

*The Gospel of*  
**Matthew**

**Part One: Chapters 1-10**



**The Forum Terrace Church of Christ**  
**Adult Bible Class Sunday Moring Fall Quarter 2022**

A Workbook By Daniel R. Vess



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# The Introduction to Matthew

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The Gospel of Matthew was the most often quoted book of the New Testament by early Christian writers. It was also likely to have been the most read Gospel among the four. Today, it remains widely read and quoted.

## Authorship

The early Christian writers never wavered in their acceptance of the Gospel of Matthew within the New Testament canon as the inspired writing of the apostle. Many early Christian writers attest to Matthew as the author: Ignatius (bishop of Antioch), Papias (the second-century bishop of Hierapolis), Irenaeus (the bishop of Lyons), Origen (third century), and Eusebius (fourth century). In addition to these writers The Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas also support the authorship of the first Gospel to Matthew. Most early manuscripts have the following heading: "Gospel according to Matthew". Papias (ca 65 - 150 AD) writes: "Matthew has written these words..."

## Matthew, the Man

Matthew is called "*Levi, the tax-gatherer*" in the Gospel of Luke and in the Gospel of Mark he is referred to as "*Levi, the son of Alphaeus*". His name means "gift of the Lord." Some believe this was a name conferred upon him by Jesus.

Jesus called to be one of the twelve apostles (Mt 10:2-3) while he was sitting at his table collecting taxes. This would have most likely have been near Capernaum. He immediately left all to follow Christ (Luke 5:27-28). This would have been a great sacrifice as a publican or tax-gatherer he would have made good money. However, it was at the expense of working for the Romans and being seen by fellow Jews as a collaborator with the enemy: Rome. This made Matthew lower in Jewish society than that of a Gentile. However, Jesus accepted him and Matthew hosted a dinner for all his friends and colleagues to meet him (9:9; Luke 5:29).

Being an apostle of the Lord would have given Matthew an opportunity to witness many of the things from the Ministry of Christ first hand. He would not have to rely on second hand accounts like Mark or Luke. As a publican he would have the skills to keep records concerning Jesus and become a journalist of the group as he traveled with Jesus.

After the resurrection there is no other mention of him in the New Testament. "Tradition holds that he preached the gospel for eight years throughout Judea and then traveled to Persia, Parthia, and Ethiopia, where he died as a martyr in about AD 62" (Osborne xiv).

## Date of Writing

Although it is popular today for some to claim that Mark's Gospel was written first, Clement of Alexandria wrote "the gospels containing the genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were written first" (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 14). Irenaeus, a bishop of Lyons (cs. 130-200 AD): "Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome" (Against Heresies 3.1.1). This suggests a date of 61 AD. Eusebius suggests a date of about AD 41. The weight of the evidence seems to consider sometime between AD 40 and AD 55. It most definitely had to be written before 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. After all, there is not one mention of such a cataclysmic event in the Gospel. More importantly Jesus Himself prophesied of the coming event in chapter 24.

## Purpose and Audience

The evidence that Matthew had mainly a Jewish audience in mind is based on the overwhelming Old Testament themes and content in the Gospel. Jerusalem is called "*holy city*" (4:5; 27:53) and "*the city of the great king*" (5:35). Note the Gospel's emphasis on religious defilement, Jewish customs ceremonial cleansing (15:2), keeping the Sabbath Day, the Temple, David, the Messiah, fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and Moses. The fact that Matthew does not explain Jewish culture like the other Gospel writer shows the Jews to be the target of his Gospel (cf. Mark 7:3, John 19:40).

Other aspects of Matthew's Gospel that would have appealed to Jewish readers would be:

#### ■ **The Kingdom**

It had been some four hundred years since Malachi closed out the Old Testament with his final prophecies. Now both John and then Jesus come break the centuries of silence by prophesying that the "Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Jews were want to know: "If Jesus is the King of the Jews, then where is God's promised kingdom?"

The kingdom theme makes up a major part of the Gospel of Matthew (4:17,23-25; 5:17-20; 9:35; 11:1-19; 12:22-37; 13:10-52; 16:24-27; 18:1-6; 19:13-20:16; 21:28-22:1). "The kingdom of Heaven" (lit. "kingdom of the heavens") is mentioned thirty-two times in Matthew. He is the only author to use this phrase. In addition, "the kingdom of God" is mentioned five (Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). Jesus uses several parable to explain the heavenly nature of the kingdom: the weeds and the tares (13:24-30, 36-43); the mustard seed (13:31-32); the leaven (13:33); the treasure in the field (3:44); the pearl of great price (13:45-46); the fishing net (13:47-50); the unforgiving servant (18:23-35); and the workers in the vineyard (20:1-16).

#### ■ **The Son of Man**

The title "*the Son of Man*" is found thirty times. This is more than any other gospel. The Jews knew that the "*Son of Man*" was promised an "*everlasting kingdom*" in Daniel 7:14.

#### ■ **Fulfillment of Prophecy**

Matthew quotes from or alludes to or mentions almost every book in the Old Testament. He is demonstrating to his readers that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. There are sixty-two direct quotes from the Old Testament with the addition of seventy-six allusions. This is more than any other Gospel. He identifies the fulfillment of prophecies on over a dozen specific occasions (1:22-23; 2:5-6; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 11:10; 12:17-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 21:42; 26:31; 27:9-10).

#### ■ **Son of David**

Eight times the Lord Jesus is called the "*Son of David*" (Matthew 1:1; Matthew 9:27; Matthew 12:23; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 20:31; Matthew 20:31; Matthew 21:9; Matthew 21:15). Matthew begins his Gospel proving through genealogy that Jesus is heir to the throne of David. This would appeal to the Jews due to the Covenant God made with David in 2 Samuel 7.

#### ■ **Kingship of Jesus**

If there is a theme for the Gospel of Matthew is would most likely be: "Jesus, King of the Jews" (1:1-2,12; 8:1-10; 42; 11:20-12:13; 14:13-36; 15:21-28; 32-39; 17:1-13; 21:12-17; 23-27; 27:37; 28:16-20). God was to raise up a Messiah-King to sit upon the throne of David.

#### ■ **The Messiah**

Jesus as the messiah is found in many sections of Matthew's Gospel (2:14-15, 21-23; 3:1-4:11; 4:13-16; 12:15-21; 13:13-15; 16:1-4, 13-20; 20:29-21:11; 22:41-46; 24:1-35; 26:1-27). The Jews long for the coming of the Messiah.

## **Structure**

The structure of a book considers the order in which events are organized into a beginning, middle, and ending. The organization of Matthew's Gospel is greatly influenced by the genre, style and intended message being conveyed.

The Gospel of Matthew is a narrative which includes five discourses or sermons of Jesus. These are alternating with sections of narrative action. The sections of discourse by Jesus are: the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29), the Commissioning of the Apostles (10:1-42), Parables about the Kingdom (13:1-52), Relationships in the Kingdom (18:1-35), and the Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46) [13]. Some of

suggested that Matthew's five-fold discourse may stress the five books of the Law of Moses.

Each discourse ends with the phrase "*When Jesus had finished saying these things,*" or similar words (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

Due to the chiasmic structure or outline of Matthew this places the third discourse as the main focal point of the book. The theme of Matthew is the nature or characteristics of the coming Kingdom.

Matthew may use the literary device known as an inclusio. The Gospel begins with Emmanuel (1:23; lit. "*God with us*") and Jesus' last words, "*And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age*" (28:20). [14]

The Gospel of Matthew has an important position in regard to its placement at the beginning of the New Testament. "The Gospel According to Matthew is eminently fitted to occupy its distinguished position at the head of the New Testament Canon. No other book so bridges the gap between the Testaments" (Bruce, F.F., "End of the First Gospel," 203). Matthew serves as a gateway into the New Testament from the Old Testament or a bridge linking the two Testaments.

### **Why Four Gospels?**

There are four New Testament books which tells of the life and teachings of Christ. Why is it necessary to have four? Why not just have Matthew?

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are different yet complement each other. The four gospels are not histories or biographies of the life of Christ. They are portraits of his life. Matthew sees him as the King of the Jews the Messiah of promise. Mark shows him to be the suffering servant. While Luke depicted the humanity of Jesus as the Son of Man. Finally, John's Gospel manifest for us the divine side of the Son of God. Matthew to the Jews.

These Gospels are all unique. Though three of them are very similar in style and content. They are called the synoptic Gospels because at first read they look alike. The synoptic Gospels are: Matthew, Mark and Luke. However John's gospel is vastly different in content. All four Gospel tell the story of the life of Jesus from four differing perspectives. These Gospels are needed to help give us the "*whole counsel of God*" in regard to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

But when looking closer at even the synoptic Gospel there are some unique features to each one. Matthew several untranslated Aramaic terms. And yet Matthew does interpreted words like "*Immanuel*" (1:23), "*golgotha*" (27:33); "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*" (27:46). This indicates that the primary language of these readers was likely Greek. There are twenty-four miracles unique to Matthew. There are several parables only found in Matthew. Matthew's gospel is the only gospel in which the assembly (church) of the New Testament is mentioned Matthew 16:18.

#### **Questions:**

1. What is the external evidence for Matthew being the author of the first Gospel?
2. How do most manuscripts of this Gospel begin?
3. What names does Luke and Mark give Matthew?
4. What does his name mean?
5. Where was Matthew at when Jesus called him?

6. Why is it necessary that Matthew's Gospel being written before 70 AD?
7. Who was most likely Matthew intended audience?
8. How many times does Matthew use the phrases "*Kingdom of Heaven*"?
9. How many times does Matthew use "*Son of Man*"? Where is this from?
10. Which Gospel quotes the Old Testament the most often?
11. Why would Matthew's focus on Jesus being the Son of David, Messiah and King?
12. How does each of the five discourse or sermons of Jesus in Matthew end?
13. How does Matthew's beginning and ending involve an inclusio?
14. Which books are Synoptic Gospels? Why are they so grouped?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Why the need for four Gospels?
2. Why do you think Matthew is the only Gospel to use the word "*church*" in reference to His called out assembly of believers?

**Homework:** Read the Gospel of Matthew this week.

*Lesson Two: Sunday, October 9, 2022*



# Jesus' Birth & Childhood

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## **Matthew 1:1 - 2:17**

### **Validation of Jesus by Genealogy, 1:1-17**

Matthew introduces “*Jesus Christ*.” “Jesus” is from the Greek *Iesous* which is a translation of the Hebrew name *yehosua* being translated in English as “Joshua.” It means “Jehovah saves”. The title given Jesus by Matthew is “Christ” from the Greek *Chrestos* meaning “anointed one.” The Hebrew term is *masiah* or Messiah. Jesus was of the seed of Abraham. God told Abraham, “*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice*” (Gen. 22:18). He was also to be of the seed of David. “*Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations*” (Ps. 89:4). And the “Son of David” therefore in line to be king. “Son of David” was considered by the Jews of Matthews day to be a Messianic designation.

For a millennia Jews have been awaiting the fulfillment of these promises. What right and proof did Jesus have to claim the Throne of David and bless mankind. Matthew begins with a genealogy to offer documented proof.

Matthew could have compiled his genealogies from public records kept by Jews to help determine who was qualified to be priests or marry a priest. Most Jews maintain family trees for the purpose of inheritance and tribal identity. Since the destruction of Jerusalem all such public records have been forever lost.

Matthew’s genealogy is different from that of Luke’s. Whereas Luke’s family tree for Jesus ranges from Adam to Jesus, Matthew begins with Abraham. Luke begins with Jesus and lists his genealogy in descending order. The biggest difference is Matthew is dealing with Joseph’s side of the family tree while Luke focuses on Mary’s side. “Matthew’s genealogy traced the line through Solomon, while Luke’s traced it through Nathan, another one of David’s sons” (Wiersbe).

Matthew arranges his imperfect genealogy into three groups of fourteen. This may have been used as a memory device. It was also for the purpose of organizing them into three distinct historical periods. The first fourteen were about patriarchs to the first King in the line of Judean kings related to Jesus, thus the mention of King David. The monarchy is the focus of the second set of fourteen. The third group of ancestors covers the period of history beginning with the captivity, exile, return and right up to the Roman period.

Matthew does not mention everyone in his genealogy. He cites those of importance to his message. The mention of Judah is of prophetic importance. “*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people*” (Gen. 49:10). David’s father, Jesse, also figures in Messianic prophecy (Is. 11:1,10).

In the first section of Jesus genealogy Matthew mentions some of his more famous or infamous grandmothers: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Tamar was guilty of prostitution and incest with Judah. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who lied. Bathsheba was an adulterous. Ruth was a Moabite widow and grandmother of David.

In the second grouping of fourteen generations Matthew leaves out four kings: Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Jehoiakim.

The list of the many known ancestors of Jesus with hard to pronounce names are by no means listed here for the Bible student to explore the lives of them one by one. However and argument could be made that this list represents not just proof of Jesus claim to royalty but a genealogy of grace. Abraham did not trust in God when he left for Egypt or took Hagar as a second wife in hopes of helping God fulfill his promises. David was not a stellar father, committed adultery with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, and a gave into the Devil’s temptation to number the people. Solomon married many forbidden foreign wives who turned his heart from God to idolatry. All the men and women in the list where sinners on need of a Savior. Even Mary (Luke 1:46-48) and Joseph needed a Savior. Jesus came from a long line

of sinners and came for the purpose of saving them from their sin.

Joseph did not “*begat*” Jesus Christ. The term “*begat*” (Greek, *gennaō*) means “fathered” or “fathering”. Joseph is not said to have fathered Jesus. But to have been married to Mary who gave birth to Jesus. Joseph is therefore not listed as a biological father of Jesus. This is in keeping with the fact that the prophecy that Jesus was to be born of the seed of woman. “*And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*” (Gen. 3:15). Biologically it takes the seed of a man and a woman to produce a baby. Jesus was born without male seed. “*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*” (Gal. 4:4).

### **Virgin Birth of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, 1:18-25**

Several awesome births are found in the Bible. Isaac being born to 90 year old barren mother, Sarah. Manoah’s barren wife given birth to Samson. Hannah having Samuel. John the baptist being born to Elizabeth. Yet all fail to come close to the spectacular virgin birth of Jesus.

Matthew has shown the biological lineage of Jesus. “*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows...*” (1:18b). The term “birth” is from the same Greek term used for genealogy. Now he shows the divine/supernatural lineage of Jesus by way of the virgin birth.

Joseph was betrothed to Mary when it was discovered she was with child. He was in a quandary in that he knew it was not his child. He would have suffered from a broken heart and devastated by the idea of painful betrayal. However, he must have respected and loved Mary and did not wish to publically humiliate her or have her stoned to death for adultery (Deut. 22:23-25). One must understand that betrothal was a phase between engagement and marriage. Couples were engaged, that is had the marriage arranged by parents. Once a dowry was paid to the bride to be’s parents a betrothal period set in for one year. During this time they were as good as married but no sexual relations occurred. If she turned up pregnant or either proved to be unfaithful, the marriage was off and the betrothal ended with a divorce. If all went well the couple would be married in a public ceremony.

While Joseph was contemplating whether to put her away (Greek *apoluo*, divorce) quietly, an angel appears to him. In a dream the angel tells him what is really going on with his bride. Mary was not pregnant or fathered by the Holy Spirit in a carnal like since. “*Mary’s conception was not a divine seduction, but a miraculous conception*” (Pope 44).

This is not just a random miracle but a fulfillment of prophecy. The phrase “*that is might be fulfilled*” introduce the first of many prophecies fulfilled in Matthew giving proof to the King-Messiahship of Jesus. Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 concerning the virgin birth of Jesus. It is a prophecy with a dual fulfillment. The first fulfillment was in the days of King Ahaz when Isaiah assured him with a sign of a virgin giving birth to a son. This was to prophesy that the Kingdom of Judah and David’s royal lineage would not be wiped you by the enemies of the day. Matthew uses this to explain the virgin Mary is pregnant.

There has been some question whether of not the Hebrew word *alma* means “virgin”. “*Alma* (Hebrew) is a more general term which refers to a young unmarried woman, while *parthenos* (Greek) speaks more directly to the virginity of the one in question. He fact that the LXX translated *alma* with *parthenos* (in Isaiah 7;14) shows that the ancients understood *analma* to be a ‘*virgin*” (Pope 48,49).

We do not know a great deal about the character of Joseph except that he is called a “just” or “righteous” man. But notice when he is told something by an angel his responds immediate with obedience. He marries Mary. And he also protects her and God’s son. Joseph will have to endure the criticism of others by not putting Mary away, tolerate the judgmental comments about his and/or Mary’s premarital sexual relations, forego sexual relations with his new bride, and support and protect a child that is not his.

Joseph follows the angel’s command to name Mary’s son, “Jesus.” By doing so he was publically and legally accepting Jesus as his own son.

Jesus was also to be known as “*Emmanuel*” meaning “*God with us*”. With the incarnation God is literally and physically with them in the first century.

The Bible does not support the Catholic doctrine of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary. Joseph and

Mary began sexual relations after the birth of Jesus. Furthermore, sex between a husband and wife is honorable (Heb. 13:4) and no child can inherit sin from their parents. Mary went on to have children after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 12:46; 13:55-56; Mark. 6:3).

Jesus was most likely not born on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Since Mary was six months pregnant when she visited her cousin Elizabeth. And Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah was taking his turn as a priest to serve in the Temple, it is most likely that Jesus was born September or between mid-March and the first week of May. This is further support by the fact that the shepherds were out in the fields with their sheep at that time of Jesus' birth.

### **Veneration of Jesus by Wisemen, 2:1-12**

Who were these wise men seeking to worship the young King of the Jews? First of all, many legends are to be debunked by the facts before understanding who they were. We do not know specifically where they were from. Legends has it from the Middle ages that they were from India, Persia and Arabia and named Dasper, Balthazar, and Melchoior. Their bones are said to be buried in Cologne, Germany. We do not know how many of them came. All we know is that they were bringing three types of expensive gifts: gold (a valuable metal), frankincense (burned with the grain offerings and used in embalming the dead) and myrrh (a resin made into perfume and used for anointing at burials).

They were not kings. Only two king appear in chapter two: Herod and Jesus. They were called *Magoi* or *Magi*. These were not necessary pagan astrologers. Daniel himself was made the leader of the magi by King Nebuchadnezzar. They could have been Jews of the Diaspora. Coming from the area of Babylon or Persia where many settlements of Jews were still known to exist. They believed and followed God. God communicated with them and they obeyed Him. This explains how they would have known about the coming of the "King". They were following a "star". Many think this could not have been an actual star because it had recently appeared in the heavens (2:7); moved in the sky (2:9); and settled over the tow of Bethlehem. In historical records found in China there as a "comet" which appeared for several weeks in about the year 5 B.C. Others look to Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17 being fulfilled with this cosmic sighting by the Magi: *"A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel,"*

Calling upon the Chief Priests and scribes to help locate this little king, Herod is informed of the prophecy found in Micah 5:2: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."* "Ephrathah" is an older term for the area and by including it Micah distinguishes this Bethlehem from the one in Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). Bethlehem had been the place Jacob buried Rachel. Ruth met Boaz here. David grew up and tended sheep in this town near Jerusalem.

The wise men found the house where Jesus lived with his parents. It is to be noted that regardless of how they set up modern day nativity scenes, they did not go to a manger to see a newborn baby.

Herod the Great was not willing to give up the title "King of the Jews" without a fight. A religious/political party of the Jews looked to him and later his son Antipas to be the Messiah. He ask the wise men to find Jesus and return, so he too could worship Jesus. But God warned them to return home instead.

### **Violence Against Jesus by Herod, 2:13-18**

When the magi did not return Herod felt mock. Although that was not the intention of the wise men. They are simply obeying God. Yet Herod was enraged he lost control of his emotions over this young rival. Herod was an Idumean (from Edom) and had no real claim to the Jewish throne.

The reaction of Herod the Great was just the opposite of that of the wise men. He did not want to worship Jesus, he wanted to wipe him out. Having the children two and under killed in Bethlehem was in keeping with Herod's violent, murderous ways fueled by paranoia. He had his wife's brother the high priest, Aristobluos drowned. He had his sons Aristobulous and Alexander strangled. He killed his wife, Mariamne and her mother Alexandra. Some three hundred members of his government were stoned to death at his command. Even five days before his death Herod had Antipater, the oldest of his sons,

executed. As he lay dying, he called for all the nobles of Jerusalem to be shut up in the Hippodrome and killed upon his death, so there would be great mourning at the time of his death.

The slaughter of innocent babes in Matthew narrative is hard to take when God spared his own son. But “the infants of Bethlehem died for the safety of him who was destined to die for the safety of all” (McGarvey).

The genocide of the Bethlehem babies also fulfilled another Messianic prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.” Ramah was the gathering point of Jews by the Babylonians as they planned to carry them off into exile. Rachel is figuratively seen as the mother representing all those mothers whose sons were being carried off into Babylonian captivity.

Matthew records a second proof of Jesus’ being the promised Messiah in verse thirteen. Joseph and Mary fleeing with Jesus to Egypt from Herod fulfills Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” It is believed that they may have settled for a time in the city of Alexandria where there were an estimated one million Jews living by AD 40. The gifts from the magi would have helped finance this trip to Egypt and back.

In fleeing to Egypt they would have to live as fugitives (flee come from *pheugo* from which we get the English term “fugitive”). In a few months to a year, God sent yet another dream to command Joseph to return home. Herod the Great had died in 4 B.C. Archelaus took his father Herod’s place. He was fashioned in the same mold as his father. So Joseph moved back home to Nazareth (Luke 2:4). This was also a proof of Jesus identity. He would be called a Nazarene. However, there is no such specific prophecy in the Old Testament. Nazarene is close to the Hebrew word *netzer*, which means “a branch or shoot.” Several prophets apply this title to Jesus (see Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12–13). Perhaps these are the prophets Matthew has in mind. Some Jews sarcastically questioned Jesus coming from Galilee: “Will the Christ come out of Galilee?” (John 7:41b). Even Nathaniel said, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). The term “Nazarene” was applied both to Jesus and His followers (“sect of the Nazarene”, Acts 24:5), and He was often called “Jesus of Nazareth” (Matt. 21:11; Mark 14:67; John 18:5, 7). This was not done as a compliment. In subsequent centuries Christians were mocked as Nazarenes in the prayers offered by Jews in their synagogues.

“Matthew focuses on two features through all of this narrative: (1) divine revelation as indicated by angelic instruction for ever more, and (2) the fulfillment of a divine plan revealed in the Old Testament” prophecies (MacArthur 47).

#### **Questions:**

1. What does “Jesus” mean?
2. What does “Christ” mean?
3. Why do you think Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus?
4. What is the difference between Matthew's genealogy and Luke's? Why?
5. How does Matthew divide up his genealogy? Why?
6. Why are the mention of Jacob and Jesse important to this genealogy?

7. What five women are mentioned in Jesus genealogy? What do they have in common?
8. What prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled in Matthew 1?
9. How did Joseph plan to deal with Mary's unexpected pregnancy? Why didn't he?
10. What does it mean that Joseph did not know Mary until Jesus was born? Why?
11. List some of the legends about the wise men who came to worship baby Jesus?
12. Why do some think the wise men followed a comet?
13. Which prophecy tells us where Jesus was to be born?
14. Why did God warn the wise men to go home a different way?
15. Why would having the children killed at Bethlehem be in keeping with the character of Herod?
16. Why did Joseph flee to Egypt? What prophecy did this fulfill?
17. Why did Joseph and his family return to Nazareth?
18. How was Jesus growing up in Nazareth proof of his deity?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Why would this be considered a genealogy of grace?

2. Contrast the three different reactions of the wise men (magi), Herod the Great, and the Chief Priest and scribes to the news of the coming of the King-Messiah.
  
3. Show how Joseph demonstrated trust, obedience, patience and humility.

**Homework:** Wise men worshiped Jesus. They travelled far, brought gifts, and obeyed God's will. If you are wise do the same.

*Lesson Three: Sunday, October 16, 2022*

## **Jesus' Forerunner & Baptism**

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***Matthew 3:1-17***

**John the Baptist: Jesus' Forerunner, 3:1-12**

Just what does it take to be a great person? The world answers: outstanding athletic ability; to have a fortune; fame; great artistic talent; being a literary giant; possessing musical skills; military achievements; political office, intellectual achievements, great scientific discoveries, born into nobility, etc. If we are to ask Jesus who was a great man, he would say, *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"* (Matt. 11:11).

### **Great Character**

#### ▶ **Simple Life of Self-denial**

He wore a camel's haired-garment and a leather belt around his waste. He was not very fashionable and his kind of clothing did not provide much in the way of comfort, but it was practical and long-lasting. His diet was equally primitive. He ate wild honey and locusts (Matt. 3:4-6). The law allowed the Jews to eat locusts (Lev. 11:20-23).

He was to herald the coming of the messianic King. He looked more like a hermit or a bum. The kings announcers normally would dress in the finest clothes, eat the king's food, and stay in the best hotels.

#### ▶ **Humble**

Of Jesus He said, *"He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry"* (Matt. 3:11). The Jews didn't mess with people's feet. It was an insult, the work of a slave. John said he wasn't even worthy to do that. John was a messenger not the Messiah. He was the King's herald not the royalty.

### **Great Mission**

John's unique greatness was in his role in the scheme of redemption. He was the forerunner of the Messiah. His mission for God was a one of power and privilege paving the way for salvation to the world.

#### ▶ **To Prepare the Way of the Lord**

Jesus introduces John the baptist, *"For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight' "* (Matt. 3:3). The imagery is that of building a roadway. Pot holes need to be filled. Fallen trees and boulders removed. Gorges need to be bridged. That which is crooked made straight. Crookedness is often associated with unrighteousness. For example, a thief is a crook.

Making ready for the Lord is preparing the hearts of the people to receive Him. John was on assignment from God to prepare the people for the coming kingdom and its King.

The herald would proclaim the king's coming to everyone he encountered. The coming of a king would require a herald to go before him to announce and prepare the way on which the king was to travel. In fact the term "preaching" has the primary meaning of "to herald." John prepared for the coming of the Messiah by preaching about Him and the need to be ready via repentance and baptism.

### **Great Preaching**

What is great preaching? Normally, one would think of their favorite preacher's personality and mannerisms. Many great preachers are promoting themselves. James Denney once said, "you cannot at the same time give the impression that you are a great preacher and that Jesus Christ is a great Savior."

#### ▶ **Preaching Repentance**

How did he prepared the way of the Lord? This demanded the preaching of repentance to all who would be prepared for the coming kingdom. John refused to baptize people who failed to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. *"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance'"* (Mt. 3:7,8). Repentance always involves a change of mind leading to a change of life in the way they thought, talked and conducted themselves. Repentance was exactly the same message with which Jesus began His preaching and the apostles began theirs (Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; Mark 6:12).

#### ▶ **Preaching the Kingdom**

The motive for the people to repent was the coming of the kingdom. John preached *"repent, for*

*the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*" (Matt. 3:2). "At hand" means the church had not yet been established but preparations were underway. It was not in existence at the time. It was not thousands of years in the future. Furthermore, John could not have been in the Kingdom. It was established after his death. John prepared for the coming kingdom by pointing to the king of the kingdom, but did not live to see it come. When Jesus promised to build His church, John had already been beheaded (Matt. 16:18). John was a forerunner and not a follower of Jesus.

▶ **Preaching Confession of Sins**

John required those he baptized to demonstrate fruits of repentance. This would involve confession of their sins (Matt. 3:6).

▶ **Preaching Baptism**

John preached the baptism for repentance for the remission of sins (Mk 1:4; Luke 3:3). John's baptism was not repeated, it was one time only. It was not a sprinkling of water upon the subject. John baptized in the Jordan river and other places where there was "much water" (Jn. 3:23).

The baptism of John is not the one baptism of the New Testament today (Eph. 4:4-6). John's baptism was a belief that Jesus was to come in the future. Jesus has already come, died, resurrection, and ascended into heaven. Those who had been baptized with John's baptism at Ephesus had to be baptized with Christ's baptism. Paul said, "*John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*" (Acts 19:4). Christ's baptism requires as a prerequisite a confession of one's belief in Him. John's baptism was preceded by a confession of sins (Matt. 3:6). John's baptism was not in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit like Christ's baptism (Matt. 28:19). Unlike Christ's, John's baptism was not in the likeness of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3,4). Christ's baptism puts one into the church and into Him (Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:47). John's did not. Neither did John baptize anyone into the Baptist church, because it did not exist until 1606 AD. John's baptism was temporary, but Christian baptism is to continue unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

▶ **Preaching Hell**

John preached about hell. He warned the Pharisees when they came to him to be baptized without first repenting, "*for I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (Matt. 3:9,10). The subjects are those who are disobedient and impenitent.

Within the context of Matthew 3 two groups are addressed. The first group is composed of those genuine disciples who have been baptized by John in verse six. The second group is composed of the Pharisees and Sadducees who have failed to bring forth fruits of repentance (3:7,8). They are fruitless trees to be hewed down and cast into the fire, not the good trees that bore fruit. They were the chaff to be burned with unquenchable fire, not the wheat that is good. The two groups are to receive two different baptisms. The first group are those disciples who are bringing forth fruits of repentance and are baptized by John in water. They are representative of those who are the fruitful trees and the wheat that will be gathered and not burned with fire. It is this group which will be blessed with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The second group are made of the Pharisees and Sadducees who have not been penitent and are not being baptized by John. They are the unfruitful trees and the chaff that will not suffer fire. They will one day experience the baptism of fire. Surely, both groups will not experience both baptisms. And furthermore, this context shows that these are two baptisms not just two aspects of one baptism.

The purpose of fire baptism is divine wrath and judgment. John spoke about "*the wrath to come*" (Matt. 3:7).

The element of this baptism is fire. When lexiconographers translate the use of fire in the context of Luke 3 and Matthew 3 they connect it with God's judgment and wrath and not the workings of the Holy Spirit. W. E. Vine noted regarding the "fire" of this passage: "of the fire of Divine judgment upon the rejectors of Christ, Matt. 3:11 (where a distinction is to be made between the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the fire of Divine retribution)" (1991, 308). Arndt and Gingrich speak of the "fire of divine Judgment Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16" (1967, 737). J. H. Thayer commented: "to overwhelm with fire (those who do not repent), i.e., to subject them to the terrible penalties of hell". (Thayer 1958, p. 94).



John spoke of the baptism of fire which would one day be administered by Christ. *“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”* (Matt 3:12). John was baptizing with water those who would repent of their sins. He could not bless the obedient with the promises of the Holy Spirit or punish the disobedient with the fires of Hell. This belonged to the one who was to come after him: Jesus. In Matthew 3 there was to come with an axe and cut down the unfruitful trees and cast them into the fire. He was coming with a winnowing fork to separate the wheat from the chaff. The chaff would be cast into the fire. He would bless some of the disciples of John with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for they were the wheat and the fruitful trees. Those who were like unfruitful trees and chaff He alone will judge and immerse them into the fires of Hell.

The time of the fire baptism is future. The phrase *“baptism by fire”* is used by the military to refer to the first time a soldier faces combat. The phrase *“baptism of fire”* represents the final end of those at war with Christ. They will one day in the future experience the fires of hell.

### **Jesus' Baptism, 3:13-17**

The Baptism of Jesus is also found in the other Synoptic Gospels (Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). Jesus came alone to John for baptism. John and Jesus were related. Their mothers, Elizabeth and Mary, were cousins. Elizabeth knew who Jesus was before He was born. She called Mary *“the mother of my Lord”* (Luke 1:43). How much about Jesus did John know is unclear, however he knew enough to prepare the way for Him. What John was not prepared to do was to baptize Jesus. He seems to resist the ideal of baptizing Jesus. He knew that Jesus was not in need of it, but rather John was in need of being baptized by Jesus. John had refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees because they did not bring fruits worthy of repentance. But now he refuses to baptize Jesus, because he feels unworthy himself and Jesus has no need to repent.

*“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins”* (Mark 1:4). What need to Jesus have of repentance? He *“knew no sin”* (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Heb. 4:15). Why was Jesus requesting to be baptized? Jesus Himself explained why He needed to be baptized: *“it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (3:15b).

Still what does this mean *“to fulfill all righteousness”*. Some claim Jesus was giving John's ministry and baptism His approval, so others would accept John. Still the idea is put forth that this baptism is like a ceremonial cleansing for Jesus' role of High Priest. Perhaps it is to identify with sinners in a vicarious way. After all He was *“numbered with the transgressors”* (Is. 53:12) in death, perhaps also in baptism. The best answer perhaps is that Jesus is going to obey God's will preached by John as an example of His complete obedience to God's Will. J. W. McGarvey wrote, *“Jesus came not only to fulfill all the requirements of the law, but also all that wider range of righteousness of which the law was only a part.”*

Many depictions of Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan show water being poured or sprinkled upon Jesus' head. However, Jesus would have been immersed in water. After His baptism it is said, he *“ . . . went up straightway out of the water. . . ”* (Matt. 3:16) and *“ . . . straightway coming up out of the water . . . ”* (Mark 1:10). Baptism is indeed a burial in water (Rom. 6:3-5). In other places it means to dip or submerge the object of baptism into liquid (Luke 16:24; John 13:26). John baptized at a location in the Jordan River where *“there was much water”* (John 3:23), because immersion requires such, pouring and sprinkling does not.

After Jesus is baptized the Holy Spirit descends from Heaven upon Him in the form of a dove. This served as a witness to John and others present that Jesus was the Son of God. John the baptist said, *“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God”* (John 1:32-34).

Next, God speaks from heaven saying: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (3:17). This is a quote from Isaiah 42:1–3. God is confirming that He is in total approval of the life and decisions Jesus has made up to this point. Two other times God speaks from Heaven to Jesus. At

Jesus' transfiguration (17:5) and in the Temple when sought by Gentiles (John 12:28).

By calling Jesus "*beloved*" God speaks of a "deep, rich, and profound relationship" with Jesus. By calling Him Son, God makes Jesus equal to Him for God is His Father. Perhaps "*you are My son*" is from a Messianic Psalm (Ps. 2:7).

At the baptism of Jesus the doctrine of the Trinity is seen as all three members of the Godhead are represented. The Father spoke from Heaven. While the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven. While the Son was standing dripping wet in the Jordan River. Yet God is one God. However, God is three persons. B.B. Warfield explains, "There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence" (Orr, James ed., "Trinity" The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930) 5:3012).

**Questions:**

1. How did John dress and eat?
2. What was John's two-fold mission?
3. Why did John refuse to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees?
4. Show that John could not have started the Baptist Church?
5. What practical changes did John require of those repenting?
6. Why is John called "*the baptist*"?
7. Why is John's baptism not the one baptism of today?
8. What is the "*baptism of fire*"? Who will administrate it?
9. Why did not refuse at first to baptize Jesus?
10. Why was Jesus baptized?
11. Show from the context that baptism is immersion.
12. What role does the Godhead play in this baptism?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Should we require people to bring forth fruits of repentance before baptizing them today? Explain.
2. How would you go about teaching someone that the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire are two distinct things?
3. How might John's warning about the baptism of fire be used to help teach someone the Gospel and lead them to water baptism?

**Homework:** God has sent us all on the mission to tell people about Jesus and encourage them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin so they can enter the Kingdom.

*Lesson Four: Sunday, October 23, 2022*

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## **Jesus' Temptation & Ministry Begins**

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### ***Matthew 4:1-25***

#### **Jesus' Temptation, 4:1-11**

Twice in the history of the world the destiny of humanity has hung in the balance depending on the will and action of two men: Adam and Christ. The first yielded to Satan's temptation (Rom. 5:19). The second did not yield, ever. The contrasts and comparisons between these two is striking. Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden; Christ struggled in a lonely wilderness. Adam was at his best when tempted; Christ was hungry. Adam was the king of the old creation (Gen. 1:26); Christ is King of the new (spiritual) creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Adam sinned and lost his dominion (Heb. 2:6-9); Christ obeyed and regained what Adam lost and more (Rom. 5:12-21). Adam was

defeated and brought death to humanity; Christ was victorious and brought life to all who will trust Him.

## Background

### ◆ **Temptation after Exaltation**

Immediately after John baptized Jesus, the Spirit descended and the Father spoke His approval from heaven, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. Mark 1:12 says that this occurred "*immediately*" after His baptism. Satan's temptation came immediately after the high and holy experience of Jesus' baptism. Yesterday, the voice of the Father and the witness of John the Baptist; today, loneliness of the wilderness of temptation.

### ◆ **Led up of the Spirit**

"*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil*" (Mt. 4:1). It was not done by presumption on the part of Jesus, nor was it for the mere display of His power in resisting temptation.

### ◆ **Alone in the Wilderness**

Wilderness indicates country destitute of inhabitants. The area was called *Jeshimon*, which means "the Devastation." Surrounded by such dangers, the temptations offered by Satan were made more intense. Amid want and perils, Satan might suppose that Jesus would be more easily seduced from God.

### ◆ **Temptation**

We do not know what form the devil took in the wilderness when he tempted our Lord. Both Mark and Luke's account tell us that He was tempted for forty days prior to these three temptations. Remember, temptation is in no sense sin; for Christ was tempted, yet He was sinless (Heb. 4:15). Thus sinlessness does not preclude temptation. It is the yielding of the will to temptation which constitutes sin. Christ never yielded. Not to these three temptations. Not to the forty days of temptations. Not once in all of His thirty-three years upon the face of the earth.

## First Temptation: Stone To Bread

### ◆ **Ripe for Temptation**

Christ had been fasting for forty days. This fast was total abstinence from food for Luke says explicitly, "*he did eat nothing.*" Next, is found one of the greatest understatement of all time: "*He then became hungry.*" It is difficult for some of us to go one hour and forty minutes without eating, but what about forty days. Two other men fasted for forty days: Moses (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Ki. 19:8). There was probably no other time in Christ's earthly life when He was more susceptible to temptation. He was physically weak and thus extra vulnerable to the temptations of Satan. Satan came to entice Christ to sin. Sin would render Christ useless as a Savior for mankind. No temptation could have been more plausible or more likely to succeed than this one.

Satan's temptations appear reasonable. They often seem to be only urging us to do what is good and proper. They seem even to urge us to promote the glory of God, and to honor Him. There was no sin in being hungry. Yet Satan suggested that, if Christ were God's Son, God should not let Him hunger.

### ◆ **Temptation to Doubt**

Basically, Satan is saying: "*If You are the Son of God*", he was trying to cast despairing doubt in the mind of Christ. Evidently, Christ's belief in His Deity was a point of attack by Satan. When Jesus Christ came to earth He did not give up His deity, but He evidently chose not to express them and use them as a man. He had to learn and grow just like all men born into this world (Luke 2:52). Christ did not know He was the Son of God through omniscience, but through the Law and the Prophets, the witness of John the Baptist, and the voice out of the heavens at His baptism, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*" (Mt. 3:17). He believed Himself to be the Son of God based on this evidence. Satan was trying to get Him to sin by causing Him to doubt God. His sin would not have been preforming the miracle, but doubting Divinely revealed evidence about His deity. The tempter's whole object was to get Him to distrust the heavenly testimony borne to Him at His baptism as the Son of God.

"If" played a significant role in this temptation. "If" is a small word with a big impact. It is powerful. Throughout Jesus' life on earth all the way to the cross. "*If you are the Christ, tell us plainly*" (Jn. 10:24). On the cross, "*If you are the son of God come down from the cross*" (Mt. 27:10). The Roman soldiers, "*If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself*" (Lk. 23:37). Even one of the thieves, "*If you are the Christ, save yourself and us*" (Lk. 23:39). Satan set the condition that Christ prove His son-ship by turning stone to bread. God set no such condition.

### ◆ **Temptation to Trust in Self**

Would Jesus accept the will of His Father that this was a period of privation designed for His spiritual profit, or would He take matters into His own hands and use His own powers to meet His needs? To have yielded to Satan's suggestion would have shown distrust in the Father; for the Father, by the Spirit, had brought Him to this point; therefore the Father was able to provide for His needs at the proper time. Today, Satan would have us be

like the Pharisees, *"Who trusted in themselves that they were righteous"* (Lk. 18:9). In this temptation of Christ is was a question of putting immediate needs ahead of eternal purposes.

#### ◆ **Lust of the Flesh**

Satan uses three main temptations as His weapons in battle against mankind. He fashioned these temptations out of this world. *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."* (1 Jn. 2:16) These are the three main methods Satan uses to tempt man to sin. He used them first with Eve in Genesis 3:6 and he has used them ever since. He was successful in using these on all men until the day he met Christ. Satan was following the pattern introduced in Eden; He appealed to Eve by presenting the fruit of the tree in such a manner that she saw it was good for food.

As yet He had performed no miracle. Was He really the Messiah? Essentially Satan was saying, "Jesus, You have the right to meet Your God-given needs when You deem appropriate. you're hungry now, so eat!" Christ could have rationalized that there was nothing wrong with eating bread to appease His hunger, and therefore nothing wrong with turning stone to bread, but He knew there was much more involved. It would have been the misuse of His powers given for one purpose to gratify another. Jesus expounded upon the principle in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:25-34.)

#### ◆ **An Appeal to the Authority of the Scriptures**

How did Christ deal with this? Did He perform a miracle to fill His stomach and prove Satan wrong? No. He used the written Word as the lamp for His feet (Ps. 119:105). He said, *"It is written"*. He appealed to the authority of the scriptures to answer. Eve also started with *"God hath said"* (Gen. 3:3), but she was not constant in her adherence to God's Word. Christ knew that man needed first to sustain spiritual life. In this Jesus identified Himself with the human family - Man shall not live by bread alone. Men who put the securing of bread first in their lives will be malnourished spiritually. Eve's biggest mistake was talking things over with Satan. She should have repeated back to him verbatim what God had commanded her to do and then just walked away.

Jesus quoted a portion of the last words of warning from Moses to the Israelites before they entered Canaan. Moses had reminded the Israelites that God had led them for forty years in the wilderness to humble and test them and to discover whether they would obey Him or not. God tested them with hunger and then taught them to rely upon Him to care and provide for them. He did not provide them bread, but He gave them manna from heaven to sustain their lives. He gave them instructions as to how much they could gather for a day's provision and said if they gathered any more that it would breed worms and stink. Some gathered more manna and that is exactly what happened. Yet the Israelites were not just sustained by the manna they gathered, but by obeying the voice of God. Moses concluded explaining that God's lesson was: man does not live by the mere satisfaction of His physical needs, but Man lives by the care and provision of the Lord (Deut. 8:1-3). If Israel spent, not forty days, but forty years in a waste, howling wilderness, where there were no means of human subsistence, not starving, but divinely provided for, on purpose to prove to every age that human support depends not upon bread, but upon God's unfailing word of promise.

Jesus was confident God would provide for Him, too. Satan was tempting Jesus to take things into His own hands. Jesus' response brought to light the motive behind Satan's request. In essence He said, "My ultimate responsibility is not simply to satisfy My physical needs, but to obey My Father in heaven." Jesus established His Sonship, not on Satan's terms, but on the Father's.

## **Second Temptation: On The Pinnacle Of The Temple**

#### ◆ **Location of Temptation**

The temple was built atop a small mountain, Mt. Moriah. The royal portico of Herod was akin to the Temple. It would have been a 480 foot drop into the Kidron valley below. According to Josephus, it was "vastly high" in elevation while the valley immediately below was "very deep, and its bottom could not be seen." An immense tower built on the very edge of this precipice, from the top of which dizzy height Josephus says one could not look at the bottom (Antiquities, 15,11,3).

#### ◆ **Quoting Scripture out of Context**

Satan knows the Bible. He can quote it. Satan supported his dare with an "edited" quotation from Psalm 91:11,12 concerning the protection of God over his children. The context of the Psalm teaches that the Lord protects those who love, follow, and obey Him (see Ps. 91:1,9,14). "To keep you in all your ways" which suggests one who has his feet in the ways God has directed. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of His people who are placed by Him in trial or danger; but it is not true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke Him and trifle with the promised help.

Satan was asking Jesus, "Since You believe the Word of God, then why not prove one of God's promises?" Beware of taking promises out of their context or claiming promises when you have not met the conditions. Satan arrays scripture against scripture; he would misapply it. Christ knew His Bible and would not allow this.

◆ **Temptation to Test God**

Christ was to prove His deity to Satan by testing the love of God and making an unnecessary show of God's power. He would not put the love of God to the test by a needless miracle. Miracles were performed by the Lord to produce belief (Jn. 20: 30,31). Jesus was constantly urged to do miracles to satisfy curiosity. Satan along with all the other devils already believed. *"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder"* (Jn. 2:19). As a matter of fact, some the best confessions concerning Jesus as the Son of God came from demons.

◆ **Sin of Presumption**

The first temptation was one of doubt, the second was one of over trust. The first temptation was under-confidence, now it is over-trust and presumption. If He trusts God, then the devil challenges Him to act on that trust. Often men start by doubting salvation from sin, and end recklessly presuming salvation in sin. Christ would never fall into either category.

◆ **Pride of Life**

This temptation was an attempt to puff Jesus up with pride to "prove" Himself. Satan tempts those who profess faith to let their "faith" lead them forward and expect God will follow them. Such religion is done to be seen of men. Jesus said those who sound a trumpet when giving alms are hypocrites (Mt. 6:24). So are those who pray long and loud in public places (Matt. 6: 5-7). Our lights must shine so others can see our good works and glorify the Father, not us. *"You stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear"* (Rom. 11:20).

◆ **Harmony of the Scriptures**

Christ replies, *"it is written, again"*, thus showing the harmony of the scriptures. To get a right understanding of God's Will we must compare Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is not made up of isolated texts.

The context of His quote is Deuteronomy 6:16. Obviously Moses was reminding the Israelites of a former occasion when they had tried God at Massah. In the wilderness the Israelites camped at a place where there was no water and they tempted or put the Lord to the test saying, *"Is the Lord not among us?"* (Ex. 17:1-7). The people were thirsty and murmured (Ex. 17:7). The Israelites saw the plagues God brought upon Egypt. They saw God divide the waters of the Red Sea while His pillar of fire stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians. He had enabled Moses to sweeten the waters of Marah and had fed the children of Israel with manna, but these were not sufficient grounds for faith for the Israelites. For them, God must needs continually prove Himself.

By the use of the word *"again"* Jesus is show that God does not contradict His Word. Scripture is harmonious. One verse is not to be used to nullify another or to counteract the whole tenor of Divine truth. God does not give us conflicting duties. For instance, God specified vocal music in New Testament worship (Eph. 5:29; Col. 3:16). Satan will say, "David played on a harp," implying that if David did, it is scriptural for us to do so in New Testament worship. Satan's message is: "If you believe John 3:16 you cannot believe Ac. 2:38; Mk. 16:16; Rom. 6:1-6; I Pet. 3:21."

### **Third Temptation: The Kingdoms Of The World**

◆ **World Tour**

In Luke's account of the temptation of Christ he says it took place *"in a moment of time"* (Lk. 4:5). "In a moment of time" was some supernatural operation. In neither of these last two incidents are we told how Jesus was transported from one to the other.

Also, suddenness aids temptation. When crude business men make a fast deal and make everything look real good at first, the people who see it may jump right in and grab what they think is a great deal.

◆ **The Temptation to Compromise**

Now Satan has resorted to a blatant temptation. There was no deceit and no mention of Jesus' Sonship. In fact, he has ceased now to present his temptations under the mask of piety, and he stands out unblushingly as the rival of God Himself in his claims on the homage of men. Despairing of success as an angel of light, he throws off all disguise. Satan promised Christ all the kingdoms of the earth, but it would cost Him. Christ would have to worship Satan just once. Satan shows some generosity in this temptation, but it has its price tag. Satan is slow to show generosity and to give anything. Most will sell out to him for nothing. Any compromise with Satan puts one in the position of being his slave.

This temptation offered an easy path. The devil is offering Jesus a short cut to the achieving of His objective. God's way led to the cross (Mt. 26:39). The Son of man would not take the easy way out. Satan's sweetest temptation was the most repulsive to Christ.

However, Satan's promise is faulty. Three times he is called by our Lord Himself, *"the prince of this world"* (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul calls him *"the god of this world"* (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan rules over the world because of his control over the men in it (1 Jn. 5:19). *Jesus called him, "the ruler of this world"* (Jn. 12:31). Regardless of all this, the world is ultimately God's.

If we are to have God's promise, it must be obtained God's Way. To seek a right thing in a wrong way is still wrong. Jesus had come to establish a kingdom, one consisting of people from all nations. Satan would give a speedier possession, but God a more lasting one. Satan's offer to surrender was not unconditional. It was a surrender on Satan's terms rather than in God's way. Christ wasn't willing to make a treaty, but conquer Satan's kingdom. Good ends do not justify evil means, for evil means bring evil ends. To establish a Messianic kingdom by worldly means would produce a worldly kingdom. Satan obviously did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom.

God is God, and right is right and wrong is wrong. There can be no compromise in the war with evil (Dt. 6:13; 10:20). Satan may offer a Christian a "better" job for just the small price of missing some of the worship services of the Lord. He may offer a preacher a continuing paycheck for just the small price of remaining silent on a matter that needs to be preached.

◆ **Appeals to the Lust of the Eyes**

Many things look good to us, but they are not good for us. Eve saw the forbidden fruit was appealing. Such offers may be large to the world, but are small in the eyes of Jesus and Christians. According to Psalm 2:6-9, God had already promised these kingdoms to Christ. God had promised Jesus *"the nations for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"* (Psalm 2:8).

◆ **Proper Application of Scripture**

Then Jesus said to him, *"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'"* (Mt. 4:10). For the third time Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy (6:13). The scripture was written to the end that all might only worship God and serve Him. This text refers back to the incident of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6).

Christ would worship and serve only the Lord. Whatever we worship is the god we serve, we cannot do both God and the world (Mt. 6:24). Only by worshiping and serving God can a right end be attained. Jesus knew that by doing so, He would not only obtain all earthly authority, but all authority in heaven (Mt. 28:18).

## **Victory Over Temptation, 4:11**

◆ **By Remembering Who You Are**

Jesus came into the world to save the world. His major obstacle to fulfilling His mission was the ruler of the world, Satan. Twice Satan tried to cast doubt as to His identity. All three quotes are drawn from a section of Scripture that opens with these words: *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"* (Dt. 6:4-5). Christ later called this *"the first of all the commandments"* (Mk. 12:29). When facing Satan's temptations remember that you are a child of God, who does not listen to strangers.

◆ **By Knowing and Using God's Word**

One reason why Jesus never sinned is that He was not ignorant. He always did what He knew was right. The Son of God recognized the binding authority of scripture, the harmony in what God said, and the proper application of it. Jesus verbally confronted Satan with the Truth; and eventually Satan gave up and left. Christ is the *"Captain of our salvation"* (Heb. 2:10-18). He shows us, His soldiers, how to use the Sword of the Spirit to defeat Satan's weapons of temptation. You will see that the three pronged pitch fork of Satan (consisting of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) was no match for the Word of God.

◆ **By Exposing and Depositing the Devil**

Finally, Jesus replied, *"away with you Satan."* Christ knew that Satan's short-cut would not be lasting. In the first two temptations, Satan was subtle, as if disguised. In the third he was proud and vain. Jesus now tears off his mask, calling him by name. Satan had no right or place in the presence of Christ. When Peter tempted Jesus, the Master also called him by name, but He told Peter to get behind Him, for the proper place of a disciple is in the rear or behind the one he follows. Satan was His adversary, not a helper.

Temptation must be promptly rejected. Notice, Jesus didn't stop to weigh the matter. We have this choice. We can tell him to "get" or we can invite him into our heart and give him a comfortable seat. *"Resist the Devil and he will flee from you"* (Js. 4:7).

◆ **It Is but a Temporary Victory**

Satan only left *"for a season"* (Lk. 4:12). Certainly Jesus faced many other occasions of temptation (See, Jn. 6:15; Lk. 22:28; Mt. 27:39-44). Forty days of victory did not preclude future temptations. We must always be alert for the Devil's return, no matter how victorious we've been.

◆ **Victory Celebration**

Angels came to Jesus to serve Him, possibly to provide Him the sustenance as one did for Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-8) and the support that He had denied Himself during the forty days of His fast. Remember there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. God is there through it all. He is faithful. We may feel alone, but we are not

alone.

Satan is the strong man; Christ is the stronger than he (Mt. 12:29; Lk. 11:21f). Jesus showed us the way to handle Satan. Temptations are not sins, but they are the battles we all must fight. They will leave the victor stronger and the vanquished weaker. If we, like Christ, resist the devil, he will flee from us for a season.

### **Jesus' Ministry Begins, 4:12-25**

Matthew's narrative of the life of Jesus picks up with Jesus returning from the wilderness having been tempted by the Devil to Nazareth and on to Capernaum. The time is set when John the Baptist is in prison. However, according to John's record a great deal more took place and is covered in John 1:19 through John 3:36.

At this point Matthew does not tell us why or how John ended up in prison. He does explain later in Matthew 14:3-4: *"For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'"*

#### **◆ Calling Galilee to Repent, 4:12-17**

Jesus was to work in the region of Galilee it is about 59 miles long and 28 miles wide. It was the area originally given to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Now it was controlled by the Gentiles: Romans. It was densely populated with several cities around the Sea of Galilee which is actually a lake. The Jewish population of Galilee were more the working class and not considered as sophisticated as those in Jerusalem and Judea. These Jews even had their own accent (Matt. 26:73). However, according to the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1,2 this is where the light of the Messiah was to dawn.

The preaching of Jesus was the same as that of John (3:2) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:17). Repentance requires a change of heart that results in a change of behavior. The phrase "at hand" means "has come near" (Pope 112) and proclaims the closeness of the kingdom's arrival.

#### **◆ Calling Fishermen to Fish for Men, 4:18-21**

Jesus seems to relocate his hometown from Nazareth to that of Capernaum. The name "Capernaum" means city of Nahum, perhaps, named after the minor prophet. Although it is not but a collection of ruins, in the time of Christ it had a substantial synagogue, military presence and tax office. It was situated on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. The sea was important to the commerce of the area. Although this lake was only about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide and several hundred feet below sea level it support many fishermen. Some of these fishermen used lines and hooks on the shore. Those with boats used a net pulled between two or more boats to catch fish in the deep.

Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to "follow me." So the immediately followed Jesus. Without information from the other three gospels it would appear they just dropped everything and blindly followed a stranger. At the time of this meeting on the shores of Galilee, Jesus had already met this two brothers. John the baptist had pointed out to Andrew and John that Jesus was the lamb of God. Andrews spent time with Jesus and was convinced He was the Christ. He immediately finds Peter and brings him to Christ. In fact, every time Andrew is seen in the Gospel narrative he is bringing someone to Jesus. Here he brings his brother, later a little boy with a sack lunch, and Gentiles seeking Jesus.

Down the shoreline they find James and John. They two immediately leave their father Zebedee with his servants and follow Jesus. They also knew Jesus being his cousins through Mary's sister. These men may have been disciples of Jesus in the recent past but now He calls them to leave all and follow him full-time.

Notice Jesus likes to call busy men and women to follow Him. Fishermen news hard work and the need to stay busy. In fact, fishermen possess many characteristics needed in becoming fishers of men. Fishermen must fish out of faith. When he casts the hook, he does so not by sight but by faith. The fisherman normally cannot see the fish in the water. They must be very patient. Fish seldom bite the moment the bait hits the water. He must learn to be selective. Not all fish are caught the same way. Persistence is keep to success. The good fisherman does not want to quit until he makes his catch. The fisher of fish must have courage. The water is not always shallow and tranquil. A good fisherman is alert to the best time to fish. He knows that there is a time to cast and a time to look for better fishing spots. Finally, he takes care of his catch. He carefully preserves his fish.

#### **◆ Calling All to Hear and Be Healed, 4:23-25**

How did Jesus bring this Light to Galilee? First, by his teaching in the local synagogues. These synagogues were found in ever town and city of Galilee were they had at least of population of ten male Jews of age. The ruler of the synagogue would often turn they services over to a visiting Rabbi for the public reading and exposition of the Torah. Both Jesus and Paul took advantage of this in order to spread the good news (Luke 4:16-17; Acts 13:15-16). Jesus message consisted of preaching the Gospel or Good News of the Kingdom. Second, Jesus let the light shine by His many miracles which were the certification He was the Christ. His miracles were performed as a means of Good News and blessings to the people of Galilee.



Jesus healed everyone from every malady. He took away the symptoms - like pain. Jesus helped the demonics by casting out the demons who possessed them. He cured the epileptics who were suffering from central nervous system disorders. The Greek word here literally means "moonstruck" hence some translations say lunatics. Jesus healed those with handicaps of the feet and legs called "paralytics". No matter what the illness Jesus healed them without exclusion or without restricting the number of those healed. He healed them instantaneously, directly and completely. Also of note, this passage distinguished between physical and mental illness and demon possession.

It seems the Jesus did not turn anyone away. The more He healed, the more His "fame" spread. The more came to be healed and to hear the preaching of the Gospel. The crowds starting pouring in from Galilee and Jerusalem and Judea, but also from "*Decapolis*" which was the area of the ten Greek cities on the east side of the sea of Galilee and from "*beyond the Jordan*" which was known as Perea.

### Questions:

1. Contrast the temptation of Christ to the temptation of Adam.
2. T F Jesus was only tempt three times in the wilderness.
3. What was Satan's objective in the first temptation to get Jesus to sin?
4. How did Jesus respond to this first temptation?
5. What was the second temptation of Jesus in Matthew's gospel?
6. How did Jesus respond to this second temptation?
7. What did Satan offer to do for Jesus in the third temptation? What was the price tag?
8. Why would Satan's plan not work for Jesus?
9. How did Jesus respond to this temptation?
10. "\_\_\_\_\_ the Devil and he will \_\_\_\_\_ from you" (James 4:7).
11. T F Satan left Jesus never to return and tempt Him.
12. Match the temptation on the right and the scripture on the left with love of the world in the middle.  
Turn stone into bread   pride of life   Deuteronomy 6:13

Jump off the pinnacle of the Temple

lust of the flesh

Deuteronomy 6:16

Worship Satan for all the kingdoms

lust of the eyes

Deuteronomy 8:3

### **Application & Discussion:**

1. Jesus has been tempted just like we are. What things can be learned from Him to aid us in resisting temptations?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does the timing of the temptation increase the potency of the temptation? How can a Christian counter this?

**Homework:** List several passages of scripture you should memorize to help you battle temptation.

*Lesson Five: Sunday, October 30, 2022*

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# **Jesus' Beatitudes**

## ***Matthew 5:1-16***

### **Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, 5:1-2**

The Sermon on the Mount can be read in just fifteen minutes, but forms the core of Christ's teaching throughout his three and a half years of ministry on earth. This sermon was radical and revolutionary. Matthew 5:17-20 gives the theme of the Sermon: the righteousness of the citizen of the Messianic Kingdom versus the failed righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Paul Earnhart said, "the Sermon on the Mount is the best known of all the teachings of Jesus — it is also the least understood and the least practiced."

### **Beatitudes: the Quest for Happiness**

Happiness is not found by merely looking for it in the perfect happenstance. Jesus did not say, "Blessed are they that seek happiness." Through these Beatitudes Jesus shows that happiness is a quality of spirit rather than a set of circumstances. In the text "blessed" comes from the Greek word *makarios*. It is found fifty-five times in the New Testament. In the context of the New Testament

*makarios* is more than just a great state of being but is based on a condition of the spiritual heart and spiritual relationship with God.

To correctly interpret each beatitude one must understand they are constructed of three parts: a blessing (“*Blessed are...*”); a character trait (“*the pure in heart,*”); and a promise (“*for they shall see God*”). The term “beatitude” comes from the Latin *beatus* meaning blessed or happy.

### **Blessed Are The Poor in Spirit, 5:3**

Jesus promised, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:3).

There are two Greek words for “poor”. *Penes* represents the man who has nothing to spare, whereas *ptochos* describes the man who has nothing at all. In this passage *ptochos* is not concerned with what a man has, but what a man is. Jesus does not have those in mind who have a poor self-image and who self-pity or the assumption of voluntary poverty.

Poor in spirit are contrasted with rich in self: the self-made vs. those spiritually bankrupt; self-conceited vs. the selfless; self-sufficient vs. helplessness; self-serving vs. self-denial; and the self-glorifying vs. self-aborrent.

The promise or reward for having this character trait: “*theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*” Not just anyone can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. God has entrance requirements. This beatitude is first because it describes the attitude one must have toward self. Until he can be emptied or be totally impoverished of self, he can never be filled with comfort, mercy, inheritance, etc.

### **Blessed are Those Who Mourn, 5:4**

The next beatitude from Jesus is a certainly paradoxical. “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*” (Matthew 5:4). Mourning is something that we wish to avoid. Comfort detached from mourning is our aspiration. The word translated “*mourn*” is the strongest Greek term for the utter sorrow of a broken heart. This beatitude is key to helping us become better Christians instead of bitter critics. “It’s not what happens to me that matters most; it’s how I react to what happens to me.” “Why do bad things happen to good people?” is the wrong question. Instead we should be contemplating: “What happens to good people when bad things happen to them?”

The mourner’s reward: “for they shall find comfort.” The word “*comfort*” comes from the same root as the word “fortify”. “Com” means “with”. God gives us strength with which we can fortify our weakness. As the Shepherd’s Psalm reads: “*Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*”

### **Blessed are the Meek, 5:5**

Jesus wants us to be meek. “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). People generally have the idea that a “meek” individual is one that is extremely quiet, withdrawn, timid.

Cowardice or spiritlessness have also been referred to as meek. The meek are akin to the Milquetoast. A popular saying is “Meek as a mouse.”

The word for “meek” is translated from the Greek word *prautes*. The word was “...used of animals which have been tamed, and which have learned to accept discipline and control...A horse obedient to the reins, a dog trained to obey the word of command...” (Barclay, pp. 113,114). Meekness is like a horse once wild, but now obedient to the bridle and bit and thus, of service and value to its master. Therefore, it is not the absence of strength, but strength brought under control! Instead of “meek as a mouse” we should say “Meek As A Horse”.

The characteristics of meekness are god-controlled strength. Meekness is the opposite of one being out of control. Someone who is teachable. You cannot teach a man who is self-assured that he knows it all. Those who humbly submit to God. And the meek are gentle toward all men.

The promise that the meek will inherit the earth goes back to the Old Testament (Ps. 37:11). They used it as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, perhaps as the sum of all blessings. The meek inherit the earth in that they receive the richest, fullest, and most satisfying life that

this earth can give.

### **Blessed are Those Who Hunger and Thirst, 5:6**

The words used by Jesus describe a man who is painfully hungry and agonizingly parched. The Greek terms mean “to suffer hunger, to be famished, to crave after” (Liddell-Scott) and “to suffer thirst, suffer from thirst” (Thayer). Hunger and thirst are possibly the two strongest feelings in the human experience.

Healthy Christians should also have a strong baby-like appetite (1 Pet 2:2). The Psalmist captures the meaning well “*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God*” (Ps. 42:1) and “*O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water*” (Ps. 63:1).

The blessing for having such a hunger and thirst: “*for they shall be filled.*” The term “*filled*” is a very strong and graphic word, originally applied to the feeding and fattening of animals in a stall. The root of the Greek term means “fodder” or “grass”. We will become so spiritually satisfied that we will be like hefty, well-fed cattle. It implies a complete satisfaction. One who is filled to the point of having to loosen their belt or not able to take another sip. “*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 4:19).

### **Blessed are the Merciful, 5:7**

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” is the next Beatitude. The terms “grace” and “mercy” are not synonymous. Grace is kindness given to those not deserving. Mercy is kindness given to those in need. Trench wrote “*...in each of the apostolic salutations where these words occur, grace precedes mercy, an order that could not have been reversed*” (R.C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, 184). Thayer defined *mercy* as “kindness or goodwill toward the misery of others, joined with a desire to relieve them.” When ten lepers called out, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*” (Lk. 17:3), they did not want the Son of God to simply become aware of their circumstances. They wanted healing.

Mercy is extended when we help others with their needs. “*But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*” (1 Jn. 3:17).

The end result of this character trait is the promise of obtaining mercy. A spiritual axiom found throughout the scriptures is “*...for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*” (Gal. 6:7). If we sow mercy, we will reap mercy.

### **Blessed are the Pure in Heart, 5:8**

The next beatitude has been considered the most important of all eight: “*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8). With our heart we think (Prov. 23:7), obey (Rom. 6:17), love (Matt. 22:37), and understand (Matt. 13:15). The word for “*pure*” is translated from the Greek *katharos* from which we have the word “catharsis.” The term means “unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed” (Barclay) or “without the admixture of any element” (Vine). In the matter of one’s spiritual heart no wickedness or duplicity of purpose is present.

Purity in heart involves pure inwardly, being pure in motive. Purity in action and word begins with purity in thought, deed and speech.

“*Shall see God*” is the Beatitude’s promise. Just how can one see God? If your vision of God is not clear, it is not because God cannot be seen. It is because your heart is not pure. To clear the eye we must cleanse the heart. (Ps. 24,3,4; 17:15; 41:12; 63:2; 140:13).

### **Blessed are the Peacemakers, 5:9**

The seventh beatitude is: “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*” Just who or what is a peacemaker? First, let us look at the mean of peace. Someone had said, “peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload.” The world would define it as the

absence of conflict or war. Peace is not the absence of something, rather it is the presence of something.

Peace is the presence of God in our lives and in our hearts. The Hebrew word for "peace" is shalom. It means the presence of all good things. It means everything which makes for a man's highest good. The Greek word *eirene* is found about eighty-eight times in the New Testament. The concept behind the term "peace" is that of harmonious relationship. So a peacemaker is one who makes for peace not by removing turmoil but by creating good relationships.

A good peacemaker will have peace with God (Is 59:1-2). He will be forgiving and practicing the Golden Rule with regard to others (Matt. 7:12). A Peacemaker will share the Gospel leading others into a relationship with the "*Prince of Peace*" (Isa. 9:6). Christ established a Kingdom of peace (Rom. 14:17) with the Gospel of peace (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 6:15).

What is the reward for being a peacemaker? It is to be sons of God. Why? Because we look like our Father, the God of Peace. If the peacemakers are blessed, it necessarily follows that cursed are the "peacebreakers". "Woe to the troublemakers, for they shall be called the children of Satan." Are you a son of God or is Satan your father? Are you a peacemaker or a troublemaker? Are you a bridge-builder or bridge-destroyer?

### **Blessed are the Those Who are Persecuted, 5:9-11**

Finally, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Why would someone who has all of the seven previous virtues of being poor in spirit, meek, a peacemaker, etc. be persecuted? Because these character traits run contrary to the very spirit of an evil world, provoking a response of the sinner toward the saint.

Those blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Some Christians suffer because they have violated the civil laws of society (1 Pet. 2:20). Suffering with asthma or chronic pain is not persecution "*for righteousness sake.*" Kingdom citizens should expect persecution because some men love darkness more than light (Jn. 3:19,20). Jesus warned, "*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.*" (John 15:18).

"Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven" is the resulting reward. The blessing for being persecuted for righteousness' sake is possession of the Kingdom of Heaven. Notice this last Beatitude reverts to the first. The first Beatitude states the condition of becoming a citizen of the kingdom, and the last describes the character of one who has become a citizen. Tribulation is necessary to enter into the kingdom (Ac. 14:22). Persecution is a means by which the kingdom will grow. As it has been said before, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"

The addendum to this beatitude is dealing with the reaction a Christian is to have toward being persecuted. The one persecuted for Christ must "*rejoice and be exceedingly glad.*" Our joy is focused on the fact that our "reward in heaven is great." "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us*" (Romans 8:18). "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*" (2 Cor. 4:17).

These beatitudes tell us the character of the citizen of the Kingdom and the standard of righteousness to which he must aspire. The citizens of Christ's kingdom have a powerful and positive impact on the world around them.

### **You Are the Salt of the Earth, 5:13**

Possessing all eight of these beatitudes a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven will let his righteousness found in these character traits influence the world like salt and light.

Saints need to understand the properties of salt and how it is such a powerful influence in this world. Salt is valuable. The Romans would say, "there is nothing more useful than sun and salt." Salt preserves and prevents. It preserves meat and prevents foods from spoiling. The salt-like saints of the world have had a preserving and preventing influence. Salt purifies. Drink hydrochloric acid or ingest sodium hydroxide and these chemicals will likely end your life. Put these two chemicals together

and you have sodium chloride or salt. Without salt the body would not survive. Salt creates thirst. We are to thirst after righteousness (Mt. 5:6). Salt gives flavor. Nothing brings out the natural favor in food like salt. Salt has the power to take a bland dish and make it palatable. Salt is penetrating. Sprinkle a little salt on your grits and it finds a way of permeating the entire bowl. Salt is conspicuous. The absence of salt in one's vegetables is readily noticed.

If, however, you can live this world as a Christian inconspicuously than you may be worthless salt that has lost its savor. Salt can lose its positive properties. Pure salt does not lose its savor. Instead salt becomes contaminated. Just as a salt-free diet is no fun, nor is a salt-free world. Contaminated salt is useless. The only positive use for such salt is to be thrown down on paths to be trampled on.

### **You Are the Light of the World, 5:14-16**

Salt is a hidden but a powerful influence. Light is a visible and revealing influence. Light reveals and illuminates. The light of the Christian shows the beauty of Jesus which can be seen in him. Light banishes darkness. Light comforts and cheers. The light of the saints can bring comfort to a world that has lost its joy due to the misery of darkness. Light guides. We must always remember to "*shine as lights to the world*" (Phil. 2:15). Light protects from evil and warns of danger. Light awakens. Light is pure. Light and darkness do not mix. God's purity from all sin is why He is light. Light too is conspicuous.

The smallest of light can then be seen even in the darkest of rooms.

However, our light can be hindered. Putting a lamp under a bushel is very wasteful. Some Christians will hide their lights by being ashamed of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; I Pet. 4:16), Citizens as "The light of the world" must be visible to the world.

Light is reflective. The moon has no light of its own, but reflects the light of the sun in the darkness of night. When we reflect the light of Christ through our lives in this dark world God is given the glory. God alone gives light. God is glorified when men see the good works in our life. Godly living makes God look more attractive.

#### **Questions:**

1. In your own words what is the theme or objective of the Sermon on the Mount?
2. What is a beatitude?
3. What are the three parts of a beatitude?
4. Which of the two Greek words for poor is used in this verse? What is the difference?
5. Why do you think it is important Jesus listed "*poor in spirit*" first among the beatitudes?
6. How is the second beatitude paradoxical?
7. How does the world view the character trait: meek?

8. What is the proper definition of the Greek term translated "*meeek*"?
9. How powerful of a hunger or thirst is represented by the Greek terms used in Matt. 5:6?
10. What does the word "*filled*" mean in this context?
11. List some ways we are to show mercy to others?
12. What is the reward of being merciful?
13. What is the "*heart*" in Matthew 5:8?
14. What does "*pure*" mean in this context?
15. How is it that man can see God who is invisible, that is, not flesh and blood?
16. What does the Greek word *eirene* mean?
17. What is involved in being a peacemaker?
18. What is the reward for being a peacemaker?
19. What is the reward for those who are persecuted for righteousness sake?
20. How should not a Christian react to persecution?

21. How valuable was salt in the ancient world?
22. What are some of the attributes of light and how do they compare to the Christian life?
23. What is meant spiritually by the hiding of a lamp under a bushel?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. What are some ways to can shine and make God look good?
2. Give an example of how you are able to demonstrate meekness as a Christian?

**Homework:** Influence the world around you this week by exemplifying all eight character traits found in the Beatitudes and see how blessed you can be.

*Lesson Six: Sunday, November 6, 2022*

## **Jesus' Demonstration of Kingdom Righteousness**

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### ***Matthew 5:17-48***

#### **Jesus and the Law, 5:17-20**

- **Christ Came Not to Destroy the Law**

Jesus' conflict with the established self-appointed guardians of the Law, the Pharisees, may have left the impression that Jesus was at odds with the Law itself. The Pharisees tried time and again to catch Jesus in opposition to the Law of Moses. Eventually, Jesus was crucified as a Law breaker. But Jesus did not come to destroy the Law of Moses. The word here for "destroy" is *katalusai* meaning "to overthrow, i.e. render vain, deprive of success, bring to naught" (Thayer).

Jesus' disagreement was with the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law of Moses. A vast system of man-made regulations added to the life of a Jew to assist him as far away from violating of the Law as possible. At the time of Jesus these laws were oral traditions. Later they would be collected and written down in the twelve volumes of the Jerusalem Talmud and the sixty volumes Babylonian Talmud.

- **Christ Came to Fulfill the Law**

Just how did Christ fulfill the Law? First, He fulfilled or completed the purpose of the Law. Second, He fulfilled the Law by coming and preaching the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Third, by fulfilling the messianic prophecies (Lk. 23:25-27; 44-48). Jesus fulfilled all of them. The fourth manner He fulfilled the Law was by living a perfect life. (1 Pet. 2:21-25). Because He was sinless, He was the



only man able to pay the penalty of the Law as a sacrifice for sins. Finally, Jesus fulfilled all the promises of the Law.

- **All the Law Was to Be Fulfilled**

Not one *jot* would be overlooked in the fulfillment of the Law. The word *jot*, or *yod* is the name of the Hebrew letter i, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It is comparable to the Greek *iota* or dot. Nor would even a single tittle be neglected in the fulfillment of the Law. A tittle is what we call the serif. It was a little stroke or mark by which some of the Hebrew letters were distinguished from others. A comparison in the English alphabet would be how the “G” is distinguished from “C”, or “Q” from “O”. Not one crossing of a t or dotting of an i would be neglected in the fulfillment of the Law.

Jesus demonstrated that the smallest part of the Law was important. Therefore, Citizens of the Kingdom must obey all God’s Laws. The teachers of the Law would not only break the Laws themselves but cause others to break them by their human rules.

- **Righteousness That Exceeds the Pharisees**

Imagine the shock Jesus gave to the common people when He demanded a higher standard of righteousness than that of the Pharisees. Jesus condemned their use of traditions and accused them of using these to break God’s actual Laws (Matt. 15:1-9).

In the last week of Jesus life, He pronounced several woes upon the Pharisees’ standard of righteousness in Matthew 23. Where would the prospective citizens of Christ’s coming kingdom find a standard of righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees? The answer is the Beatitudes. The rest of the Sermon on the Mount will give them further instructions in righteousness. This kingdom brand of righteousness must exceed in quality and quantity anything Jesus’ disciples had witnessed among the Pharisees.

### **Murder with the Mouth, 5:21-26**

In the six areas which exemplify the Pharisaical brand of righteousness Jesus shows how those who wish to have kingdom righteousness must do better. He corrects their false traditions which misrepresent the intent of the Law. Yet, Jesus goes beyond this by speaking of His own authority: “*but I say to you. “It was said”*” is not a quote from the Old Testament but Jesus is quoting scribes’ interpretations of the scriptures. These scribes and rabbis came to think that the correct way to avoid breaking the sixth commandment (“thou shalt not murder” Ex. 20:13) was to simply keep from taking an innocent life. All the hate and anger which motivated the murder was not a sin. Jesus pointed to these six cases of contrasting standards of righteousness to demonstrate that kingdom righteousness starts in the heart.

- **Murder Begins in the Heart**

Pharisaical righteousness deals with murder as a mere civil issue. It consisted of avoiding the act of murder. Criminal intent which remained in the heart was of no real consequences.

Jesus implies that the guilt for murder does not begin just when the victim dies. Murder begins in the heart. Just how could one be guilty of murder without taking the life of another? Jesus gives three ways this can be done. First, one may murder his neighbor by being angry with him without a just cause. Jesus is not condemning righteous indignation. He expressed anger toward the Pharisees (Mk. 3:5). God Himself is “angry with the wicked every day” (Ps. 7:11, KJV). In fact, all Christians are commanded to be angry. “*Be angry, and do not sin*” (Eph. 4:26). The second means by which a hater can murder is by calling his neighbor “raca.” An attack on the intelligence of a man. Perhaps, calling him an empty headed, stupid fool.” Jesus said one could be in danger of condemnation before the Sanhedrin. Again, it is difficult to imagine this court taking up a discussion of a case where one man called another “stupid.” Third method of murdering with the hateful heart. It is by calling a man “fool.” Jesus Himself called the Pharisees “blind fools” (Matt. 23:17). The word “fool” is translated from the Greek term *moros* from which the English word “moron” is derived. It is a disparaging comment expressing the idea that someone is morally worthless. Once more this man is in danger, but not from a lower court or the supreme court but of Hell itself.

- **Reconciliation Required for Righteous Worship**

Jesus envisions a worshiper taking his sacrifice and traveling to Jerusalem. As he hands the

sacrifice over to an officiating priest, he suddenly remembers his unresolved issues with his neighbor. His reconciliation with his neighbor comes before his reconciliation with God. Jesus indicates here that it is the one who remembers he has offended or is in debt to his brother. Jesus encourages one to settle their issues out of court as quickly as possible. An *“adversary”* is the accuser in a lawsuit.

### **Adultery of the Heart, 5:27-30**

Jesus conflict again is not with the Law of Moses but with the Pharisaical view of adultery. They believed the act itself constitute the sin or adultery. Therefore, they could look and lust all they desired without guilt. Perhaps, they had overlooked the tenth commandment which condemned coveting their neighbor’s wife. After all, in the Law of Moses adultery was punishable by death. Both parties were to be stoned to death (Lev. 20:10; Dt. 22:22-27).

There are three kinds of adultery spoken of in the Bible; physical adultery, mental adultery, and spiritual adultery (Js. 4:4). All three are very serious sins. Though they may have different consequences in the end will cost each sinner their soul.

Like all sins, hatred, jealousy, envy, anger, etc., adultery begins in the heart before it is manifested in the flesh. Jesus is not condemning mere momentarily observation. There is a difference between lust and mere attraction, admiration, and affection. David saw the bathing Bathsheba. He lusted for her. Called her to his palace. They committed adultery.

*The Cure for Lust is...*

✓ **Not Self-Mutilation**

Plucking out their eyes and cutting off their hands. Jesus is obviously using a figure of speech. Any man who can lust with his right eye can learn to lust with his left eye. The statement in these two verses are hyperbolic. Mortification or putting to death the deeds of the flesh was commanded. The lustful “eye” and “hand” must be removed to save the soul.

✓ **Radical Removal of Enticements**

Anything that causes a man to be trapped or to stumble or lead him into sin must be removed.

✓ **Watch What You Look At**

Job wisely determined to guard his eyes from sins. *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?”* (Job 31:1).

✓ **Mind What You Think**

✓ **Be Careful Where You Go**

*“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts”* (Rom. 13:14).

### **Divorce by Paper, 5:31-32**

An understanding of the Law of Moses shows that God did not promote and permit frivolous divorce. In fact, a Jew did not divorce his wife even for adultery. She was stone to death.

The Pharisees conclude from this passage Moses was promoting the permissibility of divorce on any grounds? They accepted divorce for any grounds based on their misunderstanding of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. To them the only requirement was the giving of a certificate of dismissal. Again, the Pharisees were far more concerned with the outward legal steps in a divorce, than the motives of the heart from which divorce emanated. Divorce was merely a matter of legal paperwork and procedures.

The Pharisees’ first mistake was thinking Moses commanded divorce instead of permitting it (Matt. 19:4f). Divorce was limited to *“some uncleanness.”* The Hebrew term *“uncleanness”* has been interpreted by some scholars to mean nakedness or nudity.

In contrast to the Pharisees’ tradition allowing divorce for just any cause Jesus only allows for one exception for divorce: fornication. First, divorce without fornication causes wife to commit adultery. Next, when a spouse divorces for just any reason it causes the other man whom the put away spouse marries to commit adultery. Jesus also states that in the case where a spouse is put away for fornication and chooses to remarry both the put away spouse and the new marriage partner are living in an adulterous relationship. In fact, four people can be guilty of adultery: the wife when she remarries, the man she

marries, the husband when he remarries, and the woman he marries.

By necessary inference when a spouse commits adultery the innocent spouse can remarry without the new marriage becoming an adulterous relationship. However, in every divorce there is sin. This is one reason why God hates divorce.

### **Oaths Without Performance, 5:33-37**

An oath is a solemn promise or statement that something is true, which God is called upon to witness. So is it universally wrong to make a promise by way of a vow or oath? Paul swore (2 Cor. 1:23) and so do angels. (Rev. 10:5,6). Jesus swore (Matt. 26:63f) Even God has sworn and oath or vowed on many occasions (Gen. 22:16,17; Heb. 6:13-18; 7:21).

Jesus did not condemn the swearing of oaths altogether. He condemn the abuse of vows. To give their claims more credibility, they would swear by the temple, by their head, by heaven or by the earth. They had divided vows into two classes: those absolutely binding because God's name had been used, therefore making God a partner in the transaction, and non-binding vows which had evaded the use of God's name.

The principle that Jesus is teaching is that one must see God in every aspect of his life and live truthfully before Him. To swear by heaven was to swear by His throne (Mt. 23:22) the earth His footstool (Is. 66:1); or Jerusalem, His own city (Ps. 48). To swear by one's own head is to swear by one's life.

A disciple of Jesus must let his "yes" be "yes." The Christian's "word is his bond."

### **Vengeance, 5:38-42**

The Law of Moses on retribution reflects the fundamental legal concept of *quid pro quo* or law of like for like. If a criminal takes another's eye in like manner his eye will be taken. It stopped one for being killed over a lost eye. It limited vengeance. It was a judicial law to curtail vigilante justice.

The traditions of the Pharisees saw retaliation as more of a personal right to be enjoyed under the Law. Justice had to be carried out. One must avenge himself. It was "tit for tat, you kill my dog I'll kill your cat."

What Jesus is teaching is not a restraint upon the duties of the government authorities (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:13,14). In fact, God has ordained the government to protect the rights of the innocent and punish evil doers. Though nothing that Jesus is saying excludes self-defense it does encourage Christians to seek non-violent ways to resolve conflicts.

Instead of demanding one's right to revenge, Christians have a right to give up their right to things.

If the court has demanded a man give up his tunic via a court ruling Jesus said give them your cloak as well. The cloak was an outer garment like a robe. It could correspond to a coat. According to the Law man's cloak could not be taken permanently from him (Ex. 22:26-27). However, one could voluntarily give up a clock to settle a debt. If the courts rule we owe a man then willing pay up even to the point of giving up your RIGHTS to keep your cloak. Jesus had commanded His disciples to be willing to give up their rights to retaliate, protect their wounded pride, and their rights to keep things.

A Roman official could only legally compel one to carry his pack for a *million* or one Roman mile which was about one hundred and fifty yards short of a standard mile of today. Jews To insure this they would drive a stake in the ground exactly one mile from their home. He was not to carry the pack one step beyond the mile marker. Jesus commanded His citizens to volunteer themselves to go the second mile which was not required.

### **Enemies, 5:43-48**

Jesus clearly implies that citizens of His Kingdom will have enemies (Jn. 15:18-20; Matt. 10:3). So, if you do not have enemies, perhaps it is time to go out and get you some.

Once you find yourself some enemies, what should you do with them? The Pharisees were familiar with the Law's commandment to "*love thy neighbor as they self*" (Lev. 19:18). But if you interpret "*neighbor*" to mean those who are faithful Jews your love is limited. Enemies would be excluded. Notice the Pharisees tradition left out "*as yourself.*" While disqualifying their enemies from the command to love,

the also omitted the standard of how to show love to one's neighbor. No translation or version of this passage in the Law of Moses mentions anything like "hate thine enemy."

Kingdom citizens need to treat their enemies differently. First they must love them. This is the Greek *agape* love. It is a love that seeks and works to meet the needs of another no matter what your current attitude may be toward them or how you feel and conversely how they feel about you. The best way to get rid of our enemies is to love them to the point they are turned into our friends, brothers and sisters, and fellow-lovers of God. Next, they cursed by their enemies they are to love them in return. What greater blessing can be bestowed on our enemies than to seek their eternal good rather than their eternal damnation. They are to do good to those who hate them. By doing good one can open up the lines of communication and perhaps begin to end the enmity. Finally, Christians must pray for their enemies. Instead of balling up your hands into a fist to fight your enemies, fold your hands in prayer and face the Lord on their behalf. Jesus is not talking about us praying for our enemy to get run over by a truck.

Three blessings result from treating your enemies in this righteous way. The saint will manifest his sonship with God to the world. After all, "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). A son will be like his father. A Yiddish proverb says, "better that my enemy should see God in me than I should see evil in him." Second, his righteousness will exceed that of his fellow man. Our love needs to be the kind and quality which will distinguish us from sinners. Finally, he will be perfect like God. Obviously, Jesus is not saying we can be perfectly sinless like God (Rom. 3:23). The concept of the word for "perfect" is to be complete or whole or mature, full-grown. As a student who has reached a mature knowledge of his subject.

The Christian who applies Christ's standard of righteousness can be a full-grown, mature, and a complete citizen of His Kingdom.

#### **Questions:**

1. What is the difference between destroying and fulfilling the Law?
2. List five ways Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses.
3. What is a "jot" and "tittle"?
4. Is Jesus just correcting the abuses of the Old Testament by the Pharisees? Explain.
5. What are the consequences of calling someone a "moros" or fool?
6. Who is to make the first move toward reconciliation in a conflict?

7. Can women commit adultery in the heart? Explain.
8. What is mortification of sin? How is it accomplished?
9. T F According to the Jesus divorce was merely a matter of proper legal paperwork and procedures.
10. Is a spouse guilty of fornication free before God to remarry? Explain.
11. When can a spouse be allowed to remarry without it being adultery?
12. In like of this lesson do you think in the future you will make promises with "God is my witness" or "on my mother's grave" attached? Explain.
13. What was the view of the Pharisees on this issue of retaliation?
14. Does Jesus encourage Christians to give and lend money to just anybody without exception? Explain.
15. T F The Law of Moses never taught the Isralites to love their enemies.
16. List the three ways Jesus says this love can be expressed to our enemies?
17. What are the three results of loving our enemies?
18. List some things we can pray about when we go to God in prayer for our enemies.
19. What does "*perfect*" mean in verse 48?

## Application and Discussion:

1. List some traditions among congregations which have been exalted almost to the level of being a commandment Christians must obey?
2. What can women do to help avoid become a stumbling block to men? Should she be willing to make some sacrifices? Explain.
3. If a man and woman have divorced, but not for the cause of fornication, what two options do they have? (See 1 Cor. 7:10,11).

**Homework:** By way of self-examination, discover our false standards of Righteousness and correct them.

*Lesson Seven: Sunday, November 13, 2022*

# Jesus' Contrasts of the Motives of Righteousness

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## **Matthew 6:1-34**

### **Giving, 6:1-4**

In this text, two motives for giving charity are under discussion: giving which is done to be seen by men and charity which is given for the sake of the need without concern for recognition or reward. Much of the concern of the Pharisees in their religion was the outward or external performance of their religious deeds. The phrase "to be seen" comes from the Greek word *theathenai*. Our English words "theatrical" and "theater" are both derived from it. This describes the motives of the Pharisees.

The prohibition to sound the trumpet to gain public attention to their almsgiving is not to be taken literally. Jesus prohibits His disciples from blowing or tooting their own horn to make an ostentatious display of their charitable deeds. Hypocrites are known to practice this behavior of seeking recognition. Our English word "hypocrite" is taken directly from the Greek term. It is also a theatrical term which refers to an ancient Greek actor who put on a mask for the audience to pretend to be somebody he was not. Jesus is not calling all thespians "hypocrites. Robertson describes them as "pious pretenders who pose as perfect" before their public (51). First, they wish to be seen by their religious following in the synagogues. Second, they desire the attention of the people in the streets.

Jesus assumes His disciples will be charitable. When they do give, it must be done in secret. This does not mean Christians should never write a check with their name and address on it to a charitable organization. It does not mean he dare not list the amount given on his tax return. He had already commanded his disciples to let their light shine before men so they could see it and glorify God (Matt. 5:16). Again, the motive is to glorify God not self. Barnabas' charity was noted by the apostles (Acts 4:34-37) so much so they named him the "son of encouragement."

So pure is the motive of the giver, Jesus said "*do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*" (6:3b). Instead, the act of giving is to be selfless and self-forgetting. Jesus does not want "our

left hand applauding our right hand's generosity" (Stott 132).

The source of their reward is from the Father Himself. In verse two the Greek term for reward implies a wage that has been earned and paid in full. Jesus gives two reasons God is the best source to look to for reward. First, God sees in secret. Second, God rewards openly. When the final Day of reward comes for all men, will you be among those who here the Lord say, "*Well, done good and faithful servant*" (Matt. 25:21)?

### Praying, 6:5-8

Just as Jesus assumed His disciples would give alms He assumes they will pray: "*and when you pray*" (6:5a). He then goes on to contrast the unrighteous prayers of the Pharisees with the right motives of kingdom citizens.

#### *Praying with the Wrong Motive*

- ▶ **Prohibition:** "*you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray.*" Hypocrites love to pray. Often they will turn an opportunity to pray in public to word their private prayers. If you find yourself praying very little in private, but jump at every chance to pray in public, you need to examine your motives.
- ▶ **Place:** "*standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets.*" The place of prayer is important from the standpoint of who will be in eye-shot and ear-shot of their prayers. The word used here (*plateia*) refers to a wide, major street, and therefore to a major street corner" (MacArthur 365).
- ▶ **Purpose:** "*that they may be seen by men.*" Jesus condemned the Pharisees who "*for a pretense make long prayers.*" He then mentions the reward they will receive for their great prayers: "*these will receive greater condemnation*" (Mark 12:40).
- ▶ **Prize:** "*Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*" Self-glorification or the praise received from an adoring public can never match the reward of being glorified by God.

#### *Praying with the Wrong Motive*

- ▶ **Place:** "*But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door.*" Going into a closet and closing it. This is no guarantee that one will pray with the proper motive. It will rule out praying to be seen of men.
- ▶ **Purpose:** "*pray to your Father who is in the secret place.*" Properly motivated prayer will not draw attention to the one praying but to the Father who hears the prayer.
- ▶ **Prize:** "*and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*" Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee is a good example of this reward for praying with a proper motive (Luke 18:10-14).

#### *Praying in the Proper Manner*

- ▶ **Prohibition:** "*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them.*" Vain repetitions can come in a variety of forms. The Jews often used excessive adjectives to describe God in prayer. Many protestants repeat the "Lord's Prayer." Catholics say "hail, Mary's." Muslims recite their memorized prayers in Arabic five times a day toward Mecca whether they know Arabic or not. Some Pentecostals used "unknown" tongues when praying. The king in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* miserably fails in prayer. "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; Words without thoughts never to heaven go." Jesus is not condemning the mere repetition of requests in prayer. He Himself prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane that God remove the cup of suffering He was about to drink (Luke 22:36-46). Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh be removed (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Nehemiah prayed for three solid months concerning the fallen walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 1). Jesus also warns concerning these hypocrites, "*they think that they will be heard for their many words.*" He condemned the Pharisees who "*for a pretense make long prayer*" (Matt. 23:14). What is condemned here is not the length of a prayer, but the motive behind the length of the prayer. Jesus was known to pray all night (Luke 6:12).
- ▶ **Privilege:** "*For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*" Praying is a privilege. It is more than just a duty. Because He is omniscient He knows before we ask. If this is the case, why pray? Prayer is the means God has chosen for His children to

communicate to Him. God does not need our prayers, but if we are to have Him as our Father we need to pray.

### **Model Prayer, 6:9-15**

Perhaps Jesus model prayer is the most famous prayer in the Bible. This prayer can be divided into two sections. First, the prayer focuses on God and the second half on the physical provisions, pardon, and protection.

#### *"Our Father Who Art in Heaven"*

Proper prayer demands the right relation. Because we have a relationship with God as our Father we have access to Him anytime and any place. Because God is our Father in Heaven to whom the saints pray their relationship to the world is not the same as those who are outside God's family.

#### *"Hallowed Be Your Name"*

The term "hallowed" means "to set apart from everything common and profane, to esteem, prize, honor, reverence, and adore as divine and infinitely blessed" (Lenski). The Father is to be respected as holy. Everyone should regard as holy, revered, and esteemed any scriptural name of God.

#### *"Thy Kingdom Come"*

Both John the Baptist and Jesus came preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. The long awaited prophecies were about to be fulfilled (Mt. 4:17; 3:1,2; 4:17; Mk. 1:14-15; 9:1). Since Christians are already in the Kingdom (Col. 1:13) which was established nearly two thousand years ago on the first Pentecost after the Lord's resurrection (Ac. 2:29-36), it makes no sense to continue to pray for it to come. Today, does not mean one should not pray for the growth and well-being of the church.

#### *"Thy Will Be Done On Earth as it is in Heaven"*

To be a part of a kingdom is to submit the rule and will of the King. The will of God is in reference to what God wants. Jesus prayed, *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done"* (Luke 22:42).

#### *"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"*

Man prepares the soil, plants the seeds, beats back the weeds, and picks the harvest, but without God man would starve. He is just that dependent upon the Creator. We live daily or one day at a time. God knows our daily needs before we ask. Jesus commands we must still ask. Prayers for daily bread is a recognition of our dependence on God. A prayer of supplication needs to be made for the necessities of life.

#### *"Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors"*

Receiving forgiveness from God and forgiving our fellow man are intertwined in this prayer. When we pray, with an unforgiving heart, we are in effect requesting God not to forgive us. The extent of a forgiving attitude is also compared with God's readiness to forgive.

#### *"Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil"*

God does not tempt any Christian with evil (Js. 1:13). It is the evil one (Mt. 13:19; 1 Jn. 2:13,14; 3:12) who wishes to lead us into evil or sin. The request "lead us" suggest the need for God's guidance in the decisions of life (Jer. 10:23).

#### *"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

The model prayer given to Jesus disciples ends appropriately with an adoration of God. The Father in Heaven is to be praised for His all-powerful reign and dominion. This recognize that it is God who is in control over all and only He has the power to answer our prayers.

### **Fasting, 6:16-18**

On the Day of Atonement fasting was commended to be *"from even till even"* (Lev. 23:32). This was the only time the Law of Moses commanded fasting. By the time Jesus came preaching, fasting had been made into a major part of the religious life of a Pharisee and those who followed them. Again Jesus contrast His standards with that of the Pharisees.

#### *Fallacious Fasting*

- **Fake Faith:** *"do not be like the hypocrites."*
- **Fabricated Face:** *"with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces."* In times of sorrow and fasting they would tear their clothes and cast up ashes to fall upon their heads.



- **False Function:** *“that they may appear to men to be fasting.”* Parading one’s piety before the people will not please the Lord.
  - **Flimsy Fortune:** *“Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”* There is no direct spiritual reward received by just abstaining from food.
- Faithful Fasting*
- **Foreseen Feat:** *“But you, when you fast.”* No where in the New Testament is fasting commanded of Christians as a deed of devotion. Jesus assumes His disciples will fast.
  - **Forthright Face:** *“anoint your head and wash your face.”* Instead of putting on the make-up of an actor playing a part before his audience. Christians are to cover-up the signs of fasting
  - **Fair Function:** *“so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place.”*
  - **Favorable Fortune:** *“and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”* A human audience can be taken in by our performance in public. God cannot be fooled. He will openly expose those who are fasting frauds.

### **Treasuring, Focusing, Serving, 6:19-24**

#### ■ **Treasuring Up One of Two Possible Investments**

Treasuring up one of two possible investments demonstrates Kingdom righteousness. In the Greek text Jesus is making a play on words. He is prohibiting them from treasuring up treasures. The phrase to *“lay up”* is from the Greek word *thesaurizete* and the Greek term *thesaurous* is translated here, *“treasures.”* They both come from the same Greek term from which the English word *“thesaurus”* is derived. A thesaurus is a treasury of words.

Jesus gives three reasons why investing in the temporary treasures of life is the wrong choice. First, since much of their clothing was made of wool, moths would eat it away. Another reason is the corruptibility of their possessions. Finally, Jesus reminds them of thieves who break in and steal their goods.

Next, Jesus gives the same three reasons from a positive standpoint as to why His disciples should invest in heaven. Heaven has no devouring insects or rodents, no rust, and all thieves are kept off the streets of gold. The *“heart”* is the mind. Our mind dwells on what is most important. If our minds are focused on spiritual blessings our hearts are focused on Heaven

#### ■ **Focusing On One of Two Possible Directions**

Verses 22 and 23 of Jesus’ sermon are more of a challenge to understand. The word *“single”* is from the Greek *haplous*. *“The word means ‘without folds’ like a piece of cloth unfolded, simplex in Latin”* (Robertson 56). A single eye is a simple one in that it is focused on a single point. The eyes determine directions and destination. The heart or eyes of the man whose focus in on the earth and its treasures while at the same time trying to focus on the hope of Heaven has double-vision. He cannot see clearly where he is going. He will stumble and fall. A man with two good eyes walks in the light as opposed to a blind man who walks in darkness.

#### ■ **Serving One of Two Possible Masters**

*“Mammon is a Syriac word, a name given to an idol worshipped as the god of riches. It has the same meaning as Plutus among the Greek”* (Barnes). Jesus explains this impossibility by declaring they must either hate or love and be loyal or to despise. There is no room for compromise. To serve materialism is to be disloyal to the God who redeemed us from the slavery to sin. It is claiming *“in God we trust”* when the truth is *“in gold we trust.”* For a true disciple the Lord is the only Master they serve. Their eye is clear and focused on a single destination. Their treasures are treasured up in Heaven.

### **Worrying, 6:25-34**

What is the meaning of the term *“worry”* as used in this context? The Greek verb *merimnao* *“signifies to be anxious about, to have a distracting care”* (Vine 160).

#### ■ **Do Not Fret About Food**

God created the birds and man. If He knows how to take care of them shall He not take care of

the very creatures who were made in His image? Man should not be anxious about life because he is of more value before God than even a sparrow. Stop taking so much thought about food and clothing and start looking at the birds and the lessons they can teach about trusting in the Creator. God asked Job, “*who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?*” (Job 35:11).

■ **Do Not Languish About Longevity or Length**

“The word *helikian* is used either of height (stature) or length of life (age)” (Robertson 59). Worry will not add to one’s height. The same is true about being overly concerned about the length of one’s life. Any man can worry himself to death over anything. No man can worry himself into more life.

■ **Do Not Care About Clothing**

Just as clothing fashion and fame is here today and gone tomorrow so is the grass and flowers of the field. Clothing wears out, goes out of fashion, can be out grown. The “*oven*” could be a metaphor for the hot eastern wind called the *sirocco* which would blow through the desert and across Palestine. One day the flowers are blooming beautifully and the next they are dry, ugly, and burned up. Jesus turns from lilies of the field which God clothes to the clothing of Solomon. If Solomon could not cloth himself better than God could dress a flower even with all his great thoughtfulness and wealth than no man can do any better. So, why not let God provide for you?

■ **Do Not Distress - Develop Faith**

Distressing over the three-fold triad of daily concerns is forbidden. 1) “*What shall we eat?*” 2) “*What shall we drink?*” 3) “*What shall we wear?*” An excessive preoccupation with these worldly provisions is not productive.

■ **Do Not Be Anxious - Rely on the Father**

Instead of worry about anything, Christians should talk to their Father in Heaven about everything.

■ **Do Not Seek Provisions - Seek First Spiritual**

Christians are seek to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven and practice Kingdom righteousness. By worrying over the material world which is temporal, they miss out on righteousness and the Kingdom. The promise is God will take care of all your cares.

■ **Do Not Fear the Future - Live Today**

Christians are never promised a trouble free life. Every day presents its own set of problems. “...the average person is crucifying himself between two thieves: the regrets of yesterday and the worries about tomorrow” (Wiersbe 28). Living one day at a time makes life bearable. Taking on the cares of a lifetime in one day makes life impossible. Worry has the ability to double the trouble by adding the problems of tomorrow to those of today.

**Questions:**

1. Define "hypocrite"
2. T F If a Christian does a good deed and it by chance becomes known to the public, he is a hypocrite.
3. What two reasons does Jesus give for God being the best source to look to for their reward?
4. What advantage is there in praying in a closet with the door closed?
5. Give examples of acceptable repetition from the prayers of god-fearing men and women in the Bible.

6. If God knows our every need before we ask of Him in prayer, why pray?
7. What does "*hallowed*" mean? Why is God's name to be hallowed in prayer?
8. When did the Kingdom come? What should Christians pray to God about the Kingdom today?
9. Why ask God not to lead us into temptation, if God does not tempt any man?
10. Why did the fallacious fasters disfigure their faces?
11. How or in what way will God reward the righteous who fast?
12. What three reasons does Jesus give for not laying up treasures on earth?
13. What is the good eye and how does it make the whole body full of light?
14. Why is it impossible to serve both God and materialism?
15. What are the lessons the birds of the air can teach us about worry?
16. Why is worrying about tomorrow so futile?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Are private prayers uttered in public worship services appropriate? Explain.

2. What are some specific things you can do to help lay up more treasures in Heaven, let more light into your life, and serve God only?
  
3. List some ways you can seek the Kingdom and righteousness.

**Homework:** Why do you do the things you do as a Christian? Check your motives this week.

*Lesson Eight: Sunday, November 20, 2022*

## **Jesus' Promotion of the Acts of Righteousness**

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### ***Matthew 7:1-28***

#### **Judging, 7:1-6**

It's been said that the most frequently quoted Bible verse is no longer John 3:16 but Matthew 7:1. Perhaps this verse is the most used, abused, and confused statement of Jesus in the Bible. But does Jesus condemn all judging in the verse? First, the one quoting Jesus' "judge not" is often contradicting the context. The passage itself calls for a judgment to be made concerning the man who has a speck in his eye and the man who has a beam sticking out of his eye. To interpret Jesus to mean that all judging is sinful would make Jesus a hypocrite. He commands his disciples to judge in John 7:24. All be it, judge with righteous judgment. If Jesus is condemning all types of judgment by His disciples than this passage is in conflict with many other New Testament examples and commands given to the disciples (Mt. 14:1-11; Acts 6:9; 7:51-54; Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:20; Js. 5:19,20). If all judging is prohibited by Jesus, life would be made impossible to live. All of us judge just about everything every day. When a couple is selecting a baby sitter, when buying a car or voting for politicians. All require proper judgment.

- **Hypocritical Judgment**

Obviously, if one has a large problem (beam) apparent for all to see, it is hypocritical of him to become overly concerned about the little speck in the eye of another. Jesus gave a great example of this in His parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk. 18:10-14). When the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray all he could see was the publican sin and did not humble himself as a sinner before a Holy God.

- **Judgment After Self-Examination**

Jesus is not teaching that one has to be perfect before he can correct the faults of others. Jesus demonstrated that before trying to correct the sins of others, we must first correct our own sins. Jesus did not condemn the man for trying to get the mote out of our brother's eye. In fact, He commanded that he do so, but only after he first removed the beam in his own eye. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you

also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

- **Judgment with Discernment**

Jesus even taught His disciples to avoid wasting their time and efforts on certain men. Some men are like dogs. Some men are like hogs. Pigs were the height of impurity and foulness.

- **Judgment with Discrimination**

No one would give pearls to a hog. He loves nuts and seeds and loves the mud. They would try to eat the pearls and find them to be inedible. Likewise, some are so worldly minded they cannot handle some holy and valuable truths from God. The early Christians displayed this type of discrimination with the Gospel with regard to those who were spiritual dogs and hogs.

- **Judgment with Danger**

Both hogs and dogs were wild and dangerous. Some men will respond violently to any rebuke or judgment no matter who righteously it is given.

## **Finding, Loving, 7:7-12**

*Praying: Asking, Seeking, Knocking*

- **Prayer is to be Made Continually**

Jesus gives three commands which are present imperatives. This passage could be rendered: "keep on asking," "keep on seeking," and "keep on knocking." Saints are to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Th. 5:17). Asking is required before God will be answering. Many find doors of opportunity closed to them. They trust that someone is there to open these doors. Therefore, they will knock until entrance is gained.

- **Prayer is to be Made Confidently**

Jesus gives two illustrations of how even evil fathers will not answer the request of their children. Imagine a child asking for fish and getting a poisonous snake. A scorpion is poisonous and could resemble an egg when curled up. Without faith in God's willingness and ability to answer prayer one would not be motivated to pray. God compares Himself to natural fathers who can be evil and still answer the needs of His children. Prayer is to be offered with confidence that the Heavenly Father cares enough to listen. Prayers should be made with confidence that the Heavenly Father will give "good" gifts. Kingdom citizens should pray with confidence which does not limit God.

*Golden Rule: Loving*

This Golden Rule when practiced fulfills the Law and the Prophets. It appeals to our common sense. Most people know how they want to be treated. The Golden Rule is not meant just to hang in a nice picture frame over the den couch. It was given to be applied to all walks of life

## **Entering, 7:13-14**

In these two short verses Jesus gives His disciples just two paths from which to choose. All men are passing through one of two gates and traveling down one of two pathways. These do not lead to the same place, but their destinies are polar opposites. One leads to death and the other to life.

*Two Gates*

- **The Wide Gate**

A "gate" represents a starting point, a beginning, a point of entrance, a choice. The wide gate is large and spacious. It offers an easy entrance. One does not have to give up anything to squeeze through this gate.

- **The Narrow Gate**

The less appealing gate is the one labeled "*narrow*." The narrow entrance is less inviting because it is small, constricting, and paltry in comparison. Its exclusiveness seems narrowminded and bigoted. Truth and the way of righteousness is limited. Just as two plus two can only add up to four, so the truth is exclusive of anything other than what is right. The very nature of truth is that it must be narrow. Either something is true or it is not. There is only one faith, one hope, one Lord, one God and Father (Eph. 4:4-6).

*Two Paths*

- **The Broad Path**

To be considered broad-minded is a compliment. It describes someone who is tolerant of a

variety of beliefs, opinions, and progressive ideas. Whereas a narrow-minded man is someone who is intolerant and unwilling to accept different beliefs or behavior. They are condemned for being judgmental or prejudicial.

- **The Difficult Path**

The contrasting path is difficult because it is straight or restricted. It does not allow much margin for error. The path is difficult because it is not popular. It requires determination

*Two Travelers*

- **The Many**

The saying "Fifty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong" is from a song written in the late 1920s which contrasted the loose morals of the French with the prohibitions and inhibitions of Americans. Why do so many make the wrong choice? 1) First, there is the appeal of the majority. 2) It is assumed what is popular is appropriate and approved. 3) Others do not like the conditions set by Jesus for entrance in to the narrow gate.

- **The Few**

Jesus' statement, "*few there be that find it*" (Matthew 7:14) is perhaps one of the saddest words spoken in the Bible. The "*few*" dare to be different. The eight souls saved on the ark. Righteous Lot lived in Sodom and he was spared. Joshua and Caleb are the only original slaves the left Egypt as adults to enter the Land of Promise.

*Two Destinations*

- **Destruction**

Direction determines destination. Note, the word translated "*destruction*" in this passage does not mean annihilation. Instead it refers to loss. It involves complete ruin. It alludes to the absolute deprivation of well being.

- **Life**

It is a life that is eternal and does not end. Only two choices and Jesus told us which one is right. This makes our choice not a fifty-fifty chance but a 100% certainty as to which one to choose. You will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell? There is no third option.

## **Bearing, 7:15-20**

- ▶ **False Teachers Wear Fake Fleece**

Satan has always had a pack of these wolves who disguise themselves as one of the flock in order to be effective. It is the obligation of God's sheep to discover the false teachers.

- ▶ **False Teachers are Fierce**

This is why Jesus commands us to "beware!" Wolves are natural enemies of sheep. Sheep are very defenseless and docile.

- ▶ **False Teacher Found Out by Fruit**

A agriculturalist can look at a plant, bush or tree and tell what it is by the leaves it bears and the bark it wears. The Pharisees and Sadducees were examples of bad trees which bore bad fruit. The first thing to notice about a good tree is that it will bring forth good fruit. These fruits are character traits found in the lives of the saints. The bad fruit of the false teacher will be the character flaws found in his daily life. The tree may appear healthy on the outside, but is rotten and diseased within. The main fruit of a false teacher is what he teaches. A false prophet is just that he is a fore-teller of falsehoods. Everything he says is not a lie. When wolves enter a flock they will try to separate the weak from the strong so they will have an easier time of destroying their prey.

- ▶ **False Teacher Feed Fictional Food**

Someone could stick figs on thistles and grapes on thornbushes to give them the appearance of a genuine source of food. However, this would never change their true nature. The preaching of the false teachers may sound very appealing to their audience.

- ▶ **False Teacher Face Future Fate**

One day the false teacher will be identified as corrupt not bearing good fruit at the Judgment. He will be sentenced by God and cast into the fires of Hell.

## Obeying, 7:21-23

### ◆ Profession of Faith in Lord

It is easier to profess faith in the Lord than to possess it through obedience. Lip service has always been easier than performance of service. Many will claim Jesus as Lord and Master and have never been His slave. Faith in Jesus as Lord is not a mere mental ascent or verbal confession. Faith demands actions on the part of the professor.

### ◆ Profession of Obedience in the Lord

The phrase *"that day"* would be in reference the Day of Judgment which will begin when Christ returns (Matt. 24:36). The "many" are those who have chosen the wide gate and are traveling the broad path. The phrase *"in Your name"* is used three times for emphasis to mean "by the Lord's authority and will." Claiming obedience is one thing, but action contrary to the will of God is disobedience. No amount of good deeds can be substituted for obedience to the Gospel or obedient faith in keeping the law of Christ. Sin can only be covered by the grace of God through obedience to Christ. Many will be those who could argue for their entrance into Heaven on the bases that they were good moral men and women, they never killed anyone, they were faithful to their spouses, they helped the poor, they did not do any harm, they were good obedient citizens of their country, they did not tell lies, etc.

### ◆ Profession of the Lord to the Disobedient

Jesus clearly identifies Himself as the Judge as well as the Lord. He is their Judge not their savior because they have no past relationship with the Lord. He does not know them. Of course, Jesus is God and God is all-knowing. So Jesus knows who they are. The term *"know"* is to know intimately. Paul said, *"The Lord knows those who are his"* (2 Tim. 2:19). The problem with the many on Judgment Day is they are deceived into thinking they have a personal relationship with Christ as their Savior.

Therefore, they have not future presence with the Lord. After Jesus has judged them not to be known by Him as their Savior, He condemns them to eternal destruction.

The final reason they would be in this sad situation on Judgment Day is they practiced no present obedience to the Lord. "Practice lawlessness is a present participle in the Greek, indicating continuous, regular action...You continually and habitually practice lawlessness is the idea" (Macarthur 479). It is of no use to profess Christ or do good in His name if one does not have a personal relationship with the Lord.

## Building, 7:24-27

Jesus just demanded real obedience to His Kingdom law for those who face Judgment. A mere verbal declaration of *"Lord, Lord"* will not do (Matt. 7:21).

### ✓ Building Differently

At first glance, this parable shows everything be to similar between the two builders. Appearances can be quite deceptive.

### ✓ Building Upon the Right Foundation

The dissimilarities of the buildings were not very apparent until you looked at the foundation they were build upon. One built upon the rock foundation while the other built upon the shifting sands.

### ✓ Building Wisely

According to this parable there is a wise way to build and a foolish way. In Luke's account of this parable he adds the detail of the wise builder *"digging deep, and laying his foundation a rock"* (Lk. 6:48). The wise man will build his house to last.

### ✓ Building While Listening

The wise builder was paying attention to instructions. He did not start assembling without reading the instructions. It is wise to pay attention to the Designer's instructions.

### ✓ Building to Endure the Storms of Life

The true test of any buildings foundation will be the storms and earthquakes. Into every life some storms must blow. Those who build their lives on the foundation of the shifting sand crash in the face of adversity.

### ✓ Building in View of Final Inspection

Before a home can be inhabited a building inspector must check the building to see if the

structure is within the specifications of the building code and thus deemed safe. Throughout the sermon Jesus has alluded to this day of reckoning. When the house falls the soul is lost. This is a great fall. There will be no recovering from this disaster. After the great fall of the fools house there will not be another chance to rebuild.

### **Summary, 7:29**

When Jesus opened His mouth and began to speak it was not as one of the learned Rabbi's of the day. The Greek form of the word "*taught*" implies that Jesus spoke these things often. True "preaching is the proclamation of certainties, not the suggestion of possibilities." 51

#### **Questions:**

1. What is a "*mote*" and what is a "*beam*"?
2. List other passage where Jesus commands his disciples to judge others?
3. Who represents the dogs and hogs and what do that which is holy and pearls represent in verse six?
4. What are the conditions of acceptable prayer?
5. What is the major difference between man's golden rules and the original Golden Rule by Jesus?
6. What makes the wide gate so inviting to the masses?
7. Why is the right path difficult?
8. Who are the many who are traveling the broad path?
9. What is the most obvious characteristic of a false teacher?
10. What is it not possible for evil trees to produce good fruit?



11. What is the future fate of false teachers?
12. Who is the judge in 7:21-23?
13. What is the future for those whom Jesus does not know?
14. Why did not Jesus know these?
15. What is similar between the two houses? What is the big difference?
16. What will a wise spiritual builder do before he begins to build?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. You have just judged someone with righteous judgment who turns to you and says, “judge not!” What is the best way to handle this situation?
2. Someone you know is thinks they are saved and you know they are not? What could you do to encourage them to openly examine their soul’s true condition?
3. Make a list of Bible characters who you think were wise builders and those who were foolish builders?

**Homework:** Consider your righteous conduct before the world.

# Jesus' Willingness to Help

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## Matthew 8:1-34

In chapters eight and nine of Matthew the apostle records nine miracles in groups of three. They are divided by Jesus' teachings on discipleship. Miracles of all sorts are represented from a leper to a servant to a mother-in-law. Why did our Lord perform miracles? He did so out of compassion for man's needs. They were an addition to His credentials and fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (see Isa. 29:18–19; 35:4–6). But miracles also provided object lessons for the crowds.

This chapter shows Jesus' willingness to touch a leper, heal a Centurion's Servant, help Peter's mother-in-law, calm the sea at His disciples' pleadings for help, and even willing to cast out Legion into a herd of swine. All this in contrast to two disciples who were willing to make excuses instead of following Jesus.

### Spotless Leper, 8:1-4

▶ **Jesus Has a Following**

The multitudes follow Jesus down from His sermon on the mount. They are impressed by His teaching and perhaps hope to see a miracle. Jesus did not perform miracles for the purpose of gathering a crowd. The multitudes came by word of mouth.

▶ **Jesus Receives Worship from a Leper**

Pressing through the crowd and an unclean leper bolding approaches Jesus *"and worshiped Him."*

Lepers were outcast of society. They could not enter a synagogue or temple. There was not medical cure so it was a death sentence.

▶ **Jesus Touches a Leper**

Jesus could have healed the leper from afar or at a word but He *"put out His hand and touched him."* This would have made Jesus unclean according to the Law (Lev. 5:3). But instead of contaminating Himself, he cleansed the leper. Today, over ninety percent of the world's population are immune to leprosy. Back then it seems as if it were far more contagious.

It may have been a long time since the leper had been touched by another. This shows Jesus great compassion. The man would have kept people away by covering his mouth and crying, "Unclean! Unclean!"

▶ **Jesus is Willing to Cleanse a Leper**

The leper has no doubts about Jesus' ability to cleanse him. He said to Jesus, *"You can make me clean."* The leper only questions whether Jesus will be willing. Jesus said *"I am willing; be cleansed."*

Leprosy is an illustration of sin (Isa. 1:5–6). Sin separates, kills, defiles, etc. Jesus willingly died so He could cleanse of all sin.

▶ **Jesus Immediately Heals the Leper**

The term "leprosy" comes from the Greek *lepros* meaning "scaly." The body would become scaly on the arm and face and spread. Jesus would instantly cure all the outward effects of the disease.

▶ **Jesus Makes of Request of the Leper**

Jesus made a request of him: *“See that you tell no one; but go your way.”* This was not an uncommon request of Jesus to those He healed (Matt. 8:4, 18; 9:30; Luke 8:56). But he could not help but share his good news with everyone. Today, we are asked by Jesus to share the Good News, but refuse to speak to anyone.

▶ **Jesus Encourages the Fulfilling of the Law**

Jesus encouraged the man to *“show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”* He came to fulfill the Law and demonstrated such here. According to Leviticus 14. Two birds were taken. One sacrificed and the other released. Application of the blood was placed on the former lepers ear and thumb. He was sprinkled seven times and pronounced clean.

### **Captain Marvel, 8:5-13**

Next comes the story about a Centurion who was a Roman captain who made Christ marvel at his great faith. It is also recorded in Luke 7:10. There are only two times that the Bible says Jesus marveled at someone. On the other occasion he marveled at their unbelief (Mk. 6:6).

★ **Marvelous Authority**

As a Centurion he was in authority over scores of men. He was a man of power who commanded respect and obedience. Polybius, the historian, describes the qualifications of centurions. They must be not so much “seekers after danger as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable; they ought not to be over anxious to rush into the fight; but when hard pressed they must be ready to hold their ground and die at their posts.”

★ **Marvelous Love**

This Centurion cared about his servant. He was more than just a “living tool.” He also cared about the Jews where he served having built for them a synagogue.

★ **Marvelous Reputation**

Although he was a foreigner in Capernaum, he had come to be respected by the Jews. Jews and Gentiles normally hated each other. Jews despised the Gentiles, and the Gentiles hated the Jews. Perhaps he had become a proselyte to Judaism. His reputation was of such that the elders of the Jews helped procure help from Jesus.

★ **Marvelous Humility**

This Roman soldier sent his friends out to Jesus to tell him that he was not worthy that Jesus should come under his roof (Cf. Acts 18:28). The Jews of Capernaum saw this soldier as “worthy” because of his good deeds, but he had seen his own unworthiness. Augustine: *“By saying that he was unworthy, he showed himself worthy of Christ’s entering, not within his walls, but within his heart”*.

★ **Marvelous Faith**

There are two instances of faith which are called *“great faith”* by Jesus. The other is another Gentile, the Syrophenician woman (Mt. 5. 15:28; Lk. 4:26). In both cases Jesus healed at a distance. Our faith must grow and increase (2 Th. 1:3). If it grows, it becomes great. If not, it diminishes in weakness. He came with that perfect confidence which looks up and says, “Lord, I know you can do this.”

★ **Marvelous Respect for Authority**

The Centurion understood the principle of authority for he was a man who had authority. He was a man who was placed under the authority of his superiors. He was also a man with authority over a men.

He felt that the powers of nature were not only subordinate to Jesus, but were completely under his power. Christ was able to simply *“Peace be still”* or *“be cleansed.”* An instantaneous cure from a distance is rare among the healing miracles of the Bible.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, *“A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul.”*

### **Feverish Mother-in-law, 8:14–17**

According to Mark (1:21-29) and Luke's (4:31-38) accounts the healing of Peter's mother-in-law took place after the demon was cast out in the synagogue at Capernaum. When they all arrived at Peter's home, Jesus touches the hand of the fever stricken mother-in-law and not only does it go away instantly but her strength is instantly renewed to the point she can get up and serve her guest.

They do not have long to eat supper until news of the event spreads and many come to Peter's house to be healed.

Matthew uses this occasion to note the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4. Although it is about the Suffering Servant dying for our sins, he applies it to physical healing. If Jesus can heal the sick and can heal the sin-sick. Peter quotes this same passage and applies it to spiritual healing (1 Peter 2:24).

### **Would-be Disciples, 8:18-22**

This section serves as a brief interlude between the first set of three miracles and the second set. Jesus, because of the crowds, decides to get into the boat and cross the Sea of Galilee. Mark tells us other boats were loading up to follow. It is at this time two of Jesus disciples approach Him to declare their intentions of following Him. They just will not be able to join him at that moment. So they explain why they are going to be delayed. These men are disciples. Yet not ones like Peter, James and John whom Jesus has called to joined Him full-time.

#### ■ **The Scribe Required Comforts of Life**

The first one to approach Jesus is a scribe. Scribes were well-educated. Along with the Pharisees, most scribes rejected Jesus. Many of them were admonished by Jesus along with the Pharisees.

This is the first time someone of the upper class expresses a desire to be a disciple of Jesus. And this is the first time Jesus refers to Himself as the "*Son of Man*" when answering the scribe. This is a messianic title found in Daniel 7:13-14.

Jesus' answer informs the scribe that true discipleship of such a transient preacher as Himself would not involve the creature comforts he was thinking about. Jesus did not have even the creature (foxes and birds) comforts. He never owned a home, just the clothes on his back. The scribe was not up for that kind of a teacher or discipleship. True discipleship involves total commitment (Luke 14:26).

#### ■ **The Son Required Convenience of Timing**

The son seems to make a reasonable request to bury his father. Was Jesus being unreasonably insensitive? In the hot climate of Palestine they buried their dead the on the day of death. If the disciple's father had passed, he would have not even been talking with Jesus by the sea shore. Jewish tradition required a mourning period of thirty days. Perhaps, the expression "*let the dead bury the dead*" was equivalent to "I want to wait until I receive my inheritance which is coming soon." Others claim Jesus was in effect saying to him, "Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead." Still one more possibility is the second burial. In the first burial one is placed in a tomb. After a year of mourning and the decomposition of the body, the bones were collect and places into an ossuary or bone box. This second funeral service ends the year long mourning period. In this case Jesus is saying the dead is already with the dead. It is most likely the financial consideration of this would-be disciple. So Jesus is telling him that his commitment to discipleship is now not when it is convenient. A true disciple must follow Christ on Jesus term and not his own terms.

### **Amazed Disciples, 8:23-27**

The storm was shaking. "Storm" is from the Greek *seismos* from which we derive "seismograph." "*The waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling*" (Mark 4:37, ESV). The Sea of Galilee is only eight miles across and can be crossed in a couple of hours. Due to the fact that it is 680 feet below sea level and hills to the west and Mount Hermon towering in the north over nine thousand feet sudden violent storms are created as the winds sweep down the sloops to the warm sea.

The disciples had experienced fisherman on board, but they panicked. They even accused Jesus

of not caring. He was asleep on a pillow in the stern (Mark 4:38).

What was amazing was not the storm, but that Jesus was asleep during the storm. Jesus was fully human, so He was very exhausted. He was fully divine, so He trusted God.

Jesus rebukes them for their *"little faith."* This is in contrast to how he marveled earlier at the Centurions great faith. They should have had faith based on God's care for man as explained in Psalms 89:8-9; 107:23-30. As long as the Son of Man was in the boat the Father of the Son of God was not going to let anything happen. As the song we sing: "No water can swallow the ship where lies the Master of ocean, and earth and skies."

When Jesus calmed the storm the waves and the wind did not subside gradually as it normal, but instantly. This left the disciples in extreme amazement. The Son of Man can even control nature.

### **Demon Legion, 8:28-34**

Jesus' journey takes Him and His disciples to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee *"to the country of the Gadarenes."* There he meets a man possessed by many demons called *"Legion"*. The healing of the Gadarene demoniac is also recorded in Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39. Matthew's account speaks of two demon possessed men. They were strong and mean and naked and lived among the tombs. No one could approach where they were. Jesus led His disciples from a storm tossed sea to a demon haunted cemetery.

Jesus acknowledged the presence of demons, and they acknowledged him: When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, *"What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."* For He said to him, *"Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"* Then He asked him, *"What is your name?"* And he answered, saying, *"My name is Legion; for we are many"* (Mark 5:6-9).

Now, the demons who had unmercifully tormented this man beg Jesus to show them mercy: *"Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country . . . all the demons begged Him, saying, 'Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.' And at once Jesus gave them permission"* (Mark 5:10-13).

The demons had permission to leave the man, but they entered a herd of swine which ran down into the sea and drowned about two thousand of them. Those tending the swine ran to town to tell others what had happened and *"the whole city came out to meet Jesus"* (8:34). The people were now so afraid of Jesus, they asked Him to depart. The man who was healed was asked to tell others of the great things done for him.

Much can be learned from this miracle. This event tells us that Jesus not only had power over the storms but over the powers of the unseen world. Second, *"even the demons believe and tremble!"* (Jas. 2:19). However, Legion's faith could not save them. Legion begged Jesus not to torment him *"before the time"* and not to *"command them to go out into the abyss"* (Luke 8:28, 31; Matt. 8:29). Many today do not believe in Hell but Legion did and was afraid.

Notice how the man who was freed from the demons reacted to Christ. He expressed gratitude and faith. Although his countrymen reacted with fear and rejection of Jesus He wanted to stay with Christ. Jesus was able to use this man who was not clothed and in his right mind to spread the good news (Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39).

#### **Questions:**

1. How does Matthew arrange chapters eight and nine? Is this a coincidence? Explain.
2. Why is it significant that Jesus touched the leper when healing him?
3. Why did the leper ask if Jesus were willing?

4. What request did Jesus make of the healed leper and did the man honor the request?
5. Describe the character of the Centurion.
6. How did Jesus view the Centurion's faith?
7. Why did Jesus marvel at the Centurion's faith?
8. What prophecy is associated here with the healing of Peter's mother-in-law?
9. What did Peter's mother-in-law do immediately after her fever left? Why is this significant?
10. How did Jesus deal with scribe's excuse for not following Him at that moment?
11. How did Jesus deal with the son's excuse for not following Him at that time?
12. Why were great, sudden storms common on the Sea of Galilee?
13. Why is it that the disciples are accused of having *"little faith"*?
14. Why was the demon-possessed man called *"Legion"*?
15. Why was Legion so afraid of Jesus?
16. How did the city react to Jesus casting out demons?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Why do you think Jesus was able to sleep through the storm? What would they say about our ability to sleep though stormy trials rock our lives?
  
2. Compare how the leper, Centurion, disciples, demons, the man freed of demons, and the towns people reacted to Jesus. Compare these reactions with men and women react to Jesus today.

**Homework:** Be willing to help others in need and willing to serve God without excuse.

# Jesus' Power to Heal the Sin-Sick

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## Matthew 9:1-17

### Healing of the Paralytic, 9:1-7

Matthew says that Jesus went to "*His own city.*" The city was Capernaum where Jesus ends His first preaching tour of Galilee. "This is the place where Jesus had healed the mother-in-law of Peter (Mark 1:30-31). Modern archaeologists believe they have found the actual house of Peter at the ancient site of Cappernaum...one-story building surrounded by a large, walled courtyard. Peter's (apparent) house in Capernaum was approximately twenty-eight feet long and would have been fifteen to eighteen feet deep" (2004/05, 343). Jesus may have been raised in Nazareth and born in Bethlehem and killed in Jerusalem but Capernaum was His base of operations in Galilee and during His earthly ministry. The last time He visited, all manner of sick were brought to Him for healing (Mark 1:33-34).

#### ■ Concerned Supporters

At the time of this visit to Capernaum a paralytic is brought before Jesus to be healed. His four friends were deeply concerned. However, due to the crowd the four friends carrying him cannot bring him through the door. So they must find another way to get their friend to Jesus. Would it not be great if those who want to help and support us were concerned enough to find a way to get us to Jesus even if there were obstacles in the way. Will we bring others to Jesus due to our concern for their souls even when faced with hindrances?

The friends were not just concerned, they were determined and resourceful. They could have said, "Oh, well tomorrow is another day. Perhaps, we will get to Jesus earlier and find help for our friend." Neither were they the type who said, "we will pray for you" and leave it at that. Instead, they put their back and brains into it. They do not simply return him to the city gate, where he would have begged for his daily sustenance.

They went up on the housetop and were going to lower the paralytic down through the roof. William Barclay describes the average home of the time: "The Palestinian house was flat-roofed. The roof had only the slightest tilt, sufficient to make the rain water run off. It was composed of beams laid from wall to wall and quite a short distance apart. The space between the beams was filled with close packed twigs, compacted together with mortar and then marled over. It was the easiest thing in the world to take out the packing between two beams. In fact coffins were very often taken in and out of a house via the roof."

While they were up on the roof digging a hole. Jesus was down below teaching the crowd. Among the audience were the scribes and Pharisees who had front row seating. First, they heard the sound of the men moving around up on the roof. Then came the sound of scraping and digging as pieces of the roof and ceiling started to fall on the curious spectators below. The annoyed religious leaders were shaking the debris off their robes. As the bed descends from above the crowd scatters to safety. Perhaps Peter's mother-in-law was standing there looking up yelling at them, "Okay, now who is going to pay of the repairs to my roof."

Jesus noticed their faith. They had an active faith which did not stop until they achieved the goal of reaching Jesus. Christ was the only answer to the paralytic's problem. They had a fellowship of faith allowing them to work together to get him to Jesus.

What if all personal evangelists had this kind of faith, determination, and love as demonstrated by these four who were supporting a crippled man who could not support himself. Perhaps more like



them are needed to bring those paralyzed by sin to Jesus. Willing to find a way to get them to Him instead of finding a plethora of excuses. Those who will love the lost enough to tear through the roof if necessary. After all "God so loved the world that he made the ultimate sacrifice for us (John 3:16). He dug, so to speak, though the roof of the world and lowered his Son down so Jesus could die for our sins" (Hughes 175).

These men labored to bring the man to Jesus without regard to reward. Other than Jesus' taking note of their faith, they are not praised. Their actions alone speak volumes about their compassion and conviction. Perhaps, they were the ones who were going to pay for and repair the roof.

#### ■ **Crippled Sinner**

The man was suffering from a form of palsy resulting in a gradual paralysis. Palsy is the Greek word *paralytidos* from which the English word "paralytic" is derived. Palsy is an abbreviation of the word "paralysis."

Jesus tells him, "*Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you*" (Matt. 9:2b). Perhaps, the man felt a burden of guilt or embarrassment. Crippled bodies sin. After all sin begins not in the hands and legs but in the heart.

Does the fact Jesus forgives the man and then heals him prove that his sickness is linked in some way with his personal sin? It is true that some have brought upon themselves illnesses and injuries due to their sinful lifestyle. Some of the Jews of the day would have claimed the man suffered physically because of his own sinfulness (John 9:2). Just as Job's friends attributed his suffering to his sin. The Babylonian Talmud claimed, "the sick man recovers not from his sickness until (God) has forgiven all his sins" (Nedarim 41a). Jesus did not attribute the paralysis to evil in his life. Men suffering in general because of human sinfulness is generally in the world.

Jesus is not demonstrating a promise of physical healing for all those who receive forgiveness. The Health/Wealth gospel claims if one is a faithful follower of Jesus they will prosper in material wealth and physical health. The New Testament makes no such promise.

Notice when Jesus heals the man He commands him to do three things: 1) arise; 2) take up bed; 3) and go into thine house. He obeys. And while obeying he glorifies God for the gifts of both walking home and walking in fellowship with God. Certainly this is the only way to travel home.

#### ■ **Charitable Savior**

Although the most noticeable need of the crippled man being lowered through the roof was his palsy, Jesus focuses on that which was not so visible: the sinful condition of the man's soul. At first Jesus' remarks might seem cruel. Here four men bring a man in obvious physical need and Jesus decides to deal with the greater, deeper need first. The greatest problem of facing every man and woman is their sin and the greatest need is salvation through Divine forgiveness. Jesus did not come to heal the sick. "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*" (Mark 2:17).

In truth all of Jesus' miracles in one way or another point to the spiritual needs of the man. Healing the body demonstrates Jesus' power and man's need for the healing of the soul. Jesus proved He was the only one who could do both. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). Peter proclaimed to the Jewish council, "*nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

#### ■ **Critical Scribes**

The critics of Jesus were composed of scribes and pharisees. The scribes were men who copied the Scriptures and preserved them. Their job resulted in a great knowledge of the Scriptures. This enabled them to teach the people. The pharisees were a group of men numbering about six thousand at this time in Palestine according to Josephus. Their name comes from the Hebrew word *perushim*. They are the "separated ones." They would strive to be holy and separated from the Greco-Roman culture and true to the Law of Moses. They have gathered to watch Jesus who is a growing threat to their leadership and control and influence over the Jewish people.

The scribes and pharisees became more and more critical of Jesus. They accused Him of having fellowship with publicans and sinners, violating the traditions, violating the Sabbath Day, casting

out demons by the power of the devil, being demon-possessed, a wine-bibber and a drunkard, and here they are about to accuse Him of blasphemy.

Although there was standing room only, they were sitting. They were ready to criticize Jesus the moment that found anything they could disagree with about His teachings. They are the self-appointed investigative committee predisposed to object in their hearts to anything they found offensive.

Nonetheless their accusation of blasphemy would be accurate and justified, if they assume that Jesus was a mere man and not God incarnate. After all, men can forgive offense against themselves by another, but only God can forgive sins men.

God is *"forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty..."* (Ex. 34:7). *"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins"* (Is. 43:25).

The Jews defined three levels of blasphemy. 1) One blasphemed God by speaking evil of His law as Stephen and Paul (Acts 21;27,28). 2) To slander, speak evil of, or curse God Himself is to blaspheme Him (Lev. 24:10-16; E. 20:7). 3) One can blaspheme by usurping the role of God and act as if one were God. This is Jesus' blasphemy in the eyes of the scribes and pharisees.

If guilty of blasphemy Jesus could be stoned according to the Law of Moses. Blasphemy was a capital crime punishable by stoning (Lev. 24:10-23). If Jesus is a blasphemer, he could not be just a good man but a fake and liar. He could not be a true prophet. He could not be the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Today, there are preachers and denominational priests who claim the authority to forgive sins against God by succession through the apostles. The authority to pronounce absolution has never been given to men. To do so is a true case of blasphemy. If these men can forgive sin then they need to prove it by healing the sick.

#### ■ **Cognizant Seer**

A seer is one who has supernatural insight. In Jesus case He was cognizant or aware of the thoughts of the scribes and pharisees. Only God can read the thoughts of man.

Jesus *"had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man"* (John 2:25)  
*"...the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts..."* (1 Chron. 28:9)  
*"I am he who searches the minds and hearts"* (Rev. 2:23)  
*"Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God"* (Rom. 8:27)

By knowing the unspoken thoughts of the enemies of truth Jesus was able to speak directly to their criticisms before they were verbalized. This not only proves His deity, since only God is omniscient, but allows Him to deal with the evil thoughts.

#### ■ **Called "Son of Man"**

Jesus describes himself as the *"Son of man"* in this healing. He identifies himself as a man and the term connects himself to those men who were prophets. The phrase was used to refer to Ezekiel over eighty times. The phrase is used by Daniel and applied to the coming Messiah (Dan. 7:13, 18). It is used over eighty times in the Gospels as a messianic title to connect the humanity of Jesus with His divine mission for God. It compliments His other title *"Son of God"* (Matt. 27:43; Luke 22:70; John 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4) which speaks to His deity.

#### ■ **Confirming Signs**

Knowing their thoughts Jesus is able to provide proof that He is God who can forgive sin. He asked them which would be easier to say *"your sins are forgiven"* or *"raise up and walk."* The answer is quite obvious. Forgiving of sins is not physically observable. Nor can one weigh a sinful soul and compare it with the weight of a soul that has been forgiven. Of course, it is easy to just say either. But if the physical manifestation of a supernatural event is verified than the spiritual event is proven. "If someone couples the forgiveness of sins, which is invisible and unseen, to physical healing, which is both

visible and verifiable, and then actually performs the healing, the claim is substantiated" (Boice148). Therefore both are impossible for a mere man to do, even if it is easy for a mere man to say.

Jesus' miracle of healing is undeniable proof. The man was completely and instantaneously healed. There was no need for weeks of physical therapy or the man needing to regain strength enough to carry the bed or learn to walk. Although the proof is solid, all men still have the right to reject the proof. Of Jesus detractors it is said, "*but although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him*" (John 12:37).

Jesus power to do miracles proves His authority to heal the soul. When He brings light to the eyes of the blind, He shows His power to remove the darkness blinding the soul. When He cleansed the lepers of their physical spots, He proves His power to remove the sin stains from the soul.

This is only one of three recorded occasions where Jesus forgave sins ( Luke 7:48; 23:43). Jesus' authority to forgive sin proves His deity. Supernatural claims demand supernatural evidence. To claim to be Superman requires a man of super strength and abilities to support the claim. Jesus forgave and Jesus healed, therefore Jesus is God. He can do it on earth by the same authority by which forgiveness takes place in Heaven.

#### ■ **Captivated Spectators**

Bengel wrote, "The bed had borne the man, now the man was bearing the bed; and the crowd once blocking up his path when he was carried to the house, now makes a way for him to walk out with a cleansed soul and a thoroughly healed body." The Gospel of Luke informs us of the crowds response to these healing: "*And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen strange things today!'*" (Luke 5:26). There was a three-fold response. First, they were "amazed." This term is from the Greek *ekstasis* from which the English terms "ecstasy" and "ecstatic" are derived. They were in a state of ecstasy over what they had witnessed. Jesus forgave a man, He challenged the scribes and pharisees by reading their minds, and healed the paralytic. Second, they glorified God. Third, they were "*filled with fear.*" The term fear is from the Greek *phobos* from which the English "phobia" comes. They were fearful because: "*We never saw anything like this!*" (Mark 2:12).

The advertising slogan for the Louisiana tourist industry is, "Come as you are. Leave different!" The paralytic arrived through the roof as a sinful cripple and left leaping for joy carrying his bed as a forgiven man.

Which would he appreciate more? The body which was healed or the soul whose sins have been forgiven? One day his body would grow old and wither. Again, he may not be able to walk without assistance as when he was a cripple. And finally he would die. But he would not have to die crippled by sin. He would be free from sin throughout all eternity. In addition one day he would have a resurrected body free from all pain and decay.

Regardless of your physical state all sinners can obey the gospel and receive the promise of Jesus: "*Your sins are forgiven.*"

### **The Call of Matthew, 9:9-13**

The call of Matthew to follow Jesus marks the second interlude. He was already a disciple and knew of Jesus' ministry. He is now receiving a special call like the four fisherman had in order to be selected as an apostle. Imagine the other disciples surprise when Jesus calls Matthew. They may have expected Him to rebuke the publican and preach against Matthew's great affront to God and his fellow Jews by collecting taxes for the Romans. In Capernaum he was scum. Publicans were greatly hated in Palestine. They had unparalleled authority to collect taxes with the support of Roman soldiers, if needed. Jews rejected the rule of Rome over God's People and did not believe that taxes should be paid to Rome. Publicans were considered as low as unclean animals like swine. They were not allowed to attend services at the synagogue or enter the Temple. Their testimony was not valid in Jewish courts.

Matthew answers the call with immediate action. Luke records that Matthew "*left all*", but Matthew does not mention his sacrifice. Perhaps an example of his humility. And yet, Matthew may have made one of the greatest sacrifices of money and a lucrative occupation among the twelve apostles. He did not leave without settling up with the tax authorities. It would not have went well for Matthew to be a publican turned disciple of Jesus and then be on the run as a fugitive.

Matthew hosted a banquet with Jesus and his other disciples as guest (Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29). It included fellow-publicans. Perhaps this is when Jesus' reputation of a friend to publicans and sinners began. The Pharisees' question about Jesus eating with sinners was more of a rhetorical one of admonition. The Pharisees thought they were spiritually whole while Publicans and sinners were hopelessly sin-sick.

Jesus' response forms three arguments against the isolationist attitude of the Pharisees toward sinners. First, the sick need help. The Pharisees will not help them. Jesus will be like a physician to the sin-sick souls. Second, the Pharisees need to go back to the Word of God and learn a lesson from Hosea 6:6 they have missed. They knew the passage but failed to learn its lesson. Perhaps this is why Jesus needs to quote it again in 12:7. Hosea said, "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*" Just as Hosea had to forgive and seek after his wife, Gomer, a prostitute, so they needed to focus on the need to be forgiving and seeking to help heal the lost sinners and prostitutes of their day. Sacrifices without compassion to forgive other sinners is worthless. Jesus' final argument is that He is just doing His job. He calls sinners to repentance. This does not imply the Pharisees were righteous. The implication is they were self-righteous and only righteous by their own estimate. Therefore they did not need His help. "Just as they stood outside Matthew's house and watched the tax-gatherers and sinners eat with Jesus, they would also stand outside God's kingdom and watch every sort of repentant sinner and outcast be welcomed into it" (MacArthur, 8-15, 67). Complete isolation from sinners does not please God, it only keeps one from Him.

### **Questions about Fasting, 9:14-17**

With John the baptist in prison many of his disciples were now looking to Jesus. Like the Pharisees they too were perplexed by Jesus' "partying" with Matthew and his friends. They like the Pharisees were practicing the ritual of fasting. Most likely this was done twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays. This was not a commandment in the Law of Moses. The only time fasting may have been enjoined upon the Jews was on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Fasting was one of the three main outward signs of piety practiced by the Judaism of the day. The other two were almsgiving and praying. Jesus had already condemned the Jews for putting on a sad face to be seen by men when fasting (Matt. 6).

Jesus gives three parables or illustrations to explain why He and His disciples were not fasting. First, fasting and mourning are out of place at a wedding. Jesus compares Himself to the bridegroom and His disciples His "best men." There would come a time when the Bridegroom (Jesus) would be taken away. The Greek term indicates a violent sudden removal of Jesus. He is likely foretelling of His coming Crucifixion. Just as fasting is inappropriate at a wedding, so is fasting at the time when God's Son is among them. Second, he speaks of old garments being patched with new cloth. When the new cloth shrinks, it will rip the old cloth making things worse. The end result would be ruin. The new teachings of Jesus on Kingdom righteousness cannot be used to patch up the holes in old Judaism. Jesus is not trying to reform or renovate the Law of Moses. He is here to fulfill it and remove and replace it. Finally, He compares mixing human traditions and rituals with the Good News to putting new wine into old wine skins. "Wine was often stored in animal skins that were specially prepared for that purpose. The hide would be uncut except at the legs and neck, and sometimes would be turned inside out. The leg openings would be stitched closed and sealed, and the neck was used as a spout. Which was tied with a leather thong or string." (MacArthur, 10-15, 70). Jesus was saying the old Law cannot contain the New covenant.

Application can also be made to John's work as a forerunner of Jesus. John said he must decrease while Jesus increased. John was not the Bridegroom, Jesus was. John's day was done and a new day has dawned.

#### **Questions:**

1. Where was Jesus' "own city"?

2. What did the four supporters of the paralytic have to do in order to get him before Jesus? What does this demonstrate about them?
3. What did Jesus notice about the four friends and the paralytic? Why?
4. What is palsy?
5. What did Jesus tell the paralytic? Why?
6. Does the fact Jesus forgives the man and then heals him prove that his sickness is linked in some way with his personal sin?
7. What three things does Jesus command the paralytic to do?
8. List several things the scribes and pharisees had accused Jesus of being or doing?
9. Why did they accuse Jesus of blasphemy?
10. What does Jesus' ability to know the thoughts of a man's heart say about Him?
11. What does the phrase "*Son of Man*" identify about Jesus?
12. Which was harder to say "*your sins are forgiven*" or "*raise up and walk*"? Explain.
13. What proof did Jesus offer to show He had the power to forgive sins?

14. According to the Gospel of Luke what was the threefold response of the spectators?
15. How did Jews treat and view publican? Why?
16. How did Matthew respond to the call from Jesus?
17. What three arguments did Jesus make to the Pharisees' complaint concerning His eating with publicans and sinners?
18. What three parables or illustrations did Jesus give for not fasting like the pharisees and the disciples of John?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What obstacles should be there when we strive to bring people to Jesus to heal their soul of sin and how can we over come these hindrances?
2. What should be our response every time God forgives us?

**Homework:** Do what you can this week to help heal the sin-sick of this world.

*Lesson Eleven: Sunday, December 11, 2022*

## **Jesus' Compassionate & Healing Touch**

## **Matthew 9:18-38**

In the Hindu religion with its caste system those who are often the neediest are the one who are called the Untouchables. Jesus often touched those whom He healed. He could heal at a distance without ever even seeing the recipient of His miraculous power. However, He chose to touch the eyes of blind. The unclean lepers would feel His touch even though they were the untouchables. To show love and mercy is to touch the object of your love and compassion. This is why Jesus touched. He identified with those He came to heal and save.

### **Touching the Hand of the Dead, 9:18,19, 23-26**

It was while Jesus was dealing with the disciples of John on the subject of why Jesus and His disciples failed to fast that the chief ruler of the synagogue abruptly spoke to Jesus about an urgent situation. His twelve year old daughter was about to die. Jarius was the highest ranking religious figure in all of Capernaum being the chief ruler at the local synagogue.

Imagine the thoughts of the Pharisees when they saw Jarius worship Jesus. This was a man who was desperate to save his daughter. He did not care at this point what they thought of him. It only mattered what he thought about Jesus' ability to touch with His life giving hand his dying daughter. At this point in His ministry Jesus had never raised anyone from the dead. In fact, He had a habit of breaking up every funeral He attends. As they were about to bury the widow of Nain's son, Jesus ends the procession to the cemetery by raising Him up to life. As they were four days into mourning the death His friend Lazarus, Jesus calls him from the dead. As women come to Jesus tomb for further burial preparation, Jesus resurrects from the grave.

By the time Jesus arrives at the house of the ruler, the girl is dead. The professional mourners and musicians have already arrived. The Babylonian Talmud says: "even the poorest in Israel should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman" (Ketuboth 4.4). They were already making quite the commotion. Jesus commands them to get out of the house. This is not before He claims the girl is asleep. Jesus is not lying. Throughout the Bible death is often called a sleep (Dan. 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:14). Jesus has the power to awake the dead. The girl's condition was not terminal but temporary.

The other Gospels inform us that Jesus let Peter, James and John along with the girl's parents to accompany him. Jesus taking her by the hand called upon her to raise. She arose immediately.

Even though Jesus knew dead bodies were unclean, He touched the dead to bring life to the body instead of uncleanness to Himself.

### **Touching the Hem of the Garment, 9:20-22**

It was while Jesus was on His way to the house of Jarius that His travels were interrupted by a woman. Jesus just raised a twelve year old girl from the dead. Now he heals a woman who has suffered for as long as the girl had been alive. She was bleeding constantly most likely from her womb. This made her unclean according to Leviticus 15:25-27. This resulted in extreme isolation. If married she could not be intimate with her husband else he would be unclean for a time. If unmarried she could not get married. She would not be able to go to the synagogue or the Temple.

Her condition was incurable. She had sought out help. But no healing could be found (Luke 8:43). Her situation grew worse (Mark 5:26) and left her penniless. "The Jewish Talmud prescribed eleven different cures for it. Among the remedies, most of them superstitious, was that of carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag in the summer and in a cotton bag in the winter. Another involved carrying around a barleycorn kernel that had been found in the dung of a white female donkey." (MacArthur 80).

She was truly an untouchable. What hope did she have of being healed by the touch of the Master hand? If Jesus did touch her, He would become ceremonially or ritually unclean. If she were to touch Him directly it would mean He was considered unclean. However, she had a plan and to give her the courage to carry it through, she kept repeating to herself the plan. If she could just touch the hem

of His garment, she would be clean. This not only demonstrated her great faith in Jesus power to heal but also her respect for Christ and not to contaminate him. Furthermore, she shows and knowledge and respect for the Law of Moses.

As soon as she touched the hem of the garment power went forth to heal her immediately, that is, *“from that hour.”* Jesus would turn and ask who touched Him. He shows the woman respect by calling her daughter and commending her faith. She did not make Him unclean by her touch transferring any uncleanness, but His power transformed her. Some believe the hem here means the tassel sew onto the end of the garment (Num. 15:37–41; Deut. 22:12).

### **Touching the Eyes of the Blind, 9:27-31**

Before Jesus could return to the house where He was staying in Capernaum (perhaps the home of Peter), he was being called upon by two blind men from the crowd. Notice how many times Jesus who was always surrounded by the masses of people would ignore them, so He could focus on the needs of individuals like John’s disciples, the ruler of the synagogue, the woman in this context, and now these two blind men. These “interruptions” were used by Jesus as opportunities.

Blindness must have been a common problem for first century Palestine. Jesus cured many who were blind.

At first Jesus seems to ignore they crying out to Him until the follow Him into the house. They proclaim aloud their faith in Him as the Messiah by using the royal title *“Son of David.”* Their request is *“mercy.”* They could not demand healing from Jesus. They did not have anything to give Him. In response Jesus asked them if they had faith in His ability to give them sight. At their confess of faith they were given sight.

As Jesus often did, He sternly commanded them not to spread this around. This seems to be a odd request. After all, those who have known of these two blind men would notice they could see. Perhaps this is what Jesus desired. He wanted the crowd to see the healing and make up their own mind what it proved about Him. They needed to believe Him to be the Son of David, the Messiah sent from God. Instead of obeying the Son of David they spread the good news about receiving their sight from Jesus to everyone everywhere they went.

### **Touching the Ears of the Mute, 9:32-34**

Although there is a clear distinction between healing physical diseases and casting out demons, sometimes demon possession results in physical afflictions. The demon possessed man was *“dumb.”* This means he could not speak. Since the term also could mean deafness, the man may have been rendered mute because he could not hear. When the demon was cast out the man could immediately speak.

There are two responses to the casting out of this demon. First, the reaction of the multitudes: *“It was never seen like this in Israel!”* (9:33). Second, is the response of the Pharisees who could not deny the great power of Jesus over demons or His ability to heal. So they attribute Jesus power to that of Satan: *“He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons”* (9:34). They would later repeat this claim in Matthew 12:22ff. The ruler of the demons is the Devil himself. However, these same Pharisees had no problem proclaiming their source of power of demon was Divine (12:27).

Blindness is often a symbol in Scripture of spiritual blindness which is unbelief and ignorance. In this case the blindness to who Jesus was is self-imposed by the Pharisees. They were also dull of hearing and could not speak the truth about who Jesus was.

Today, while men and women study the evidence of Jesus’ credentials, they too must come to a conclusion about Jesus. Was He Demonic? Was He Demented? Was He a Deceiver? Or was He Deity? Those who are blind and dull of hearing will not be able to make the right choice.

### **Touching the Heart of the Savior, 9:35-38**

This section represents Matthew’s third discipleship interlude.

#### ■ **Methods of His Mission**



How did Jesus react to the accusations of the Pharisees? He was not going to ignore their insulting accusation on His mission and character for long. However, Matthew tells us He just kept right on teaching and preaching and healing through the cities and villages. Verse thirty-five is an almost exact representation of what is said in 4:23. First, Jesus teaches in the synagogues. There were an abundance of these in Galilee. The rulers of these would permit visiting rabbi's to read and expound upon the scriptures. Jesus would take advantage of this. Perhaps, Jarius would help Him procure access to these opportunities. By instructing them on the messianic prophecies the preaching done by Jesus in public would be supported. Next, Jesus went about in public "*preaching the gospel of the kingdom.*" To preach is to be a herald. Originally a King could send out his herald to loudly announce the king's decrees for all to hear. Here we have the King Himself proclaiming aloud the good news about His coming Kingdom. The third method of carrying out His mission was "*healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*"

#### ■ **Motives for His Mission**

When Jesus looked upon the crowds following Him He did not see dollar signs or fame. Jesus saw lost sheep needing a shepherd. He served them out of compassion. The word used here comes from the Greek meaning intestines or gut. Deep, strong, lasting emotions often trigger physiological effects in the stomach. The ancient thought about compassion was that it was not from the heart but the gut.

The second motive is that there was a great need that was being neglected. The Pharisees were not willing and perhaps not even able to spiritual pasture these lost sheep. Jesus knew them to be vulnerable and helpless. Israel had been plagued with false, self-serving shepherds for many centuries (Ezekiel 34). Jesus is the "*Good Shepherd*" (John 10:11). He saw these human sheep as being distressed. The Greek word means "skinning." They were being skinned. These sheep were also seen as being downcast. It was as if they were totally helpless and dying from their wounds. Jesus was not seeing people wandering around in a lost and confused state. These people were in dire straits. A good shepherd was needed now.

#### ■ **Manpower for His Mission**

Jesus knew that He was just a human. Like any other man he was limited by time and space. He could not help all these people alone. The solution was to pray to the "*Lord of Harvest*" This is God who owns the world.

What is this Harvest? Some claim it is the Judgment? It is true that in the Old Testament prophets "harvest" is sometimes used to refer to a day of Judgment (Is. 17:10-11; Joel. 3:11-14). Jesus did speak of the harvest as being a day of judgment in His parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:30). However, there is no mention of angels in this chapter instead workers sent by God in response to prayer. The harvest are the souls who can be saved by repenting and believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. After the Samaritan woman at the well left Jesus and told the town's people about him they all came across the field to see Him. Jesus said "*Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*" (John 4:35).

Jesus wants us to pray for workers. But not just any old worker. Workers whom God can send into the harvest. In the next chapter Jesus calls the Twelve and commissions them to go out into the harvest. As this point He only calls upon the disciples to pray for workers. By praying to God to send workers they would begin to think about their own need to be a worker.

#### **Questions:**

1. Why do you think Jesus physically touched people during His ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why would a Jew avoid touching a dead body?

3. Who came to Jesus on behalf of his dying daughter? What was his position in the community? Why is this significant?
4. How did Jairus show great faith?
5. What effect did Jesus have on the funerals he attended?
6. How were the funerals of the first century Jews different from our funerals today?
7. Why did Jesus say the girl was asleep?
8. Why did the bleeding woman devise a plan to just touch the hem of Jesus' garment?
9. At what point was she healed?
10. How did the blind men refer to Jesus?
11. Why do you think Jesus sternly commanded the healed blind men not to spread their good news around?
12. What physical problems did the demon possessed man have?
13. What two responses did Jesus receive?
14. How were the Pharisees both blind and dull of hearing?

15. What three methods did Jesus use to carry out His mission?
  
16. What were the two motives for carrying out His mission?
  
17. What are the harvest? And where did the harvesters come from?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. How is our situation in sin like that of the bleeding woman?
  
2. Contrast Jarius with the bleeding woman?
  
3. Was healing by Jesus contingent upon the faith of the person He was healing? Explain.

**Homework:** Reach out and touch and untouchable out of love and compassion.

*Lesson Twelve: Sunday, December 18, 2022*

## **Jesus' Chosen Men to Share the Good News**

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***Matthew 10:1-23***

This chapter focuses on the mission of the Twelve. They will first go to the lost children of Israel

but it does look down the road to the time when their mission scope enlarges to include the Gentiles. After all they did not raise the dead till after the day of Pentecost.

Some of the specifics Jesus taught in Matt. 10 applied only the apostles, yet in principle they apply to His witnesses in every generation.

### **Selection of the Twelve, 10:1-4**

As Jesus' ministry increased His humanity began to show more and more. He was at this point a "one man show." The territory to cover was too great for the Son of God who was subject to the limitations of being human. He could only be at one place at a time. Furthermore, as word spread about His compassion and power in healing, the mass of crowds continued to swell. He saw this as a great harvest. But a bumper crop requires more workers.

#### **Jesus Prayed for Them**

To solve this problem for the need of assistance in the work Jesus "said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (9:37,38). According to Luke, before He selected these men He prayed to God for wisdom and for the men who were about to be selected. "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). When selecting men to serve the needs of the widows in the Jerusalem congregation, the Apostles prayed (Acts 6:6). Before selecting Barnabas and Paul for their missionary journey, the Church at Antioch prayed (Acts 13:3).

#### **Jesus Called Them**

Jesus had already called these men to follow Him. Now He calls them to go out and represent Him and assist in spreading the Good News that the Kingdom was near.

#### **Jesus Trained Them**

First, Jesus calls them "disciples" and then "apostles." His trainees were about to get a promotion. This by no means indicates that their period of training has been completed. The disciples still showed signs of immaturity and carnal-mindedness. They would lack the patience to fast and pray to cast out a demon. They failed to understand many of Jesus teachings, even the parables. When it came to their deficiency in humility, they often argued over who would have a greater position in the coming kingdom. Peter even refused to wash Jesus' feet. Jesus would rebuke them for having "no faith" or "little faith." Peter and the other disciples forsook Him after the Garden. None would follow Him to the cross except John. Peter would go on to deny Him. Judas would betray Him. Jesus even had to continue to teach them during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension.

#### **Jesus Sent Them**

Jesus took the disciples whom He called follow Him wherever He went and trained them. Now He was sending them out as apostles to represent Him wherever they went.

#### **Jesus Equipped Them**

Later in the chapter Jesus would discuss what they were to bring with them. But Jesus was more concerned about equipping them with the authority from God to cast out demons, heal every form disease and sickness among the Jews. By this they demonstrated their credentials as apostles of Jesus Christ and confirmed the Word they preached concerning the coming Kingdom.

#### **Jesus Knew Them**

The list of men are not from the ranks of the Pharisees with their brand of devotion to the Law. Jesus did not pick political men from the Herodians. He did not have any priests among the twelve. The Sadducees were not represented among the Twelve. There were no well learned scribes who were picked to be ambassadors of Jesus. These men were by no means wealthy. Jesus knew what He was doing and knew exactly the type of men He was sending out. Instead of yacht owners He sent out four fishermen. He knew they could learn how to apply their skills to fish for men. He selected a tax collector knowing how the Jews hated publicans. Simon who was a zealot was among the Twelve even though Jesus' Kingdom was not of this world and His disciples did not fight with carnal weapons. He even knew that Judas Iscariot would one day be a traitor to the cause and betray Him.

## Principles for Sharing the Good News, 10:5-15

### ◆ **Authority to Preach the Gospel, 10:5a**

Jesus has the authority to command this Twelve as He sends them out. The Greek *parangello* used for “commanded” is a military term which demands obedience to a higher authority. The word was also equivalent to a subpoena in legal settings. Jesus would use the word to command unclean spirits.

For companionship and help with trials and temptations He sent them out in pairs (Mark 6:7).

### ◆ **Audience Needing the Gospel, 10:5b-6**

The apostles were only to preach to Jewish people. But why? First, Jesus “*was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt. 15:24). Jerusalem and Judea were to be the starting points for the spreading of the Gospel and Kingdom. No one can do everything at once. They had to start somewhere. And the message was tailored to a Jewish audience.

Jesus did have contact with several Samaritans and Gentiles during his ministry (Matt. 8:4-13; John 4). The Gospel has the power to save “*everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). Today, the Gospel is to be taken to all nations.

### ◆ **Apprehensible Message, 10:7**

The Jews would welcome the good news that the long awaited Kingdom was “*at hand*”, that is soon to be set up. However, it was not to be a geographical area with a local king of the Jews. It clarified that the Kingdom had not yet come but was yet in the near future.

### ◆ **Affirming Credentials, 10:8a**

Many professions such as doctors and lawyers display diplomas to certify their qualifications and authority to practice. The Twelve were not theologians like the scribes or the priests. Their credentials would be the miracles they performed. Today, our affirming credentials are not miracles but the New Testament. Miracles were used in the apostolic age until the perfect or complete revelation of God’s Will (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

### ◆ **Announce Freely, 10:8b**

What did Jesus mean when he commanded them, “*freely you have received, freely give*” (10:8b). Perhaps, they were not to charge anyone for the miracles they were to perform. Not like men who performed before a crowd for money like Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8. Miracles were not for their personal gain or prosperity. It would also imply they were not to charge for the Gospel message like the wandering and nomadic-like philosophers among the Gentiles. The Good News is offered without charging. This would help deal with the temptation of greed. Even elders in the church would be warned to serve “*not for sordid gain*” (1 Peter 5:2). Greediness would eventually claim the heart of Judas

### ◆ **Acquire Necessities, 10:9-10**

The restrictions above did not mean they were not to provide for their daily needs while on this limited and short mission. Jesus wanted them to keep their preparation time and baggage to a limit. They did not need to spend months raising funds. They should expect that those who were fed the Good News would feed them in return “*for a worker is worthy of his food.*” They left on their mission with no money in their belts, a sack lunch, barefooted, without staff, and carrying only one coat (cf. Luke 22:35-36). Although they did not demand payment, it is clearly implied they were not to refuse food and lodging.

Does this command to the Twelve apply to preacher’s today. First, preachers are not apostles. Furthermore, this was a commission which was limited in scope and duration. Also, they were not locally situated in their work for extended periods of time. Elders who labor are worthy of “double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Preacher were to be giving wages like Paul had received. This was based on the concept of not muzzling and ox while it was working. Paul said that the “*Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*” (1 Cor. 9:14).

### ◆ **Association With the Reputable, 10:11**

There were very few places to stay in first century Palestine which were like motels. The disciples were to stay with only those in town who had a reputation of being “*worthy.*” Who they stayed with would reflect upon the messenger and his message. So they needed to avoid ungodly homes with bad reputations.

Neither were they to wander from house to house constantly being on the move. Again this was a method employed by itinerant false teachers. They should find a good place and be content to stay

there until they were ready to move on to the next town or village.

◆ **Applaud the Receptive, 10:12-13a**

Jesus added, “*and when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it*” (10:12,13a). The greeting is the Hebrew word *shalom* meaning “*peace*.” Meaning the total well being and wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

◆ **Abandon the Rejecters, 10:13b-15**

Jesus goes on to explain who they are to deal with those who are not receptive or “*worthy*”. First, they were to withdraw favor or blessing (2 John 10-11). Next, they were to shake or dust off their feet as they left the house or city. After visiting Gentile country Jews of Jesus day would literally do this so that the soil of the pagans would not contaminate the land of God’s people. So the disciples were in effect treating these homes and cities as if they were Gentile in attitude toward God. In Pisidia Paul and Barnabas “*shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium*” (Acts 13:51).

Dust off ones feet was nothing compared to the reaction of the Lord. He also is not tolerant of those how reject the Truth. These homes and cities would be worse off receiving greater Divine Judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah. Today no certain trace of them has yet been found by archaeologists.

Anne Graham Lotz wrote, “If God doesn’t judge America, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology.” God did judge Sodom and will judge them. Just as certain He will judge all the cities who reject the Good News. However, they did have a chance to hear it.

### **Warning the Disciples, 10:16-23**

A variety of slogans have been used to encourage enlistment in the US Army. Shortly after the US entered WW I Uncle Sam posters were seen everywhere. When the draft was announced at the start of WW II, these posters and slogans became less effective. But in 1971 a new slogan appeared. “Today’s Army Wants to Join You.” (I never got that one) In 1981 “Be All You Can Be” became the new catchphrase. Then in 2001, despite much criticism from Army command, “An Army of One” was promoted. More recently, during the war on terror, “A call to duty” has seemed to resonate. But Jesus said, “*I send you a sheep among wolves*”

God is able to use our persecution for several ends. How one handles persecution can even be a positive influence on the persecutors. By it one can learn of God’s care and protection. Believers can mature to the point of trusting in God. Trusting God to deliver from even death (2 Cor. 4:17). Our example of enduring persecution will motivate fellow saints to remain faithful in tribulations.

● **Be as Sheep Among Wolves, 10:16a**

A Jesus begins a new section in His message on the requirements of true discipleship. He commands them to “*Behold*.” This is a warning for them to be on guard when it came to what they say and the reaction others have to their message. Shepherds do not send their sheep out where they know there will be wolves However, Jesus is sending them knowing the dangers.

These disciples are like sheep. Jesus often used this metaphor. He called the multitudes “*sheep without a shepherd*” (Matt. 9:36). In the animal kingdom domesticated sheep are among the most unintelligent and vulnerable creatures. They require a shepherd who is alert and able to protect them.

The wolves come in the form of false teachers. “*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves*” (Matt. 7:15). Paul warned the Church at Ephesus, “*for I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock*” (Acts 20:29).

● **Be Wise as Serpents, 10:16b**

In order to counter the threat Jesus said they first needed to “*be wise as serpents*.” In Egyptian hieroglyphics serpents symbolize wisdom especially the python. According to Genesis 3:1 Satan appeared as a serpent which was “*cunning*” or smart or shrewd. Snakes move around with a planned caution. They are smart at hiding, quick to see danger and more apt to make a run for it than strike. Snakes are well adapted by nature to hide and to preserve itself. The disciples needed to learn from snakes. They needed to know what to say and when to say. When to strike and when to run and hide.

● **Be Harmless as Doves, 10:16c**

The second requirement to help the disciples safely carry out their commission is to be “*harmless as doves.*” The dove is a very gentle species of bird. They are a symbol of purity and peace. The Greek for harmless is “without horn.” The dove is without horn. They offer no harm and are not offensive in their nature.

This harmlessness is seen in their message and how they present it to others. Paul and his companions suffered much but when “*reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now*” (1 Cor. 4:12-13). Jesus Himself behaved in a similar way. “*When He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously*” (1 Peter 2:23).

Thus they are to guard against being wronged and they are to do wrong to no one.

- **Be Aware of Men, 10:17a**

Jesus ends His metaphorical menagerie. Literal wolves will not be their problem. Jesus is going on to identify the real wolves who will persecute them: These men will use both the Jewish religious authorities and government authorities of the Romans to afflict them. Jesus does not promise them easy and safety in their mission. After the Allies were forced to evacuate Dunkirk in 1940 Churchill said to his fellow Englishmen, “All I can offer you is blood, sweat and tears.”

- **Be Beaten by Religionists, 10:17b**

They would often be Apostles arraigned before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:18; 12:1). Those who reject their message will attack the messengers having them scourged. A scourging consisted of thirty-nine lashes with a whip. One less than the maximum of forty stripes allowed by Mosaic law (Dt. 25:3). Paul wrote, “*from the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one*” (2 Cor. 11:24). Referring to the time when Paul himself persecuted Christians he said, “*Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You*” (Acts 22:19).

- **Be Brought Before Government, 10:18**

It was not long until the pagan governments became involved in persecuting Christians. Herod “*killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also*” (Acts 12:2). Roman Governors like Pilate, Felix, and Festus would persecute the bearers of Truth.

Jesus gives the reason behind such persecutions: “*for my sake.*” It was not because they were sheep it was because they followed the Shepherd. The world only attacks when they see Christ in us.

The end result of being persecuted was “*as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.*” The truth of the Gospel shines a light on those living in darkness as it testifies of Christ. Many persecutors like Paul of Tarsus would see how Christians taught, behaved and react to their suffering and switch sides. Godless governments have always sought to suppress the righteousness of religion.

- **Be Prepared to Speak by God, 10:19-20**

This is a promise of the guidance of the Holy Spirit as it would inspire these apostles with words from God. The Word preached originates in the Will of God and not in the hearts of these men. Jesus would later promise: “*when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come*” (John 16:13).

- **Be Betrayal by Family, 10:21**

Perhaps the greatest and most painful warning of all is that Jesus warns them that not only will some of their family members reject the Gospel, they will persecute fellow family members. Later Jesus would warn in verse thirty-five: “*A man’s enemies will be the members of his household.*” In certain religious cultures a funeral service is held for a family member who becomes a Christian, because in the eyes of his relatives he is no longer alive.

- **Be Faithful Unto Death, 10:22**

The disciple’s work on earth will never be finished until his rest from His labors in death. Hate will come from every class of man on earth, even from family members. A disciple who is not hated is a disciple who is not sharing the Good News and letting his light shine. Persecution has a way of showing to the world and God who is a true disciple and who is perfunctory in their professing of Christ.

The Hebrew writer has his readers look to Jesus and “*consider Him who endured such hostility*

from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12:3). Enduring to the end is a common command throughout the Word of God (Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; 1 Corinthians 13:7; Revelation 3:11).

The end of the faithful's endurance of persecution is salvation. Persecution is temporary. Salvation is eternal. *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him"* (James 1:12).

- **Be Ready to Beat A Hasty Retreat, 10:23**

Jesus does offer to them a sort of route of escape from persecution which results in fringe benefits for the Gospel. As they are chased from city to city they can keep spreading the Gospel message. Persecution inadvertently spreads the very message he strives to quell. *"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles"* (Acts 8:1).

Running away from dangers of death and harm and imprisonment was not cowardly for the saint. It allowed them to live and be free to preach another day. Christ does not want to send His disciples out on suicide missions. He has not blood lust for His servants. He does not want them to be reckless with their lives. Martyrdom may become a reality for many, but they do not have to look for it or wait around for it.

The assurance of Jesus: *"you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes"* is a difficult one to understand. Is it speaking of the second coming of Christ or His judgment upon Jerusalem and Judea in 70 AD or the coming of His Kingdom? The later is preferred in this context.

#### **Questions:**

1. True False Jesus teaching in chapter ten only applies to the mission of the apostles before the death of Jesus.
2. Why did Jesus need the Twelve to help with the ministry?
3. What is the difference between an apostle and a disciple?
4. What did Jesus equip the apostles to do?
5. Why did Jesus send the Twelve only to the Jews and not to the Gentiles?
6. What did the command "freely you have received, freely give" (10:8b) mean to the Twelve?
7. Why did Jesus tell the Twelve to take limited supplies with them?



8. How should they treat homes or towns which were not very receptive to their message?
9. What can positively result when saints are persecuted for the cause of Christ?
10. Who are the wolves?
11. How are serpents wise?
12. How can disciples be harmless like doves?
13. Show from the New Testament the righteous being beaten.
14. Give New Testament Example of Christians be persecuted by the Roman Government.
15. Who helped them speak to the authorities?
16. Should Christians ever run away from persecution and persecutors? Explain.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Are you hated by the world for Christ's sake? If not, why not?
  
2. What are some fringe benefits from running from the persecutors?

**Homework:** Prepare yourself to go out and share the Good News while being aware this by bring upon you persecution and rejection.

*Lesson Thirteen: Sunday, December 25, 2022*

## **Jesus' Requirements of Discipleship**

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### ***Matthew 10:24-42***

Two brothers were not sharing but fighting. Their mother had to intervene. She admonished, "you boys need to be more like Jesus." The oldest turned to the younger brother and said, "okay, you be Jesus."

Being like Jesus is not easy. Being a true disciple means to be like Jesus.

The instruction of Matthew 10 was first of all to the twelve. Much of the teaching however, applies to every disciple of Jesus Christ in every age. Because Jesus switches to the indefinite third person for "disciple" in verse twenty-four, some believe Jesus is speaking to all disciples through out the ages and not just the twelve He is about to send you on the limited commission to the lost children of Israel.

### **Characteristics of a Disciple, 10:24-33**

▶ **A Disciple Emulates His Master, 10:24-25a**

Being a disciples of Christ requires a total make-over. A teacher longs for their student to learn what the teacher knows. However, Jesus wants them to become Christ-like. *“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher”* (Luke 6:40)

Discipleship involves total submission to the will and teachings of the master.

▶ **A Disciple Suffers With His Master, 10:25b**

The more the disciple becomes like Jesus the more the world will begin to treat him like Jesus was treated. If they call him Beelzebul one can only imagine what they will call His followers. Beelzebul was a Canaanite deity. Baal was one of their pagan gods. By coupling his name with “zebul” which means dunghill they are in effect calling Jesus god of the manure pile. For the Christian who feels like the world treats him like dung, he should see this as a off-handed compliment.

▶ **A Disciple Does Not Fear the World, 10:26-31**

It is only human nature to spare oneself from the pain of conflict and problems. However, one of the most common exhortations by Jesus and even throughout the Scriptures is for followers of God not to be afraid (Matt. 14:27; 28:10; Luke 12:32; Jonn14:27). He repeats *“Do not be afraid”* three times. Jesus goes on to give His disciples three reasons why they should not be afraid.

First, their fear is out of place with their mission, because God’s Word must be spread. Just as it is the job of a fireman to put of fires without being paralyzed by fear, so the disciple must face the world and proclaim the Gospel without being stopped by their fears. The job of a light is to shine not to hide under a basket. Rabbis would often come up and whisper answers into the ears of their students. These whispered words, they were to speak aloud. The message could be heard better when shouted from a housetop. It took courage to speak up. The Gospel is not a secret message. In the six hundred miles of catacombs dug by Christians under ancient Rome is the common phrase etched in its walls: *“The Word of God is not bound.”*

The second reason for not fearing what men can do to them is that God is the only one who can destroy the soul. The worse the world can ever do is take our life. No man has a right or authority to damn another man’s soul to hell. Instead of fearing death from men they need to fear or venerate or respect the God who has the power over the destiny of their souls. Be not afraid for the eternal life of the soul is of far more value than the temporary life of the body.

If anyone is to command our fear, it is God. God has the power to cast into hell, no man or even Satan has such power. Even the bodies they destroy will one day be resurrected and become imperishable (1 Cor. 13:42).

The final reason a disciple should not be afraid while carrying out his commission is the assurance of God’s providential care. A copper coin was worth one-sixteenth of a denarius which was the daily wage of a common worker. Jesus compares the disciples’ life to that of a sparrow. One of the smallest of birds. The term “hop” is the better translation than *“fall.”* God has knowledge and care for every sparrow and each hop it takes upon the ground. Therefore, He is aware of your every step in life. He cares enough to count the number of hairs upon your head. Keep in mind the average number of hairs is 140,000. The hair count changes daily for everyone. Therefore God daily is aware of how many hairs are upon our head. If God knows about every hop of a sparrow and the lose of every hair on one’s head, He if fully aware of everything happening in our daily life.

▶ **A Disciple Confesses the Lord, 10:32-33**

Confess means to confirm and concur with. A true disciple is willing to publically identify with Christ. Paul tells us confession of the resurrected Jesus is essential to salvation. *“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Rom. 10:9-10). There is no room in the kingdom for fair-weather disciples or closet disciples or disciples incognito.

It is possible for one who once followed Jesus to deny him. Peter out of fear would deny Jesus three times on the night his Lord was betrayed. Often out of fear Christians will deny or hide being a Christian. Jesus warns that he deny them. This is especially true in regard to Judgment day (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:41).

On Judgment Day “every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:11-12)

Why should we worry about unpopularity in this life when we know we will be fully vindicated in the next?

### **Cost of Discipleship, 10:34-42**

“If Jesus is not God come in the flesh, this is either an example of an incredible insanity or else a hideous attempt to deceive other people. Which is it? If Jesus was insane, ignore him. It is the only rational thing to do. If he was attempting to deceive other people expose him. Fight his lies for the sake of those who might be taken in and harmed by them. On the other hand, if Jesus is who he claimed to be confess him openly” (Boice 183).

The consequences of confessing oneself to be a disciple of Jesus is costly. Jesus goes on to explain this cost using five illustrations.

First He explains the purpose of His mission to the earth from Heaven. “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (10:34). Here Jesus is quoting from Mich 7:6: “for son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man’s enemies are the men of his own household.” Micah describes a siltation that existed because of wickedness during the reign of King Ahaz.

This passage is used of the conflict between relatives as a figure of conflict and war. Righteousness has always been at war with evil. Christ came to bring conflict with those who oppose the will of God in this world. Even the Word is described as a sword (Heb. 4:12).

There seems to be a contradiction here with the fact that the Messiah was to be the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). The coming King and kingdom was to usher in a worldwide rule of peace an abundance (Ps. 72). The Gospel is one of peace. But peace is often built after the carnage of war and destruction resulting from a struggle between good and evil. Men will reject the King and His Kingdom. Peace will come after their defeat.

#### **Cost of Discipleship is...**

- **A Person’s Family, 10:35-37**

Jesus warns that discipleship can bring painful division among family members. The term “against” is from the Greek *dixazo* meaning “to cut in two, to render asunder.” It indicates a long and definite severance of relationship. These family separations may be for the rest of one’s life, being irreconcilable. No relationship on earth is closer than that of family.

These divisions will arise when one family member becomes a follower of Christ and the other reject Him. It is in this sense that Jesus sets His disciple against his family. Paul and Peter mention the marital conflict which results when one spouse accepts the Lord and the other rejects Him. The faithful saint will work to win the other to Christ and not seek a divorce (1 Peter 3:1f; 1 Cor. 7:14-15). Parent and child, siblings and in-laws will not escape the sword of division when one becomes a disciple of Jesus and is rejected by family.

- **A Person’s Love, 10:37**

Family members are commanded to love one another. But what if one’s discipleship threatens these loving family relationships. Jesus demands supreme love. Supreme love for God and His Son is command because this is the only eternal relationship. Being a disciple is choosing love of Christ over love for family.

Those who chose family over Christ will not be worthy of Him. “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

- **A Person’s Life, 10:38**

The cross symbolized death. The disciples would hear “cross” and think only of physical death. Indeed they should be willing to sacrifice to the point of death. However, Jesus is speaking of life of total self-denial. He is willing to deny self its family, occupation, possessions, etc.

- **A Person’s Goals, 10:39**

When it come to my life I have goals and plans for how I want to live. Yet, I need to lose this life I have planned and plan to find life by following Jesus. Finding life or finding myself is a reference to a selfish and self-seeking life. It may sound wise and having fun with money, fame, friends, family, etc. But it is not finding life it is in fact lose ones life. Once I have lived the way I want to life I will in the end of life find out that I have never really lived life at all.

In contrast, I can lose my self-centered life-style with it goals and plans and seek to follow Jesus. By giving up my life and having my way, I can find true meaning to life in Christ and in the end eternal life.

- **A Person's Obedience and Service, 10:40-42**

The term "receive" is found several times and is talking about those who accept and follow the words of the disciple and assist them in spreading the good news.

The person who receives the disciples also receives the Son also receives the Father. Just as a nation receives and accepts the terms from an ambassador sent from a foreign country.

The disciples are like prophets of Jesus. Those who like the Shunnimite woman who received Elisha and was rewarded with a son by birth and again that same son by resurrection, so will they be rewarded who receive one of the Twelve. The Twelve were righteous men. Righteous men were a blessing to those around them. Little ones are believers who seem undistinguished and unessential. The modest help given to he unassuming disciple will not go unrewarded by God. As the Twelve traveled from town to town a cup of cold water would have been of great benefit. Such a deed of hospitality and support would not go unnoticed by the Lord.

To Confess and follow Christ will cost a disciple. Everything has a price. And the cost of discipleship is everything. However, salvation is a free gift. The cost of discipleship is not the price paid for salvation. It is the natural consequences of being like Him.

**Questions:**

1. Does any of this instruction of Discipleship applied to us as Christians today? Explain.
2. Why should a disciple of Christ expect to be persecuted?
3. What three reasons does Jesus give for His disciples not to be afraid?
4. How important is the disciples' confession of Jesus?
5. What is the consequence of denying Christ?
6. How is it that Jesus came to earth and has brought a sword?

7. How is verse thirty-four not a contradiction with the idea that Jesus is the Prince of Peace?
8. Why is it necessary to love Jesus more than family?
9. What does bearing the cross represent?
10. Why is losing my life necessary to find life?
11. What does it mean to receive a disciple?
12. What is the rewards of a prophet or righteous man?
13. Why would the giving of a cup of cold water be rewarded?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What if a spouse becomes a Christian and the other does not? What can the saint do about the religious division in the home?
- +
2. What things can I do every day to help me be a true disciple of Christ?

**Homework:** Pay the cost of discipleship every day.

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