”

Peter, who just a few hours previously boasted of his loyalty to Jesus, was unable to stay awake for one hour! This is the total “aloneness” Jesus must feel which is reflected in the statement, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” He desperately needs consolation from His friends, but even they will not stay awake to comfort Him.

41 Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Romans 7:14ff - Sometimes we use the “flesh” as an excuse for not doing God’s will. Jesus overcame the flesh and controlled it. He did not let it control Him.

42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done.”

Jesus is a bit more resigned this time, realizing His death must be. We have to understand the power that Jesus is demonstrating. He could have said, “Enough is enough!” and called for His angel legions. His love for mankind took Him to the cross. Indeed this **cannot** pass - there was no other way.

43 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

They are really physically and emotionally drained. It is difficult for them to stay awake.

44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

Three times Jesus asked. Three times He was denied. If God would not change His plan for His only son, He will not change it for you or me.

45 Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The time has come. The betrayal is imminent. The fulfillment of passages such as Isaiah 52-53 is about to unfold.

46 Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand."

Judas is finishing his work. Jesus knows they are coming for Him.

47 And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve came up, accompanied by a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

We know Judas was one of the twelve apostles, but the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to remind us one more time. It is significant that one of Jesus' inner circle should be His betrayer. Judas is the perfect example of someone so close to Jesus but still unable to see the truth. Also, the fact that Judas and his betrayal is mentioned in all the gospel accounts, shows this made a deep and abiding impression on the writers as the Holy Spirit saw fit to repeat it again and again.

48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him."

They certainly do not want to be guilty of arresting the wrong man. They want only Jesus. Judas' fervent kiss (*kataphilesen* as opposed to *philesen*, a simple kiss) will be all the evidence the rulers need to recognize Him.

49 And immediately he went to Jesus and said, "Hail Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

There are two ways to look at this:

1. As totally hypocritical. Judas feels no love for Jesus or

2. Recognizes Jesus as the great teacher and is pressing Him to declare His (earthly) Messiahship.

50 And Jesus said to Him, "Friend, do what you have come for."

Then they came, laid their hands on Jesus and seized Him. Knowing all that Judas has done, and is doing, Jesus still calls him "friend," dealing kindly with Judas. (Note: every time, in Matthew, when Jesus calls someone "friend," the "friend" is in the wrong.)

51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

We know from John's account it was Peter who cut off the right ear of the servant Malchus (Jn 18:10). Luke also tells us it was the right ear (Lk 22:50).

52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place, for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.

Resistance is futile. The use of force provokes retaliation and the use of more force. Jesus wants to control the situation. He explains to Pilate in John 18:36 the reason His servants do not fight is because His kingdom is not of this world; it is not an earthly kingdom.

53 Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Twelve legions would be 72,000 angels (one legion contains 6,000 men). With the power angels possess, Jesus' would be an undefeatable army.

54 How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"

Jesus was well aware of what His purpose was in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He came to give His life a ransom to many (Mt 20:28).

55 At that time Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me.

Jesus rebukes them for coming after Him as if He were a common criminal and in cover of darkness. Why would they come for Him in this way? (Satan's followers work at night, too.) They had made no move to seize Him in broad daylight (earlier the rulers said they were afraid of the multitudes).

56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

Not just one prophecy regarding the crucifixion is being fulfilled, but all the prophecies from Moses to Malachi. They all converge at the cross. This is what angels desired to know about, 1 Peter 1:10-12 (cf. Eph 3:10-11; Col 1:16). All that God wanted to do that was good for man is seen in Jesus (see also Lk 24:44-46).

57 And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.

According to the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:1) unless a trial takes place in daylight, then a death penalty cannot be given. Is this just a preliminary hearing to see if there is enough evidence or is this an illegal act?

The full Sanhedrin had seventy-one members led by the high priest, but a count of twenty-three was all that was needed to hear cases. These particular twenty-three had been carefully chosen! There were some individuals, such as Nicodemus, who would not have been in favor of what was going on.

58 But Peter also was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

Follow. Peter had closely followed the Lord from city to city, from the Palestinian country side, but now he follows **at a distance**. (Do we follow “at a distance”?) In John’s account we find that John was personally acquainted with the priest and he turns to let Peter in through the gate (Jn 18:15-16).

59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death.

They are having to produce false witnesses. One of the Ten Commandments was “Thou shalt not bear false witness...”

60 And they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward,

Their testimony was not sufficient to bring about the result they were desiring.

Deuteronomy 19:15 - The Law taught two or three witnesses confirmed the acts and convicted the wrong doer.

61 and said, “This man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.”

Compare John 2:19. Mark 14:58 shows there was a serious disagreement in the details of the testimony of these two witnesses and it proved them to be false witnesses.

False witnesses were to be put to death, so the Sanhedrin must have done some persuasive urging to get them to bear false witness (at the risking their own lives).

62 And the high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”

With Jesus committed to doing God’s will, He chose not to defend Himself.

63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Matthew has already shown that Jesus could outwit anyone. He could have talked Himself out of this. His silence is intentional because He intends to go to the cross. We know Jesus prayed for deliverance from this and He could have defended Himself, but He does not. That is love in action. “Yet He did not open His mouth;... Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,... a sheep that is silent before its shearers,...” (Isa 53:7).

64 Jesus said to Him, You have said it yourself; nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

He is binding an oath on Jesus to give a direct answer to this question. Jesus does not identify Himself with their misconception of the Messiah, but as the Son of Man in Daniel; One who would be the future judge of all.

The Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power. Jesus claims to be the heavenly figure in two Old Testament passages:

Psalm 110:1 - Sitting at the right hand of power.

Daniel 7:13 - Coming on the clouds of heaven.

Clouds again being used in a judgment context.

65 Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;

There would be no need for other witness. Under the Law of Moses blasphemy carried the death penalty (Lev 24:10-16; cf. Sanhedrin 7:4-5).

66 What do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death!”

The folly of this court is seen here. There has been nothing done which is deserving of death. It is clear this verdict was pre-planned.

67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him,

This was the supreme insult. It still is today (see Num 12:14; Deut 25:9; Isa 50:6).

68 and said, “Prophecy to us, You Christ, who is the one who hit You?”

They compound their insult with mocking and challenging Him.

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a certain servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.”

While Jesus is being beaten and mistreated, Peter sits outside, not knowing what is taking place inside the walls of the high priest’s palace.

70 But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.”

He denied before “all.” An entire group of people witness what Peter is saying.

71 And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 72 And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.”

Out of desperation Peter feels he needs to strengthen his denial. Therefore he swears - takes an oath or solemn promise - that he does not know Jesus.

73 And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; for the way you talk gives you away.”

The Revised Standard Version reads, “Your accent betrays you.” Northern (Galilean) language was different from the regular Judean language.

74 Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately the cock crowed.

Why did Peter do this? Was he a coward? No. Perhaps he was disgusted, dazed, disappointed, confused. He sins in a number of ways:

1. Denial,
2. Swore with an oath and then lied and
3. His language in verse 74. His cursing and swearing (pronouncing a curse on himself if he is lying).

75And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

He remembers what Jesus said. Three times he had the opportunity to confess, but every time he let His Lord down.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death;

Now the entire group of the Sanhedrin, all seventy-one men, are gathered together to decide how they can kill Jesus.

2and they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor.

Pilate, their governor, has the ultimate power to do what they want done. Notice the groups that counsel together: the **chief priests** (Sanhedrin) and the **elders** (the older, respected leaders of the people). They are all seeking a way to put the Lord to death, but they want Pilate to do all their “dirty work.”

3Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Judas sees his plans are not working out. This suggests that Judas did not expect Jesus to be condemned.

4saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself.”

Perhaps he is thinking that these two things will set Jesus free:

1. A return of the money and
2. A witnesses. And who better than himself (one who had been closely with Him) to confess that Jesus is an **innocent** man?

These are religious leaders of the people who should be concerned about truth. But they are more concerned about power.

5And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

There was no way Judas would keep this “blood money.” He could see there was no out for Jesus at this point, so Judas kills himself.

Do not allow sin to destroy you! (A good lesson from Judas’ life.) Scripture tells us Judas was a thief. He failed to conquer the sin in his life. His biggest sin, however, was one that truly destroyed him.

⁶And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.”

What total hypocrisy!! They are about to murder an innocent man, but are concerned with misusing a few paltry dollars! They are afraid they might desecrate the temple treasury with the money they themselves paid to Judas. They are straining at a gnat while swallowing a camel (Mt 23:24.)

⁷And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers. ⁸For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

The traditional site of this is on the southern slope of the Hinnom Valley, near the junction with the Kidron River.

⁹Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; ¹⁰and they gave them for the Potter’s Field, as the Lord directed me.”

Matthew attributes this phrase “potter’s field” to Jeremiah (18:23), but neither he nor Zechariah (11:12-13) use these words. According to Jewish writers, the book of Jeremiah was placed first in a section called the “Book of the Prophets.” Perhaps Matthew does not quote from the writer himself, but from that section of the scrolls.

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.”

In John 18:36 Jesus tells Pilate His kingdom is not of this world, but He is a king.

¹²And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He made no answer.

The leaders hurl accusations at Him (see 1 Pet 2:23). In all probability these accusations had no substance or fact, but were designed solely to provoke Jesus into saying something with which they might accuse him.

13Then Pilate said to him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?”

This is certainly something that Pilate had never seen before; a man accused of crimes demanding the death penalty, but He makes no attempt to defend Himself.

14And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.

Jesus is fulfilling Isaiah 53:7. He said nothing. Any other man would have been fighting to save his life. We have already seen how Jesus could out argue any man. This continues to demonstrate His commitment to go to the cross.

15Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the multitude any one prisoner whom they wanted.

This was done to increase the popularity of the governor.

16And they were holding at that time a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

Barabbas was imprisoned for robbery (Jn 18:40), insurrection and murder (Mk 15:7).

17When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said to the, “Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

Some Greek manuscripts have his name as “Jesus Barabbas.” Pilate is asking them to chose between two men named “Jesus.” It is also significant that he asks do you want **Jesus who is called Christ**. Who has called Him that, other than Peter in Matthew 16:16? So, there are others that have considered Him in this way. The Hebrew word for “Christ” is “Messiah.” Did they want Pilate to release the Messiah?

18For he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up.

There were no legitimate charges brought against Jesus. Pilate could see He was being tried only because of **envy**.

19And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.”

As he ponders over a decision, his wife sends a message to him. This event is unique to Matthew. People in ancient times gave great credence to dreams. That is why she felt it so urgent for her to get this message to Pilate.

20But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes to ask for Barabbas, and to put Jesus to death.

The chief priests and elders persuade the others to do this. People can be persuaded to make the wrong choice. These people were persuaded to not choose Jesus. We might be persuaded to do the same. We must be aware!

21But the governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!"

They desire Jesus' death! This must have been surprising to Pilate, for he certainly would have known how popular Jesus was with the multitude.

23And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

The mob gives no answer to his question. They continue to scream for Jesus' blood.

24And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."

The situation is getting way out of hand. Through a symbolic act of washing his hands, he declares that he will have nothing more to do with this.

25And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

The people accept responsibility for the death of Jesus. In spite of this, they were still offered forgiveness (Acts 2:37-39; 3:17). In Acts 5:28 they do not want His blood on their hands.

26Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified.

Scourging was customary before a crucifixion. This scourging in, and of itself, was so brutal it could kill a man. The strips of leather laid across a man's back had bits of bone and metal in their ends. The man would be bent over a scourging pole with his hands tied, stretching the skin as tight as it could be and then it would tear wide open once the scourging started. This may explain why Jesus did not live as long on the cross as did the ones crucified with Him.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him.

The praetorium is the governmental palace where Pilate lived.

28 And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him.

They dress Him in the garments of a monarch, in a scarlet robe; done, of course, in a mocking fashion.

29 And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

The **reed** represented the scepter, the ruler's staff. The **crown** was made from bushes with extremely long and sharp thorns. Then they mock and ridicule Him.

30 And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

31 And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

Compare Mark 15:16-20. The Jews gave their "dirty work" to the Romans and they did what the Jews wanted done. How hard it must have been for God to witness this! The scourging, the insults, the mocking, the striking Him and so on. God allowed this travesty to continue all because of love (cf. Jn 3:16).

32 And as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

Only John 19:17 records that Jesus carried His own cross and there is no scripture saying He fell under the weight of it. Mark 15:21 records the names of Simon's sons. It seems logical that he did this because they were known to the readers to be Christians. So, in all probability, the man who carried Jesus' cross eventually "took up his own cross" to become a disciple of Jesus, as did his children.

33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull,

The word "Golgotha" is Aramaic, therefore the Greek is translated "Place of the Skull." The Latin for this is "calvus" ("Calvary") meaning "bald" or "scalp." The Latin word *cranium* equals the Greek word *kranion*.

34 they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.

John goes into more detail about this in 19:28-32. Psalm 69:21 prophesied this.

35 And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots;

Again fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy (Psa 22:18). Clothing from the bodies was probably one of the few things the soldiers would receive in payment for their “crucifixion detail.” Whatever the person had of value, they would take, casting lots for certain articles.

36 and sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.

They must remain until Jesus dies. They might as well be comfortable, so they sit. “Keep watch” is the same terminology used in 26:40 where the disciples were asked to keep watch with the Lord.

37 And they put up above His head the charge against Him which read, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

This sign indicated the **charge** that was against Him. His crime was not treason or blasphemy. It was simply that He was the king of the Jews. Pilate wrote this inscription, although the Jews were not happy with it. Pilate wrote it and there have been none since who have worn this title. Jesus has stood before the world now for 2,000 years as the only and the last King of the Jews.

38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

Jesus was crucified with robbers; those who had broken the Law of God and the laws of man (cf. Isa 53:9). In our day and age, a robber receives merely a “slap on the wrist” or a warning to not do it again, but in the first century, a robber was nailed to a cross.

39 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads,

People do foolish things in ignorance.

40 and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Compare with Matthew 26:61.

If you are the son of God, come down from the cross. These people have been so blind to His previous miracles, that even if Jesus did come down in front of all of those there, would they believe? No. Their hearts are too hard. If they would not believe the earlier miracles, they would not believe if He were to come down.

41In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him, and saying, 42“He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe Him.

He saved others; He cannot save Himself. They are mistaken! It is not that He **cannot save**, but that He *will not* save. He *chooses* to not save Himself so that He can save others.

43He trusts in God; Let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

The Son of God. As in verse 40 they ridicule Him. But, what they are calling Him and saying about Him are, in fact, the truth, even though do this in mockery.

Notice the emphasis on Psalm 22 in this whole section.

44And the robbers also who had been crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him.

While both robbers insulted Jesus at first, one robber realized that Jesus was the Son of God and repented (Lk 23:39-43).

45Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

From 12 noon to 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon it was dark; a most unusual phenomenon. This is most assuredly a very dark period in man's history.

Mark records that the crucifixion took place at the third hour (9:00 o'clock a.m.).

46And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God why hast thou forsaken Me?”

Jesus speaks in Aramaic and Matthew translates. This is the only statement from the mouth of Jesus that Matthew and Mark record as Jesus hangs on the cross. There are seven statements Jesus makes from the cross. Luke and John each give three of them.

47And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.”

“Elijah” and “Eli” sound very similar. Elijah means “my God is Jehovah.” Eli simply means “My God.”

48And immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.

John 19:29 also talks about this. This is the one kind act given to Jesus in the last hours of His life.

49But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

Matthew has said much about Elijah. What Old Testament book prophesied of Elijah coming? Malachi. They are thinking of the Elijah to come and perhaps believe they will see him before their very eyes.

50And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

Jesus willed Himself to die. He gave Himself over to God.

51And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split,

The veil was that which separated the Holy of Holies from the Most Holy Place. Its tearing symbolizes a number of things:

1. The defilement of the place,
2. The departure of God from that place,
3. The end of the Old Law because the temple and the holy of holies was the focal point of the Old Law and
4. We have Jesus who has gone beyond the veil (Heb 10:19-22). His blood does that for us.

An earthquake so powerful that tombs were opened and rocks were split.

52and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Here is one of the great signs which accompanied the crucifixion. All of these prove that Jesus was divine. The Bible records them to show the significance of what occurred. After Jesus' resurrection, those who were raised appeared to many. There would be, therefore, no doubt that something spectacular had happened.

The account of this resurrection is unique to Matthew. While many questions are raised by these verses, (How long did they live? Did they testify of Jesus?), this is all that is recorded.

⁵⁴Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Keeping guard = keeping watch over Jesus. These men had seen the way Jesus had conducted Himself throughout this entire horror. Now they seem to think even nature itself is responding to what happened to Jesus. This is not the usual type of man they have nailed to crosses in the past. This man was divine!

⁵⁵And many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, ⁵⁶among whom was Mary Magdalene, along with Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Followed (again) is a concept emphasized by Matthew. There were a number of women who attended to (**ministered** or served) Jesus and all the gospel writers emphasize their works. There is never one woman recorded in the New Testament who opposed Jesus. Those who opposed Him were the men.

⁵⁷And when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.

See Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38ff. This particular man (along with Nicodemus) is a significant individual. Joseph is a powerful man and a wealthy man.

⁵⁸This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given over to him.

Joseph is also a courageous man because he comes asking for the body of Jesus. Burial before nightfall was a requirement in the Law of Moses (Deut 21:23).

⁵⁹And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

What a beautiful outpouring of love!

All the gospel writers describe this as being a **new tomb**. Perhaps this is because of the raising of the man who was touched by Elisha's bones in 2 Kings 13:20-21. No one would be able to argue that Jesus was raised as a result of touching Elisha's bones in an old tomb.

⁶¹And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

The women come to complete the burial preparations on the body of Jesus. Matthew tells us Joseph supplied the linen cloth. John tells us Nicodemus supplied the myrrh and aloes, which weighed one-hundred pounds. Each by itself was useless without the other. Jesus' death resulted in their "discipleship of secrecy" being brought into the open and a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9, "...Yet He was with a rich man in His death,..."

62Now on the next day, which is the one after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate,

The **preparation** was on Friday, the day the Jews prepared for the Sabbath.

***See article: "The Reckoning of the Passover"

63and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.'

The Jewish leaders remember well Jesus' predictions of a resurrection - even that He said He would rise on the third day. (Why did the apostles not remember???) However, they want Pilate to know they do not really believe these claims; after all, they were made by the **deceiver** (cf. Jn 7:12.) Nevertheless...

64Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

They have already considered a possibility of the body being stolen by His apostles, therefore they take measures to protect themselves. In their doing this, however, they reduced the effectiveness of their own claim (after the resurrection) of the body being stolen (28:13).

The first "deception" was the claim that He was the Son of God. A claim to have risen from the dead would surpass even that in the "deceptive" work of Jesus.

65Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how."

Pilate leaves the securing of the tomb to their discretion. Notice, though, that Pilate is not willing to dispatch any of his own guards. He will not be blamed for any mishaps at this point in time.

66And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

Since a guard has been posted and the stone has been sealed, they will know if it has been tampered with. In Matthew 16 Jesus said the gates of hades (the grave) would

not be able to prevail against Peter's claim that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. No matter what man or Satan may try to do to keep Him in the tomb, they will not succeed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

¹Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

Compare with Mark 16. By the time they reach the tomb it is the first day of the week. Salome (Mk 16:1) and Joanna (Lk 24:10) also were at the tomb.

²And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

The earthquake was the work of God. Romans 1:4 says He raised Him from the dead.

³And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow;

This is an impressive figure! He obviously was very powerful, having moved the stone so easily.

⁴and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

The guards shook for fear and with very good reason! Whereas 27:66 mentioned the stationing of only one guard, this verse shows that the Jews apparently added at least one more guard for added security. Again, though, this worked against them, for now there are at least two men (and not His disciples) who could bear witness to this heavenly figure.

⁵And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

The angel tells the women not to be afraid; nothing has happened to the body of Jesus. They had come "looking for Him." (Are people today still looking for Him?)

⁶He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

This is a declaration of victory! How many times had Jesus said He would be raised? The angel verifies that Jesus did, in fact, prophesy His resurrection.

The women are invited to come see the place where He was lying. They have the privilege to be the first to witness the empty tomb.

⁷And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.

The women have a job to do: “go tell the disciples.” How was their glad message received? We know from other accounts the disciples did not believe, therefore Jesus had to appear to them. The angel says, “You will see Him.”

⁸And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.

This is so exciting, yet so unbelievable! What they have witnessed is so great and wonderful! Imagine the variety of emotions running through them; fear, sadness, confusion, joy, etc. They must have rejoiced with fear and trembling (Psa 2:11b).

⁹And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

This is *proskeneo* (**worship**). Imagine the growth of their faith in Jesus! They have a new appreciation of who Jesus is. They went to the tomb expecting to find a body, but the empty tomb has just completely redefined what they were expecting in Jesus. Now they *worship* Him! They (and we) are to worship God and serve Him only (Mt 4:10). They are worshiping Jesus because He is divine.

¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.”

Do not be afraid. They were told this in verse 5, yet, in verse 8 they are still fearful. Jesus had told them this and the angel told them this.

Acts 1:3 - Jesus appeared several times over a period of forty days. Paul discusses the many appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 to refute the argument that the resurrection was a hoax perpetrated by the apostles. These faithful men were killed for believing in and preaching the risen Lord. They had an imperishable faith that Jesus kept alive! He was their Lord!

¹¹Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

These soldiers are afraid for their lives. Losing a prisoner or someone they were to guard was punishable by death. This is the type of unbiased witnessing that would be impressive to anyone who would have an open heart. Perhaps this explains Acts 6:7; where priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

12And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

After all the plotting and conniving, their plans are coming to naught. Instead of killing the soldiers for not carrying out their duty, they bribe them (with much money) to lie about Jesus' disciples.

13and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'

This is a perfect illustration of what Jesus was saying about these individuals in Matthew 23:3, "...do not do according to their deeds;..." They were very wicked. It is obvious their hearts were hard and they had no desire to know the truth (thus no salvation - 2 Thess 2:10).

14And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble."

This indicates the soldiers were Roman soldiers. Pilate was the governor and could easily be bribed.

15And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

This shows the success of this fabricated and fraudulent story. On the day Matthew began to pen his gospel, thirty years after the resurrection, there were still a number of Jews who believed this story. There are many, even today, in our time, who believe this. Hugh Scofield in his book *The Passover Plot* deals with this belief.

16But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

They are going to meet in a particular place. Many think this was where the five-hundred brethren witnessed the resurrected Jesus at one time (1 Cor 15:6). Jesus appeared for forty days before His ascension (Acts 1:3).

17And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some were doubtful.

Some immediately respond in a certain way. John mentions Thomas who, in John 20:24-29, doubts and says that unless he can see the imprints in His hands and touch His side he would not believe. His doubts were erased when he touched Jesus. They **worshiped** Him, recognizing Him as God, as Thomas declared, "My Lord and my God!"

18And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

This is the culmination of the gospel of Matthew; the point he has been trying to make. He is writing to a Jewish audience, appealing to them to accept the kingship of Jesus, the Messiah. Matthew began by showing that Jesus was of David; demonstrating His power through numerous miracles. He was the master teacher. He has fulfilled countless numbers of Old Testament prophecies and finally - through the accounts of eye witnesses - we are brought to the reality of the risen Lord!

Authority - the key word! The power was *given* to Jesus. Jesus did not assume it for Himself, it was given to Him. It is an all-embracing authority, in heaven and on earth. We know from Philippians 2:9-11 that every tongue shall confess and every knee shall bow in heaven, on the earth and under the earth. Here we have Jesus unifying Himself with the rule of God while His kingdom (the church) will preside on earth. Jesus will sit down at the right hand of the throne of God.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

On the basis of the authority Jesus has, He gives the command to **go**. This is an imperative! He commands them to go and **make disciples**. One must be a disciple to make disciples. How can we expect others to follow Jesus unless we follow Him ourselves? In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says, "Be imitators of me..." This is the way "discipling" works...by imitation. The first thing Jesus told them to do was to go and make disciples. They learned the meaning of that by counting the cost and prioritizing (Mt 8:18-22). The disciple learns - and never forgets - that he is a follower and not a leader, Matthew 10:24. The word "disciple" means "a follower." Then in Matthew 16:24 Jesus says these four things: you have to *want* to follow, you *deny* self, you *take up* the cross and then you *follow*. You must be willing to sacrifice.

How do we make a disciple? In the Greek we have two participles that tell us how we do this. Both of these are in the "aorist imperative."

Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. In Mark 16:16 Jesus commanded disciples to baptize others. We know from John 3 that John baptized. The authority for this baptism is given - in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The disciples are nothing more than disciples, they do not baptize in their own authority, but in the authority of Jesus. Jesus is not giving a "baptismal formula," but indicating that the authority for baptizing is that which abides in the authority of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is an act of obedience and all three of these are involved in this act. Baptism is also an act of worship.

²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. Jesus taught them and now commands them to go and teach others. We do not want to be like the disciples in Matthew 26:56, "Then all the disciples left Him and fled." We want to be the type of disciples that the Lord finds working and doing. Two times Matthew talks about the disciples doing just as Jesus directed them (21:6; 26:19). Can Jesus find us doing just as He has directed us to do?

Teaching them to observe. It is hard to sell a product you do not use or a religion you do not live. Notice that teaching follows baptism. To make a disciple you have to teach, and then you baptize, and then you teach more of what they are required to do now that they are disciples. The word **teaching** is a present participle. The teaching - and the learning - never ends! The point of teaching is to produce obedience. We are trying to bring about a certain lifestyle.

With you...till the end of the age. The disciples do not need to be concerned about Jesus not being with them. He was their prophesied Immanuel (Mt 1:21,23) - "God with us."

He has assured them of His power; He has given them a commission; His presence will be with them!

ARTICLES

MATTHEW THE APOSTLE

The tradition of the church is very strong that Matthew is the author of the first gospel. No real evidence has been advanced to contradict this claim. Matthew, identified with Levi, was a tax collector or publican whom Jesus called to be one of the twelve (Mt 9:9-13; 10:3). Almost nothing is really known about him. After the listing of the apostles in Acts 1:13, Matthew disappears from the record of the New Testament. The following are some of the traditions of the ancient church regarding Matthew and his gospel.

Papias, Fragments, I.

For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those who spoke much, but in those who taught the truth ... If then, anyone who had attended on the elders came, I asked immediately after their sayings, what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew or by any other of the Lord's disciples.

Papias, Fragments, VI.

Matthew put together the oracles of the Lord in the Hebrew language and each one interpreted them as best he could.

Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III. i. 1.

Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church.

Irenaeus, Fragments, XXIX.

The Gospel according to Matthew was written to the Jews. For they laid particular stress upon the fact that Christ should be of the seed of David. Matthew also, who had a still greater desire to establish this point, took particular pains to afford them convincing proof that Christ is of the seed of David; and therefore he commences with an account of His genealogy.

Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 4:7-10.

And in the figure of a man, Matthew strives to declare to us the genealogy of Mary, from whom Christ took flesh.

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, VIII. iii. 22.

Concerning readers, I Matthew, also called Levi, who was once a tax-gatherer, make a constitution; Ordain a reader by laying thy hands upon him and pray to God and say...

Recognitions of Clement, LV.

But Matthew, meeting his propositions, showed clearly, that whosoever shall not obtain the baptism of Jesus shall not only be deprived of the kingdom of heaven, but shall not be without peril at the resurrection of the dead, even though he be fortified by the prerogative of a good life and an upright disposition.

The fact that the second century heretic Tatian included Matthew in his Diatessa-ron is further evidence that it had been accepted by the church as the work of the apostle himself. A legendary death account survives in the New Testament apocryphal work entitled, The Martyrdom of St. Matthew. The work is obviously filled with superstition and is of a decidedly inferior character.

Dan R. Owen

RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN JUDAISM

During the Maccabean Period, Judaism fragmented into a variety of religious parties. See Josephus, Wars of The Jews, 2.8.

- A. Josephus mentions 4 of the 6 groups.
- B. The New Testament mentions 5 of the 6 groups.

Most of the Jews did not belong to any of these parties.

- 1) **PHARISEES** - "Separatists," 6,000 members.
 - A. Powerful group (Josephus, Antiquities 13:10) shows that they dictated public opinion to kings, priests.
 - B. Chief interpreters of the Law (Torah).
 - C. Accepted as binding three major divisions of the Old Testament:
 - 1. The Pentateuch,
 - 2. The Prophets and
 - 3. The Writings.
 - D. Also accepted the "Oral Law," the tradition of the elders (cf. Mk 7:3). This was compiled by the Rabbis and later codified in the Mishna (200 A.D.) and preserved in the Talmud (a vast written collection of religious interpretations).
 - E. Believed in:
 - 1. Coming judgment,
 - 2. Resurrection of the dead,
 - 3. A future life of the soul,
 - 4. Rewards and punishments and
 - 5. Angels, demons and other spirits.
 - F. Gamaliel and Saul were Pharisees (Acts 5:33,39; 23:6-9; Phil 3:4-7).

2) **SADDUCEES**

- A. Liberal aristocratic group.
- B. Policy of cooperation with the Romans - they were the wealthy land owners.
- C. Controlled the temple, priesthood and Sanhedrin.
- D. Adopted Hellenistic customs.
- E. Tried to maintain political equilibrium.
- F. Accepted the Mosaic Law only.
- G. Denied:
 - 1. Final judgment,
 - 2. Resurrection,
 - 3. Future life and
 - 4. Existence of angels and demons.
- H. Their close association with the temple spelled their doom. When the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. they were reduced to insignificance (the Pharisees became the founders of Judaism).

3) **ESSENES**

- A. Inhabited the area around the Dead Sea, called "Qumran."
- B. Gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- C. Rejected mainstream Judaism and the temple (they thought it was hopelessly corrupt).
- D. Ascetics and monastics (withdrew to desert).
- E. Meditated, studied and copied Scripture.
- F. Disciplined themselves and waited for the coming Messiah (whom they called the "Teacher of Righteousness").

- G. Dualistic in their thinking:
 1. Life - Death,
 2. Light - Darkness,
 3. Good - Evil and
 4. God - Devil.
- H. They trained for the holy war of Armageddon in which God would vanquish the forces of evil.
- I. Most practiced celibacy.
- J. Held all things as common property.
- K. Had a ritual purification through bathing (like baptism).

4). **ZEALOTS**

- A. Intensely patriotic group that advocated the overthrow of the Roman control.
- B. Looked for the strong-armed Messiah (Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13).
- C. The disciple/apostle Simon was a Zealot.
- D. Judas' betrayal may have been a misguided attempt to force Jesus to lead a revolt like the Zealots thought the Messiah would do.
- E. In 66 A.D. organized a revolt against Rome. This was suicide for the Jewish nation, because they provoked the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 1. Even after Jerusalem had been captured they shut themselves in the temple and forced the Romans to destroy it.
 2. They shut themselves in Herod's summer home in Masada (72 A.D.).
 3. Instrumental in the Bar Kochba revolt (132-35 A.D.).

5) **HERODIANS** (Mk 3:6; 12:13; Mt 22:16).

- A. Political movement.
- B. Supported Herod's dynasty (Antipas).

6) **SCRIBES** (Mt 23).

- A. Copied the Law.
- B. Were, by virtue of their occupation, looked to as authorities on the Law.

THE EMPIRE OF ROME

- A. Was an extremely large Empire.
- B. Extended from 196 B.C. to 476 A.D.
- C. Took over Judea and Syria in 63 B.C.
- D. Emperors of interest:
 - 1. Octavian Augustus became first Emperor (27 B.C.-14 A.D.).
 - a. Had a peaceful kingdom.
 - b. Discharged veterans and formed colonies.
 - c. Revived state religion.
 - d. Had building projects.
 - e. In many places the Emperor became "Dominus et Deus," Lord and God.
 - f. Attempted to restore family life.
 - 2. Tiberius (14-37 A.D.).
 - a. Adopted son of Augustus.
 - b. 56 years old when took over reign.
 - c. Augustus insisted that he divorce his wife (whom he loved) and marry Julia (the daughter of Augustus his step-father).
 - d. His bitterness and resentment soured him for life.
 - e. He was known for his suspicious and cruel behavior.
 - 3. Caligula (37-41 A.D.).
 - a. Called "Little Boots."
 - b. He demanded to be worshiped as a god.

4. Claudius (41-54 A.D.).
 - a. See Acts 11:28; 18:2.
5. Nero (54-68 A.D.).
 - a. Emperor at deaths of Paul and Peter.
6. Vespasian (69-79 A.D.).
7. Titus (79-81 A.D.).
8. Domitian (81-96 A.D.).

THE HERODS

Herod the Great (40-4 B. C.).

1. Was 22 years old when he took the throne.
2. Ruled over most of Palestine, in addition to some other regions (Idumean, Edom).
3. Obtained favor of Anthony and Octavian. Appointed king of the Jews.
4. Had Aristobulus killed because of jealousy.
5. Wife was Mariamne whom he gave orders to kill if anything ever happened to him. She was ultimately executed. Herod became physically and mentally ill after this.
6. Builder of the temple (took 46 years, Jn 2:20).
7. Killed his two sons by Mariamne.
8. Caesar Augustus said: "I would rather be Herod's hog than his son."
9. Died April 1, 4 B.C. of cancer, dropsy and guilt.
10. Built the stronghold Masada.
11. Matthew 2:1-19; Luke 1-5.

After Herod the Great's death the area was divided up into:

1. North Region: Herod Philip (4 B.C. - 34 A.D.).
 - a. Region northeast of Galilee.
 - b. Managed to escape notoriety.
 - c. Probably the most able of Herod's sons.
 - d. Luke 3:1.
2. Central Region: Herod Antipas (4 B.C. - 39 A.D.).

- a. Builder.
 - b. Very unpopular.
 - c. Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.
 - d. Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:1; 13:31-35; 23:7-12.
3. South Region: Herod Archelaus (4 B.C. - 6 A.D.).
- a. Ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea.
 - b. Augustus banished him to Gaul.
 - c. Matthew 2:22.

After these men died or lost power:

1. Herod Agrippa I (37 - 44 A.D.).
 - a. Made king over all Palestine, 41 A.D.
 - b. Acts 12:1-24.
2. Herod Agrippa II (48-70).
 - a. Tetrarch of Chalcis and northern territory.
 - b. Acts 25:13-26:32.
 - c. Felix (52-59) was procurator under him (Acts 23:26-24:27).
 - d. Porcius Festus (59-61) was procurator under him (Acts 25).

THE FOUR GOSPELS

I. MATTHEW.

A. Author - the apostle Matthew. The Bible tells us five things about him:

1. Jesus selected him to be one of the twelve.
2. He was of the family of Alpheus.
3. He is also called Levi.
4. In his early life he was a publican (Roman tax collector).
5. In appreciation of Jesus' consideration of him, he made a feast, inviting Jesus and some of his publican friends.

B. Purpose of Writing - Matthew wrote his gospel for the distinct purpose of persuading the Jew that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah. He will do this by emphasizing the following:

1. Use the Old Testament to show that Jesus' life and teachings were foretold.
2. Give large sections of Jesus' teachings to demonstrate His surpassing greatness as a teacher.
3. To demonstrate that Jesus was able to perform miracles that impressed the "multitude" and led many to "follow" Him. They did this because they were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

C. Noticeable Characteristics -

1. Many quotations from the Old Testament.
2. Emphasizes the "kingdom."
3. Has frequent and lengthy discourses of Jesus.
4. Wrote in logical order rather than chronological order (especially chapters 5-13).

D. Date - between 65-70 A.D.

II. MARK.

- A. Author - Mark, also called "John Mark," or "John" whose surname was Mark (cf. Acts 12:12,25; 13:5,13; 15:37-39; Col 4:10; Phile 24; 2 Tim 4:11).
- B. Source of Information - Mark apparently went with Peter on many of his preaching trips and was interpreter (or a personal secretary) for him, so he learned from Peter many of the things he has recorded in his gospel. Papias (found in Eusebius, Church History, 111.39); the anonymous Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark; and Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III.i.1 all support this tradition of Mark's connection with Peter. Thus many have called Mark "Peter's Gospel."
- C. Purpose of Writing - Written for believers to confirm them in the things they have already been taught specifically that Jesus is the Anointed One of God.
- D. Noticeable Characteristics -
 - 1. Stress upon Jesus as the Son of God or the Anointed One (1:1; 3:1; 5:7; 14:61; 15:39; cf. 1:11; 9:6; 13:32).
 - 2. Emphasizes the miracles of Jesus (and the power, compassion and humanity demonstrated in these miracles) rather than the teachings of Jesus.
- E. Date - written near the end of Peter's life, if not after Peter's death. Probably around 67-68 A.D. Many feel this is the first gospel to be composed.

III. LUKE.

- A. Author - Luke, Paul's companion in many travels and in his imprisonments. Luke is also the author of the book of Acts. Of all the New Testament writers, only Luke is thought of as being a Greek by birth.
- B. Source of Material - Luke gathered the material for his gospel from two sources (Lk 1:2,3):
 - 1. Apostles ("servants of the Word") and
 - 2. Eyewitnesses.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he obtained and preserved for us in chapters 10-19 a wealth of material on the later teachings and works of Jesus which are not found in the other gospels.

C. Purpose of Writing -

1. To present an accurate account of the work of Jesus to the Greek mind.
2. To emphasize that men are lost in sin and that Jesus is man's salvation.
3. To demonstrate that Christianity was not a subversive cult.
4. To promote interest in Christianity as a world-wide religion.
5. To give previously unrecorded accounts of Jesus' dealings with foreigners, women and many Samaritans.

D. Noticeable Characteristics -

1. Least Jewish (few Old Testament quotations).
2. Very wide vocabulary (750-800 words not found elsewhere in the New Testament).
3. Interest in the miracles of Jesus.
4. Great interest in the parables - 23 parables total and 18 are unique to Luke.

E. Date - 61-64 A.D.

IV. JOHN.

- A. Author - He was the apostle John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 21:20,24; cf. 19:35).
- B. Purpose of Writing - stated by John himself in 20:31 - "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing may have life in His name."
- C. Noticeable Characteristics -

1. Overlap with the Synoptics is small. Only 8% of John found in the other gospels. It is 92% unique!
2. Emphasizes the Deity of Jesus.
3. More teachings on the Holy Spirit.

TITLES OF JESUS

- I. The Messiah.
 - A. The title "Messiah" is a Hebrew word meaning "anointed" which in the Greek becomes "Christ."
 - B. The term was at first applied to any person anointed with the holy oil (such as the High Priest or the King, Lev 4:2-5,16; 2 Sam 1:14-16).
 - C. During the last part of the Old Testament period the title "Messiah" came to mean the ideal king, anointed by God (that is, given power by God's Spirit) to deliver His people and establish His own kingdom (Dan 9:26-27).
 - D. In the New Testament, "Messiah" (or Christ).
 - 1. Occurs 55 times in the four gospels, 474 times in the rest of the New Testament.
 - 2. In the gospels the word seldom appears in the sayings of Jesus (Mk 9:41; 12:35; 13:21) and in none of these does Jesus apply the name directly to Himself.
 - 3. Some post-resurrection sayings (Lk 24:26,46; Jn 17:3; Mt 23:10) seem to be the only times Jesus uses this word to refer to Himself.
 - 4. When asked if He was the Messiah, Jesus admitted that He was in Mark 14:60-61.
- II. The Son of Man.
 - A. Instead of using the term "Messiah," Jesus preferred to refer to Himself as the "Son of Man."
 - B. This expression occurs 81 times in the gospels (cf. Mt 8:20; 25:31; Mk 2:10; Lk 9:58; Jn 5:27).
 - C. This phrase is never used by Jesus' disciples, followers, petitioners or enemies (with Jn 12:34 the only possible exception - but there they were just repeating Jesus' earlier use of the phrase).
 - D. It occurs outside the gospels four times (Acts 7:56; Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13; 14:14).
 - E. Meanings:

1. Man in general (Psa 8:4; 80:17).
 2. In Ezekiel (with over 90 occurrences) it refers to the frailty of man in the sight of the Almighty.
 3. It refers to one who is a servant of man.
 4. The elect one of God, the Messiah (cf. Dan 7:13-14).
- F. Jesus used the phrase to show His connection to humanity, but also shows that He is different from other men. He used the phrase to show that someday He would be acknowledged as the Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind.

III. The Son of God.

- A. This is a title freely used by Jesus and others.
- B. The gospel of John uses this phrase more than any other, because it fits his purpose (to demonstrate that Jesus is in deed God who has now become incarnate in human flesh).
- C. Jesus used it because He claimed and received the honor that is given only to Deity.
- D. The phrase demonstrated the unique relationship Jesus had with the Father.
- E. It demonstrated the authority Jesus had as one who speaks in the name and with the sanction of God Himself.
- F. It was because of this claim that Jesus was condemned to death (Mk 14:61-64).

For further study see:

Bruce Metzger, The New Testament, Its Background, Growth, and Content, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 149-56.

R. C. Foster, Studies in the Life of Christ, pp. 344-347, 196.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

By Denny Petrillo

- I. Historical background: The Old Testament.
 - A. Idea of our being sons and daughters (Deut 1:31; Isa1:2; 43:6-7).
 - B. Names of people - Samuel's son "Abijah" (1 Sam 8:2), Hezekiah's mother "Abijah" (2 Chron 29:1).
 - C. Direct statements occur later in Israel's history.
 1. Psalm 68:5 - "A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation."
 2. Isaiah 63:16 - "For thou art our Father, ...Thou, 0 Lord, art our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name."
 3. Isaiah 64:8 - "But now, 0 Lord, Thou art our Father, We are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand."
 4. Jeremiah 3:4 - "Have you not just now called to Me, My Father, Thou are the leader of my youth?"
 5. Jeremiah 3:19 - "Then I said, 'How I would set you among My sons, and give you a pleasant land, The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!' And I said, 'You shall call Me, My Father, and do not turn away from following me.'"
 6. Malachi 1:6 - "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?"
 7. Malachi 2:10 - "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?"
 - D. Although direct "Father" references are limited, there is ample "children" and "son" references to demonstrate that this close relationship was desired by Jehovah.

- II. The coming of God's Son: a re-establishment of God as Father:
 - A. When Jesus came in the flesh, He was among a people that had a limited and inhibited understanding of God.
 - B. The basis of their problem is seen in Matthew 3:9, "and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for or our father;' for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham."
 - C. The Jews considered Abraham as their true father, thus limiting any establishment of a genuine relationship of their own.
 - D. Jesus gave the key in Matthew 11:27: "Nor does anyone know the Father, except the son and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."
 - E. It was one of Jesus' purposes to rekindle this relationship.
- III. The teachings of Jesus concerning our Father in Heaven.
 - A. Perhaps the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 would best serve to illustrate this point:
 - 1. 17 times Jesus uses the phrase "your Father."
 - 2. This emphasis was for the purpose of teaching us about a relationship desired by our God.
 - B. What does Jesus teach us about the Father?
 - 1. That He loves and blesses all people (5:48).
 - 2. That He loves and cares for all creatures (6:26).
 - 3. That He especially cares for His children:
 - a. He knows their requests before they even verbalize them (6:8).
 - b. He knows their physical needs and intends to meet those needs if they trust (6:32).
 - c. Even more than an earthly father, He will give good gifts to those who ask Him (7:11).

- d. That He sees all that we do - and will reward faithful, quiet obedience (6:4,6,18).
- 4. That there are things we do which please our Father:
 - a. When we glorify Him by being righteous (5:16).
 - b. When we imitate His love for all people (5:45).
 - c. When we pray to Him, calling Him "Our Father" (6:6,9).
 - d. When we are forgiving of others (which He has determined will be a condition of our being forgiven - 6:14-15).
 - e. Obey Him doing His will (7:21).

"And do not call anyone on earth your father;
for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."
Matthew 23:9

IV. The Fatherhood of God: outside the gospels.

- A. It is interesting to note that Paul refers to the Fatherhood of God in the beginning of each of his epistles.
- B. How does God become our Father?
 - 1. By our being separate/obedient (2 Cor 6:14-19 - esp. 18).
 - 2. By our acceptance of Jesus Christ - His Son (Gal 1:4).
 - a. He is our only access to the Father (Eph 2:18 cf. Jn 14:6).
 - b. He is our Advocate (Gk. paraklatos) to the Father.
 - 3. We conduct ourselves in fear knowing our Heavenly Father will impartially judge (1 Pet 1:17).
 - 4. By our not loving the things of the world (1 Jn 2:15-17).
 - 5. By our walking in truth (2 Jn 4).
- C. What benefits are derived from this relationship?

1. We receive good gifts (Jas 1:17 cf. Mt 7:9-11).
2. We have a relationship without fear - but a closeness. This is seen in that even though we are adopted, we can cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-7).
3. He has, after our adoption, made us qualified to share in the inheritance (Col 1:12).
4. We can truly know Him closely (1 Jn 2:13).

D. What should be the outcome of this relationship?

1. We strive to not shame our Heavenly Father - but rather bring glory to Him (Phil 4:20).
2. We live in fellowship with Him (constant association 1 Jn 1:3).

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are."

1 John 3:1

JESUS

In the temple

A study of Mark 11:15-18

IN THE TEMPLE...

1. Jesus angrily drove out the money changers and merchants.
2. Jesus asked whether the leaders respected things which were “from heaven - or from men.”
3. Jesus told about farmers who refused to give the landowner the fruits of his vineyard.
4. Jesus turned an attempt to entrap Him into a rebuke of their selfishness and greed.
5. The priests denied the resurrection, the very hope of God’s people.

RESULT:

1. One scribe listened (Mk 12:28-33).
2. Others failed to see the relation between practice and sincerity.

THE GOSPELS

I. WHY WERE THE GOSPELS DELAYED IN WRITING?

- A. God did not need them to be written for a time.
- B. Miraculous gifts had to be used to establish truth of the teaching.
- C. First followers were not well educated - many could not read.
- D. Easier to spread by word of mouth.

II. WHY WERE THE GOSPELS WRITTEN IF THE ORAL GOSPEL WAS SO GOOD?

- A. God wanted certain things to be written (Jn 20:30-31).
- B. To preserve it accurately (apostles dying out - false teachers coming).
- C. The people needed instruction where no spiritual gifts were given.
- D. It was necessary for their attempts to instruct other circles.
- E. People were being dispersed.

III. WHY WE CAN PLACE CONFIDENCE IN THE ORAL ACCOUNTS ONCE THEY WERE WRITTEN:

- A. The claim of the writers:
 - 1. Inspiration and research claims.
- B. Eye-witnesses would have corrected wrong statements.
- C. Leaders of Jewish communities would have refuted any errors.
- D. Early Christians taught not to believe every claim.

THE GENUINNESS OF MARK 16:9-20

BY
GUY N. WOODS

Q: I am disturbed to learn that some now are saying that Mark 16:9-20 are not part of Mark's biography of our Lord and ought to be omitted. Why?

This by no means is a recent allegation. Denominational theologians, unable to avoid the obvious conclusion that is drawn from Mark 16:15-16 regarding the design of baptism in God's plan to save, sought refuge in unbelief, alleging that Mark 16:9-20 is spurious and thus is not a part of Mark's original inspired production.

Current controversy about modern versions of the New Testament, some of which either omit the passage or deny its genuineness, has prompted a renewal of the allegation in our day.

Reasons for rejecting the passage result from the fact that two of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament — the Sinaitic and the Vatican — omit it. Copies derived from these sources, some of which still are in existence, are without the passage. Some ancient writers either opposed the teaching in the verses or denied their reliability. This is the sum of the evidence against the Markian authorship.

It should be observed that when it is said, "two of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament omit it," this is far from being the same as saying the oldest *copies* of the New Testament are without it. These manuscripts are documents containing the text of the New Testament in Greek. The versions are translations into the languages then in current use. The Old Syriac translation appeared and was in use in the shadow of the apostolic age — within the lifetime of many early Christians who could and did know John the apostle personally. Mark 16:9-20 is in this translation.

It also appears in the Ethiopic, Egyptian, Old Italic, Sahidic and Coptic translations appearing soon after the end of the first century, all much older than the two Greek manuscripts omitting it, evidencing the fact that the manuscript or manuscripts from which they were made all contained the segment. Two hundred years before the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts were copied, it was in the Scriptures then being used.

Irenaeus, an early "church father," often is said to be the most scholarly writer among the Christians in the century after the age of the apostles. A student of Polycarp, who was a close associate of the apostle John, Irenaeus quotes the passage thus demonstrating the fact that it was in the text used in the decades immediately after the death of the last of the apostles.

In the same century Tatian cites it and the passage appears in more than 500 ancient Greek manuscripts and in works by dozens of Latin and Gothic writers of the day. Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus and elder in a congregation in Rome in the early portion of the third century, quotes a portion of the passage, thus demonstrating it was in his Bible.

Any documentary evidence against the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20 — is greatly weakened by the fact that an abrupt break in the text of the Sinaitic at the eighth verse evidences clearly that additional material once was attached and its absence from the text reasonably may be accounted for by the loss from the final section.

The Vatican document, for the same reason, terminates at Hebrews 9:14, thus omitting the remaining portion of that treatise and the books of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2 and 3 John; Jude; and Revelation. Are we to conclude from this that these books never were part of the original text? The argument against Mark 16:9-20 is no more weighty.

Moreover, a little known fact is that included in the Sinaitic manuscript are apocryphal books with portions of Tobit, Ecclesiasticus and other non-canonical writings. If the omission of Mark 16:9-20 from this document proves the passage to be spurious, does the inclusion of these apocryphal portions establish their reliability?

J. W. McGarvey said in his *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, “Our final conclusion is, that the passage in question is authentic in all of its details, and there is no reason to doubt that it was written by the same hand which indited the preceding parts of the narrative. The objections which have been raised against it are better calculated to shake our confidence in Biblical Criticism than in the genuineness of this inestimable portion of the word of God.”

The best and most conservative scholars through the ages have accepted the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. Infidels, despisers of truth and rationalistic “scholars” reject it. Each must decide into which camp his views lead.

Gospel Advocate, September 1988, pg. 34.

Lessons from the Genealogy of Christ

The New Testament opens with the genealogy of Christ. From Abraham to Jesus, as traced through the ancestry of Joseph, the adoptive father of the Lord, Matthew records the “legal” (according to Jewish reckoning) lineage of the Savior (Mt 1:1-16). Often, superficial students of the Bible see no real purpose for those allegedly “dusty” genealogical tables. Actually, however, these records are of vital importance and, in addition, contain numerous incidental lessons.

PROPHECY - The main thrust of Matthew’s record of our Lord’s ancestry is the establishment of fulfilled prophecy. Precious prophecies adorned the inspired pages of the Old Testament; these pointed to the coming of a Messiah who would be the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14), who would, in fact, descend from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10) and shoot forth from the stock of Jesse (Isa 11:1). This promised one would be a descendant of David (2 Sam 7:12-13), thus endowed with the divine right to sit upon David’s *spiritual* throne (Isa 9:6-7). When Jesus came, therefore, claiming to be this promised Christ, it was necessary to show that he had the background to meet the qualifications of these inspired prophecies. Thus, Matthew begins his gospel narrative with the following words: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (1:1). As Lenski observes, this “marks Jesus as the one in whom the Messianic promises made to David and to Abraham were fulfilled.”

In this connection, it is extremely significant to note that when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans (70 A.D.), the genealogical records of the Hebrews were destroyed, so that now “they are utterly unable to trace the pedigree of any one Israelite who might lay claim to be their promised and still expected Messiah. Hence Christians assert, with a force that no reasonable and candid Jew can resist, *that Shiloh must have come*” (McClintock & Strong, III, p. 771). In addition, let us consider some of the secondary lessons which may be learned from an examination of the Lord’s genealogy as recorded by Matthew.

WOMEN - There are four women alluded to in this ancestral catalog of the Christ – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Though the practice of mentioning women is not totally unknown, it is, in the words of A. B. Bruce, “unusual from a genealogical point of view” (Expositor’s Greek Testament, 1, p. 62). What is the possible significance of this inclusion? It could be a hint of the elevation that women would receive as a result of the influence of Christ’s gospel.

The plight of the ancient woman was dire indeed. “In the ancient Greek world women were considered inferior to men. Wives led lives of seclusion and practical slavery.... In Roman society women enjoyed greater practical, though not legal, freedom than in Greece, but licentiousness and moral laxity was rampant.” Even Hebrew women,

though considered a part of the covenant of the Old Testament and having great dignity in the home, had little legal position (Baker's Dictionary of Theology, p. 556). The coming of Christ, however, dramatically changed the picture. The birth of Jesus to the virgin Mary was the turning point in human history for women. The Savior openly defied the attitudes of his day in his frequent dealings with women. He conversed with the woman at Jacob's well – a Samaritan at that! (Jn 4). He refused to shun the sinful woman who kissed and anointed his feet, but rather said: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Lk 7:50). Jesus permitted noble women to minister to him (Lk 8:3), some going even to the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25).

The Master's teaching regarding marriage and divorce was a great boon to womanhood. In the ancient world, a man could divorce his wife for the flimsiest of excuses, – "But if a woman repudiate her husband, she shall be drowned in the river" (Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, 11, p. 834). Jesus, however, prohibited divorce except in the case of fornication (Mt 19:9) and this declaration applied equally to women (Mk 10:12). Even the infidel Gibbon acknowledged: "The dignity of marriage was restored by the Christians" (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 11, p. 701). The precious blessings of salvation in Christ, of course, are available to male and female alike (Gal 3:28).

GENTILES - It is interesting to note, that of the four women mentioned above, at least two, and probably all four were Gentiles by birth. Rahab was of Canaan (Josh 2) and Ruth was a native of Moab (Ruth 1). Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11:3) and Tamar was probably a Canaanitess (Gen 36). How strange, unless by design, that these should be mentioned instead of such worthies as Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, etc. But what would be the purpose? "Perhaps," says Dr. Walsham How, "to fore-shadow the call of the Gentiles, for He who had not a faultless Jewish pedigree, but numbered in His ancestry strangers to the house of Israel, in like manner came to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles,' as well as to be 'the glory of' God's 'people Israel.'" [Note: This should correct the common, but erroneous, allegation that those Mosaic regulations, which prohibited Israelite men from marrying foreign women, were designed to "keep the bloodline pure." Actually, those laws were to inoculate against idolatry.] And so, Jehovah's favors were not confined to Israel, even during the Mosaic age (see Lk 4:25-27, where Jesus healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman). The Lord's "great commission" was directed to all nations, and so, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal 3:28).

SINNERS - It is perhaps not without some significance that three of the four women listed in this genealogy had disreputable backgrounds. Tamar prostituted herself to Judah, Rahab was a harlot and Bathsheba was David's accomplice in adultery. With a stained heritage of such nature, how easily does the Savior identify with the frailties of human nature, though he himself "did no sin" (1 Pet 2:22). Christ received sinners and ate with them (Lk 15:2), indeed, he is characterized as "the friend of sinners" (Lk 7:34). Notice also how gently he dealt with fallen women (Lk 7; Jn 8).

EVIDENCE OF INSPIRATION - The careful student will observe how Matthew deliberately goes out of his way to call attention to Bathsheba's transgression. He does not say: "David begat Solomon of Bathsheba;" rather, he declares: "David begat Solomon of her of (literally, belonging to) Uriah." David took her, but she was *Uriah's* wife! Thus, both David's covetousness and his adultery are underscored! We may be absolutely certain that if the narrative under consideration had been penned by an uninspired person, this unsavory event in the life of Israel's greatest king would hardly have been mentioned. This is forcefully demonstrated by the fact that the uninspired Jewish Talmud actually defends the adultery of David on the ground "that every warrior had, before going into the field, to give his wife a divorce," hence, Bathsheba was allegedly free! (Edersheim, Bible History, IV, p. 191). Furthermore, this incident emphasizes the universal sacredness of God's marriage law. Even though Uriah was a heathen by birth and David was one of God's chosen people, Bathsheba "belonged to" the former in Jehovah's sight and not even the king could take her with Heaven's approval!

VIRGIN BIRTH - Matthew's genealogy of Christ clearly affirms his virgin birth. From Abraham to Joseph, the, verb "begat" is used 39 times. And yet, instead of claiming that Joseph begat Jesus, the writer says, "...and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (1:16). Of special note here is the fact that the pronoun "whom" (Greek - *hes*) is feminine gender, singular number. Joseph is thus excluded from any involvement in the birth of Christ, the Son of God.

Wayne Jackson
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OBJECTIONS TO THE “STAR THEORY”

1. THE STARS WERE NEVER CLOSER THAN TWICE THE APPARENT DIAMETER OF THE MOON.
2. MAGI USED THE WORD “*ASTER*” (SINGULAR) NOT “*ASTRON*” (PLURAL). STAR STUDIERS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN FOOLED.
3. ACTION OF THE STAR RESTING OVER THE HOUSE IS UNUSUAL.
4. ANGLE OF THE STARS WOULD HAVE LED THEM TO EGYPT.

THE GREAT ASTRONOMER KEPLER, ASCERTAINING THAT THERE WAS A CONJUNCTION OF THE PLANETS JUPITER AND SATURN IN 747 A_U_C_, TO WHICH THE CONJUNCTION OF THE PLANET MARS WAS ALSO ADDED IN THE YEAR 748, SUGGESTED THAT THIS GROUPING OF STARS MAY HAVE FORMED THE SO-CALLED STAR OF “BETHLEHEM.”

THE DEATH OF HEROD THE GREAT

by
Wayne Jackson

The Ruler's Background.

Herod, popularly known as “the great,” is given considerable space in the New Testament (see Mt 2). He was an Idumean (a descendent of Esau) by ancestry. After the death of Julius Caesar, Herod was appointed “king of the Jews,” though his administration was not formally secured until after a series of military victories consummated by the capture of Jerusalem in 37 B.C. One of his chief accomplishments was the remodeling of the dilapidated Jewish temple (Jn 2:20), a project which was not completed until A.D. 62/64, only a few years before that temple was destroyed by the providence of God (Mt 22:7).

Herod will always stand as one of the most deplorable characters of New Testament literature. He was a vicious ruler who neither feared God nor regarded his fellows. He was the man who issued the bloody order that all male babies, two years old and under, in the environs of Bethlehem be slaughtered (Mt 2:16). This was his attempt to eliminate the Christ child - a plan which was destined to fail, of course, for “God was with Him” (Acts 10:38).

Biblical Record of Herod's Death.

Matthew records the following interesting words regarding Herod's death. “But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the young child's life” (2:19,20). There are several important points tucked away in this divine narrative. Consider the following.

The Restraint of the Narrative.

The text very simply says: “But when Herod was dead...” The inspired apostle gives absolutely no details regarding the manner of the king's demise. This is a very curious fact, for two reasons. First, Herod had died in a most dramatic fashion. Josephus states that a loathsome disease descended upon the ruler as a judgment from God on account of his sins. He describes the horrible details - burning fever, ulcerated entrails, foul discharges, convulsions, stench, etc. (*Antiquities* 17.6.5).

Second, this man was the first bitter enemy of the Messiah. Surely one would expect, from a purely human vantage point, that the followers of Christ might enjoy a sense of victory in Herod's death; hence, a delineation of details regarding that matter would be of particular interest. Never mind. The New Testament simply has it, “And when Herod was dead.” The restraint of the biblical writers, contrary to urges of human inclination, is

one of the subtle but amazing evidences of the Scripture's inspiration. Likely, Matthew, left to his own literary devices, would have expanded his account of Herod's death. Was not a superior force at work?

Corroboration of the Virgin Birth.

It is of further interest in this account to note that the angel does not say to Joseph, "Take your son and wife and return to the land of Israel." No, the very carefully worded charge is this: "Take the young child and **his mother**..." This guarded statement acknowledges the fact that whereas Mary is the "mother" of the child, it is not the case that Joseph is the father. There are only a few occasions in the New Testament where Jesus is denominated as the "son" of Joseph: (a) He was so styled by Philip, a new convert of less than 24 hours, who spoke more than he knew (Jn 1:45); (b) He was referred to as Joseph's son twice by unbelieving Jews (Lk 4:22; Jn 6:42) who rejected the evidence of His deity; (c) The reference to Joseph and Mary as Jesus' "parents" in Luke 2:27 employs the term in a popular sense. Joseph had assumed the role of the Lord's foster-father and he was so viewed by his contemporaries.

On the other hand, the angel's phraseology in Matthew is very consistent with inspired records concerning the virginal conception of Christ (Mt 1:16-24; Lk 1:26-38; 2:4-7; cf. Isa 7:14).

It is of further interest to note that in the first chapter of Matthew, there is a listing of the **legal** genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Joseph. Within this context the term "begat" is used thirty-nine times. Yet, as a connection between Joseph and Jesus, "begat" is conspicuously absent. This is a subtle but deliberate suggestion of the virgin birth. In fact, Matthew stresses regarding Mary, "...of whom was born Jesus." The pronoun "whom" (*hes*) is singular in number and feminine in gender - thus excluding Joseph from any involvement in the Lord's birth.

The Grammatical Implication.

It is of special interest that Matthew says, "They are dead that sought the young child's life" (2:20). Why the plural "they," since only Herod's death is mentioned in the previous verse? Several ingenious grammatical theories have been suggested by commentators. The simplest explanation, however, may lie in a curious historical oddity. Herod had a son whose name was Antipater. Antipater was of the same cruel disposition as his father. He would doubtless have been ever as much of a threat to the Lord as his evil sire, had he succeeded his wicked father to the throne. In fact, Antipater was a rival to the throne. As Herod's oldest son, he had complained that his father's life was dragging on so long that he would be an old man by the time he became king. When he mistakenly thought that Herod had died, he evidenced great joy. When word of that rejoicing reached the ailing king, he had his son killed immediately. This was only five days before Herod himself expired (Josephus, *Wars*, 1, XXIII, 7). Hence, it might be very accurately said: "**They** are dead that sought the young child's life."

Conclusion.

In these two verses of Matthew's record we thus see three remarkable details: (a) the restrained calmness of the inspired writer; (b) the harmony of the scriptural accounts in the smallest of matters; and, (c) the minute accuracy of the divine narrative in the most subtle of grammatical forms.

The precision of the Bible, even in what appears to be (from the human viewpoint) trivial details, is an unending source of amazement to the careful student of this sacred book. Study the sacred volume; be awed by it. Obey its precepts!

Reasoning from Revelation, Vol., II, NO., 12, December, 1990

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE HOME LIFE OF JESUS?

1. Hometown - Nazareth of Galilee (a town with a bad reputation, cf. Jn 1:46).
2. Regarded as a son of Joseph (Jn 6:42).
3. Family occupation: Carpenter (Mt 13:55).
4. There were other children in the home (Mt 12:46; 13:55; Mk 6:3; Jn 2:12). Their names were: James, Joses, Simon and Judas. He also had sisters who are not named.
5. Family regularly attended synagogue worship on the Sabbath (Lk 2:27,41).
6. Joseph probably died before Jesus was 30 years old since he is not mentioned in any reference to the family after the 12 year old incident (Lk 2:39-51) and Jesus gives His mother over to the care of John at His crucifixion (Jn 19:26-27).

“And Jesus kept increasing in
wisdom and stature,
and in favor with
God and men.”

Luke 2:52

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

INTRODUCED:

- A Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8.
 - 1. A baptism of repentance (Mk 1:4).
 - 2. For forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4).
 - 3. Looked **forward** to Christ, one who was greater (Mt 3:11).

REPLACED BY THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST:

- A. Jesus said to baptize in His name (Mt 28:18-20).
- B. The early church did baptize in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:35,36; 10:48).
- C. Paul says there is only one baptism - Eph 4:4 (which must be water baptism - the Eunuch said, "Here is water, what keeps me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36; see also 1 Pet 3:21).
- D. Acts 18:25 - Apollos knew only of the baptism of John (even though Christ's baptism had already been preached and practiced). He needed to have "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (verse 26).

- E. Acts 19:1-7 - those who were baptized with John's baptism (after the death of Jesus and the preaching of Jesus' baptism) were told to be baptized again (Acts 19:5). This time they were baptized in the name of Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The baptism of John was temporary - looking forward to the coming of Jesus and for the purpose of preparing the way for Jesus (Mt 3:3).
- B. When asked why he was baptizing, John indicated it was in preparation for one coming who was much greater than he (Jn 1:22-28).
- C. Once John did his work, he needed to decrease (including his baptism) and let Jesus increase (Jn 3:30).

Denny Petrillo

SATAN

I. BIBLICAL TEACHINGS.

1. WAS A FALLEN ANGEL (Judg 6; 2 Pet 2:4).
2. WAS THE FIRST SINNER (1 Jn 3:8).
3. WAS THE ORIGINATOR OF SIN (Jn 8:44).
4. PERPETUAL TEMPTER OF MANKIND (Rev 20:2,8).
5. IS DANGEROUS (Rev 2:10; 3:9; 1 Pet 5:8-9).
6. SHALL BE CONQUERED BY JESUS (Jn 12:31; Rev 12:9 (cf. Heb 2:14)).
7. MAY BE CONQUERED BY US ALSO THROUGH THE GRACE OF CHRIST (1 Pet 5:8-9; Jas 4:7).
8. JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY FOR DELIVERANCE FROM HIM (Mt 6:13).
9. JESUS WILL DESTROY THE WORKS OF SATAN (1 Jn 8:8).
10. SATAN HIMSELF SHALL SUFFER ETERNAL PUNISHMENT (Rev 20:10).

JOHN 8:44

II. BIBLICAL NAMES.

1. SATAN (HEBREW) - ADVERSARY (Job 2:1).
2. DEVIL (GREEK) - FALSE ACCUSER OR SLANDERER BECAUSE HE SPEAKS AGAINST MEN (Rev 12:10 - 12) AND GOD (Gen 3:1-5).
3. BEELZEBUB (Mt 12:24).
4. SERPENT (Rev 12:9).
5. PRINCE OF THE POWERS OF THE AIR (Eph 2:2).
6. ABADDON (HEBREW) AND APOLLYON (GREEK) - DESTROYER (Rev 9:11).
7. BELIAL - GOOD FOR NOTHING (2 Cor 6:15).
8. MURDERER AND LIAR (Jn 8:44).
9. PRINCE OF THIS WORLD (Jn 12:31).
10. GOD OF THIS WORLD (2 Cor 4:4).
11. THE DRAGON (Rev 12:7).

*“YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL,
PROWLs ABOUT LIKE A ROARING LION,
SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR,
BUT RESIST HIM...”*

1 Peter 5:8-9

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

WHAT DID THESE TEMPTATIONS INVOLVE?

THE DEVIL SOUGHT TO:

1. INDUCE HIM TO PROSTITUTE HIS DIVINE POWER FOR PERSONAL ENDS.
2. INFLUENCE HIM TO SEEK POPULARITY BY DECEPTION AND DARE GOD TO PERFORM AN UNNECESSARY MIRACLE.
3. TO PERSUADE HIM TO TURN ASIDE FROM HIS PURPOSE OF DYING FOR THE REDEMPTION OF SINNERS.
4. "GIVE" JESUS THE WORLD AS HIS KINGDOM IF HE WOULD COMPROMISE WITH EVIL.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER TEMPTATIONS?

1. IT WAS AN ASSURANCE OF HIS DETERMINATION TO SAVE US.
2. IT WAS AN ASSURANCE OF POWER FOR THE GREATER VICTORY IN THE RESURRECTION.
3. IT WAS AN ASSURANCE TO THE CHRISTIAN THAT HE ALSO CAN OVERCOME TEMPTATION.

THE BEATITUDES

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

- I. Surprises.
 - A. Jesus would redefine and publicly contradict the accepted teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees.
 1. Jesus had the nerve to suggest that those less than perfect could be “blessed” - that is, approved of God!
 2. Jesus taught that these lower-class individuals could actually be the recipients of God’s love, blessings and even be a part of His much desired Kingdom.
 - B. Jesus would tie together the words “blessed” and “poor.”
 1. The Jewish teachers had long stressed the connection between material prosperity and God’s favor.
 2. Jesus taught - “Woe to the rich!” (Lk 6:24).
 3. Jesus stunned the disciples with His teachings on this subject (Mk 10:23-31; Mt 10:16-30).
 4. One of the most popular concepts was that all in the Messianic kingdom would have untold wealth.
 5. Jesus would boldly teach: “You cannot serve God and money” (Mt 6:24; cf. Lk 12:15).

II. Teachings.

A. The poor could be blessed by God.

1. Remember that “blessed” means “approved of God.”
2. The word for “poor” (ptoxos) is not the usual word for poverty, but one that means an individual who has no power or influence on earth and is totally dependent upon others for support.
3. This person, because he has nothing on earth, has learned to put his complete and total trust in God (Psa 12:5; 14:6; 68:10).

B. It is the poor “in spirit” who are blessed.

1. The person who receives God’s approval is the one who recognizes his spiritual poverty.
2. “They who know their spiritual need contrast with the proud, haughty and self-sufficient who, like the Pharisee (Lk 18:10ff; cf. Rev 3:14-22), are conscious of no needs” (Jack Lewis, Matthew, vol. 1, p. 80).
3. This person has no connection with the “poor-spirited” who are without self-esteem, dejected and self-pitying.
4. Thus we learn that it is neither physical poverty that is blessed or physical wealth that is cursed (e.g. Joseph of Arimathea - Mt 27:57; Zacchaeus - Lk 19:2).
5. Those who are humble in spirit (Isa 66:2) who do not think too highly of themselves (Rom 12:3) are the ones being spoken of here.

C. The poor in spirit are poised to receive the coveted “kingdom of heaven.”

1. The kingdom can belong to anyone who wants it, but only on Jesus' terms.
2. Those who recognize their spiritual poverty will gladly receive Jesus as their Lord and King.
3. Therefore, proud, self-righteous people will not be fit for the kingdom (cf. Mt 18:3,4; Mk 10:15).
4. Notice: Who was it who accepted the gospel?
5. There is also special significance in the phrase kingdom "of heaven."
 - a. The Jews looked for a physical kingdom set up in Jerusalem.
 - b. The true kingdom is not of this earth (Jn 18:36).

*“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.”*

I. Surprises.

A. Anyone who mourns could be blessed.

1. They thought that mourning was caused by God (cf. Isa 53:4,8).
2. They thought suffering was caused by sin (e.g. blind man - Jn 9:1-4).
3. Mourners were not to be “comforted” in the way we generally understand it. They were to be encouraged to repent and let God remove the source of the discomfort (e.g. Job’s friends - Job 2:11).

- B. There could be a blessing (comfort) offered to one who chooses to mourn.

II. Teachings.

- A. The blessing awaiting those who “mourn” is to receive approval from God.

- 1. Jesus tells us to acquire this attitude.
- 2. Happiness as the world understands it is conditioned by circumstances, but blessedness is God-conditioned.

- B. Jesus uses a specific word for “mourn” (pentheo) which indicates a deep, sincere, heart-felt grief. It is mourning that cannot be hidden.

- 1. This word is in the present tense.
- 2. The word for “mourn” is found in the New Testament describing a Christian’s mourning for his sin (1 Cor 5:1-2; 2 Cor 12:21; Jas 4:8-10; e.g. 2 Cor 7:10 - different word, same idea).
- 3. This is a sorrow which is not hidden, but which emerges in the tears and the confession of the truly penitent heart.
- 4. Is it possible to have great thoughts about God but little thought for sin? (see Jer 8:6; Rom 7:24; Amos 6:1).

- C. Those who mourn will be comforted.

- 1. How will those mourning, because of sin, be comforted?
 - a. Herein lies one of the great lessons of Jesus. He Himself is how we receive comfort (see Lam 1:16; Isa 61:1-3; Lk 2:25).
 - b. Jesus is our comfort!

2. What comfort does Jesus provide us?
 - a. Forgiveness (Acts 3:19; Rev 3:5).
 - b. Peace (Lk 7:50; Jn 16:33).
 - c. Exaltation (Jas 4:6-10).
3. The Christian does not go through life with a long face and a sour disposition.
 - a. We would need a psychiatrist.
 - b. Continual mourning is not even healthy (cf. Prov 17:22).
4. Once forgiven, we receive comfort.

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF
SCRIBES & PHARISEES

VERSUS

TRUE
RIGHTEOUSNESS

DO NOT COMMIT MURDER

#1 5:21-26

DO NOT BE ANGRY

DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

#2 5:27-30

DO NOT LUST

IF DIVORCE GIVE CERTIFICATE

#3 5:31,32

DIVORCE ONLY FOR
UNCHASTITY

SOME VOWS BINDING -
SOME NOT

#4 5:33-37

BE A PERSON OF
YOUR WORD

EYE FOR EYE -
TOOTH FOR TOOTH

#5 5:38-42

GO THE SECOND
MILE

LOVE SOME -
HATE OTHERS

#6 5:45-48

LOVE AND PRAY FOR
ALL

Man chops off right hand because 'Bible told him to'

WINDSOR (UPI) - A 20-year-old man, who said he was obeying the laws of God as set down in the Bible, chopped off his right hand and repeatedly stabbed himself in the right eye, investigators said Friday.

Doctors at the University of Colorado Medical Center operated on the man for nearly 12 hours. His condition Friday night was reported as guarded.

A roommate of the victim, Brad Errol Wild, said he discovered what happened when Wild emerged from a bathroom shortly before midnight Thursday at their rural home near Windsor, 50 miles northeast of Denver and asked for help in plucking out the damaged eye.

Wild received emergency treatment at McKee Medical Center in Loveland and then was rushed to the Medical Center in Denver.

A meat saw, a cutting knife, a hand ax and a Bible opened to the Book of Matthew were discovered at the home where the mutilation occurred.

The Bible was open to a section which read:

"And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that the whole body should be cast into hell."

Scott W. Call, a special deputy with the Larimer County Sheriff's Department, said he talked briefly with Wild at the hospital and the man told him he cut off his right hand because the Bible told him to do it. He said the Bible also demanded that he pluck out his right eye.

The hand not only had been severed, but it also appeared to have been beaten with an ax, officers said. Trails of blood were discovered in the bedroom, livingroom, kitchen and a bathroom.

Lonnie Dean Mayfield, 23, said he arrived home at 11:30 p.m. as Wild staggered out of a bathroom with his hand severed and asked for help in plucking out his eye.

Mayfield called another roommate, Daniel Lee Finnman, 25, an employee at the McKee Medical Center and the two men were able to get Wild to the hospital.

“We have absolutely no idea why he did it,” a spokesman said. “His roommates said he smoked marijuana on occasion, but not very much. The hunting knife was found stuck in the bathroom floor, the meat saw was in a bedroom and the hand ax and the Bible were in the living room.”

AS I SEE IT

by Norman Gipson

The Bible tells us that a certain man was “willing to justify himself” (Lk 10:29). That fellow must have left many descendants in the world! The last few minutes I have been on the phone because of an out-of-state call, which brought this point to mind.

It was this way: A woman is suing her husband for divorce, her grounds? He looks at Playboy magazines, and lusts after the women who are pictured there. And the Bible says that anybody who looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Mt 5:28). Therefore, says the offended wife, she has a right to divorce said husband on the ground of adultery!

A bit of groundwork first, then a comment: If the circulation of Playboy Magazines or their readership had been limited to this writer, Mr. Hugh Hefner would still be waiting to sell his first copy. So count me out when it comes to endorsing such filth, even a passing glance at a newsstand will indicate, not to mention the hundreds of newspaper stories and interviews. The man who feeds his mind on such vileness is breaking many a text of God’s word - Philippians 4:8 as one example.

But to use this as grounds for divorce ignores some facts. (1) It takes two people to commit the ACT of adultery. But the woman who is being lusted after in such a case may be absolutely, completely innocent! (2) If the woman who is suing her husband for divorce hates him that much, she is a murderess according to 1 John 3:15. That verse reads, “whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” This ought to give such a woman food for thought! If her husband deserves being divorced because of adultery in his heart, she deserves the electric chair for hating him and thus becoming guilty of murder. (And notice that John did not even add IN HIS HEART.)

In Mark 7:21-23, Jesus gave a long list of sins; evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness and evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness. And he says that they all come from within (in the heart, that is) and defile the man. So if Mrs. Divorce-seeker ever **thought** about stealing anything, she is a thief: if she ever **thought** about giving anyone a piece of her mind verbally, she is guilty of railing.

What the lady might consider is to examine her own heart, try to help her husband overcome this sin, forgive him, strengthen him and keep the home together.

MIRACLES

THE NATURE OF MIRACLES:

1. THEY REVEAL GOD'S POWER OVER ALL THE CREATION.
2. THEY REFLECT THE CHARACTER OF GOD (GOODNESS, MERCY, ETC.).
3. THEY ARE BENEFICENT RATHER THAN PUNITIVE.
4. THEY WERE PERFORMED BY AGENTS OF GOD - NOT MAGICAL POWERS.
5. THEY WERE FREE.

THE VALUE OF MIRACLES AS A TESTIMONY TO THE CLAIMS & TEACHINGS OF JESUS:

1. THEY ATTESTED GOD'S APPROVAL OF HIM AND HIS MESSAGE.
2. THEY CONFIRMED HIS CLAIMS ABOUT HIMSELF.
3. THEY REVEALED THE NATURE OF HIS MISSION (I.E. TO GIVE).

Question: Are there degrees of reward or punishment? or are all in heaven rewarded the same and all in hell punished the same? (D.C.)

Response: “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes” (Lk 12:46-48).

“Woe unto thee Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you” (Lk 10:13-14).

(See also Mt 10:15; 11:22-24; Mk 6:11 and Lk 10:12).

These passages cause me to believe that there are degrees of punishment for the lost. Chorazin and Bethsaida were cities where Jesus had ministered and in or near to which Jesus had worked many miracles. (The feeding of the five thousand with just five loaves and two fishes occurred in “a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida” Lk 9:10.) Tyre and Sidon were heathen cities whose punishment and destruction had been decreed by the Old Testament prophets (Ezek 27,28; Isa 23).

Unless one wishes to presume that the people of Tyre and Sidon would be saved in the day of judgment, which in view of the prophetic denunciations seems highly unlikely, then it can only be “more tolerable” for them by their punishment being somewhat less than the people of the Galilean cities Jesus named.

The fact that punishment will be meted out in greater degrees to some than to others is consistent with the fact that punishment for sin is “wages” (Rom 6:23). Wages are paid in accordance with what is deserved.

There is nothing in these passages, however, to suggest that some sins are worse, or deserving of more punishment, than other sins. The difference is not according to what sins I committed, but according to how much opportunity there was to know or to do better than was done.

I know of no passage, however, that suggests degrees of reward for those who are saved. One parable of Jesus may seem to weigh against the idea. “The kingdom of heaven is like” a man who hired laborers to work in his vineyard. The ones hired early and the ones hired the last hour of the day were paid the same (Mt 20:1-16).

More certainly pertinent, however, is the fact that salvation is a free gift (Rom 6:23). Nothing we do earns it (Eph 2:8-9).

There is no scriptural basis, therefore, for degrees of rewards.

Some suggest that certain Christians, those who are more advanced in spiritual maturity and greater in faith, may have greater capacity for happiness than others. "Everyone will get their bucket full, but some have bigger buckets than others," it has been suggested.

The reasoning has a certain appeal, but I know of no Biblical passage that suggests such a thing. I am leery of coming to any conclusion about life beyond this world on any basis other than Biblical revelation. It is "our Savior Jesus Christ," who has "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:10).

The gospel tells us that every faithful child of God has "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet 1:4). "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:10-11).

Cecil May, Jr.
Magnolia Messenger, November 1988, p. 3.

“Matthew 12 and Situation Ethics”

by Dave Miller

A favorite “proof text” of the situation ethicist and, increasingly, of the libertine within the church, is the incident recorded in Matthew 12:1-9. Please read this text before proceeding with this article.

Some have suggested this passage teaches that times arise within the Christian’s life when he must break the “letter of the law” to keep the “spirit of the law.” They maintain that Jesus permits us to violate His will at times for the sake of convenience. If compliance with His words becomes inconvenient, then those words may be treated as optional.

Probably no greater threat to the stability of the church exists in our day than this somewhat humanistic inclination. Vast numbers of people, in and out of the church, live life and make decisions based upon their subjective perceptions and personal feelings. For them, right and wrong, truth and error are obscure, blurred, hazy, gray and complex. What is wrong in one situation may be right and acceptable in another situation.

Satan has done his job well. He has made great strides in American culture over the past 30 years. He is successful in breaking down biblical values and moral absolutes. He has succeeded in replacing this frame-work with a tolerant, open, permissive attitude and outlook that refrains from passing judgment upon anybody and anything. The “I’m O.K., You’re O.K.” mindset is embedded in American civilization. Every facet of our existence is significantly affected — including our religious convictions.

When the disciples picked and consumed a few heads of grain from a neighbor’s field, it was perfectly lawful (Deut 23:25). Working would have been a violation of the Sabbath law. If they had pulled out a sickle and begun harvesting the corn, they would have been violating the Sabbath law. They were picking corn to eat immediately — an explicit compliance with Mosaic law “save that which every man must eat” (Exod 12:16).

The Pharisee’s charge that the disciples were doing something “not lawful” on the Sabbath was simply an erroneous charge! (Mt 15:2.) Jesus counters their charge with masterful, penetrating logic:

1. (verses 3,4) David clearly violated the law in 1 Samuel 21, yet you do not condemn him (how inconsistent!);
2. (verse 5) On the other hand, the priests who work in the temple, do so on the Sabbath; yet they are not guilty of violating the Sabbath law because the law authorized their work to be done on that day. The Sabbath law did not mean that everyone was to sit and do nothing! Implicit was the right to do several things that did not violate the Sabbath regulation — eating, temple service, circumcision

(Jn 7:22,23), extending kindness or assistance to the needy (Deut 22:1-4; Mt 12:10-12; Lk 13:14-16; 14:1-6).

3. (verse 6) In addition, Jesus is God. If He could instruct priests to carry on temple service on the Sabbath, He could surely allow His disciples to eat on the Sabbath (in harmony with the law) — since He is greater than the temple!
4. (verse 7) He then penetrates beneath the surface argument the Pharisees posited by focusing on their hearts. Obeying God's law was not their prime interest. They were masquerading under that pretense (Mt 15:1-9; 23:3). But their problem was not in an attitude of desiring meticulous compliance with God's law. Their zest for law-keeping was hypocritical and not accompanied by (1) obedience themselves and (2) concern for others. Blasting people with honest, genuine application of God's guidelines for the good of mankind was their concern.

They had neutralized the true intent of divine regulations, making void the word of God (Mt 15:6). They had ignored the laws that enjoined justice, mercy and faith (Mt 23:23). So, though their attention to legal detail was laudable, their misapplication of it, also their neglect and rejection of some aspects of it, made them inappropriate / unqualified propagators / promulgators of it.

They did not understand the teaching of Hosea 6:6 and Micah 6:6-8. In both Old Testament contexts, God strikes a blow against the mere external, ritualistic observance of some laws to the neglect of heartfelt, sincere, humble attention to other laws and treating people properly. Samuel addressed this attitude shown by Saul (1 Sam 15:22).

If the Pharisees had understood these things, they would not have accused the disciples of breaking the law (Mt 12:7).

5. (verse 8) Finally, Jesus again affirms the accuracy of His handling of this whole affair. He reaffirms His deity and, therefore, His authority for giving an accurate explanation of the Old Law.

CONCLUSION

Matthew 12 does not teach that Jesus sanctions violations of His laws under extenuating circumstances. His laws are never optional or non-binding, though man often finds God's will inconvenient and difficult (Jn 6:60; Mt 11:6). The truth of the matter is if our hearts are receptive to God's will, it is easy to obey (Mt 11:30). It is "not too hard" (Deut 30:11). It is "not burdensome" (1 Jn 5:3). If, on the other hand, we resist His will and do not want to conform to it, it is "offensive" (Mt 15:12), "hard," (Jn 6:60) and "crushing" (Mt 21:44; Jer 23:29).

Man will continue to invent ways to avoid the intent of Scripture. Man will continue to “distort” (2 Pet 3:16) and “handle the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor 4:2). The “good and honest heart” (Lk 8:15) will “take heed how (he) hears” (Lk 8:18). The good heart will “read ... hear... and keep those things which are written therein” (Rev 1:3).

Dave Miller, P.O. Box 210667 Bedford, TX 76095
Firm Foundation, December, 1988, Vol. 105, No. 15, pp. 1,6

Q - A recent article in a magazine published by a Church of Christ in South Bend, Ind. charges that Mark 2:23, 24 contains an instance “where Jesus violates the seventh day command” (John Clayton, *Does God Exist?*, Jan/ Feb ‘91, p. 22). Could you comment on this?

A - The assertion that Christ violated the sabbath law is erroneous and it contains a very serious implication. If Jesus “violated” the law of God, then He sinned (1 Jn 3:4). If He sinned, the biblical affirmations regarding His perfection are false (see Jn 8:29; 1 Pet 2:22); furthermore, He would have been unable to serve as the spotless sacrifice for our sins (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 1:18-19). To contend that Christ violated the sabbath law reveals a dreadful ignorance of the circumstances in Mark 2:23f.

On a certain sabbath day Christ and His disciples were passing through a grain field. The disciples, being hungry (Mt 12:1), began to pluck ears of grain and to husk them with their hands (Lk 6:1). Accordingly, the Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples did that which was not lawful on the sabbath. Several points must be noted: (1) Christ *Himself* was accused of nothing on this occasion. (2) The disciples did not violate the sabbath law of the Old Testament. Jesus plainly said that they were “guiltless” in the matter of this accusation (Mt 12:7). The law did not demand that one go hungry on the sabbath. What the disciples had violated was the *rabbinical tradition* which forbade plucking and husking grain on the sabbath day.

Jesus responded to the false charge in several ways: (1) By an *ad hominem* argument (one designed to show the inconsistency of an opponent), the Lord cited the case where David unlawfully ate of the tabernacle showbread (Mt 12:4). Since the Pharisees had never condemned that breach of law; why should they now fault the Master’s men simply because they violated the uninspired tradition of the Jews? (2) Not all labor on the sabbath was condemned, as evidenced by the fact that the priests labored in the service of God on that holy day (Mt 12:5). (3) Christ, as the Creator, was Lord of the sabbath (Mt 12:8), i.e., He was more qualified to interpret the sabbath law than the fallible Pharisees. (4) The law was never designed as an end within itself so that human need was to be neglected. This was a perpetual flaw in the thinking of those legalistic Jews (cf. Lk 13:14-15; Jn 5:9f).

Jesus did not violate the sabbath law and it is the epitome of irresponsibility to suggest that He did.

Wayne Jackson
Christian Courier, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, June 1991, p. 6.

“Is there merit in the argument that Jesus justified violation of God’s law in the case of necessity or hardship as advocates of situation ethics allege in the instance of his disciples plucking grain on the sabbath day?”

There is not only no merit in the “argument” in the effort; it is a blasphemous attack on the integrity of him who is the very embodiment of obedience and whose most dominant aim was to do the will of the Father who sent him (Heb 5:8-9; 10:7). The allegation rests on a gross misapprehension of the event as recorded in Mark 2:23-28.

Jesus and his disciples were walking along a public road which passed alongside a field of grain, likely wheat or barley. The disciples stripped off some of the grain, vigorously rubbed it between their hands to separate the chaff from the kernel and ate it. The law of Moses made provision for such action, provided no sickle or other gathering instrument was used (Deut 23:25). It was on the sabbath day when this occurred and the Pharisees, ever around and desirous of finding something with which to accuse the Saviour, regarded the action of the disciples as an infraction of the law of the sabbath. We should take careful note of the fact that this violated the Pharisaic *interpretation of the law* — not the law itself. The Pharisees reached this conclusion with their usual dubious and circuitous reasoning: plucking is a form of reaping and the rubbing of the grain a kind of threshing; and, since reaping and threshing were forbidden on the sabbath, the Pharisees concluded that the Lord’s disciples had violated the law of the sabbath.

The Lord answered the charge by an appeal to a familiar Old Testament incident: “Did you never read what David did?” he asked. There was more than a little irony in his statement. He said, in effect, “You claim to be conversant with all the law and the whole of the Old Testament scriptures. Is it possible that you have never read that David, whose conduct *you* approve, went into the tabernacle when Abiathar was high priest, ate the shewbread, which was intended for the priests alone and gave some of it to those with him? With this historic event you are undoubtedly familiar. Why then, do you find fault with my disciples?”

In the days of Abiathar, the high priest, David came to the tabernacle at Nob and demanded the shewbread which was placed on the table in the sanctuary fresh each sabbath day. (1 Sam 21:1-6; Ex 25:23-30; 39:36.) Lawfully, it could be eaten only by the priests and by them only on the sabbath day. Thus, David, their favorite saint had openly violated the law of the sabbath and this with the sanction and participation of the high priest!

Are we then to conclude that Jesus conceded violation of the sabbath day by his disciples, as David did? Some, among us, have so concluded and have sought to justify any such violation, on the ground of love or necessity, today.

But, does it seem likely that he who refused to turn stones into bread to terminate the torture of forty days' fasting could countenance such action? If one may violate the law of God, when its observance involves hardship or suffering, may we not properly conclude that there is no such thing as suffering for the name of Christ or engaging in any sort of self-denial? Why then, did Jesus refer to David's case?

The Pharisees regarded David's actions as entirely excusable; otherwise, they would have replied to the Lord as follows: "Your own argument effectively condemns you. You identify the action of your disciples with that of David: David sinned; and, therefore, so did your disciples!" The Lord knew that the Jewish teachers who opposed him could not pursue this mode of reasoning because they justified David's procedure. Thus, the Saviour's argument followed this order: "David, when hungry, ate the shewbread, an admittedly unlawful act; yet, *you* justify him. My disciples plucked grain and ate it which the law allows; but, *you* condemn them. You stand convicted on the basis of your own logic!" This *ad hominem* argument utterly silenced them.

Having thus effectively squelched the Pharisees on their own ground, Jesus added, "The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath; so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath." (Mk 2:24-28.) That the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath implies that when the welfare of man conflicted with the observance of the sabbath, the former took precedence over the latter. *But, of this man was not himself to judge, since he could not do so with detachment and impartiality.* Jesus could, because he was lord of the sabbath; and, being its master, his conduct regarding it was above criticism. This took the matter outside the range of logic and placed it in the realm of authority. The Saviour again, as on so many other occasions, showed the errors of his opposers and justified his own authority, in one tremendous affirmation. The disciples of Jesus did not violate the law of God in the grain field; they ran aground of Jewish tradition which often nullified the law of God. (Mt 15:1-9.) Neither here, nor elsewhere, in the Scriptures, is there any support for the dangerous and false deductions of those among us today who are parroting Fletcher's *situation ethics* errors.

Guy N. Woods
Gospel Advocate, February 2, 1978, p. 72.

JESUS VERSUS THE PHARISEES

A Study of Matthew 12:1-44

Pharisees (Rabbinic tradition): Forbade reaping on the Sabbath (Shabbath 7:2), or eating anything that was not prepared the previous day (Sanbat 19a).

Jesus: Followed Law of Moses (Deut 23:25) which allowed the disciples to pick and eat on the Sabbath.

Arguments of Jesus:

- 1. They were inconsistent in their application of their law (tradition) - 12:3-4.**
 - a. They would not have condemned David (bMenahoth 95b) even though David clearly violated the Law (Lev 24:5-9).
 - b. Ad hominem argument revealed evil intent of Pharisees.
 - c. Jesus nowhere approves of what David did, whereas He insists that the disciples were “innocent” (v. 7).
- 2. They failed to understand how the priests could work on the Sabbath - 12:5.**
 - a. The priests’ busiest day was Saturday - but it was all allowed by the Law of Moses (Lev 24:8; Num 28:9f).
 - b. They argued that when there was a conflict of obligations the greater command would override the lesser one.
- 3. They failed to see what was really happening with the ministry of Jesus - 12:6**
 - a. As much as the Pharisees respected the temple, it was not as important as the work that Jesus was doing.
 - b. The “something” (neuter) is the kingdom of God and the proclaiming of it by the disciples.
 - c. Compare with Matthew 12:41-42 - what is the “thing” that is here? 12:28 - the kingdom of God.
- 4. The Pharisees had failed to apply the principle of mercy - 12:7.**

- a. Quote from Hosea 6:6 (cf. Mt 9:13).
- b. Mercy is more important than sacrifice (going through the motions of ritual correctness).
- c. Does not say to neglect sacrifice. One still must obey the laws of God (but mercy was also one of those laws).
- d. Just as the priests were guiltless (v. 5), so also are the disciples guiltless (v. 7).

5. The Pharisees failed to recognize the authority of Jesus - 12:8.

- a. Jesus, as the Messiah, had the authority to rule on the Sabbath which the Pharisees did not.
- b. He declares that the Sabbath did not require a man to go hungry (nor does it restrict a man from doing good on that day - 12:12).
- c. If one presumes to speak for the law, they are guilty of doing the same things the Pharisees were doing.

LESSONS:

- 1. If we are not careful we can allow our traditions to become law and wrongfully condemn people for violating those traditions (cf. Mt 15:1-3).
- 2. We must learn to apply the principle of mercy as well as attempt to follow the stipulations of God's law (Mt 23:23).
- 3. We must recognize the authority of Jesus (Mt 28:18-20) and how His instructions govern the church (Eph 1:20-23).

ABUSES OF THIS TEXT:

1. This section is not teaching “situation ethics” by which, in some circumstances one may circumvent a command of God. David’s actions did not receive Jesus’ approval. The disciples/priests were not violating any laws of God.
2. This section does not give approval to the followers of the Son of Man to also be “Lord of the Sabbath” (i.e, to determine the extent and/or binding nature of God’s Word).

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

First of all, we must place Matthew 12:31-32 in context. Jesus had worked a miracle on a blind and deaf person by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:18; Acts 2:22; Acts 10:38). As a miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit through Jesus, this miracle was a “sign” of the arrival of the new age (Jn 20:30-31; Mt 11:2-5; Mt 16:3; Acts 2:19,22). The hard hearted Pharisees ascribed the miracle to the power of the Devil, thereby discouraging all the people for heeding the signs of God and believing in Jesus the Messiah. They were those who were “scattering abroad” what Jesus was trying to gather (12:30).

The sin is that of “speaking against” the Holy Spirit or “blaspheming” the Holy Spirit. The word “blaspheme” means to defame, to slander, to say abusive things about, according to Arndt and Gingrich. A clue is given in Mark 3:29-30. Here their sin is described in detail. “Because they said, ‘He hath an unclean spirit.’” This is the same thing as in Mark 3:22 where the scribes said, “He hath Beelzebul.” The sin is simply this, the attributing of the miracle of Jesus to the Devil, publicly slandering the Holy Spirit of God.

We are further helped by the context. Jesus tells them that only a rotten tree can produce such rotten fruit and it is because their hearts are evil that they speak such terrible things. Then He says again that men will give an account for every idle word that they speak in the Judgment day. It is again obvious from the context that the sin is something spoken (12:33-37).

After such a stern rebuke the Pharisees show the ultimate in hypocrisy by asking Jesus for a sign. Note that He has already given them multitudinous signs, but they would not heed those signs. He calls them an evil and adulterous generation. He says the men of wicked Nineveh were still able to repent at the preaching of Jonah but they are not able to repent at the preaching and the signs of one so far greater.

All of this implies that no person would exalt himself against God and publicly defame and slander the work of the Holy Spirit, unless they had become so hardened of God. Such a person is sinning willfully even though he knows the truth (Heb 10:26). Such a person is walking in darkness (1 Jn 1:6). Such a person is too hard hearted to acknowledge his sin and repent.

In Matthew 12:43-45 the account of the return of the unclean spirit further illustrates the hardness of some of the people of Jesus’ day. They were like people out of whom a demon had been cast. Jesus was casting Satan out of their midst. They were like a cleansed demoniac that found seven worse demons to lodge in him. The miracles and signs and the preaching of Jesus did not cleanse the scribes, but ever more hardened them to God’s truth. Thus, Romans 9:18 reflects the very different affect that the demands of a righteous God have on different men. Pharaoh was approached with a righteous demand to be penitent and submissive to the will of God.

Therefore, the sin against the Holy Spirit is what the hardened Scribes said, but it would not be said by anyone not already fatally hardened by sin.

PARABLES

PARABLE DEFINED:

AN EARTHLY STORY WITH A HEAVENLY (SPIRITUAL) MEANING.

SOURCES FOR PARABLES:

1. EVENTS DURING THIS TIME.
2. CUSTOMS.
3. INVENTED STORY OF SUPPOSED INCIDENT (BUT NOT A FAIRY TALE!).
4. HISTORICAL INCIDENTS.

PURPOSE OF JESUS IN USING PARABLES:

1. TO ILLUSTRATE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL TRUTH.
2. TO SAY THINGS THEY COULD EASILY REMEMBER UNTIL THEY COULD BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD.
3. TO ENABLE THOSE WHO SINCERELY WANTED THE TRUTH TO UNDERSTAND IT.
4. AS A JUDGMENT AGAINST THOSE WHO WERE WILFULLY BLIND.

THE SOWER

Matthew 13:4-8,19-23.

SEED SOWN

ROADSIDE

ROCKS

WITH THORNS

GOOD SOIL

INTERPRETATION

HEARS WORD, DOES NOT UNDER-
STAND, SATAN STEALS SEED.

HEARS, RECEIVES WITH JOY, NO
FIRM ROOT SO FALLS AWAY WITH
PERSECUTION.

HEARS, BUT OVERLY CONCERNED
WITH THE WORLD AND THUS CHOK-
ED AND KEPT FROM BEARING
FRUIT.

HEARS, UNDERSTANDS and BEARS
FRUIT.

LESSONS

1. ALL TEACHINGS HAVE GOALS.
2. THERE ARE FOUR KINDS OF SOILS (PEOPLES' HEARTS).
3. DO NOT BE A STINGY TEACHER.
4. SOME NEVER UNDERSTAND.
5. SOME HAVE NO STRENGTH.
6. SOME FEIGN RELIGION.
7. SOME HEAR AND PRODUCE.

THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32

The kingdom of heaven predominated the teachings of Jesus. Why?

Men had great misconceptions concerning what the kingdom was going to be like, and who would be a part of it.

Men had failed to properly prepare themselves for the true kingdom of heaven.

Great Lessons For Us Today

1. Many under value the worth of God's kingdom.
 - a. The mustard seed was not worth much. Many see the church in the same light.
 - b. Matthew 22:29; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 3:14-21.
2. Smallness is temporary.
 - a. Mustard seed small - but grew into great tree when planted.
 - b. Same with the gospel - 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.
3. The plan of God works.
 - a. Against all odds the mustard seed and the kingdom of God saw remarkable growth.
 - b. Jesus and the apostles did not fit the mold for growth.
4. The kingdom of heaven is the only safe place (v. 32).
 - a. Ephesians 5:23-27; Acts 20:28.
 - b. Is God truly our "rock and fortress?" (Psa 18:2).

THE TARES

MATTHEW 13:24-30,36-43

ELEMENTS OF THE PARABLE:

1. SOWER..... SON OF MAN.
2. FIELD.....WORLD.
3. GOOD SEED SONS OF THE KINGDOM.
4. TARES SONS OF THE EVIL ONE.
5. THE ENEMYTHE DEVIL.
6. HARVESTEND OF THE AGE.
7. REAPERS.....ANGELS.

LESSONS:

1. SATAN ACTS WHILE MEN ARE "SLEEPING."
2. SATAN IS SUBTLE. MEN DO NOT RECOGNIZE HIS INFLUENCE UNTIL LATER.
3. GOD'S PEOPLE HATE SIN.
4. ONE MUST CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES BEFORE TAKING ACTION (I.E. TEARING OUT THE WHEAT).

5. UNTIL JUDGMENT COMES, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE FOUND PRETENDERS AMONG THE LEGITIMATE SONS OF THE KINGDOM (CF. VV. 47-50).

MATTHEW 14:1-4

Herod
Antipas

King Aretas'
Daughter

(half - brothers)

Philip

Herodias
Daughter of Aristobulos
(Who was Antipas' and Philip's
half-brother)

Points to Note:

1. When Herod married Herodias, John responded for the first time, saying: "It is not lawful for you to have her" (Mt 14:4).
2. This was not incest, because marriages to Philip and Herod were the same.
3. Even after she divorced Philip and married Herod, she was still Philip's wife ("not lawful to have your brother's wife" - 16:18).
4. Baptism would not have made this marriage acceptable, for John preached baptism for forgiveness of sins (Mk1:4). He did not offer this option to them.

For further research:

1. Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 18.5.1-4.
2. Hugo McCord, "Justifying Unscriptural Marriages." Gospel Advocate (June 1988), pp.50,51.
3. Jack P. Lewis, Matthew, Part II:12 -15, Sweet Commentaries, Abilene: ACU Press, 1976.

JUSTIFYING UNSCRIPTURAL MARRIAGES

BY
HUGO MCCORD

According to Roman law and according to a recent book, because Antipas and Herodias had legal divorces, they were unmarried. As single people they were free to marry according to the theory of some. But John the Baptist told the king, “It is not lawful for you to have her” (Mt 14:4).

Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, 4 B.C. - A.D. 39) was married to the daughter of King Aretas of Arabia. Herod Philip (tetrarch of northeast Palestine, 4 B.C. - A.D. 34), Antipas’ half-brother, was married to Herodias, the daughter of Antipas’ and Philip’s half-brother Aristobulus.

Antipas fell in love with Herodias and proposed marriage. She agreed but demanded that he “divorce Aretas’ daughter” (ANTIQ. 18,5,1). Then “Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive and was married to Herod [Antipas], her husband’s brother” (ANTIQ. 18,5,4).

When John the Baptist told the king that to have Herodias was unlawful, he was referring to Jewish law. But why did John talk to Antipas about Jewish law?

Antipas’ father, Herod the Great, was of “pure Jewish stock,” wrote his historian, Nicholas of Damascus (cf. *Schaff-Herzog*, V, 244). However, he must have been wrong, for his father, Antipater, was an Idumaeen and his mother, Cypros, was an Arabian.

But among Herod’s seven wives, two were Jewesses, both named Mariamne, so Jewish blood came into the family. Aristobulus, Herod’s son by the first Mariamne, was a half-Jew and so Herodias, his daughter, was one-fourth Jewess. Herod Philip was a half-Jew by the second Mariamne.

Luke called Drusilla, a granddaughter of Aristobulus, a Jewess (Acts 24:24). Thus Antipas must have had some responsibility to Jewish law for John to condemn him.

The author of the book under review theorizes that because the Jewish law allowed divorce and remarriage, then John was condemning incest. Jewish law did allow divorce and remarriage (Deut 24:1-2) and it condemned marriage between those “near of kin” (Lev 18:6).

Antipas was Herodias’ half-uncle, but John did not condemn the two for incest. If so, he would have condemned both of her marriages, for each was to a half-uncle.

What was wrong with the second marriage that was not wrong with the first? What Jewish law had they violated?

Josephus, a Jew, said that Herodias “took upon her to confound the laws of our country.” “The laws of our country” (the Pentateuch) were flaunted by Antipas in two ways.

First, he had coveted his neighbor’s wife and so he broke the 10th commandment: “You shall not covet ... your neighbor’s wife” (Ex 20:17). Second, he had committed adultery and so he broke the seventh commandment (Ex 20:14) and that “with another man’s wife” (Lev 20:10), even his “brother’s wife” (Lev 18:16).

John the Baptist did not accuse Antipas and Herodias of incest, but said, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife” (Mk 6:17). The theory of the book affirms that after Herodias had divorced Philip, she no longer was his wife and therefore Antipas did not commit adultery in marrying a legally divorced woman.

But in God’s sight she was still Philip’s wife. After Antipas and Herodias had married, Herodias was called “Philip’s wife” in Matthew 14:3, Mark 6:17 and Luke 3:19.

In God’s sight even a king was not allowed to marry another “man’s wife” (Gen 20:3). God stigmatized such an act as “sinning against me” (Gen 20:6). And a pagan king agreed with the Lord that people in “a righteous nation” would not stoop to such conduct (Gen 20:4).

Out of good intentions the author of the book has twisted his thinking so as to say John was condemning Antipas and Herodias for incest, of which they were not guilty and to infer that Antipas and Herodias did no wrong in marrying, for he writes that divorcees “do not sin in getting married.”

Some theorists try another route to legitimize unscriptural marriages, saying it is “indeed strange, if Jesus taught that divorced and remarried people were ‘living in adultery’ with a spouse, that the writings of the first few centuries are as silent as the tomb about breaking up marriages before baptism.”

I, too, think it strange that nothing in detail is said about early Christians leaving unscriptural marriages. However, we do have the information that in Corinth (*korinthi-adzo*, to Corinthianize, to practice harlotry) there were people who had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sexual perverts and so on (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Many Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). I find it difficult to believe that they came into the church without quitting their sins, of which adultery was one and that Paul did not teach the same thing that Jesus did, which is that everyone divorcing and remarrying, except for fornication, is an adulterer (Mt 19:9) and adulterers would be “cast into hell” (Mt 5:27-29).

Following the renowned commentator R. C. H. Lenski, some hold that Jesus was not talking about physical adultery, but any violation of the marriage covenant. Because the English translation leaves the impression that the adultery is physical, he says the translation, "he commits adultery" (Mt 19:9), is inadequate.

However, what he says is inadequate is all that the Greek word means. It does not include other violations of the marriage covenant (as sinful as they are) and the English translation true to the Greek does not include them either.

Then these theorists along with Lenski abandon both the Greek and English and find their novel definition of adultery in German, *ehebrechen*, "ruin marriage." The German verb *brechen*, meaning to break, cut or crush, when joined with *Ehe*, marriage, is comprehensive. Anything that breaks or crushes a marriage, adultery or otherwise, ruins a marriage. But Jesus did not speak German and the Greek word He used, unless qualified, has a limited physical meaning, a violation of the marriage bed.

In Jesus' eyes, a person's becoming "one flesh" with a non-spouse is the only reason grave enough to break up a home and start another (1 Cor 6:16; Mt 19:9). Other infractions are grave enough for a separation (1 Cor 7:11), but not for a remarriage. Therefore, there is no validity to appealing to the German word or any other theories refuted above. Romans 7:3 settles the matter forever.

GOSPEL ADVOCATE, June 1988, pp. 50,51.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

BACKGROUND:

A. There are eight different positions currently held within the brotherhood:

1. All of these cannot be right (logical contradiction).
2. Jesus does not give us a “take your choice” option.
3. One of these positions might be a correct understanding of Jesus’ teaching.
4. Our task: what did Jesus mean (not what we would like Him to mean).
5. Simply because there is disagreement does not mean we are unable to uncover the truth.
 - a. Taking your favorite scholar’s word for it is unacceptable in a search for truth.
 - b. Concluding that since reputable scholars disagree we are unable to find the truth is unacceptable.
 - c. “Why” scholars disagree is irrelevant to our search for truth.
 - d. Reputable scholars have always disagreed and will continue to disagree (each one is individually responsible for knowing and obeying the truth).

B. The increasing problem of divorce:

1. United Methodist church - new book, Ritual In A New Day, contains a ceremony for divorce.
2. More and more are getting divorced (nationally, friends, new converts, our families).
3. We are faced with a world that has less respect for the authority of the Bible.

C. A word of caution:

1. We must not let emotion govern our reason.
2. I.e. prisoners do not determine their own sentences; neither do sinners (cf. Prov 13:15).

RELEVANT PASSAGES:

A. Matthew 19:3-12:

1. Pharisee's question intended to entrap Jesus:
 - a. There were several prominent views at the time (cf. Deut 24:1 ff).
 - (1) Rabbi Shammai - "some indecency" means sexual unfaithfulness (Hebrew ERVATH DABAR).
 - (2) Rabbi Hillel - "a thing of indecency" (Hebrew DABAR - means the smallest thing (i.e. burning toast).
 - (3) Rabbi Akiba - "that she find no favor in his eyes" - means he could divorce her if he found one fairer than she (Mishnah, Gittin 9:10).
 - b. Which ever position Jesus takes, they will draw Him into their controversy.
 - (1) If He agrees with Shammai, they will take the view of Hillel (the popular view).
 - (2) If He agrees with Hillel, they will take the view of Shammai (and pit Jesus against Deut 24).
2. Jesus' answer (vv. 4-6):
 - a. God's original plan for marriage has to be taken into consideration.
 - (1) God could have done it other ways.
 - (2) God was telling us of His intentions.
 - b. These two become "one flesh."

- (1) Not just a reference to the sexual relationship (cf. 1 Cor 6:16).
 - (2) Includes same goals and intentions (leave and cleave; “they are no longer two ...).
- c. God is the One who joins them together.
- (1) If God joined them together, then only He can “unjoin” them.
 - (2) Thus Jesus says “Let no man separate.”
 - (a) Many today presume to do this.
 - (b) Only God’s Word can provide the basis for marriage and separation.
3. The Pharisee’s response and objection (19:7):
- a. Deuteronomy 24:1 is the basis of their idea.
 - b. They understood what Jesus said.
 - (1) God intended one man and one woman relationships.
 - (2) Man cannot separate what God has joined.
 - c. They object to what Jesus said.
 - (1) They pose their objection in the form of a question.
 - (2) “If you are right, Jesus, then Moses was wrong.”
 - (a) Moses said: “Give her a certificate and divorce her.”
 - (b) You (Jesus) are thus not in agreement with Moses and God. If man cannot separate, then why did Moses command to separate?
 - (3) Note: Is there a distinction between *apostasiou* and *apolutai*?
 - (a) It is claimed that the first has to do with a legal divorce that, with certificate, allowed one to remarry and;

- (b) That the second *apolusai* has to do with abandonment (i.e., not bothering with a legal written divorce agreement).
 - (c) The evidence in both Biblical and non-Biblical sources show that the words did not carry such distinctions.
- 4. Jesus' answer (19:8-9):
 - a. This was something permitted / commanded (note: no distinction between the two - Mk 10:3-5).
 - (1) It was not God's original intention - the creation proves this. Then why did He allow this?
 - (2) Reason: "hardness of heart."
 - (a) A condition when God's will does not penetrate the heart;
 - (b) Man stubbornly refuses to hear God.
 - b. First key: "from the beginning it has not been this way:"
 - (1) This removes the matter from a discussion of Mosaic law.
 - (2) It places the matter back to the very beginning of time (cf. Mk 10:6).
 - c. Second key: "and I say to you..."
 - (1) Jesus assumes a position of authority.
 - (2) This type of terminology often indicates a difference in the general consensus (cf. Mt 5:22,28,32,34,39,44 - same Greek structure).
 - (3) We no longer listen to Moses (cf. Mt 17:5).
 - (4) Jesus eliminated a lot of things which were a part of the Law of Moses (polygamy, animal sacrifice, etc.).
 - (5) Jesus is the Word of God (Jn 1:1; Heb 1:1-2). What He says is what God wants.

- d. Whosoever.
- (1) Means all those created by God.
 - (2) Cannot mean, as some affirm, Christians only.
 - (a) Matthew 5:21; 11:6; 12:32; 16:25.
 - (b) Matthew 28:18-20 - all that Jesus taught is to be taught to the world.
 - (c) Jesus brought the gospel (Mk 1:14-15) and men will be judged by that gospel (2 Thess 1:7-9).
 - (d) Jesus is discussing the intention of God from the beginning.
 - (e) The Corinthians were previously in violation of the law of Christ before they were in a covenant relationship with Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11).
- e. Divorces his wife (apolusai).
- (1) Same Greek word as in verses 3,7 and 8.
 - (2) Also same word in Matthew 5:31f; Mark 10:2,4,11f; Luke 16:18.
 - (3) Is most often employed to mean “divorce” in the New Testament and is the topic of discussion in this section (19:3-12).
- f. Except for fornication.
- (1) This phrase modifies “divorces his wife.”
 - (2) Jesus is not here including those whose mates are guilty of fornication (porneia) and have been put away because of it.
 - (3) This also provides the only given exception to what was already said about God’s joining and no man separating (19:4-6).
 - (4) Just as fornication does not make a marriage (cf. 1 Cor 6:16), neither does fornication dissolve a marriage. God will

permit the innocent party to divorce his/her mate if they so desire. They are not required to do so.

- (5) It is clear that fornication is the only legitimate and God approved reason for one to divorce another. Remember: This is what the Pharisees were wanting to know in verse 3. They asked: "Can a man divorce for any reason?" Jesus responds: "No. I say the only reason is fornication."

g. And marries another.

- (1) While the Pharisees' question does not specifically ask about remarriage, Jesus either:
 - (a) Gives additional information or
 - (b) Knows this is a part of the question.
- (2) It is clear that the second union is a "marriage" because that is what Jesus calls it.
- (3) The conjunction "and" shows that Jesus is not here concerned about the sin of divorce (cf. 1 Cor 7:11), but with the practice of divorcing and marrying another.

h. Commits adultery.

- (1) All standard Lexicons and Theological Dictionaries define "adultery" generally as "unlawful sexual intercourse with the spouse of another."
- (2) As is true with many words, "adultery" may be used in some contexts in a figurative or symbolic way.
- (3) Is there, in this case, a possibility that a figurative meaning is intended, such as adultery - covenant breaking?
 - (a) There is no compelling evidence to suggest a figurative application (thus the common meaning should be taken). Note: John 8:4.
 - (b) It does not fit with the topic of discussion nor with the other words used in context (marriage, one flesh, fornication, eunuchs). All these point to a literal understanding.

- (c) It does not make sense generally. Note:
- ((1)) If “adultery” is simply breaking a covenant (that all one needs to do is repent and say they are sorry and will not do it again), why does Paul say that the divorced cannot remarry but must remain unmarried or else be reconciled” (1 Cor 7:11)?
 - ((2)) Even the figurative meaning would not fit with many modern applications. When God accused the Israelites of adultery, it was when they left Him and went to the other gods. It was not simply that they had left God. They had united themselves with another husband. Could they say they were sorry they broke the covenant and keep their new gods?
 - ((3)) If Jesus was intending to deal with covenant breaking, why did He not use one of two available words (DIATHEKE or SYNTHEKE)?
 - ((4)) If Jesus was wanting to specify “unlawful sexual intercourse with the spouse of another” what other word could He have used? There is none.
 - ((5)) Note quotes from Jackson, Divorce, p. 14f.

i. The disciples’ response (19:10).

- (1) The disciples understood what Jesus said. There would have been no need for the statement if:
 - (a) Jesus was allowing divorce and remarriage for any cause (Hillel’s position).
 - (b) Jesus was allowing one to repent of breaking a covenant and could remarry (and could seemingly continue this practice forever).
 - (c) Jesus was allowing the guilty party to remarry after repentance, because this would allow one to get out

of a marriage and remarry whether they were innocent or guilty of fornication.

(d) Jesus was referring only to the “abandoning” of the mate and that all one needs to do is make sure they give a legal divorce. Such an act is simple and easily followed.

(2) They use the same word (“cause”) that the Pharisees used in verse 3 (“cause”). This has them saying: “If the cause for divorce a man has against his wife is thus, then”

(3) Their statement indicates they understood a definite rigidity to Jesus’ teaching. “The prospect of being permanently bound to an unhappy marriage is not a pleasant one. The disciples objected that if divorce can be had only for unchastity, would it not be better to refrain from marriage altogether?” (Jack P. Lewis, Matthew, Vol. 2, p. 67.)

j. Jesus’ application (19:11-12).

(1) Not everyone will accept this teaching, nor will everyone comply with this teaching.

(2) Jesus recognizes that His teaching is difficult and somewhat inflexible. He did not say to the disciples, “Well, you have obviously misunderstood me. I am not being all that strict.” They clearly saw that His teaching was extremely strict.

(3) Those who will not accept His teaching are the same who will not hear (cf. Mt 13:9,13) - the non-disciples and the false disciples.

(4) There will be true disciples who will accept and apply His structure on divorce and remarriage.

(5) Accepting Jesus’ teaching may be hard for some. He uses an illustration to prove this point: Three different kinds of eunuchs:

(a) Born eunuch = situation that was not eunuch’s fault (but cannot change).

(b) Made eunuch = suffers because of decision of another (but still cannot change the situation).

- (c) Makes self eunuch = probably referring to doing this figuratively (Josephus says the Law forbade castration, Ant. 4.8.40 [290]). This would be persons who choose to forego marriage for the sake of the kingdom (because God's kingdom was more important than anything else). Or this could have reference to someone who put themselves in a situation (they were the guilty party and were divorced) and, in order to be saved, choose to live as a eunuch from this point forward.
- (6) Point: Jesus is saying that some situations are very hard. His teaching is for those to whom it applies.

AN EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 19:1-12

by Jack P. Lewis

The question of divorce was a live one in Jesus' time (cf. Sir 25:25.26, Josephus, *Ant.* 4.8.23 [253]) as it is in ours. The Herod women had divorced and remarried (Josephus, *Ant* 15.7.10 [259]) and Josephus later in the first century divorced and remarried (Josephus, *Life* 76 [426]). The schools of Shammai and Hillel debated the basis on which divorce could be granted. Each school assumed (erroneously it would seem, for the basic purpose of the law they discussed was to prohibit remarriage to a divorced wife who had in the meantime been married to another man) that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 gave the basis of divorce. The one stressed the phrase "he finds a thing of uncleanness" (*'ervath dabhar*) and concluded that there needed to be a matter of immorality, while the other stressed the word "thing" (*dabhar*) and concluded that he could divorce her for a defect like burning the bread (that is, for the smallest cause). Later Akiba stressed neither of these phrases but the phrase "she finds no favor in his eyes" and permitted divorce when another was found to be more attractive (M. *Gittin* 9:10).

In answer to the Pharisees' question about the permissibility of divorce for any cause (*kata pasan aitian*), Jesus appealed to the original plan of marriage announced in Genesis before the law of Moses was given at Sinai. There was only one man for one woman for life (Gen 1:27; 2:34), giving the verdict, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (cf. 1 Cor 7:10f.). The answer is not far from the sentiment of Malachi 2:16 where the Lord states, "I hate divorce ... So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless."

The Gospels have variation in the wording used by the questioners and answerer. In Matthew the Pharisees speak of Moses "commanding" (*entellesthai*) a bill of divorce and Jesus replying with "allowed" (*epitrepein*) while asserting that it had not been so from the beginning. In Mark 10:3, Jesus asks what Moses commanded (*entellesthai*) and the Pharisees answer with "allowed" (*epitrepein*); (Mk 10:4). Jesus then comes back to speak of "this commandment" (*entole*) to which they had alluded. Whatever the word describing it should be, the regulation was only a concession to man's hardness of heart.

The exegesis of the passage promptly gets lost in English semantics. The concept of "commandment" suggests something that has to be done if God is to be obeyed. For the English reader an optional commandment is a contradiction in concepts; yet the putting away and the giving of the bill of divorce were optional. While the later rabbis demanded divorce of the adulteress (M. *Sota* 6.3) and also denied her to her lover (M. *Sota* 5.1; Yeb. 2:8), most exegetes will grant that Moses did not demand that a divorce and a divorce document be given without conditions. He did not prohibit the man's forgiving the wayward wife (cf. Hos 3:1ff) where another marriage had not taken place. The husband is not forced to deliver her to punishment (cf. Mt 1:19). The law of

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is a law of multiple conditions and when these conditions exist (when the woman has received a divorce, has been given the bill of divorcement and has married another man), then the husband cannot take her back. One can only conclude that *entole* as used by Jesus and “commandment” as now commonly understood are not equivalent in meaning. *Entole* in this passage must mean something like “legislation” rather than “commandment.” The taking back was prohibited as stated by Moses; the divorcing and the giving of the bill of divorce were optional.

Verse 9 is the crucial verse of the passage. The exception clause (though peculiar to Mt 5:32 and 19:9) is not lacking in the better manuscripts. Despite its occurring in two forms in the manuscripts, it cannot be dismissed as a scribal addition. It is a solid part of the text of Matthew. On the other hand, the words “makes her commit adultery” (Wyclif and Tyndale: “letcherie”) [i.e., when she remarries] which are in the KJV but not in the NKJV are poorly attested and are thought to be a scribal addition from Matthew 5:32 where they are authentic. Some texts have a further addition, “and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery,” which is included in the KJV and NKJV, supported by the Majority text, but is thought to be a scribal accommodation of the text from Matthew 5:32. The biblical student who does not settle textual questions may find himself affirming, “Thus says the Lord” when he ought to be acknowledging, “Thus copied a scribe.”

In the passages “except” (*parektos* [Mt 5:32] and *me* [Mt 19:9]) indicate the one exception to the given rule. The keyword for study is *porneia* which the Vulgate rendered *fornicationem* and which came into English with John Wyclif (1382) as “fornycacioun.” The spelling was modified by William Tyndale to “fornication,” and the term has been so rendered in successive English translations, including the KJV, ASV and Moffatt (except for the Geneva Bible [1560] which had “whoredom” here but “fornication” in Mt 5:32). John Wesley in his New Testament and Alexander Campbell in his *Living Oracles* also used “whoredom.” The Twentieth Century New Testament, the RSV and NEB used “unchastity.” Rotherham, the Centenary Translation, Goodspeed, Phillips and Knox have “unfaithfulness,” and the T.E.V. “unfaithful.” The N.I.V. used “marital unfaithfulness,” the N.A.B. “lewd conduct,” and the N.A.S.V. “immorality” (margin: “sexual immorality;” but the text of Mt 5:32 has “unchastity”) and the NKJV has “sexual immorality.” Earlier than these, Norlie and Lamsa had “adultery.”

Thus it can be seen that the twentieth century translations have moved away from the Latin influence which dominated early English translations, but have themselves been vague on what the inclusion of the exceptive word is. It can also be seen that those who discuss the passage often adopt on this point the terminology of translations they otherwise reject.

The Greek lexicon suggests that *porneia* is “prostitution, unchastity, fornication and every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” In intertestamental literature, *porneia* covers harlotry and adultery (*T. Jos.* 3:8), incest (*T. Rub.* 1:6) and unnatural vice (*Sib. Or.*

3:764; 4.33-36) and sodomy (*T. Beni.* 9.1; cf. Jub 16:5, 20:5) and comes to mean sexual intercourse in general without more precise definition (*Ass. Isa* 2:5).

Porneia, a broader term than *moicheia* (“adultery”), refers in this context to extra-marital intercourse on the part of the wife, which in practice is adultery. As Sirach 22:23 says of the unfaithful wife, “she has committed an offense against her husband; ... she has committed adultery through harlotry [*en porneia emoicheusthe*].” Showing the overlap of the terms also is the remark of Hermas (*Mandate* 4:15) who speaks of the wife who remains in her fornication (*porneia*) and of the husband who knows it and lives with her sharing in her adultery (*moicheia*).

Today a culture contaminated with pornography, pedophilia, masturbation, homosexuality and free love — any of which threatens if not destroys a marriage relation — confronts the believer with defining the relation of these activities to *porneia*. Sympathy for victims of a situation is abundant, opinions are available without limit, but clear, explicit statements in passages of scripture which would eliminate doubt are not to be found.

Someone desperate for a support for a position he had already accepted, advanced the idea that “committeth adultery” has a more continuous connotation than “commits adultery” does. Two points make clear the asininity of this contention. First is that the dictionary will show that “committeth” in old English had exactly the same parameters of meaning which “commits” does in current English. To try to make it otherwise is arbitrary. Second are the numerous passages in which verbs ending in “eth” have no continuous connotation at all (e. g. Mt 3:13).

While the better text of Matthew 19:9 prohibits the remarriage (apart from the exception) of one who divorces his wife, that of Mark 10:11 prohibits the remarriage of the woman divorcing her husband and Luke 16:18 of marriage to a divorced woman. Thus, unlike in secular Greek and Roman custom, men and women are placed on the same footing in sex matters. The person entering these relationships “commits adultery” (*moicheuein*) which is prohibited in the Old Testament by one of the commandments (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18) but is also condemned in numerous New Testament passages (Mt 5:27-28; Rom 2:22; 7:3; 13:9; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Thess 4:3; Heb 13:4; Jas 2:11).

Shocked at the rigidity of Jesus’ teaching about remarriage after divorce, the disciples responded that if this is the situation (using *aitia* as the Pharisees had in their question of verse 3), is it not better to remain single than to be bound to a marriage? Jesus answered that the teaching is for those for whom it is suited. Some are born incapable of marriage, some are incapacitated by human surgical procedures and some can refrain for the sake of the kingdom. Most of Christendom has understood Jesus’ statement about those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom to be a figurative statement. The closing statement, “He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” seems to mean that if the teaching (about divorce) is applicable to one’s condition, then he should heed it. Fidelity is to be maintained (Heb 13:4). Marriage is a

life-long fellowship of the partners not even to be transgressed on by the lustful look (Mt 5:27-30).

No single verse covers all aspects of a life situation and Matthew 19:1-12 is no exception. The specifics of the problem of the one sinning with a high hand is not raised, nor is that of the penitent sinner who, tired of his sin, is seeking to come home. Hope for the chiefest (sic) of sinners is suggested by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15,16 and Paul, though issuing a warning, suggests that the Corinthians in the past had been guilty of adultery among other sins (1Cor 6:9-11). Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32).

Putting Away and Divorce

Jack P. Lewis

A recent effort to justify remarriage of divorced people has come to my attention. An author, who insists that familiar Old and New Testament passages are not dealing with divorce but the forcible expulsion or cruel abandonment of wives by husbands, has come to my attention. The author attempts to make a distinction between “send away” and “divorce” in both Old and New Testament vocabulary. According to him, Jesus was prohibiting multiple marriages where there had been no divorce but gave no prohibition of remarriage of those properly divorced.

The author’s first distinction is between *shalach* (“send away”) and *kerithuth* (“divorcement”), which occur in Deuteronomy 24:1,4 for the bill of divorce. He insists that *shalach* is the cruel, harsh expelling without a divorce after which other marriages are contracted. One notices that Abraham sent (*shalach*) Hagar away (Gen 21:14); but it is particularly Malachi 2:16, “For I hate divorce” (*shalach*), that draws the author’s attention. He insists that the translation “divorce” is erroneous and that “send away” (that is, without a divorce) is the proper term for what God hates.

In evaluating this case, one first must ask if the writer of Deuteronomy merely was prohibiting the abandonment of the woman whose virginity is slandered by her husband (Deut 22:29) and of the woman who had been seduced prior to marriage (Deut 22:29). The verb *shalach* occurs in both of these Laws. Would it have been all right to divorce them if the proper papers had been given?

The putting away of women at the time of the return from the Exile is described by a causative form of *yatsa’* (“to cause to go out”; Ezra 10:3,19). The divorced woman is called the *gerushah* (the “expelled,” from *garash*; Lev 21:14; 22:13; Num 30:10; Ezek 44:22) and the abandoned woman is named *‘azubhah* (Isa 62:4). Is it merely the abandoned woman or is it the divorced one who is prohibited to the high priest (Lev 21:14; Ezek 44:22)?

The author’s fallacy is most obvious when one considers *kerithuth* (from *karath*, “to cut off”) which occurs in three divorce settings for the bill of divorce (Deut 24:1,3; Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8). The Lord asks, “Where is your mother’s bill of divorce [*sepher kerithuth*] with which I put her away [*shalach*]?” (Isa 50:1). Again He says, “She saw that for all the adulteries of the faithless one, Israel, I had sent [*shalach*] her away with a decree of divorce [*sepher kerithuth*]” (Jer 3:8).

These two passages make clear that an effort to make a distinction between *shalach* and *kerithuth* with one meaning “abandonment” and the other “divorce” cannot stand. Both terms here refer to the same action.

Since the author struggles with the New Testament are based upon his fallacy with the Old Testament, they are not more successful. He parallels *shalach* of the Old Testament, which he has already misinterpreted, to *apoluo* in the New Testament. However, the Greek Bible does not use *apoluo* in any of the Old Testament passages, as we will see.

The author observes that the King James Version translated *apoluo* as “put away” in all 11 New Testament passages except one — that of Matthew 5:32, which reads “divorce.” He charges that all English thinking has been colored by the flaw in the King James Version, causing all — even the dictionary makers — to think of “divorce” as being the subject of all New Testament passages. The American Standard Version renders Matthew 5:32 as “put away,” which the author likes and he concludes that all of these passages are dealing with abandonment and not with divorce. He sees subsequent marriage after abandonment prohibited but not after *apostasion*, which he defines as “divorce.”

One cannot deny that the King James Version has colored, sometimes erroneously, our thinking; but whether this case is such an instance merits another look. *Apostasion* occurs in the New Testament in only three passages (Mt 5:31; 19:7; Mk 10:4), all of which echo Deuteronomy 24:1,3. The Bauer *Lexicon* edited by Arndt, Gingrich and Danker (p. 97) comments, “The consequent giving up of one’s claims explains the meaning which the word acquires in Jewish circles.”

The Greek Old Testament use *apostellein* (“send away;” Gen 21:14) and *exapostellein* (“send away;” Deut 22:19,29; Mal 2:16) for the *shalach* passages we have already examined. However, the second word, *exapostellein*, is also the verb used in Deuteronomy 24:1,3; Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8 for the dismissal of the woman who has the *biblion apostasiou* (“bill of divorce”), leaving no linguistic basis for a distinction between the cases where the bill is specifically mentioned and cases where it does not. Ezra 10:3 uses *ekballien* (“expel”) and Ezra 10:19 uses *ekpherein* (“bring out”) in describing the post exilic divorces.

The “divorced” woman is described by a passive participle of the verb *ekballein* (“to cast out;” Lev 21:14; 22:13; Num 30:10; Ezek 44:22) and the “abandoned” one is named *Eremos* (“desolate;” Isa 62:4).

The writer’s New Testament case stands or falls on the validity of his asserted definition of *apoluo* as meaning “put away (*apoluo*) his wife without bothering with a written divorce.” He claims,

Apoluo indicated that women were enslaved, put away, with no rights, no recourse; deprived of the basic right of monogamous marriage. *Apostasion* ended marriage and permitted a legal subsequent marriage. The paper makes a difference.

He asserts that the Greek word *apoluo* did not include a writing of divorce for the woman: “She, technically, would still be married.”

Here we have a case of a man’s creating a definition that supports a distinction congenial to his case and then proceeding to chase his own tail by assuming he has established his contention. There is no possible way for him to establish the limited definition of *apoluo* that he is championing. *Apoluo* means “to set free” and is used in other settings than divorce ones. It also means to dismiss a wife and is used in this sense by Dionysius of Halicarnasus 2,25,7 and Diodorus Siculus 12,18, 1 (See 1. H. Marshall, “Divorce,” in Colin Brown, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1, 505-507). The fallacy of the writer we are reviewing is in assuming that *apoluo* in the New Testament cases where the *biblion apostasiou* is mentioned has a different meaning from the eight cases where it is not. Such a distinction will not stand.

Josephus commenting on Deuteronomy 22:13ff used the verb *apopempein* for the dismissal (*Ant.*—4.8.23 [247]); he also uses *apopempein* for the putting away of the slave girl by Pheroras (*Ant.* 16.8.3 [198]), as well as for his own divorce (*life* 426). In discussing Deuteronomy 24:1, he uses *diazeuchthenai* (“to be disjoined;” *Ant.* 4.8.23 [253]). He describes how Salome sent Costobarus a document dissolving (*apoluo*) their marriage (*Ant.* 15.7.10 [259]) and she then is described by the passive participle *dischorizein* (“separated”). This variety should caution against making hard and fast distinctions that are not explicitly mentioned.

Hermas, in the second Christian Century, continues the use of the gospel term *apoluo* (*Mandate* 4.1.6,7) in discussing divorce. It is not conceivable that Hermas, who knows the gospel passage, could, in his command about the immoral wife, “Let him put (*apoluo*) her away,” mean what our author is contending for — the harsh cruel dismissal without a bill of divorce. Smatterers in Hebrew and Greek should not set themselves up to challenge the reliability of all the Greek and Hebrew lexicons, not to mention all rabbinic discussion of a question.

Gospel Advocate, November 6, 1986, p.665,666

1 CORINTHIANS 7 AND REMARRIAGE

By Jack P. Lewis

Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 discusses questions about which the Corinthians had written him. Unfortunately, we do not have their letter and we have to deduce from between the lines what their questions were. Any exchange looked at from only one side is never completely seen.

Paul points out that the rights and obligations of marriage are mutual, not to be denied by either party of a marriage. He prefers that the single not marry, but concedes that marriage for them is preferable over their being tormented with passion (vv. 1-7).

The wife is not to separate from her husband and if she does she has two options - the one is to remain single and the second is to be reconciled to her husband. The husband should not divorce his wife (vv. 10-11).

The Christian married to an unbeliever who is willing to continue the marriage is not to divorce the unbeliever. Arguing from a premise that he and the Corinthians jointly held, Paul asserts that the children of such a marriage are holy; hence, the unbeliever in such a marriage is consecrated through the believer. Paul is not asserting that the marriage saves such a person, but that the marriage is a genuine marriage from which the unbeliever may be brought to salvation (vv. 12-16). If the unbeliever wishes to separate, the brother or sister is not bound, for God has called us to peace. Paul here seems to grant that separation is preferable to continuous fighting with an unbeliever who wants out of the marriage (v. 15).

Paul proceeds to say that he would have people stay in the condition in which they were called to the Christian life - whether married or single (vv. 17-24). He speaks of an impending distress (without defining it) which makes it preferable for the single to remain single. He describes it as an approaching condition of society in which marriages would be disrupted, as would be mourning, rejoicing and commerce (vv. 25-31). In such a time, where the wife or husband has to worry about the welfare of the partner, the single has only his own well being to consider and therefore can devote himself with single-mindedness to the service of God. Though Paul does not elaborate on the conditions, one can see that if a time of persecution came, the married person would have to consider that his death for his faith would leave his wife alone. The single person would have no such burden to entice him to deny the faith. His ties with this world are less.

Paul's statements in verses 36-38 will always be perplexing. The translators of the KJV seem to have envisioned the section as dealing with a father's treatment of his daughter. The ASV made this interpretation clear in italics. However, neither translation gave us a clear insight into what "he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin" must

mean. The twentieth century translations tend to interpret the passage as discussing a man and the woman he is in love with rather than father and daughter. Leaving our perplexities aside, though Paul prefers the single state, he grants that the man who marries the woman does well.

Finally, Paul affirms that marriage is for life, a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives; but if he is dead, she can marry whomever she wishes “only in the Lord.” Even here Paul would prefer that she remain unmarried (vv. 39-40).

The things that Paul did not say bother us now more than the things that he did say. In particular, we puzzle over “the brother or sister is not bound” (v. 15). It is easy to understand that Paul is saying they are not bound to continue in a marriage with an unbeliever when the unbeliever is not willing to go on. But the question we want to ask is, “What then?”

Paul used the Greek verb *dedoulotai* (v. 15) which verb occurs in eight New Testament passages: Egyptians enslaved the Israelites (Acts 7:6); Christians in conversion become slaves of righteousness (Rom 6:18); they become slaves of God (Rom 6:22); Paul made himself a slave of all (1 Cor 9:19); before conversion Christians were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe (Gal 4:3); older women are not to be slaves to drink (Titus 2:3); and troublemakers in the church are slaves of corruption (2 Pet 2:19). While these cases give insight into the meaning of *douloun* in the New Testament, they do not make any contribution to our question, “What next after the divorce?”

1 Corinthians 7:15 came into English with John Wyclif in the form: “For whi the brother or sistir is not suget to seruage in sichc”; and into printed English with William Tyndale as “a brother or sister is not in subjection to soche.” With the Geneva Bible it became “in subjection in suche things”; in the Bishops’ Bible as “is not made subject to such things”; and in the Rheims as “is not subject to servitude in such.” With the KJV (and later ASV) it became “is not under bondage in such cases”; the Smith-Goodspeed had, “In such cases the brother or sister is not a slave”; and then with the RSV it became, “in such a case the brother or sister is not bound.” The twentieth century translations have not made essential improvements: NASV, NAB, NKJV read: “not under bondage in such cases”; the NIV: “not bound in such circumstances”; the T.E.V.: “in such cases the Christian partner ... is free to act”; and Taylor: “the Christian ... should not insist that the other stay.” All of these make clear that the Christian is a free person; none of them makes any contribution to the question, “What next?”

With these obscurities, some say that the person divorced by the unbeliever is free to marry someone else as 80 percent of the divorcees for whatever reason in the U.S. now do in the first three years after divorce. Others say, “not so.” In my opinion there is a quite simple reason for our translations not making the matter clear, as well as for our inability to be able to convince each other of our respective positions. We are asking the passage a question that Paul was not discussing! As a general rule (if not a comprehensive one) when one asks a biblical passage a question that the writer was

not answering, he obtains from it the answer he has either consciously or unconsciously accepted on some other basis. He merely uses the passage to support a position he already occupies. It confirms him in his belief; but he cannot convince others with it.

The theologians who went before us taught us that biblical authority is found in direct command (or prohibition), approved example and necessary inference. Those who resort to logic on 1 Corinthians 7:15 wish to argue that “is not bound” must mean “is free to marry someone else.” Their logic is an inference, but not a necessary one. The divorcee has three options – to remain single, to be reconciled to the divorced one or to be married to someone else. The third option is not a necessary inference from the passage.

For these reasons, it would seem to me that 1 Corinthians 7:15 is no reason to supplement the Gospels with their “except fornication” (Mt 5:32; 19:9) with an additional cause for remarriage – “previous marriage to an unbeliever” who wanted out of the marriage.

HARDING GRADUATE SCHOOL OF RELIGION BULLETIN,
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Does Matthew 19:9 Apply To Non-Christians?

Basil Overton

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (Mt 19:9).

Some Observations

1. Society is in a deplorable plight because there is so much divorce and remarriage. The doctrine that the marriage law stated by Jesus in Matthew 19:9 applies only to Christians is not the way to get society out of its deplorable plight, but it is a way to plunge people deeper and deeper into troubles.
2. Jesus made it clear that God’s law for marriage was given at the beginning when he created Adam and Eve. (Mt 19:4,5.) Marriage and God’s laws regarding this holy relationship existed long before the church was established. Jesus said that exceptions were made by Moses regarding putting away wives, “but from the beginning it was not so.” (Mt 19:8.)

It is evident that what Moses allowed or suffered regarding putting away wives was not according to God’s arrangement which was “from the beginning.” This means that before the law of Moses was given God had laws regarding marriage. This is why Joseph, before the law of Moses was given, expressed horror over yielding to the enticements of his heathen master’s wife and said to her, “There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9.) Does anyone think Joseph’s master’s wife would not have been sinning had Joseph yielded to her? She was Potiphar’s wife! Evidently Joseph recognized that Potiphar and his wife lived in the estate of marriage which God ordained in the beginning.

Paul stated clearly that the Gentiles who were not under the law of Moses, knew God and did not live up to their covenant (sic) with God. (Rom 1.) They became so rebellious and disobedient that God gave them up. Paul stated this three times in Romans 1. He said they became very wicked because they did not live by God’s standard for marriage and sexual activity. They were guilty before God because they did not live up to God’s standard of morality. They were responsible for their treatment of God’s standard of morality and his standard for marriage even though they were not under the law of Moses, otherwise, there would be no point to what Paul wrote about their sins in Romans 1.

3. If those who are not Christians are not under the law stated in Matthew 19:9, what law of God concerning marriage are they under? If they are not under any God-given law concerning marriage, the violation of what law made them fornicators and adulterers before they became Christians? (1 Cor 6:9-11).
4. Obviously, to say God's law of marriage as stated in Matthew 19:9 does not apply to those who are not Christians, tends to make worse the already deplorable complications and problems of divorces and remarriages. If this doctrine is Christian doctrine it would follow that Christian teaching encourages divorce and remarriage among non-Christians instead of curbing such! If this doctrine were true it would mean that the sinless Saviour of all men gave sanction to unlimited divorcing and remarrying among those he came to save as though they had not offended the holy God!
5. If what is stated in Matthew 19:9 does not apply to non-Christians, a Christian would not be right in telling a non-Christian man who is about to put away his faithful non-Christian wife and marry again that he should not do such. Instead, the Christian could tell such a man that it would be all right for him to put away his wife and marry again. In doing this Christians would get the reputation of encouraging the breaking up of homes! Imagine the reputation the church would gain by its telling non-Christian couples it is all right for them to divorce and remarry as many times as they please.

If what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9 does not apply to non-Christians, it follows that a Christian counselor could scripturally advise non-Christian married couples to break up their homes if they desired to do so.

If Matthew 19:9 applies to Christians only, why would not Hebrews 13:4 apply to Christians only? In that text the holy writer said, "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Other Passages

1. If Matthew 19:9 does not apply to non-Christians, what about Matthew 5:28 where it is recorded that Jesus said, "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart"?

By what rule does one say that Matthew 19:9 does not apply to non-Christians, but Matthew 5:28 does apply to non-Christians? If Matthew 5:28 does not apply to non-Christians, a Christian could not truthfully tell a non-Christian man he was doing wrong in looking on a woman with lust in his heart!

Would it tend to encourage a man to become a Christian to tell him that while he is not a Christian he can lust after women without violating God's law, but if he

becomes a Christian he will be guilty of committing adultery in his heart by lusting after women?

2. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever will deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Mt 10:32-33.) Does this passage apply to non-Christians? If it does not, how could a Christian convince a non-Christian of how God is displeased with him when he denies Christ? Should a Christian teach a non-Christian that for a non-Christian to deny Christ is of no concern to the Almighty God and of no consequence to the non-Christian?

Not The Solution

Teaching that the law concerning marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:9 applies only to Christians adds impetus to a rapidly decaying society that seethes in social and moral corruption. The social and economic havoc and hardships brought on by divorce and remarriage are within themselves abundantly sufficient reasons for our doing all we can to stop this sort of deterioration.

The heartache, the suffering of children who are victims of broken homes and all the other bad by-products of divorce and remarriage are enough for us to do all we can to bring people to the consciousness that they are violating the laws of the holy and pure God who is our Creator and that he is terribly offended by their ignoring of his holy will concerning marriage as well as all other matters.

THE WORLD EVANGELIST, Date Unknown

THE TWO SONS

MATTHEW 21:28-32

LESSONS:

1. GOD CALLS US ALL.

- A. We have all been given equal opportunity to answer our Father's call.
- B. Equal opportunity means equal responsibility.
- C. Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

2. SOME WANT THE BENEFITS FOR FREE.

- A. Some answer "yes" to God's call, but never enter into the vineyard.
- B. Galatians 6:7-10; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

3. THE WORST SIN: SAYING YOU HAVE NO SIN (or acting like you do not).

- A. Some act as if they do not need to enter the Lord's vineyard of work.
- B. 1 John 1:7-10; Matthew 7:21-23.
- C. Romans 8:13,24.

4. THE WORST OF SINNERS MAY GET IN BEFORE US.

- A. Although the one son first said "no" he later decided he needed to go.
- B. God rewards those who actually work in His vineyard!

THE WICKED VINE GROWERS MATTHEW 21:33-46

This is the second parable in a series that Jesus speaks to the chief priests and elders. These parables indict them for their stubborn rejection of the Christ.

LAND OWNER = GOD

VINE-GROWERS = JEWISH PEOPLE

SERVANTS = PROPHETS

SON = JESUS

LESSONS:

1. God has given us everything needed for a fruitful vineyard.
2. God's people have been entrusted with the care of His vineyard.
3. God has "withdrawn" to see what His people will do with His vineyard.
4. Jesus was the crowning effort to reach man.
5. If we do not build our lives on the foundation stone, then we are without hope.
6. Truth does not offend honest hearts.

THE WEDDING FEAST

MATTHEW 22:1-14

This is the third parable in a series that indicted the chief priests and elders for their foolish rejection of God's plan.

LESSONS:

1. Many do not see the significance of the one wedding feast.
2. God's many invitations makes those who reject without excuse.
3. Many offer feeble excuses for not responding to God's call.
4. The invitation was extended to all who would come, not just to the elite.
5. Some respond to the invitation of God wanting the benefits, but are not willing to wear the clothes of righteousness.
6. Outside of God's Kingdom is darkness.
7. Many are called, but few are chosen.

"...and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

Matthew 25:33-34

WOE TO YOU!

WARNINGS OF JESUS IN MATTHEW 23

JESUS OPENLY CRITICIZES THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES BECAUSE THEY EXERCISED AUTHORITY IN AREAS WHERE THEY HAD NONE:

1. AUTHORITY TO CONTROL WHO ENTERS THE KINGDOM (23:13).
2. AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTERING THE KINGDOM (23:15).
3. AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF THE TONGUE (23:16-22).
4. AUTHORITY IN DETERMINING WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT IMPORTANT IN GOD'S LAWS (23:23-24).
5. AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE WHAT IS CLEAN AND UNCLEAN (23:25-26).
6. AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHTEOUS (23:27-28).
7. AUTHORITY TO LEAD (BASED UPON THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH THE PROPHETS).

“YOU SERPENTS, YOU BROOD OF VIPERS,
HOW SHALL YOU ESCAPE THE
SENTENCE OF HELL?”
MATTHEW 23:33

MATTHEW 24

A Study in Biblical Prophecy

THIS CHAPTER IS USED TO SUPPORT
THE FOLLOWING DOCTRINES:

1. That the second coming of Christ was actually the destruction of Jerusalem and there will be no future comings;
2. That everything in the New Testament (including Revelation) that speaks of the coming of Christ is actually speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
3. That the coming of Jesus will be marked by numerous signs mentioned in this chapter:
 - a. Wars and rumors of wars (v. 6).
 - b. Nation against nation (v. 7).
 - c. Famines (v. 7).
 - d. Earthquakes (v. 7).
 - e. Many will fall away (v. 10).
 - f. False prophets will arise (v. 11).
 - g. Lawlessness will be increased (v. 12).
 - h. People's love will grow cold (v. 12).

BACKGROUND

1. The disciples were showing the beautiful temple buildings to Jesus (v. 1).

Josephus said that the temple was:

“the most marvelous edifice which we have ever seen or heard of, whether we consider its structure, its magnitude, the richness of its every detail or the reputation of its High Places” (*War*, 6.4.8).

“The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could either astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up then it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clouded mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purist white (*War*, 5.5.6 [222ff]).

2. Jesus responds that these beautiful buildings will be torn down (v. 2).
3. The disciples connected Jesus' words with future events related to the Messianic kingdom. It prompted them to ask three questions:
 - a. When will these things be,
 - b. What will be the sign of your coming and
 - c. (What will be the sign) of the end of the age?
4. Jesus immediately begins to give the answer to the first and second questions, which both refer to the same event - the destruction of Jerusalem. He says two things about this great event:
 - a. It will be a very difficult time and
 - b. It will be easy to be “misled” (vv. 4,5,11,24).
5. Jesus teaches that the “rumors of wars,” etc. will not be the “end” (v. 6). These are merely the beginning (v. 8). The “end” will come in verse 14, but only after the gospel is preached in the whole world.

This “end” is not the end of the world because:

- a. He continues on from there and discusses the destruction of Jerusalem and warns them to flee.
 - b. He discusses the tribulation that will come “after” those days (v. 29).
6. Jesus tells them of a “sign” that will warn them of the coming destruction (v. 15).
 7. All of this Information should prove valuable to the lives of Jesus' followers for, if heeded, it would save their lives (cf. v. 25).

Note: Josephus, *War*, 6.4.6ff [256-266]; 6.5.1ff [271-272].

Josephus notes: “of those who perished during the siege, from first to last, to one million one hundred thousand” 6.9.3 [420].

8. In verse 29 Jesus mentions what will occur “immediately after the tribulation of those days” using apocalyptic language to indicate the importance of these events:

Note Biblical apocalyptic language:

- a. Sun darkened -

- (1) Fall of Babylon (Isa 13:10).
- (2) Distress of Egypt (Ezek 32:7).
- (3) Day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28f = Acts 2:20).

- b. Stars falling -

- (1) The fall of Edom (Isa 34:4).

- c. Coming on the clouds -

Typical apocalyptic phrase referring to the clouds coming in judgment (Isa 19:1; Lam 2:1; Ezek 30:10).

9. Thus the entire chapter can be divided up accordingly:
 - a. Verses 1-35 - the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - b. Verses 36-51 - the second coming of Christ.

TWO OTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO SUPPORT THIS DIVISION:

1. Everything up until verse 36 has a sign (vv. 15,27,30) whereas the second coming has no sign (vv. 36,42,44,50).
2. The use of the demonstrative pronouns “those days” - “these things” versus “that day.”

THE TEN MAIDENS

MATTHEW 25:1-13

LESSONS:

1. MANY KNOW THE RIGHT THINGS TO DO.
2. ALL MUST BE VIGILANT.
3. WE MUST BE CONCERNED WITH PREPARING OURSELVES.
4. MANY WILL COME UP EMPTY.
5. THE DELAY OF THE BRIDEGROOM WILL CATCH MANY UNPREPARED .

“BE ON THE ALERT THEN,
FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW THE DAY NOR
THE HOUR.”

Matthew 25:13; CF. 24:42,44

PURPOSES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

BACKWARD LOOK

In remembrance of what Christ did.

INWARD LOOK

Remembering our sins.

UPWARD LOOK

Thanking God for blessings.

FORWARD LOOK

To Christ's second coming.

The Reckoning of Passover	
GALILEAN METHOD Synoptic Reckoning used by Jesus, His disciples and Pharisees	JUDEAN METHOD John's Reckoning used by Sadducees
THURSDAY	
Midnight	
Sunrise	
Nisan 14 3-5 p.m. Slaying of Passover Lamb	
Sunset	
Last Supper Jesus arrested	Nisan 14
FRIDAY	
Midnight	
Sunrise	
Nisan 15 6 a.m. Jesus before Pilate 9 a.m. Crucifixion 12-3 p.m. Darkness 3 p.m. Death of Jesus Burial of Jesus	3-5 p.m. Slaying of Passover Lamb
Sunset	
	Nisan 15
SATURDAY	
Midnight	
This presentation is a matter of debate, Anni Jaubert, for example, has offered a Tuesday Passover for Jesus and His disciples and a Friday crucifixion on the official Passover, in agreement with the Book of Jubilees, in which the Passover was always celebrated on Thursday.	
Adapted from Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Part IV: The Day of Christ's Crucifixion," <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> , vol. 131, no. 523 (July-September 1954), pp. 241-64. Adapted by permission.	

QUESTION SHEETS

(To be completed prior to class discussion)

QUESTION SHEET #1
(Read Matthew 1-2)

1. Whose genealogy is given in chapter 1?
2. Find the names of three women in this genealogy.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. Through whom does this genealogy go, Mary or Joseph?
4. The genealogy is divided into three 14 generation sections. Name them.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
5. What was the relationship of Mary to Joseph when she became pregnant?
6. What does the Scripture say about Joseph's spirituality?
7. What did Joseph want to do with Mary? Why?
8. What made him decide not to do this?
9. What does the angel tell Joseph to name the child?
10. What does this name mean?
11. All of this fulfills what prophecy?

12. Who was king when Jesus was born?
13. Who are the “magi?” (See Bible footnote or Bible dictionary.)
14. What was the reason the magi came to worship Jesus?
15. What Old Testament passage predicted Jesus’ birth to be in Bethlehem?
16. What did Herod ask the magi to do?
17. What three things did the magi do when they found Jesus?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
18. What made them go home another way?
19. What did the angel tell Joseph to do? Why?
20. How long did they stay in this place?
21. What did Herod do when he saw he had been tricked?
22. What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled here?
23. What is this prophecy applied to?
24. Who replaced Herod?
25. What city did Joseph finally reside in?

QUESTION SHEET #2
(Read Matthew 3-4)

1. What was it that John the Baptist preached?

2. Name three things that describe John the Baptist.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

3. What was John's response to the Pharisees and Sadducees?

What does he tell them to "bring forth"?

4. What happens to the "tree" that does not bear fruit?

5. What type of baptism will the one have who is coming after John?

6. Why did John not want to baptize Jesus?

What was Jesus' response?

7. Identify all three persons of the Godhead in the baptism of Jesus

8. How long did Jesus fast in the wilderness?

9. Identify all three temptations and Jesus' response to them.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
10. From what book does Jesus quote after each temptation?
11. What message did Jesus preach while in Capernaum?
12. What two men did Jesus call first to be His disciples?
 - a.
 - b.
13. Who are the next two?
 - a.
 - b.
14. What three things did Jesus do as He was "going about" in Galilee?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
15. Name the diseases mentioned in Matthew that Jesus healed.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

QUESTION SHEET #3
(Read Matthew 5:1-6:15)

1. Be able to complete a given part of a beatitude (i.e. I may give you the first part - "Blessed are the poor in spirit" and want you to complete it or I may give you the second part - "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" and want you to give me the first part).
2. What two things does Jesus say "you are..."
 - a.
 - b.
3. What did Jesus come to do to the Law?
4. Who, in the context of the Law, will be called least or greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
5. What quality must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees?
6. What does Jesus say about:
 - a. Being angry?
 - b. Saying, "Raca"?
 - c. Saying, "You fool"?
7. What instruction is given to one presenting an offering?
8. What does Jesus say in response to the teaching, "You shall not commit adultery"?

9. What is the point of Jesus' illustration of plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand?
10. What is the reason Jesus gives for a scriptural divorce?
11. Rather than make an oath, what does Jesus say we should do?
12. What should we do to the one who slaps us on the "right cheek"?
13. What attitude should we have towards our enemies? Our persecutors?
14. What does God bring to both the good and bad?
15. What happens if we practice our righteousness before men?
16. How should we give?
17. How are we to pray? (Be complete! Give several answers.)

18. What will happen if we forgive men their trespasses?

QUESTION SHEET #4
(Read Matthew 6:16-7:29)

1. How should we not fast? How should we fast?
2. Why should we not lay up treasures on the earth?
3. Complete: "For where your treasure is _____."
4. What does "mammon" mean?
5. What are some reasons Jesus gives for one to not be anxious?
6. Rather than being anxious, what should we seek for?
7. What does Jesus say each day has of its own?
8. What point does Jesus make about the way we judge?
9. What should one do before he attempts to judge his brother?
10. What are we not to give to dogs?

Throw before swine?

11. Complete:
- “Ask ` _____.”
- “Seek _____.”
- “Knock _____.”
12. What two illustrations of a father giving to a son does Jesus use?
- a.
- b.
13. What point does He make from this?
14. What does Jesus say “is the Law and the Prophets”?
15. Describe the two paths and gates
- a.
- b.
16. How do false prophets come to people?
17. How will we know a false prophet?
18. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

19. What will many say to Jesus on “that day?” (Be complete: three things.)
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
20. What will Jesus say to them? (Be complete.)
21. Who is the wise man?
22. Who is the foolish man?
23. What response did Jesus get from these words?

QUESTION SHEET #5
(Read Matthew 8-9)

1. What did the leper say to Jesus?
2. What two things was the cleansed leper to do?
 - a.
 - b.
3. Why did the centurion not want Jesus to come under his roof?
4. What response did Jesus have to this statement?
5. What does Jesus say will happen to those of the east?

What about the “sons of the kingdom”?

6. What relative of Peter did Jesus heal?
7. When Jesus healed them all it fulfilled what prophecy?
8. What two men wanted to follow Jesus? With what response?
9. What did Jesus do that caused the disciples to marvel? What did they say?
10. Where did Jesus cast the Gadarene demoniacs? With what response?

11. What response did Jesus get from the scribes when Jesus told the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven"?
12. What authority did Jesus say He had while on earth?
13. Who is the next disciple Jesus calls? What was his occupation?
14. Be able to name all the disciples to this point.
15. What did Jesus do that provoked a question from the Pharisees?
16. What response did Jesus give? What did He tell them to go and learn?
17. Why did Jesus' disciples not fast?
18. What did Jesus say that caused the crowd to laugh?
19. What did the blind men do that Jesus asked them not to?
20. What does Jesus say is plentiful? What is the problem? What should we do?

QUESTION SHEET #6
(Read Matthew 10-11)

1. In what three areas did Jesus give His disciples authority?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. Know the names of the twelve apostles.
3. Where were these men instructed not to go?
4. What were they to do when a city did not receive them?
5. Be shrewd as _____ and _____ as _____.
6. Why should the disciples not be anxious about what they should say when they are delivered up?
7. Who is it that will be saved?
8. Whom are we instructed not to fear? Whom are we to fear?
9. What will happen to the one who confesses Jesus? Denies Him?
10. Who are the ones Jesus says "is not worthy of me?"
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

11. What did John send his disciples to ask of Jesus?
12. What did Jesus tell them to tell John?
13. What Old Testament prophecy was given concerning John?
14. Whom does Jesus say that John was?
15. What did the people say concerning John?

The Son of Man?

16. Why did Jesus reproach several cities?
17. It will be more tolerable for the land of _____ than for _____.
18. What did Jesus praise God for?
19. Who knows the father? (Be complete.)
20. Whom does Jesus call to come to him? What will He give them?
21. What does Jesus want us to take upon ourselves?
22. "For My yoke is _____ and My load is _____."

QUESTION SHEET #7
(Read Matthew 12-13)

1. What were the disciples doing that the Pharisees declared unlawful?
2. What illustration does Jesus give in response?
3. What phrase did the Pharisees not understand?
4. For the Son of Man is _____ of the _____.
5. What question was brought up in regard to the man with the withered hand?
With what response?
6. After Jesus healed this man what did the Pharisees counsel together to do?
7. What passage is given to explain the purpose of the “Messianic Secret”?

How does this passage explain the reason Jesus did not want them to make Him known?

8. What response did Jesus get when He healed the demon-possessed man:
From the multitudes?

From the Pharisees?

9. Identify three points that Jesus gives to disprove the Pharisees argument.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

10. What sin will not be forgiven?
11. What is it that will condemn one or justify one?
12. What point does Jesus make from Jonah?
13. Why will Nineveh condemn this generation?
14. Know the teaching about the unclean spirit.
15. What response did Jesus have when his mother and brothers came?
16. Know the parable of the sower and its interpretation.
17. Why did Jesus speak in parables?
18. Know the parable of the tares and its interpretation.
19. Identify the five parables that begin with "The kingdom of heaven is like

 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

20. What questions did Jesus' home town ask concerning Him? What attitude did they have toward Jesus?

What did Jesus say in response to their attitude?

QUESTION SHEET #8
(Read Matthew 14-16)

1. Why did Herod think that Jesus was John the Baptist risen?
2. What had Herod done to John? Why? Be able to explain what happened.
3. From what did Jesus feed the 5,000?
4. About what time of the morning did Jesus walk on water?
5. What did Peter say after hearing that it was Jesus?
6. How did the disciples respond when Jesus got into the boat?
7. How were Jesus' disciples transgressing the tradition of the elders?
8. How did Jesus respond to this charge?
9. What was it that the Jews were doing?
10. What did Jesus accuse them of teaching as doctrine?
11. What defiles a man, according to Jesus? Explain. (Read interpretation given.)
12. What shall be rooted up?
13. Know the incident involving the Canaanite woman.

14. In 15:30 it mentions that Jesus healed the multitudes. Using a Bible dictionary or notes, find at least five other times Jesus healed a multitude of the sick.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
15. What did Jesus have to feed the 4,000?
16. From where did the Pharisees and Sadducees want a sign?
17. How did Jesus respond to this request?
18. What did the disciples think Jesus meant when He spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? What did Jesus mean?
19. Who did people think the Son of Man was?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
20. Who did Peter think He was?
21. From the time they realized He was the Christ, Jesus began showing them something. What was it?

22. What response did Peter have to these words?
23. What must one do who wishes to come after Christ?
24. What will happen before some of these taste death?

QUESTION SHEET #9
(Read Matthew 17-19)

1. What three did Jesus take with Him on the mount?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. Know all that happened on the mountain.
3. What did Jesus tell them as they were coming down the mountain?
4. Whom does Jesus say was the coming Elijah?
5. Read Mark's account of the healing of the man's son (Mk 9:14-28).
6. For what did Jesus tell Peter to go fishing? What was the purpose of this?
7. What must one become like to enter the kingdom of heaven?
8. What is the answer to the question: "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
9. What does Jesus say is inevitable in its coming?
10. What do the little ones have in heaven?
11. What is the three-fold action one is to take with a sinning brother?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
12. How often did Peter think he should forgive? Jesus' response?

13. Know the parable Jesus gives to teach forgiveness.
14. What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus concerning divorce?
15. What was the reason Moses allowed divorce?
16. Know what Jesus teaches in verse 9.
17. What is the disciples' response to this statement?
18. What does Jesus teach about the eunuchs?
19. What did the young man need to do to become "complete"?
20. What does Jesus say is hard?
21. What is the response Jesus gives to the disciples statement: "Then who can be saved?"
22. What reward does Jesus say will await the disciples?
23. When does He say this will happen?
24. What two things will those who have left "houses, brothers, etc." receive?

QUESTION SHEET #10
(Read Matthew 20-22)

1. Know the parable of the landowner.
2. What did Jesus say was about to happen in Jerusalem?
3. What request did James and John's mother make? What was Jesus' response?
4. How, according to Jesus, does one become great?
5. Why did the Son of man come? (Be complete.)
6. What prophecy from Isaiah 62:11 is fulfilled here?
7. What does "Hosanna" mean?
8. What did Jesus do in the temple? Why?
9. What lessons about faith and prayer were taught by the fig tree?
10. How did Jesus trap the chief priests and elders?
11. Know the parable of the two sons.
12. What application does Jesus make of this parable?
13. Know the parable of the landowner's son.
14. Know the parable of the wedding feast.
15. What question did the Pharisees and Herodians team together on in order to trap Jesus?

16. How did Jesus answer?
17. What law do the Sadducees refer to in order that they might show the fallacy of the resurrection?

Know their story and Jesus' answer.

18. What does Jesus say is the "great commandment"?
19. What was the answer the Pharisees gave to Jesus' question about whose Son the Christ is?

What does Jesus say that dumbfounded them?

What was the permanent result of this exchange?

QUESTION SHEET #11
(Read Matthew 23-24)

1. What three titles does Jesus say one should not wear?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. Familiarize yourself with the woes.
3. What does Jesus accuse the Pharisees of neglecting?
4. What does Jesus accuse them of cleaning? Of failing to clean?
5. What things are going to happen to the servants Jesus will send?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
6. What happened to Zechariah, according to Jesus?.
7. What does Jesus say will happen to the temple?
8. What three questions do the disciples ask Jesus?
9. What will famines and earthquakes be signs for?
10. What will lawlessness cause?

11. Whom does Jesus say will be saved?
12. What is the “abomination of desolation?” (See Lk 21:20.)
13. What are the people to do when they see this abomination?
14. Whom does Jesus say will arise?

What will they show?

15. What should they learn from the parable of the fig tree?
16. Jesus says that no one, except the Father, will know what?
17. Why should we be on the alert?
18. When does Jesus say the Son of man is coming?
19. What does the faithful and sensible slave do?
20. What does the foolish slave say and do?

With what result?

QUESTION SHEET #12
(Read Matthew 25-26)

1. Know the parable of the ten virgins.
2. Know the parable of the talents.
3. What will happen when the Son of man comes in His glory?
4. What will He do to the sheep and goats?

What will He say to the faithful (the sheep)?

5. What is it the faithful did while on earth?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
6. Where will the unfaithful go? The faithful?
7. What was the name of the high priest?
8. How were they plotting to get Jesus?
9. What action made the disciples indignant?

How did Jesus respond to their attitude?

10. How much did Judas receive for betraying Jesus?
11. It would have been better that what had happened to Judas?
12. What does Jesus call the bread? The fruit of the vine?
13. What prophecy describes what the sheep will do when Jesus is captured?
14. What confessions of loyalty does Peter make? (Be complete.)
15. What did Jesus pray three times?
16. What was the sign that Judas was to give?
17. Who cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest?

What was the slave's name? (See other Gospels for answers.)

18. Why does Jesus not need the swords of His men? What power could He call upon if desired?
19. Where was the first place they took Jesus?
20. What caused the high priest to tear his robe?
21. Know the account of Peter's denial.

QUESTION SHEET #13
(Read Matthew 27-28)

1. Where was the second place they took Jesus?
2. How did Judas respond when he saw that Jesus was betrayed?
3. What Scripture was fulfilled here concerning Judas?
4. What did Pilate's wife say to him concerning Jesus?
5. What did the people tell Pilate they wanted done with Jesus?
6. What did Pilate do to absolve himself of any guilt?

How did the people respond to this action?

7. Who was pressed into service to bear the cross of Jesus?
8. What does "Golgotha" mean?
9. What sign was put above Jesus' head?
10. What did those who passed by want Jesus to do?
11. How long did darkness fall over the land?
12. What did Jesus cry out that confused the listeners?
13. What happened to the veil of the temple?

14. What did Joseph of Arimathea do? (Be complete.)
15. What did the chief priests get Pilate to agree to do?
16. Describe the scene the two Mary's found at the tomb.
17. What did the angel say to them? What did he tell them to do?
18. Whom did they see on their way to the apostles?
19. What did the chief priests do with a large sum of money?
20. What mixed response did Jesus get from the disciples when they saw Him for the first time?
21. What does Jesus say was given to Him?
22. What does He command them to do?
23. What are they to teach?

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