

MATTHEW

FOR BEGINNERS

MIKE MAZZALONGO

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Research Commentary:

Commentary on the New Testament

R.C.H. Lenski

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1.

Introduction to Matthew's Gospel

Before beginning this study, I'd like to say a word or two about the title of this book. The “for beginners” qualifier means that I will approach Matthew's gospel with the notion that the reader has not studied this material before. My goal has been to create a book on this subject that is instructive as well as easy to read.

Before getting into the text itself we will take the time to examine the social and historical setting that existed when this gospel was produced as well as how Matthew's book came to be included in the official New Testament canon.

We will also lay out Matthew's well-structured division of material and review some of the reasons why this gospel was written and how it was used in the early church.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MATTHEW'S WRITING

There were four main political and historical periods that shaped the thinking of the people when Jesus arrived on the scene of human history, the scene that Matthew will record in his gospel.

Persian Period, 536-336 BC

In 587 BC one of the most traumatic events in the history of the Jewish people occurred: their capital city, Jerusalem, and the magnificent temple situated there were destroyed, and a majority of the Jewish people were either killed or taken into captivity by the Babylonian army of King Nebuchadnezzar. Amazingly, in 539 BC while the Jews were still in captivity, the Babylonian Empire itself was defeated by the Persian army.

In the following year, 538 BC, with permission from the Persian king, Cyrus, a small remnant of Jewish exiles returned to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple located there. Others followed to resettle the land over the next century. Teachers and prophets like Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi wrote about this period of time.

The time between the prophet Malachi (433 BC) and the appearance of John the Baptist is referred to as the Intertestamental Period (Period of Silence). In this four hundred year span no inspired books were written, but many historical and diverse religious styles were produced. For example:

1. **Historical books:** Recorded the social and political movements of the Jewish people.
 - a. Josephus (historian)
 - b. Maccabees I and II (history of a Jewish uprising a century before Christ)

2. **Apocrypha (hidden):** These were stories and accounts of events and people in Jewish history not recorded in the inspired books. For example:
 - a. History of Susanna
 - b. Wisdom of Solomon
 - c. I and II Esdras

3. **Pseudepigrapha (false writings):** These were books written using the names of Old Testament writers long after their deaths (i.e. Revelation of Moses).

These writings, between 400 BC and the arrival of Christ, influenced the thinking of the people, and a large part of Jesus' teaching was done to counteract these ideas (the many restrictions about the Sabbath not found in the original Law given by Moses but practiced and taught by a group of Jewish scribes known as the Pharisees).

The Jewish people were basing much of their religious thought on these intertestamentary writings. As a result, many of their ideas concerning the Messiah and the "end times" were shaped by these non-inspired texts rather than the inspired prophets of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). This was to become a major stumbling block for their belief in Jesus since He did not conform to the image that they had of the Messiah coming from these sources.

Greek Period, 333-167 BC

This was the time of Alexander the Great and his legacy. After Alexander's death his kingdom was divided among his four generals. Judea, where the Jewish people lived, was under different control for the two centuries of Greek world domination:

1. 320-298 BC: Egypt dominated the area and was in constant battle with its northern antagonist, Syria, who also wanted to control the region in order to have a staging area for attacks against Egypt to the south.
2. 198-167 BC: Syria was in control of Judea. One Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, oppressed the Jews by trying to close the Temple in Jerusalem and forbidding circumcision. He even sacrificed a pig on the altar in the temple. These actions led to a revolt by the Jewish people written about in the historical books: I and II Maccabees. It was also a time when Jews were greatly influenced by Greek culture to the point where many no longer spoke Hebrew (the language of the Scriptures). To accommodate these changes a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint was produced.

Maccabean Period, 167-63 BC

A popular revolution against Syrian control and Greek influence allowed the Jews to enjoy a brief period of independence from 167-135 BC. It was during this period of time that new powers arose in the Jewish nation:

- **Pharisees:** These were scribes (lawyers) who led the revolt and were considered protectors of the Jewish Scriptures and an opposing force against the evil and pagan influence of Greek culture.
- **Sadducees:** An aristocratic upper class of priests who began to wield political power (there was no king in Israel, so they filled the power vacuum). The role of teaching went from the priests to the Pharisees; the role

of leadership passed from the king and was now exercised by the high priests.

- **Essenes:** These were desert dwellers who considered the religious leadership in Jerusalem corrupt, and who lived as a private community away from civilization. They recorded copies of the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic, sealed them in clay jars and hid them in the caves near the Dead Sea. They did this to protect the Scriptures from the corruption of the religious teachers of that time and also because they believed that the end times were near. These copies were later discovered in 1947 and are now referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- **Zealots:** Political activists and anarchists who wanted to continue the revolution against any foreign occupation of Jewish territory (Barabbas/Simon).
- **Herodians:** A political party sympathetic to Herod; some among them thought that Herod was the Messiah.

Israel was a hotbed of political activity; it was nurtured on non-inspired writings during the intertestamental period that speculated about the fantastic arrival of the Messiah who would deliver them from foreign oppression and usher in a golden period of Jewish domination resembling the period when Solomon was king.

Roman Period, 63 BC (New Testament)

The Romans destroyed Syria completely and dominated the Jews and their territory. They established governors over the Jewish people. The Roman leaders sold the rights to collect taxes to individuals in the country. These people were called Publicans

(i.e. Matthew). Herod, called king of the Jews, was appointed as a political ruler by the Romans, and was responsible for rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem during his reign.

Pontius Pilate was a military governor who supplied a Roman guarantee of force to collect taxes and put down any rebellion.

The Calendar BC/AD

- During the life of Christ, the time was calculated according to the Roman calendar (the feasts were celebrated according to Jewish calendar, but the years were according to the Roman one). The Roman calendar calculated the year by referring to the founding of the city of Rome as year one, and so the year Christ was born was 753 (after the founding of Rome).
- After Christianity became the religion of the Roman world the emperor Justinian requested that a new dating system be established using the birth of Christ as year one. When this adjustment was made the Roman year was 1279. Since Jesus had been born in 753 (Roman time) they re-established the new calendar year in Christian terms to be 526. 526 years after the birth of Christ – AD (Anno Domini: Year of the Lord).
- To complicate things even further, it was discovered that their calculation as to the year Jesus was born was in error by 4 years, but since the change had already been made to the new calendar, they left things as they were. This means that according to the new calendar Jesus was born in 4 BC!

The Romans were cruel and ruthless but during their dominance they provided important elements that supported the spreading of the gospel:

1. Pax Romana (12 BC - 93 AD): One hundred years of relative peace in the Roman Empire. This meant that most people had freedom and safety of movement throughout the land.
2. An excellent road system designed to move troops quickly and efficiently throughout the empire also provided easy travelling for missionaries.
3. They maintained the communication and literary system of that age.
 - a. The Greek language was the universal language of literature and communication between cultures and the Romans did not try to change this.
 - b. The Latin language was used as the language of law.

Paul of Tarsus, Roman citizen and Christian missionary, was able to use a well-maintained road system to travel and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ using the universally understood Greek language to communicate his message.

Palestine in New Testament Times



Wikipedia User: Andrew c

Social Background

People were poor (Judea was poorer than Galilee). Religion was the center of life and, along with political speculation, provided the anticipation of freedom. It was an agricultural society, and its

main city, Jerusalem, had a population of about two hundred and fifty thousand people. There was a high literacy rate among the Jews since everyone had to learn the Law of Moses. There existed certain class divisions:

1. Aristocracy: Priests, with High Priest as spiritual and social leader. Many accepted only the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) as authority, did not believe in resurrection and were conservative religiously but accepted Greek thought and customs.
2. Pharisees: Zealous teachers of the Law. They believed in resurrection and the immortality of the soul. Accepted the entire Hebrew Bible.
3. Common people
4. Publicans: sympathizers to Rome.
5. Sinners
6. Slaves (why crucifixion was so humiliating, it was the punishment for slaves).

Social Problems

30-40% of the Roman population was in slavery. There was no middle class. Divorce was rampant in that society. Among the Gentiles there was prostitution (cult prostitution at pagan temples), infanticide (unwanted babies left in open fields to die), and child abuse (orphans raised as thieves or prostitutes).

Religion

Among the Jews, Temple worship was central. A yearly cycle of feasts was celebrated. Regular synagogue worship was the lifeblood of the Jewish community. Most of the world, however, practiced Emperor worship along with other forms of paganism.

Into this turbulent world comes Jesus Christ. He was born in Bethlehem to a poor couple and raised as a young Jewish man attending synagogue and temple worship. He enters public ministry at age thirty confronting Pharisees, Priests, and the general public with the message that He is the Messiah and hope of Israel. He is hailed as king, executed as a criminal, and resurrected to demonstrate His deity and lordship.

Matthew, one of His disciples, writes about Him, and in the rest of this book we will begin studying his eyewitness account of this remarkable person, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, called the Christ.

2. The New Testament Canon

Jesus was born during the dominance of the Roman Empire. Palestine is under their control, publicly ruled by a Roman appointee (Herod), maintained by Roman military under Pilate, and led in their day-to-day affairs by the wealthy Sadducee priests and their main teachers the Pharisees. The country is a hotbed of political and social turmoil straining on the leash of centuries of foreign domination and stirred up by glorious expectations of a military/political messiah that will free them from slavery and restore them to the “golden era” of King Solomon (when they were a power in the world).

Jesus is born in Bethlehem, lived in Egypt for a while, and raised in Nazareth to a poor couple. He grows up like other boys learning a trade, learning to read the Law and attending synagogue as well as temple worship. He enters public ministry at age 30 confronting the people, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the king, and the Roman leaders with the claim that He is the Messiah and the hope of Israel (considering what they were expecting, no wonder they were surprised). At first the public welcomes Him but as the opposition of the religious leaders

grows this popularity soon wanes and He is eventually tried and executed by crucifixion.

Matthew, one of his disciples, writes about His life and teachings, and we have his account of these things in what is called the gospel of Matthew.

Before we talk about Matthew himself and his recorded witness of Jesus' life, I think we should examine how and why the books of the New Testament (including Matthew's gospel) were put together.

In the early church the only written scripture used at first was the Jewish writings or Scripture now referred to as the Old Testament. Apostles used these to demonstrate that Jesus had fulfilled all the prophecies about the coming of the Jewish Messiah. These, along with their own eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection, were the proof texts used to convince their hearers that Jesus was indeed the Messiah:

²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. ²⁴ But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. ²⁵ For David says of Him,

'I saw the Lord always in my presence;
For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken.

²⁶ 'Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will live in hope;

²⁷ Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades,
Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

²⁸ 'You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'

- Acts 2:22-28

and that from childhood you have known the sacred
writings which are able to give you the wisdom that
leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- II Timothy 3:15

With the spread of the gospel through the preaching and miraculous works of the Apostles, their own writings came to be as authoritative as the Old Testament scriptures, especially with churches that were made up of mainly Gentile (non-Jewish) converts.

The Apostles were aware of their responsibility to teach and preserve for the church the words of Christ, and the power that had been given to them in order to accomplish this.

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the
age.

- Matthew 28:20

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will
send in My name, He will teach you all things, and
bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

- John 14:26

In their own writings they claimed that their teaching was inspired by God.

⁶ Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹ but just as it is written,

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love Him."

¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

- I Corinthians 2:6-13

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, ² who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

- Revelation 1:1-2

¹⁵ And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. ¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” — ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. ²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- II Peter 1:15-21

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

- II Peter 3:14-16

For this reason, the apostolic writings and those authorized by the Apostles (i.e. Mark) were held as authoritative by the early church. For many years they circulated independently from church to church, and country to country. It was not felt that they should be collected into one book or canon (which means measure). Several things happened, however, that made this necessary:

1. The Apostles died and so the output and ability to confirm genuineness (while they lived they could confirm personal authorship or authorize authorship) was no longer present. The church needed to guard against the proliferation of fakes and forgeries.
2. False teachings and teachers needed to be confronted. Each church needed a complete record of the teachings of Christ and the Apostles instead of the partial information scattered throughout the Roman Empire.
3. The Roman Empire itself attempted to destroy Christianity and one method was to destroy the records of the teachings of Christ. For a period of time, it was a capital offense to have in one's possession any of the writings of the Apostles. This type of persecution helped the early church leaders decide which books to keep as inspired and authentic. After all, you did not want to lose your life for an uninspired book!

The process of collecting the authentic apostolic writings that had been circulated and confirmed by the early church was slow, but in 397 AD at the Council of Carthage the 27 books of the New Testament were confirmed as the official canon. (Criteria: written by an Apostle or disciple, well circulated during lifetime,

accepted by church during Apostolic Age.) There are more than four thousand full and partial copies in existence today.

For almost 1600 years we have had the same 27 books as the New Testament.

MATTHEW

Matthew was one of Jesus' chosen Apostles; he was a tax collector who left his profitable but repugnant business to follow Jesus. His book circulated with the title "According to Matthew" and was universally accepted as an apostolic text as early as 125 AD.

One of the earliest recorded church historians, Papias (disciple of John the Apostle), writes in his book that Matthew originally wrote a Hebrew or Aramaic text which recorded Jesus' ministry and sayings (logia) in 65 and 69 AD. Why this date?

- The original text was lost. What we have is a Greek translation circulated in the second century (100-200 AD).
- Although the original Hebrew text was lost or destroyed, there were many reports from early first century and second century writers who claimed to have seen and used it, and they did not deny the accuracy of the Greek translation that was circulating at that time. (Irenaeus says that the authorship date was 64 AD; Pantaeus (170 AD) wrote that he found the Hebrew version of the gospel in Judea; Origin (220 AD) mentions in his writings that Matthew wrote in Hebrew for the Jews.)

Some scholars believe that in addition to the Aramaic one, Matthew also produced a version of his gospel record in the Greek language but with a Jewish style. It is in this way that scholars determined the legitimacy of this book, its apostolic authorship, and placed it into the canon.

Purpose

Matthew presents a defense or apologetic work directed at the Jews. He is careful to explain events and teachings that would be difficult for the Jewish mind to understand or believe (virgin birth, death on the cross, teachings about the Sabbath, bribing of the guards to lie, procedure with the Sanhedrin, etc.). He constructs his eyewitness record using proper Jewish history and custom (genealogy, etc.), and presents his arguments based on the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Jewish Messiah.

In the early church his gospel was often used as a training manual for young Christians. His is an orderly arrangement of the sayings and ministry of Jesus.

Matthew's gospel could be used to convert either Jew or Gentile because it contained information both could relate to and grow with, but the thrust of the material was aimed at Jews.

Structure

Matthew uses a series of narratives followed by discourses in telling Jesus' story.

- A Narrative: Orderly description of events.
- A Discourse: Having to do with conversation or a speech.

There are six narrative sections and five discourse sections, each ending with the words “now when Jesus had finished saying these things...”

In the next chapter we will begin looking at Narrative #1.

3.

Beginnings of the Gospel: Narrative #1

MATTHEW 1:1-4:23

The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew, former tax collector/publican, who was personally called by Jesus to be one of His Apostles. Early church leaders and historians of that period say that Matthew wrote his gospel between 64 and 69 AD. This gospel was widely circulated and generally accepted by the early church as an inspired work by one of Jesus' chosen apostles, Matthew.

I have mentioned that Matthew wrote this work and intended it to be a defense of the faith for Jewish readers since he is careful to note how Jesus' actions and words fulfill specific prophecies about the Jewish Messiah. He is also careful to answer potential objections that Jews would naturally raise concerning the Sabbath and the manner Jesus was executed (Jews believed that crucifixion was a curse).

We also noted that Matthew's work is extremely well-organized consisting of six narrative sections alternating with five discourse sections. This organization of material made the book easier to study and memorize, and consequently used by the early church as a training manual for new Christians.

Genealogy

¹ The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. ⁶ Jesse was the father of David the king.

David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. ⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹² After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of

Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy in order to demonstrate that He is a legal descendant and heir of King David through His earthly father, Joseph. At that time genealogical records were recorded to prove land ownership that had been allotted to the original twelve tribes. Your relationship to a certain tribe determined what land you owned and where you lived, and this was proven by the genealogical records. These records were also used to determine who could serve as priests.

The differences between Matthew's genealogy and Luke's (Luke 3:28) are the following:

1. Luke begins with Jesus and works backwards to Adam. Matthew begins with Abraham and works through to Jesus.
2. Luke traces through David's son Nathan, Matthew through David's son Solomon.

3. Matthew gives the legal lineage through Joseph's descendants; Luke may be giving lineage via the blood lineage of Mary (royal ascendancy based on maternal relationship).
4. Matthew records five women in his genealogy to demonstrate the royal character of the lineage and to demonstrate that women were very much part of God's plan. He may have done this to defend against attacks on Mary and her suspected fornication (if God used women who had been guilty of fornication (Tamar, Bathsheba, Rahab) in bringing Christ into the world, He could use one who was accused of being guilty and was not (the virgin birth).

Announcement of the Birth

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." ²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with

us.”²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Matthew claims that this is a fulfillment of prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:
Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Matthew begins immediately demonstrating how every facet of Jesus’ life was in line with everything spoken about the Messiah by the prophets.

Note also in verse 25 that Joseph kept her a virgin until the birth of Jesus. This assumes that this was not to be the case afterwards (contrary to Catholic teaching of Mary’s perpetual virginity).

Wise Men

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

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

⁷ Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” ⁹ After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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

¹³ Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”

¹⁴ So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

¹⁵ He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

The term “magi” refers to a class of priests and astrologers who served as royal counselors in Persia. They were interpreters of

signs through the use of magic arts, divination, the reading of animal organs, etc., and used astrology to predict the future. They determined, by the stars, the birth of a Jewish king. There is some historical confirmation of the star: *Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn 7 BC evanescent star reported in Chinese records around 4 BC.*

They were ignorant of Herod's political situation and plans. Note that the exact location was determined by God's Word and not the star. The star (sign) merely confirmed the Word (Micah 5:2). Also note that it was Herod who sent them to Bethlehem.

Their presence also symbolized the importance of the birth of Christ to the Gentile world. Their worship of Him signified His divine and royal character.

Egypt and Return

¹³ Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

¹⁴ So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

¹⁵ He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

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

¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she refused to be comforted,
Because they were no more."

¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

²⁰ "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." ²¹ So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, ²³ and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

This was approximately a 200-mile trip. Some scholars believe that they may have gone to Alexandria since there was a large Jewish population there at that time. Matthew claims that the prophecy in Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled here.

When Israel was a youth I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.

Note the parallel between Israel (through Joseph's sale into slavery) going into Egypt and then returning, and Jesus' escape from Herod into Egypt and God bringing Him back to Israel to redeem it.

Archelaus, Herod's son, was also wicked, and killed 3,000 people during a Passover week in revenge for opposition to him. This probably explains why Joseph avoided settling in or around Jerusalem for fear of this ruler. They eventually settle in their hometown of Nazareth, and in doing so the prophecy referring to Jesus as a "Nazarene" is also fulfilled. The term Nazarene was eventually used as a form of derision by Jews in reference to Christians:

- The Talmud calls Jesus, "the Nazarene."
- Typical synagogue prayers cursed Christians as Nazarenes (Jerome).
- Acts 24:5 "...sect of the Nazarene" used by the Jewish lawyer Tertullian in accusing Paul the Apostle.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

¹ Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
'Make ready the way of the Lord,
Make His paths straight!'"

⁴ Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶ and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan

River, as they confessed their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; ⁹ and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

¹³ Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. ¹⁶ After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, ¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

The appearance of John the Baptist was also in fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Messiah. The prophets said that before the Messiah would come there would be a forerunner

who would precede Him and prepare the people for His arrival (Isaiah 40:1-5). In describing John the Baptist, Matthew claims that he is the one whom the prophets were referring to as the forerunner.

John was born of a priestly family (Zacharias) and thus his right to preach and teach was not questioned by the Jewish people. He worked and lived in the style of Elijah the Old Testament prophet (Elijah preached a stern call to repentance). Some believed that Elijah would return, and Jesus tells the people in Matthew 11:14 that John was the embodiment of this prophet.

But John is not an Old Testament prophet, he belongs to the New Testament age, his work is part of the gospel (Mark 1:1-7).

- He prepared the way through the wilderness; the wilderness was the hardened hearts of the people, and he prepared them through a message of repentance for the arrival of Jesus and the good news of the kingdom.
- His baptism was for the forgiveness of sin, preparation for entry into the kingdom of God and the Spirit who Christ would give when He would come (Matthew 1:11, John 20:22).
 - John's baptism was by immersion for several reasons, but mainly because the Greek words for sprinkle (rhantizo) or pour (ballo) are very different than the word immerse (baptizo) that is used to describe John's baptism.
- Jesus' own baptism by John was the turning point in the ministry for each. It marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry and signaled the climax and descent of John's.

- Matthew is the only gospel that records John’s protests:
 - Jesus’ baptism was to inaugurate His public ministry.
 - He accepted baptism in order to comply with God’s will in every respect. He did not have sins but He wanted to acknowledge the fact that the kingdom was at hand and baptism by John was the way every Jew, including Jesus, testified to this reality.
- At the baptism of Jesus, we see the three persons of the Godhead clearly revealed and represented: Father with the voice, Son with the person of Jesus, Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

The climactic point of this narrative is here where the deity of Christ is presented so clearly. This is the culmination of Old Testament prophecy about the initial appearance of the Messiah.

TEMPTATION

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”

⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”
⁷ Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”
⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”
¹¹ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tested by Satan. Satan had deceived the first Adam and now would use his full force to try and ruin the savior of the fallen Adam, Jesus. He was tempted for forty days, during which time He did not eat, and of which we have three recorded (Luke 4:2).

In the three recorded temptations we see Satan doing various things:

1. He casts doubt upon God’s Word concerning Jesus as God’s Son. He then demands that Jesus supply proof of His identity beyond God’s Word by providing for His own needs miraculously. Jesus responds that God’s Word is sufficient in all matters, for His identity as well as provision for His needs.

2. Satan then uses the Word to say what it doesn't; that God will protect us no matter what is done. Jesus responds by demonstrating His understanding of God's Word in context. He responds that God will keep us, but we must not be presumptuous with Him. He keeps His promises to the humble and trusting, He brings to naught the proud.
3. Satan appeals to Jesus' human nature in offering Him something that the Word does not, a crown without a cross. The devil suggests that he is under God and has a right to offer these if Jesus will place Himself under Satan. Jesus refuses to violate the first command of the Law and the basic principle of the Word that is to worship only God. He rejects the word of Satan for the Word of God even if it means His death.

With his greatest temptation spurned, Satan is defeated, and Jesus victoriously orders him away after which angels tend to His needs (food and comfort).

GALILEE AND DISCIPLES

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; ¹³ and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

¹⁴ This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a Light dawned.”

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

¹⁸ Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. ²¹ Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

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

²⁴ The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

Matthew describes John’s imprisonment and beheading. After this, Jesus heads north to the area around the Sea of Galilee (fulfillment of prophecy, Isaiah 9:1-2).

Jesus began His preaching ministry around the area where He grew up. This was similar to John’s ministry. He calls particular

disciples to begin training them, and preaches at the synagogues in this area. Matthew mentions the many miracles that He performs at this time without going into detail about them.

This first narrative establishes Jesus' genealogy, birth, Lordship, and ministry, all of this in four short chapters.

4.

Sermon on the Mount: Discourse #1

MATTHEW 5:1-7:29

I hope you are getting used to our approach of study for the gospel of Matthew. In this chapter we will look at discourse number one that includes the Sermon on the Mount, so named because of the introductory verses in Matthew 5.

Sermon on the Mount

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ²He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,

The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of topics that Jesus addressed at this occasion and partially mentioned by other gospel writers (Luke 6:17). The setting is a hillside overlooking

the Sea of Galilee. There is a chapel there at the moment and you can see the hillside where this took place. This was near the town of Capernaum where both Jesus and Peter lived as adults. Matthew says that after Jesus finished this sermon/teaching He came down, and after healing several people from the crowd, He went into Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-17).

The sermon deals with five major subjects:

- The Beatitudes – 5:1-16
- The Law – 5:17-48
- Relationship with God – 6:1-34
- Relationship with others – 7:1-12
- The way of life – 7:13-29

The Beatitudes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

The word beatitude does not appear in the New Testament. It is a translation from the Latin word, *beatitudo* that means blessed, happy or joyful.

There are nine mentioned and they follow the same progression: each begin with a promise, deal with spiritual things and are directed at people in the kingdom of God. They make no sense to people who are not Christians. With the Beatitudes, Jesus was using a style of teaching that Jewish Rabbis usually had in introducing their lessons with a question or a paradox. The Beatitudes were contradictions that challenged the pre-conceived notions of life and philosophy (i.e. the spiritually poor will attain the riches of heaven; mourners will be comforted; the gentle will gain the earth and not the warriors; the thirsty will be satisfied).

In the Beatitudes Jesus gives insight into the spiritual reality that operates in the kingdom of heaven. These are spiritual principles by which we, in the kingdom, operate. For example, those who bear persecution in the name of Christ will rejoice; this is not the normal reaction for those who are persecuted. People treated in this way usually experience fear, anger, and desire for revenge, but in the kingdom the spiritual laws work in such a way that those who suffer for Christ rejoice in this.

Disciples of Jesus who are influenced by these principles become distinctive, like salt as a flavor and light to the eye is distinctive. The distinctiveness of the disciples, characterized by the principles set forth in the Beatitudes, is what makes them stand apart from others, and what characterizes the kingdom, like the saltiness of salt and the lightness of light. This distinctiveness, ultimately perceived in good lives and good works, not only characterizes the kingdom but also reveals the true nature of God to fallen man. In the Beatitudes we see man as he is in the regenerated state, not as he was, lost without Christ.

The Law

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

¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ “For I say to you that unless your righteousness

surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹ “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. ²³ Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. ²⁵ Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; ³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason

of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴¹ Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The key verse in this discourse is verse 20, and it reveals that the higher righteousness of the disciples is the quality that distinguishes them and makes them useful in the kingdom.

This section from 5:17-48 makes a series of comparisons putting forth what they had been taught about the law by their teachers, "... you have heard that it was said..." and laying beside these teachings the essence and spirit of the Law given by the one who originally gave the law to Moses, Jesus Himself (I Corinthians 10:4).

Jesus comments on five areas of teaching in the Law of Moses that they had received from their teachers and compares these with the true essence of that teaching given by Himself.

1. Murder – vs. 21

That unjustified taking of life was wrong. Jesus pegs the crime at the beginnings of anger and resentment towards others, and that keeping the Law meant a conscious effort at reconciliation, not just avoiding murder, the extreme.

2. Adultery – vs. 27

They had been taught to manipulate the Law in order to justify their adultery with easy divorce. As long as I give my wife a "bill of divorce" I am not sinning when I divorce her. Jesus again situates the true sin as impurity of heart and the keeping of the Law as an effort to control one's body, not manipulation of the Law on marriage and divorce. He is explaining where the true sin is and what keeping the Law really meant.

3. Vows – vs. 33

The Jews had learned a complex manner of making selective vows that they felt they could break when inconvenient. Jesus reveals that vows are not necessary when one has an honest heart. The Law required an honest heart, not loopholes to avoid keeping one's word.

4. Justice – vs. 38

Their system relied on the Law as a tool for restitution and a cover for revenge. Jesus taught them that the higher principle of the Law was mercy, not simply exacting justice, or revenge.

5. Nationalism – vs. 43

They used the Law to build a wall around themselves and keep others out. Jesus showed them that one purpose of the Law was to reveal God's goodness to men, that to be like God meant mercy and justice to strangers.

Relationship with God

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

²“So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴ so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

⁵ “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

⁷ “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹ “Pray, then, in this way:
‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ ‘Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ ‘Give us this day our daily bread.

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

¹³ ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]

¹⁴ For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

¹⁶ “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so

that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸ so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

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

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸ And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the

grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! ³¹ Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

He teaches them how to have a proper relationship with God in heaven.

- **Verses 1-4:** Practice your goodness towards God with a view of pleasing God, not men.
- **Verses 5-18:** Pray to God in order to communicate with Him, not to impress others with your piety.
- **Verses 19-34:** Trust in God to provide for all your physical and spiritual needs, one day at a time.

He encourages them in understanding the nature of the kingdom by teaching them through the Beatitudes. He is telling them that the quality of life that they should strive for is as salt and light of the earth (this is the essence of the Law), and now He guides them into the practical ways of how to have a meaningful relationship with God.

Relationship with Others

¹ “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

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

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

¹² “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

The elements of a proper relationship with God are followed by the key ways to a blessed relationship between people in the kingdom.

- **Verse 12:** Upon this principle is based all the teaching in the Law and Prophets on how we must treat each other in order to bless ourselves and please God.

The Way of Life

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

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

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against

that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Having set forth the parameters of the kingdom and its inner workings, Jesus explains the way to enter into the relationship with the Father in the kingdom of heaven:

1. Enter by the narrow gate of Christ. Later on, at His crucifixion, the disciples will understand just how narrow and difficult this gate is. Jesus is the only gate, and faith is the only way (why it is so narrow).
2. Beware of false prophets who produce neither the teachings nor the fruit of the kingdom of Christ. That is how you know them, neither the fruit nor the teachings. True prophets have the fruit and the teachings. Judge Christianity or any religion by the fruit produced through its teachings.
3. Do not just hear the words of Christ, act upon them in order to enter in. Many are called but few are chosen (verses 28-29). Many heard all of what He said that day and were amazed, but few entered through the narrow gate of faith in Him.

5.

Jesus' Power: Narrative #2

MATTHEW 8:1-9:38

In the first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes the principles upon which the kingdom is established:

- True righteousness before God.
- True relationships with God and man.
- True response to His word.

The narrative that follows this discourse is a description of the power upon which this kingdom is established and the way that men have access to that power.

Three Days in the Life of Christ

In John 21:25 the Apostle says that the world could not contain all of what Jesus did. This is certainly true when you examine the many books written about Jesus and His life, and related material

about the Bible. (Google the name Jesus or Bible and you will get millions of results.)

Matthew's narrative in chapters 8-9 is a good example of the reasons why this is so. When comparing the different accounts of the material contained in these two chapters, we see why John wrote this.

Here is a summary of the activity of Jesus during a particular three-day stretch in chronological order:

Day One:

- Sermon on the Mount
- Heals leper after finishing lesson
- Goes to Capernaum (hometown)
- Heals Centurion's slave on the way
- Arrives at Peter's house, heals Peter's mother-in-law, she feeds Him
- Variety of healings of those brought to Him there

Day Two:

- Orders disciples to cross over the Sea of Galilee
- Teaches would-be disciples on the cost of discipleship
- Calms the storm on the lake
- Heals demoniacs upon arriving on the other side
- Returns across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum
- Heals paralytic brought to Him there

- Calls Matthew

Day Three:

- Dinner with disciples and Matthew at Matthew's
- Teaches Pharisees and John's disciples about nature of the kingdom
- Resurrects official's daughter
- Heals woman with hemorrhage
- Heals blind man
- Heals man who is dumb and demon possessed

Matthew does not arrange them in exactly this order but organizes his material in the following way for teaching purposes: three miracles, a teaching, three miracles, another teaching, four miracles and a summary. There are ten miracles described and the teaching has a variety of subjects, but the most important theme is that of discipleship.

Matthew has described the nature of the kingdom (Sermon on the Mount), the power of the kingdom (miracles), the way into the kingdom (faith and obedience), and the call that Jesus makes to everyone to enter into the kingdom (discipleship).

NARRATIVE #2

So, we begin in chapter 8 as Matthew describes the first group of miracles followed by a teaching.

Miracle: Leper cleansed

¹ When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. ² And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." ³ Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

This man demonstrated his faith, he believed that Jesus could heal him and received instant healing. Jesus "touched" him (unclean to clean). The leper had to show the priest at the temple that he had been healed in order to confirm his cleansing so that he could once again enter the temple and resume his social life.

Miracle: Centurion's slave

⁵ And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, ⁶ and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." ⁷ Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ¹⁰ Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. ¹¹ I say

to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; ¹² but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹³ And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed that very moment.

This soldier was a pious proselyte (he had built a synagogue for the people, Luke). He addressed Jesus as Lord, demonstrated his faith and was prepared to take Jesus at His word. Jesus marvels at the quality of his faith (imagine impressing Jesus!). His servant is healed by Jesus’ word, not personal willingness or faith.

Miracle: Peter’s mother-in-law and general healings

¹⁴ When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. ¹⁶ When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: “He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.”

Note that Peter’s mother-in-law was healed immediately and completely. Many were brought to Jesus with physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments, and the Lord healed them all. Matthew shows that this miraculous healing power of Jesus was in accord with prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Teaching: Instructions to would-be disciples

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. ¹⁹ Then a scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” ²⁰ Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Jesus is trying to describe the “other worldly” experience of the kingdom. Those in the kingdom are in the world but have difficulty being a part of it. They never really feel at home. They truly are only pilgrims passing through.

For a Jewish scribe whose religion was so tied up with history, culture and geography, it would be hard to identify with Christ rather than a physical religion based in history. Jesus’ disciples make their home here, but they are not at home until they are with Christ.

Teaching: Dead will bury the dead

²¹ Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” ²² But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

Jesus tells His would-be followers to leave to the spiritually dead the worry about the things of this world, do not let these things hold you back from following Christ.

Now Matthew goes on to describe another group of miracles.

Miracle: Calming the storm

²³ When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. ²⁵ And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" ²⁶ He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

The Apostles appealed to Jesus in fear to save them from the storm. They had "little" faith, not an absence of faith. Their weakness in faith was demonstrated in fear. Jesus demonstrated His power over nature. No modern faith healer ever demonstrated this.

Miracle: Cast out demons

²⁸ When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. ²⁹ And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" ³⁰ Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. ³¹ The demons began to entreat Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." ³² And He said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd

rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. ³³The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

The demoniac in this scene was very dangerous and possessed by many demons. The demons feared that their judgment was at hand (they know the results of their judgment but not the time. No one knows the time, and if the spirits don't know then certainly humans do not know). Note that Jesus casts them out with a simple word, no drama.

Miracle: Paralytic cured

¹ Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city. ² And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." ³ And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." ⁴ And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? ⁵ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'? ⁶ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home." ⁷ And he got up and went home. ⁸ But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

First, Jesus forgives his sins. The scribes grumbled because they felt that Jesus had no right or power to do this, only God forgives sin. They accused Him of blasphemy. Jesus demonstrates His right and power by healing the man's disease (power over one demonstrates power over the other). The people who witness this glorify God (one of the purposes for miracles).

Teaching: Matthew is called

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

Notice how simply Matthew writes about his own call and response. He gives his name, his former life (tax collector), his call and response. He uses the third person to refer to himself and records no dialogue from Jesus to himself. This shows his great humility.

Teaching: Accusation of eating with sinners

¹⁰ Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not

sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus' response to this attack was that His ministry was one of compassion not ceremony. Miracles of healing and the ministry of the cross were motivated by compassion. Nothing glorifies God more than soul saving and service born out of love for others.

Teaching: John's disciples

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results.

¹⁷ Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Questions arose why John's disciples and those of the Pharisees fast and Jesus's disciples did not. The Pharisees fasted on a regular basis as part of their religious practice (much of which was hypocritical). John and his disciples fasted partly because of their Jewish conditioning by the Pharisees, and partly because their leader, John, was an ascetic (no wine, ate only honey & locusts). Also, while John was in prison they prayed and fasted for his release.

Jesus responds with three examples:

Jesus' appearance is one of joy, the king of the kingdom has come and like the **appearance of the bridegroom** at a wedding, it is a time for feasting, not fasting. When He is killed (prophecy of His cross) then there will be reason to fast.

The patch and the wineskin. As I said, the reason the Pharisee's disciples fasted was because it was imposed on them by their leaders and by tradition. The reason John's disciples fasted was because of the example of John and the fact that he was by this time imprisoned. Jesus did not lay this condition upon his disciples, and since He was with them they rejoiced in His presence and had no need to fast.

The verses about the patch and wineskin refer to their spiritual condition. He does not reveal to them (like He did for His disciples who were the new garment, new wineskin) the details of His death and resurrection because they did not believe. He was the **new patch** and they, in their disbelief, were the **old cloth**. He was the **new wine** and they, in their disbelief, were the **old wineskins**. Their disbelief would destroy them.

Miracle: Official's daughter

¹⁸ While He was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹ Jesus got up and began to follow him, and so did His disciples...

...²³ When Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, ²⁴ He

said, “Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.”
And they began laughing at Him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ This news spread throughout all that land.

A synagogue elder asks Jesus to save his dying daughter. Jesus arrives after the child has died. He then resurrects her from the dead. This miracle prefigures His own resurrection.

Miracle: Woman with hemorrhage

²⁰ And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; ²¹ for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.”
²² But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well.

This miracle is performed in between the official’s request and Jesus’ arrival at the man’s house to raise his daughter. This event is described in greater detail in Mark 5:21-34 and Luke 8:43-48. Matthew presents the account in its order with the request from the synagogue official before and after.

It is interesting to note that Jesus healed the woman based on her faith, and raised the dead child as a response to her father’s faith. This encourages us to not only pray for ourselves but pray for others as well, because God answers all prayers offered in faith.

Miracle: Dumb and demon possessed man healed

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

²⁸ When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

²⁹ Then He touched their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith." ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: "See that no one knows about this!" ³¹ But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout all that land.

³² As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. ³³ After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." ³⁴ But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

The significance of this miracle when seen alongside of the other miracles performed (raising the dead, calming the sea, etc.) was that no one else in their history of prophets and miracle workers had singularly demonstrated power over the creation, the spirit world, diseases, and death as Jesus had. This kind of power could only be exercised by God!

Summary: Jesus, Lord of harvests

³⁵ Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

³⁶ Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them,

because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

Matthew summarizes the nature of Jesus’ ongoing ministry: teaching, preaching, and healing.

Jesus’ teaching and call to discipleship are followed by a prayer asking for a response. In the next section we will see the selection and sending out of disciples to multiply the teaching, preaching and miracles done by the Lord.

So, we have, through Matthew’s eyes and pen, a description of the everyday life of the King as He goes about establishing His kingdom in the hearts of men and women through His miraculous power and His inspired teaching.

6. Names and Mission of the Apostles: Discourse #2

MATTHEW 10:1-42

As we have discussed in previous chapters, Matthew's gospel is divided into a series of six narratives and five discourses. There is a description of activity (narrative) followed by a section of direct teaching (discourse).

In chapter 5 we looked at the second narrative as Matthew described a series of Jesus' miracles, and His responses to people who were questioning Him. At the end of this section there were a few verses showing Jesus praying that people would respond to

His call for discipleship in order to go and reap the harvest of souls. (The call to follow Jesus is a call to follow Him into the harvesting of souls.)

This section (9:35-38) serves as a bridge to the next discourse where Jesus selects and instructs His disciples in the role of apostleship (messengers) to the lost sheep of Israel.

Granting of Power – Chapter 10

¹ Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Matthew assumes that his readers know the twelve special disciples of Jesus (He had many disciples and sent out more than twelve with power, i.e. Luke 10:4-17). However, this section deals specifically with the sending out of the twelve who were to become the chosen Apostles.

Jesus gives them authority. The term denotes both power and the right to use it. This is another demonstration of Jesus' deity as One with the ability to give spiritual power to another. Power is over both the spiritual realm (cast out demons), and the physical realm (heal sickness and disease).

Names of Apostles

² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and

Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

The term apostle means more than just a servant sent to deliver a message; it denotes a fully empowered representative or legate who acts for his lord or king. Sometimes the word is used to refer to those who helped the apostles (Barnabas), but when referred to as “the twelve Apostles” the Bible speaks of these special messengers through whom:

1. The eyewitness accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus were produced.
2. The ones through whom the church was established.
3. The ones through whom Jesus’ instructions and teachings were recorded or confirmed for future generations.

There were 14 in all. Judas was replaced by Matthias, and Paul was called as an Apostle to the Gentiles. There will never be any others.

- The list is grouped in pairs (Peter always first and Judas last).
- Gives Peter’s Jewish name (Simon).
- Andrew, Peter’s brother listed with him.
- James and John, another set of brothers.
- Philip and Bartholomew (Nathaniel).

- Thomas (doubter) and Matthew (publican).
- Second James and Thaddeus (Lebbeus/Judas are his other names).
- Second Simon (from Canaan, Peter from Galilee and a zealot, member of this sect).
- Judas last, Iscariot means man of Kerioth his hometown in Judea. Designated the traitor.

Some names are found in other lists with certain names changed around, but Peter is always first and Judas is always last.

Instructions Concerning Their Mission



Wikipedia User: Andrew c

These instructions pertain to their immediate mission in Galilee, but also a wider view of their mission to all the world, how it would be received, and their own reaction to the response of those to whom they would bring the gospel.

MINISTRY TO ISRAEL

Jesus begins by giving them instructions concerning their immediate ministry to the Jews.

Go only to Jews, not Gentiles or Samaritans

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The Gospel and the kingdom were established first among the Jews and then to spread to all parts of the world (Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16). This was based on prophecy and the promise made to the Jews by God.

Preach the kingdom of heaven is at hand

⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

This was to be the theme of their proclamation. The idea was that the rule of grace and the power and promises of God made to them in the Old Testament were about to be fulfilled. Jesus was continuing the message of John the Baptist because He had not yet suffered on the cross nor been resurrected.

Power to perform miracles

⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

Healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons: they received these abilities for free and were to use them for the benefit of the people for free in order to confirm with power the message that they were preaching.

What to bring and what not to bring

⁹ Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰ or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

They were to bring no money, no luggage, no extra clothing, shoes or staffs. They were to go as they were. Jesus sends them out with the bare physical necessities and assures them that as His workers, He will provide for them on their journey.

Method of operation

¹¹ And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. ¹² As you enter the house, give it your greeting. ¹³ If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. ¹⁴ Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, it will

be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

They are to preach and do their works (verse 7), and determine by the response who are willing to accommodate them. When they are offered a place to stay they are to stay put until it is time to leave (no begging, no hopping from place to place to secure better lodging; verse 11).

When they enter they are to offer a greeting of peace and if the hosts are receptive to Christ, this blessing will remain upon the home, if not the Apostles will leave and the blessing will return to them (verses 12-13). If this occurs they are to leave and as a sign that they have been there and been rejected, they are to shake the dust of that place off of themselves as a sign of the rejection that they have suffered. They had actually been there, in their homes with the gospel, but were rejected so they who rejected Christ were shaken off in the same way that the dust is shaken off. Jesus reminds them of the judgment reserved for those who reject their message (verse 15).

WARNING AS TO THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

Here Jesus warns them as to the response they will receive not only from the Jews but also the response that they will receive as they bring the gospel beyond Israel after He is gone.

People will not take happily to the message

¹⁶“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as

doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Jesus describes to them the true nature of the world (sheep and wolves) and their need to be harmless but wise. They will, in some cases, be brought before lower (Jewish) or higher (governors/kings) courts because of the gospel, and in doing so will cause even the leaders to hear and examine the message of Christ.

Jesus will provide in their hour of trial

¹⁹ But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

He is not promising to protect them against imprisonment, torture or even death (which they all suffered). He promises to inspire them in their proclamation and defense of the gospel through the Holy Spirit when the time comes. They may be persecuted but they would not be confused or mistaken because of it.

Results of their preaching

²¹ “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and

cause them to be put to death. ²² You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

²³ “But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

The gospel will bring division within families. They will be persecuted because of Christ, the message they bring and the result it causes. Only those who persevere will be saved. It is not the call to Apostleship that saves them, but their faithfulness to the end, despite persecution, that saves them. Jesus prophesies that the destruction of the Jewish nation (70 AD/Rome) will occur to all towns. (The title, “Son of Man” often refers to judgment and specifically judgment upon the Jews).

INSTRUCTIONS ON THEIR RESPONSE TO THE PEOPLE’S REACTION TO THE GOSPEL

Do not be surprised

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

Do not be surprised if they treat you as they do Me. They accused Him of being the devil, imagine what they will say of His followers.

Do not be afraid

²⁶ “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

³² “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

Do not be afraid of failure, everything that is secret now (their schemes and your gospel) will one day be revealed and out in the open (verses 26-27). Do not be afraid of death, they may kill your bodies but they cannot destroy your souls which are precious in the sight of the Father (verses 28-31). Do not be afraid of being wrong, those who confess Christ are on God’s side, those who deny Christ are the ones who are against God (verses 32-33).

COMMENT ON THE REASONS FOR THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

The gospel brings division not unity

³⁴ “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.

The gospel brings peace between God and man, and promotes peace among brethren, but creates a natural dividing line between those who accept it and those who reject it.

The gospel demands the highest loyalty

³⁷ “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

A loyalty that puts Christ above the dearest of physical relationships, even above preservation of self, if need be.

Jesus explains that the negative response they will encounter shouldn’t surprise or frighten them because it is natural. The gospel is exclusive and demands total commitment from those it

calls. It is this exclusive nature of the message that creates division among nations, families and even individuals who must wrestle with the question, "Will I abandon all, including self, to follow Jesus?" (Christianity is exclusive in the sense that there is no other way except through Jesus Christ and obedience to Him that one can be saved).

Promise to those who respond

⁴⁰ "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. ⁴¹ He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

Jesus promises a reward to not only those who receive the message of Christ from the mouth of the Apostles, but also in turn pass along to others any good thing (even the smallest gesture such as a drink of water) in the name of Jesus. He says that even these are counted in the chain of faith and future blessing that begins with God through Christ, continues through the Apostles, and then goes on to everyone who believes. (Not just those who respond directly to the Apostles, but all who ultimately respond to their message.)

7.

Jesus Faces Skepticism: Narrative #3

MATTHEW 11:1-12:50

So far, Matthew has described an almost uninterrupted ascension of Jesus' ministry: baptism at Jordan, defeat of Satan in the wilderness, miracles, and ministry among the people, and choosing and sending disciples to preach and heal in His name.

In the third narrative portion Matthew describes the aggressive questioning Jesus begins to draw as His ministry progressed.

Chapter 11:1 serves as a bridge between the discourse where Jesus was sending the Apostles out to preach, and new encounters that He would have with John's disciples and the Pharisees. This narrative deals with the doubt and skepticism of both John and the Pharisees.

WITNESS TO AND CONCERNING JOHN THE BAPTIST

Response to John

² Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" ⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

Matthew mentions that John had been imprisoned earlier, and now John sends his disciples to ask if Jesus is the Messiah or if another was to come. John has certain doubts and sends his people to question Jesus.

John had preached that when the Messiah came there would be judgment, fire and a cutting away of the dead branches etc. So far, none of this had happened. On the contrary, John himself had been imprisoned and no judgment had yet come upon the nation.

Jesus' response shows John that everything that He is doing is in line with what the Old Testament said that the Messiah would do when He came (heal, Isaiah 35:6; preach, 61:1). John assumed that all things would happen in a certain time frame, and when all did not happen right away, he doubted. We know, however, that after the Baptist's death, the judgment he spoke of did come to the Jewish nation. In 70 AD the Roman army destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple, and killed most of the inhabitants living there. This was a terrible judgment on the nation of Israel for rejecting their Messiah but was not, as John thought, the end of the world. He assumed that the judgment on the Jewish people would coincide with the end of time when the Lord would return to judge all men. These were to be two separate events.

John did not understand that the first coming of the Lord was to be with grace, patience and forgiveness. This is the period that we are still living in now and continue to live in until Jesus returns. His second coming, however, will arrive with judgment on the entire world, not just the Jewish nation (Acts 17:30-31). This will occur but in God's own time, and we should not doubt that it will happen.

Jesus warns everyone not to stumble on account of Him. The word that He uses refers to a trap, and the idea is that a trap, when sprung, kills the victim. Jesus cautions His disciples to take care and not be caught in the trap of disbelief concerning Him, a trap that would cause one to lose faith and be destroyed.

Witness concerning John

⁷ As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces! ⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way before You.'

¹¹ Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

¹⁶ "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, ¹⁷ and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' ¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

Jesus describes John the Baptist:

- He was truly a prophet (verses 7-9).
- He was the fulfillment concerning the one who was to come in order to prepare the way for the Messiah (verse 10).

- He had the greatest prestige of any prophet because of his proximity to the Lord (verse 11a).
- He was not as great as those in the kingdom because he did not possess the Holy Spirit in the way that those in the kingdom did – Acts 2:38. (verse 11b).
- He was rejected in the same way that Jesus was rejected. “Kingdom suffering violence” could refer to the suffering that both John and Jesus suffered in order to establish the kingdom.

Reproach on the cities that rejected both Him and John

²⁰ Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

²² Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

²³ And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

John’s disciples wanted to know when the actual judgment was to come, and Jesus reminds them, as well as unbelievers, that a terrible punishment is coming. This passage may suggest degrees

of punishment if you interpret the term, “day of judgment” to mean the final judgment at the end of the world. However “day of judgment” can also be a time referring to the judgment on the Jews as a nation (i.e. 70 AD Rome destroys Jerusalem).

The destruction of these other pagan cities, who were much more sinful, will be less painful than the horrible siege and suffering brought upon the Jewish nation in 70 AD.

Invitation and promise for those who accepted the message and arrival of Jesus

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. ²⁸ “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Prayer of Jesus:

- Gratitude for those who did accept (verses 25-26).
- Promise to reveal the Father to all who come to the Son (also a claim to deity) (verse 27).

- Invitation to come to Jesus. The yoke of the Law, yoke of ignorance and the yoke of fear will be replaced by the yoke of faith and obedience to the teachings of Christ that, although demanding, are made easy and light by His mercy, grace, and presence (verses 28-30).

Jesus responds to the questions of John and his disciples, gives a witness towards John, rebukes the cities that rejected Him, and renews His invitation for all to follow Him.

CONFLICT WITH THE PHARISEES

CHAPTER 12

The next chapter chronicles the on-going conflict that Jesus had with the Pharisees and scribes who were the principal teachers of the nation of Israel.

Jesus' popularity as a teacher, regardless of His miracles, posed a threat to their position and influence so they were determined to discredit or destroy Him. This aggression began as a form of questioning concerning His conduct and teachings, and finally ended with a plot to kill Him.

ACCUSATIONS OF SABBATH BREAKING

Pharisees accuse Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath

¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your

disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.”

³ But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,
⁴ how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶ But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.
⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Sabbath law forbade thirty-nine types of work on the Sabbath. Harvesting was one of these.

Jesus responds by showing them that God’s law concerning mercy towards suffering and need is higher than the law concerning religious ceremony. God provided ceremonial laws for man’s benefit in worship, but when these clashed with human need and mercy, the higher principle of love trumped the rules about required worship (David eating the showbread). The Lord points out that the priests themselves broke the Law since they had to work in order to perform their duties on the Sabbath.

Jesus rebukes them for not discerning between the form (temple and sacrifices which led to Christ) and the substance of the Law (Christ Himself, the giver of the Law and the reason for the ceremonies).

Pharisees accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath by healing someone on the Sabbath

⁹ Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰ And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. ¹¹ And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³ Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

They set a trap for Him by asking if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus answers with the question, “Is it right to do good on the Sabbath?” He uses the example of saving an animal’s life on the Sabbath. He then contrasts this with the value of a human life and how right it is to save lives, even on the Sabbath. He then heals a man’s withered hand to make His point. It is always right to do good. They again miss the point and plot His demise in their anger.

Fulfillment of prophecy

¹⁵ But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, ¹⁶ and warned them not to tell who He was. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: ¹⁸ “Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen;

My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased;
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
¹⁹ “He will not quarrel, nor cry out;
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
²⁰ “A battered reed He will not break off,
And a smoldering wick He will not put out,
Until He leads justice to victory.
²¹ “And in His name the Gentiles will hope.”

Matthew is always careful to demonstrate how every facet of Jesus’ life is in accordance with prophecy concerning the Messiah. Here he weaves together several verses from the prophet Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant” passages (Isaiah 42:1-ff) along with other revelations during Jesus’ life on earth (... “this is my beloved Son” Matthew 3:17) to demonstrate that His meekness and refusal to debate the Pharisees at this time is in line with what was said about His character in the Old Testament. Matthew also introduces the idea that the prophets also saw the Messiah bringing salvation to the Gentile world as well as the Jewish nation. This was done to prepare for the time when Jesus would do this as well.

ACCUSATIONS OF ASSOCIATION WITH SATAN

Jesus miraculously heals a blind and dumb man possessed of a demon

²² Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that

the mute man spoke and saw. ²³ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

The crowd begins to perceive that Jesus may be the Messiah based on this miracle. The Pharisees counter by accusing Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan.

Jesus responds to them

²⁵ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

³⁰ He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

³¹ "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³² Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

³³ "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵ The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. ³⁶ But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Verses 25-26: It is illogical that I cast out demons by the power of demons because this would mean Satan is fighting against himself, and even if this were so he would be destroyed (a house divided against itself).

Verses 27-30: The Jews cast out demons and claimed power from God to do so, why do they doubt that His power is from God? There is something wrong with men who ascribe the identical effect to opposite causes. Jesus does not allow them to escape the obvious conclusion that if His power is from God, then what He claims is true. The miracle not only demonstrates that His power is from God, but also that His power is greater than Satan's. The final conclusion is that those who accuse Him or are not for Him are automatically against Him. When it comes to Jesus there is no neutral ground. He came to sow the seed, catch the fish, find the sheep, and those against Him do the opposite, they scatter the seed, the fish, and the sheep (this has always been the work of the devil).

Verses 21-37: Jesus rebukes them for their false accusations against Him. The English word blasphemy comes from two Greek words meaning injure and speech. To speak injuriously or badly

about anyone, including Jesus as they had just done, can be forgiven. But to do so against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, ever. This is probably so because it is the Spirit who convicts the world of sin and leads us to repentance (John 16:8). If we speak against Him and reject Him there is no other power to lead us once again to repentance and the forgiveness that stems from repentance. Jesus is warning the Pharisees that they are dangerously close to this point because they are blaspheming Him within whom resides the Holy Spirit and by whose power He was doing the miracles.

The Lord comments on their accusations against Him:

- Make up your minds based on facts. Good fruit comes from good trees and vice versa. Look at my fruit and judge.
- The fruit of your lips already reveals what is in your hearts. To accuse me of being with Satan after seeing good works demonstrates how twisted you are inside.
- He makes a specific statement to them concerning their confession (they chose not to confess Him but to blaspheme Him) and how it will come back to judge them in the last day (10:32 “whoever confesses me...”).
- Jesus gives a general warning to everyone concerning the use of their tongues, and how our own words reveal our hearts and will judge us in the end.

Seeking a sign

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

⁴³ "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

The Pharisees assigned His miracles to Satan. The Scribes (learned lawyers) were not satisfied with these works of mercy and grace. They wanted something spectacular (movement of the heavenly bodies) or something bizarre. They wanted their own personal "sign".

Jesus responds that the only sign given to them would be that of Jonah in the whale. Jonah was three days and nights in the whale and brought out; in the same way Jesus would be three days and three nights in the grave and be brought out. This would be the final and most convincing sign to demonstrate His deity and person.

He compares their reaction to Him to how others reacted to God and His servants in the past:

- Nineveh repented after hearing Jonah's message, but they, after receiving much more proof, refuse to repent. When they will be judged, their disbelief will be in marked contrast to those Gentiles who long ago believed and repented. Also, Jerusalem was facing impending doom just as Nineveh was before it repented and was spared.
- The Queen of Sheba travelled a thousand miles to hear Solomon, but they refuse to hear Him who is among them. Again, a contrast that will condemn them in the end.

At this point Jesus gives an illustration that compares the generation of Jews He was addressing to a demon possessed man (verses 43-45). Jesus, by His appearance, miracles and teachings is casting out the demons by which they are threatened and controlled. Despite all of this, the cleansed nation rejects Christ and His Spirit and thus left worse off in the end than at the beginning because after rejecting Him they will be totally under the control of Satan and his demons. By not accepting Jesus as Lord of the house of Israel they are left empty and vulnerable.

To those who seek a sign He tells them that their request is a sign of their lack of faith and pending destruction, but He does reveal what sign they should be looking for, always holding out the offer and hope of salvation for them.

Conflict with His Family

⁴⁶ While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” ⁴⁸ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

In the middle of His response to the Scribes He is told that His mother and brothers want to speak with Him. Mark 3:21 tells us that they thought He had lost His senses, and wanted to bring Him home. Perhaps the accusation that He was possessed by Beelzebub moved them to action.

Jesus does not respond to them in this, but questions the very essence of their relationship with Him. Their claim to Him was their physical relationship, but He responds that His true family is made up of those who do the will of God, and the will of God is that everyone believe in His Son.

In the conflict with His family Jesus extends the same invitation to them as He has to the Scribes, Pharisees, disciples and multitudes: to be united to Him through faith and obedience.

8.

The use of Parables in Jesus' Teaching: Discourse #3

MATTHEW 13:1-52

In the previous narrative we saw Jesus and His teachings being rejected by the religious leaders and a majority of people.

The next section will find the Lord using parables to teach the crowds that followed Him. Matthew explains that Jesus did this in order to keep instructing His disciples but keep hidden the things of the kingdom from those who disbelieved and rejected Him. The parable was the perfect format to accomplish these dual purposes.

Parables

The word “parable” means to place beside. It signified the placing of two or more objects together in order to compare them. In the New Testament, “seen” things are put beside “unseen” in order to reveal truth. It was a good teaching tool because it was easily understood by the uneducated and was more likely to be remembered.

In most cases a parable uses an imaginary story about something that could have happened in reality but is used figuratively to illustrate some higher spiritual truth. Parables are not fables or myths because the lessons contained in the stories could have actually happened (no fairies or mysticism).

Parables are not a device invented by Jesus (II Samuel 12:1-77, Nathan telling the parable of the sheep to David) but Jesus borrows the device and gives it special meaning. In the New Testament only Jesus uses parables and these are only recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (John has figures, “I am the vine”, but not parables). Some are repeated in more than one gospel, and many are exclusive to one gospel (i.e. Matthew, Pearl / Luke, Good Samaritan).

In order to draw accurate lessons from the parables there are some basic rules to follow:

1. Look for the spiritual truth as it applies to the situation that prompted the telling of the parable in the first place.
 - a. i.e. It was the grumbling of the Pharisees because Jesus ate with sinners that prompted the telling of the parable of the prodigal son. In

order to properly interpret the parable, Jesus' words have to be applied to their situation.

2. Avoid oversimplification or complication. Do not look for meaning in every detail and do not over interpret. Look for the general spiritual principle put forth.
 - a. To say that the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches that the doing of good to others is the be all and end all of Christianity is to oversimplify (neglects the cross of Christ, etc.).
 - b. To look for meaning to direct the way we operate economic matters in the parable of the master who paid his workers similar wages for different work (Matthew 20:1-7) is to overcomplicate matters.
3. Parables illustrate truth (like pictures in a textbook illustrate the text) but they do not prove truth. We shouldn't formulate doctrine based on parables alone.
 - a. We need to remember that parables are not doctrinal statements. They are figurative ways of pointing toward unseen things.
 - b. Laying a story with concrete things (seen) next to spiritual things (unseen) so that through what is seen, what is unseen becomes clearer.
 - c. They usually point to some truth which can be found written somewhere else. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates love for neighbor and who neighbor is. In Luke 10:27

Jesus quotes Old Testament scriptures to clearly say it. In this case the parable illustrated the idea but did not invent it.

4. Look for the meaning or conclusion within the parable itself or within the context before drawing your own conclusion.
 - a. Sometimes Jesus gives the meaning at the beginning or end (Rich Fool in Luke 12:16-21). Sometimes He asks someone to give the meaning (Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37). Sometimes He responds to a question about the parable from a listener in the group (Peter asks about how something entering a man's mouth cannot defile him). Sometimes people are left to draw their own conclusions (Mark 12:12 shows religious leaders draw the correct conclusion that the parable speaking of wicked servants beating and killing the master's son was really speaking about them).
 - b. Usually the primary meaning is contained within the parable and applicable to the situation in which the parable is first spoken.
5. Jesus and His parables are one.
 - a. Other teachers and moralists can be separated from their teachings because their illustrations are not about themselves. Not so with Jesus. His parables are about Himself and His kingdom. The reason people failed to understand the parables is because they failed to accept Him as

the Messiah, and in doing so could not grasp the full meaning of His parables.

- b. He told them in such a way that in rejecting Him, they shut themselves off from understanding the things concerning the kingdom taught in the parables.

KINGDOM PARABLES

Matthew 13 has seven parables about the kingdom (one implicit and six explicit), and one small parable about disciples at the end of the chapter. Many of Jesus' parables were about the kingdom, its nature, its coming, value, etc.

The interpretations of these have varied throughout the years depending on the theological positions held. One extreme view sees the kingdom coming suddenly and cataclysmically in the future. This position interprets all parables concerning the kingdom from this perspective (i.e. the leaven rising in the dough suddenly is an image that the kingdom will come suddenly). The other extreme is that the kingdom is fully realized and completed here and we are only adding to it as time goes by (i.e. the leaven rising is interpreted as the on-going growth of the kingdom).

A more middle of the road and, in my opinion, biblically accurate interpretation says that the kingdom has been established by Christ here on earth but it will be fulfilled (resurrection and glorification) when He returns (i.e. the leaven is Jesus, the growth is the work of the saints, and the final outcome is His return). Kingdom parables demonstrate the behavior of those who live and develop within the kingdom until the King returns.

Parables in Matthew 13

In Matthew 13 we see seven kingdom parables and an explanation of the reasons for using parables, as well as examples of most of the devices concerning parables mentioned in this chapter.

Jesus telling the parable of the sower and seed as a response to rejection from leaders and people

¹ That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ² And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach.

³ And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴ and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸ And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

Explanation of why He will now use parables

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of

the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹² For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,
'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand;
You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;
¹⁵ For the heart of this people has become dull,
With their ears they scarcely hear,
And they have closed their eyes,
Otherwise they would see with their eyes,
Hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart and return,
And I would heal them.'
¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

For disciples' teaching and method of separating believers and unbelievers. His use of parables and reason for them is according to prophecy.

Example of Him explaining a parable to disciples (also giving us the correct commentary about the parable within the text)

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

The remaining kingdom parables are in two groups of three separated by two statements and followed by a summary:

PARABLES

Wheat and Tares

²⁴ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.””

Parable of Growing Seed

³¹ He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³² and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

Parable of the Leaven

³³ He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

Parenthetical statement that parable use is according to prophecy

³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.”

Explanation of parable of wheat and tares in response to question from disciples

³⁶ Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷ And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸ and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the

end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

PARABLES

Treasure

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Peace

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Net

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into

containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes.” ⁵² And Jesus said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

He asks if they understand the parables and they say that they do. He responds with yet another parable, this time comparing them to a head of a household (whose job was to provide for the needs of the household).

They are providers of the household (kingdom) in providing what they have been given and taught, will see and be taught. Some old truths, things known and accepted (the Law and prophets). Some new truths that they have learned from Jesus who taught through parables (the gospel, death, burial, and resurrection). If they have learned and understood what He has taught them then they will see how both old and new are connected (the old points to the new, the new fulfills the old) and thus they will be able to feed and teach those in the kingdom, and those seeking the kingdom.

ASSIGNMENT

Personal project if you want a little challenge in Bible study.

1. Choose two parables in this section.
2. Answer the following questions:
 - a. What is the main truth?
 - b. What was the parable saying to the disciples?
 - c. What meaning does it have for us today?

9.

Ministry to the Masses, Ministry to the Few: Narrative #4

MATTHEW 13:53-17:27

Chapters 13 to 17 contain the fourth narrative and the final information concerning Jesus' ministry in the northern part of the country near His birthplace and adult dwelling place. After this He will go up into Jerusalem and the surrounding area. This is the second year of His ministry.

We will also witness the last of His great miracles recorded by Matthew. There are a few more to come, but the final miraculous signs of His divinity will be performed here among the people of His hometown (feeding of five thousand and four thousand) and especially for His chosen disciples (walking on water, healing and casting out demons, transfiguration, paying tax with coin in fish's mouth). There is even the healing of a Gentile woman's

daughter as an act of compassion and a sign of things to come when the gospel will be brought to all, not only the Jews.

After His Galilean ministry in this section, Jesus will go south toward Jerusalem and finish His ministry there:

- Teaching and more confrontation with the Pharisees.
- Triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
- Judgment on Jerusalem and a prophecy.
- Suffering, death, and resurrection.

While He is in the safer and more familiar surroundings Jesus establishes, especially with His disciples, His identity. In addition to this, He prepares them for the rejection He will suffer at the hands of the leadership and people when they descend to Jerusalem.

Rejection

⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. ⁵⁴ He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his

own household.”⁵⁸ And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

¹ At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, ² and said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

³ For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴ For John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” ⁵ Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

⁶ But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, ⁷ so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸ Having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹ Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. ¹⁰ He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹² His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

Jesus’ rejection by His own hometown in Nazareth and the killing of John the Baptist by Herod at the national level spell out His ultimate rejection by the people. Those who knew Him best and witnessed not only His teachings and miracles but also His pure life completely reject Him now. Herod, who knew that John the Baptist was very popular with the people and was aware of his connection to the Lord had him killed anyways thus sending a clear signal to Jesus of his contempt and evil intentions.

Yet, even with this evident rejection displayed before Him, Jesus continues to minister to the people and prepare His disciples.

MINISTRY TO THE MASSES

In this section Matthew writes of Jesus' compassionate care for the people. He does not record any parables or sermons at this point, only Jesus' benevolent ministry for those who came to Him for help and healing.

Feeding the five thousand who had followed Him out to the wilderness when He had gone out to pray following the death of John the Baptist

¹³ Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!" ¹⁷ They said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸ And He said, "Bring them here to Me." ¹⁹ Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, ²⁰ and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up

what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. ²¹ There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.

Healing of the sick by the touching of His cloak

³⁴ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; ³⁶ and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured.

Healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter who came to Him begging for help. Jesus reminds her of His primary mission to the Jews, but she appeals to His mercy and is immediately rewarded

²¹ Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." ²³ But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." ²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

Healing the blind, lame, mute and others who were brought to Him for help by others

²⁹ Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. ³⁰ And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. ³¹ So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Feeding of another group who had followed Him for teaching and healing

³² And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way." ³³ The disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?" ³⁴ And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." ³⁵ And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; ³⁶ and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

³⁷ And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. ³⁸ And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

³⁹ And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

Healing of an epileptic boy upon a father's desperate request

¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying,

¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" ²⁰ And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. ²¹ [But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.]"

Many of these rejected Him, but Jesus continued to demonstrate His divine nature through miraculous healings in the compassionate service of people who needed help.

RESPONSE TO HIS ACCUSERS

His rejection was spearheaded by the Pharisees and priests (Sadducees) who, despite seeing the miracles and hearing the teachings, refused to accept the conclusion that these pointed to. Instead of believing, they wanted to discredit and destroy Jesus in order to protect their position, and hide their own sinfulness. They did not teach with authority and twisted the Scriptures to their own advantage. They did not help the people or provide for them, they merely manipulated them.

Accusations of Transgressing “Tradition”

² Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ² “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” ³ And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” ⁶ he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ⁸ “This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. ⁹ “But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.” ¹⁰ After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. ¹¹ It is not what enters into the

mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

¹² Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” ¹³ But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵ Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” ¹⁶ Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? ¹⁷ Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?

¹⁸ But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰ These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

The Pharisees from Jerusalem (more authority than local Scribes) accuse Jesus of violating the tradition of washing before eating. Tradition, or “halacha,” was the set of rules (631) established as a fence around the Law by the rabbis in order to make sure they did not inadvertently break the Law. It included all kinds of rituals, procedures and rules that were conceived and enforced by religious leaders without any authority from the Scriptures themselves. Their thinking was that it was better to be safe than sorry.

For example, the Jews washed their hands according to complex ritual in order to make sure they were not defiled by touching something that a Gentile may have touched before them. The Law required no mingling, marriage, or worship with Gentiles.

There was no law, however, about hand washing, only human tradition and thinking. Eventually these rules became as, or more important, than the Law itself.

Jesus brushes aside their accusation by confronting them with how their tradition actually broke the very Law they were trying to uphold.

³ And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” - Matthew 15:3-5

Their traditions permitted them to avoid caring for their parents by saying that their money was consecrated to God and the temple thereby voiding the fourth commandment. Jesus accuses them of breaking the Law by hiding behind their traditions in order to cover their greed.

In the end Jesus responds to their earlier accusation by explaining that men are defiled (made impure) not by what goes into them (food, etc.) but what comes out of them (lies, adultery, greed), and by implication, condemns the Pharisees of impurity and defilement because of what came out of them.

Pharisees ask for a sign

The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from

heaven. ² But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' ³ And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? ⁴ An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.

⁵ And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ⁷ They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread." ⁸ But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? ¹¹ How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹² Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Again, as in chapter 12, they asked for a demonstration of His power as a special sign or signal to them, and Jesus responds in the same way. This request demonstrates the evil and disbelief in their hearts. Theirs was not a sincere request and could not lead to faith for them (i.e. Thomas asked for a sign from a sincere heart and received one. Jesus knew the hearts of these men and

their insincerity). He tells them what sign to look for, the sign of Jonah, the sign that pointed to His resurrection.

Jesus warns His disciples against the teaching and schemes of the Pharisees who will be their chief opponents in the future when they will be establishing the church.

MINISTRY TO THE APOSTLES

Miracle: Walking on water

²² Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. ²³ After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. ²⁴ But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the

boat, the wind stopped.³³ And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Jesus sees them having trouble in the storm and comes to them while walking on the water. Peter leaves the boat and walks on the water also. This experience teaches him an important lesson of faith. Note that in verse 33 all the Apostles confess Him to be God's Son. Jesus performed these great personal miracles in order to build the faith of His Apostles.

Miracle: Transfiguration

¹ Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ² And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. ⁷ And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." ⁸ And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

Peter, James, and John witness the visual brightness of Jesus' divine nature and His ability to communicate beyond time with

Elijah and Moses (they represent the prophets and the Law). Luke records that they spoke of His crucifixion. The voice from heaven confirms Jesus' role as one who fulfills all prophecy and Law. The instructions to, "... hear Him" is to listen to Jesus as the final word of prophecy and Law.

Miracle: Coin in the fish

²⁴ When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?" ²⁵ He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" ²⁶ When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt. ²⁷ However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

Peter is questioned if he pays the temple tax or not. Jesus tells Peter to go fishing and he will catch a fish with a coin in its mouth in order to pay the temple tax for both of them. The idea is that it was ridiculous for Jesus, Son of God, to pay tax on His own temple, but to avoid offending those still weak in faith He instructed Peter to do so. However, the way it was done once again impressed Peter concerning Jesus' identity. Those who did not believe only saw a young rabbi pay his dues, for those who confessed Jesus, yet another miracle was wrought before their eyes.

For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

- Matthew 13:12

Whoever has more given to him does not have to lose what he has. Whoever has faith, more revelation will be given; whoever does not have faith, what little he does possess, goods, life, etc., he will lose.

TEACHING

Jesus ministered to the Apostles with miracles to build up their faith and provide them with eyewitness accounts to use in bringing others to faith. He also continued to minister to them through teaching.

The lesson concerning what it is that defiles

¹⁵ Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us." ¹⁶ Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also? ¹⁷ Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?"

¹⁸ But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰ These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

Warning about the teachings of the Pharisees

¹ The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. ² But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' ³ And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? ⁴ An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.

⁵ And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ⁷ They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread." ⁸ But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? ¹¹ How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹² Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus' response to Peter's confession

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

The miracles and teachings over a two-year period have built the faith of these men when Peter speaking ahead of the others makes a full and complete declaration of what the parables and the miracles had pointed to all along: Jesus is the divine Messiah!

Jesus now teaches them beyond their confession:

1. Without the revelation of the Son in His teachings and miracles Peter could never have known this. Flesh and blood cannot reveal God. This is why the gospel is the power of God to save men, it reveals Christ!
2. Simon (the old man) is truly blessed because of his confession. He has actually seen the One who will bring salvation to Israel.

3. Peter (the new man, “rockman”) will be stronger, better because of this.
4. This revelation will be the basis for establishing the “called out,” the church. If Jesus wanted to say he was to build His church upon Peter, the construction of the sentence would have been, “... and upon thee, I will build..” The word upon which this indestructible church is based is the reality that Jesus is the divine Messiah, not just the acknowledgement of that reality.
5. To those who first believed and confessed, Jesus begins to outline the ministry they will have. The key to the kingdom is the ability to open the doors to the kingdom of heaven with the gospel message they preached, and the Holy Spirit who gave them the power to confirm their words with a powerful witness. The idea of keys is from Isaiah and king David; the key to the throne = authority.

Binding and loosening is the authority to speak for God to men on earth as well as the inspired writings to define the structure and functioning of the church. Also, to forgive or not to forgive sins (bind and loose) belonged to those who proclaimed God’s way to be forgiven for sin. They did not invent the teachings but whatever they instructed was from heaven and thus confirmed the teachings.

There are many varied interpretations of this verse but in summary and context of all that followed in the Apostles lives, these points explain well the meaning of Jesus’ promise.

Prophecy concerning crucifixion

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²² Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.

²⁸ "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

⁹ As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." ¹⁰ And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹² but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished.

So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”¹³ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

²² And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; ²³ and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.

This momentous revelation through teaching and miracles was tempered with the revelation that the Messiah, although divine, was to die an ignoble death in utter rejection.

This to teach them several lessons:

1. There was a glorious resurrection to come, not just suffering (16:21).
2. The cost of discipleship was high; think before committing (16:24-26).
3. This was according to the prophets (17:10).

With this mixture of faith in Him as divine Messiah and knowledge of His impending death, they are now ready to leave home and head for Jerusalem for the last time in order to face the unbelieving leaders and the cross.

10.

Relationships in the Kingdom: Discourse #4

MATTHEW 18:1-35

The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom in Matthew

1. Kingdom was coming. (Matthew 4:17)
2. Kinds of people in the kingdom.
(Matthew 5:3-20, poor in spirit, meek, etc.)
3. Who is king of the kingdom.
(Matthew 6:10, Thy kingdom come...)
4. The importance of the kingdom.
(Matthew 6:33, seek first...)
5. Who will enter the kingdom.
(Matthew 7:21, those who obey...)
6. How great those in the kingdom are.
(Matthew 11:11, greater than John...)

7. Not all respond to the kingdom.
(Matthew 13:1-23, sower and the seed.)
8. God will punish those not in the kingdom.
(Matthew 13:24-30, weeds, and wheat; Matthew 13:47-48, dragnet, and fish)
9. Kingdom grows mysteriously.
(Matthew 13:31-32, mustard seed; Matthew 13:33, leaven)
10. Kingdom is the most precious possession.
(Matthew 13:44, treasure; Matthew 13:45-46, pearl)

RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE KINGDOM

Until this time Jesus has talked about the kingdom in a collective way and spoken of the response people should have when presented the news of the kingdom. In chapter 18, however, He begins to describe the nature and quality of the relationship that those in the kingdom should have with one another.

Basic Premise: Care for each other's souls

Character of the people in the kingdom

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, ³ and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the

kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that those in the kingdom are meek, poor in spirit and dependent on God, all qualities that are usually seen in children. The fact that the disciples ask the question, “Who is the greatest?” suggests problems of pride and strife among the Apostles.

Jesus points towards the objective of their conversion: a transformation from pride and striving to the easy trust and meekness of a child. No dependence on achievement, power, or greatness but a quiet, innocent trust in God. One who is truly great in the kingdom seeks no glory for self but rather glory for God. The emptier one is of self, the more God can fill that person with His greatness, wisdom, love, and power.

The greatest are those who are unaware of their greatness. Not only are the greatest like children, but they must also treat others in the kingdom, who are themselves meek and vulnerable, with respect as Jesus would have them do. Those who belong to the kingdom do not manipulate or despise others (an easy temptation towards those who are childlike).

Warning about offenses

⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

⁷“Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks!

For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

⁸ “If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. ⁹ If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

¹⁰ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

Jesus issues a warning to those who would cause either a physical child or one who has become like a child in the kingdom to disbelieve in Him (verse 6). He demonstrates, by this severe warning, how precious these are and consequently how important they should be to us, evangelistically.

This passage also suggests that the very young can believe, and all we do while they are young either contributes or destroys the innate ability to trust and believe in God a child has, and a child-like believer wants to have. Jesus recognizes the various dangers in the world but specifically points out those who are a direct cause of stumbling (the word “stumble” refers to a trap that pierces and kills the animal who touches the bait). This is also a warning about personal weaknesses and sins that can be a cause for self to stumble. Jesus says that these things must be removed at all costs.

The Lord reinforces the idea that those who are least in the kingdom (children and child-like ones) are truly precious

because even the mighty angels who behold the face of God minister to these little ones. This underscores their value in God's eyes and points to the care that should be exercised in dealing with those who dwell in the kingdom.

Parable

¹¹ [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

¹² "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? ¹³ If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

Jesus is answering the question, "Who is greatest?" and He says that the smallest, most humble, and least are the greatest. This answer instructs them in several ways:

1. The direction of their development if they wish to become greatest in the kingdom (least are most).
2. The care they should exercise in not destroying these.
3. The value that these have before God. Angels minister to them, and there is joy in heaven when one who has been lost is found.

This last point is where the parable of the lost sheep fits in. It is a parable that demonstrates the Father's joy when one of these

“little ones” who was lost (because of stumbling caused by another) is found. Matthew uses this passage as a bridge to the next section about practical conflict management within the kingdom when offenses do occur.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT: DIRECT CONFRONTATION

There are a variety of ways that individuals deal with personal conflict. Some plot revenge and others torture with the silent treatment. People offended revert to anger, gossip, even slander as a way of responding to a personal offense or insult. In this section Jesus outlines the way personal conflict should be resolved in the kingdom.

Procedure

¹⁵ “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Resolution should begin with personal and direct confrontation with the issue and the person involved (verse 15). Note that the objective is to win the brother, not the argument. To win back the one who has offended you, not to prove that you are right.

When we are sinned against, we want to be validated and comforted, but Jesus says we must first make an effort to renew fellowship with the offending party. Of course, there needs to be real sin against us, and not just an issue of annoyance or opinion. The offense must be a true sin, and one that directly threatens to destroy the bond of fellowship within the assembly. To reprove means to convict or show the offending person the wrongness of the act.

If there is no response to a direct person-to-person approach then make sure that the offense is recognized and has been witnessed by two or more brethren. This is done to assure the brother that this matter is not a personal vendetta but an effort to deal with a serious wrong witnessed by others (verse 16).

If this fails, bring the matter before the church. At this point there is no New Testament example, teaching or inference as to how the church is to deal with this person. Certainly to continue to exhort and encourage him to repent in a collective way would be right (verse 17a).

If this fails to bring a proper response, the person is then to be disfellowshipped (no longer considered a faithful part of that assembly, verse 17b). Gentiles and tax collectors were not considered part of the assembly of Jesus, and out of the sphere of His promises and blessings. The brother who fails to respond to the church is also out of the kingdom.

Note that Jesus places the church as the highest authority in this matter. This leads us to conclude that there is no authority or overseeing body that is higher than local congregation.

Authority

¹⁸ Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

Jesus confirms the matter with the statement of “binding and loosing.” His point is that whenever the church proceeds in this manner, its actions will be carried out with the authority of heaven. In other words, if the church forgives a brother, then his sins are forgiven in heaven (loose), if he refuses to repent, then he will be out of the assembly on earth, and his sins will remain (bind) as they will be in heaven also.

When the church acts according to His word and will He is there with them, whether in a small (two or more) or large group. When the church gathers to obey and honor Christ, He is with them to answer their prayers in all matters.

BASIS FOR MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS: UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS

Jesus prepares us for life in the kingdom by describing how precious it is and how difficult it is for sinful people to grow in love and faith. This section deals with the practical side of daily life within the kingdom. He warns against causing someone to fall away from the kingdom because of what we do. He instructs

on how to be reconciled when there are offenses and what to do with those who cause those offenses. Finally, He establishes the attitude of heart that we all need to have if we are to avoid causing others to fall or falling ourselves: unconditional forgiveness.

The old standard

²¹ Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Peter’s question follows the previous discussion concerning forgiving the offending brother. The old Jewish teaching was that to offer forgiveness three times was enough, and so Peter’s offer of seven times demonstrates his own growth as a disciple in comparison to his previous faith.

Jesus establishes the matter beyond the legal requirement by setting forth a new attitude, not just a new number. Seven times seventy meant a number beyond count. The new attitude is a forgiving heart, and a willingness and readiness to forgive whenever called upon to do so.

Jesus tells the parable of the unjust steward

²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ But since he did not have the means to repay,

his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' ²⁷ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' ³⁰ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. ³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³² Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

Jesus does this in order to underscore the extent of what forgiveness should be (i.e. The servant could not even pay the debt he owed but was forgiven nevertheless), as well as the result and punishment reserved for those who were not prepared to forgive others (the debt he originally owed was put back on him when he refused to forgive someone else).

SUMMARY

³⁵ My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Jesus summarizes the entire passage by warning against the hardness of heart that refuses to forgive the brethren their offenses.

LESSONS ABOUT THE KINGDOM

There will be offenses against you in the kingdom. When this happens, be prepared to:

1. Not be the one who causes them.
2. Deal with those who do offend you in a Christian way when it happens.
3. Forgive others readily and graciously when you are offended because in the measure you forgive others, God will forgive you (and others will forgive you too).

11. Marriage - Divorce - Remarriage: Narrative #5

MATTHEW 19

Jesus' ministry in the northern part of the country near His hometown in Galilee is complete and He prepares to go up to Jerusalem. This narrative divides itself into two basic sections: the events taking place while on route to the city and the events taking place in and around the temple in Jerusalem. This narrative shows Jesus' reaction to people and their reaction to Him. Note that the general hostility and doubt seen in the north is even more evident among the leaders as Jesus enters the city and temple.

ROAD TO JERUSALEM

Descent to Jerusalem

¹ When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; ² and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

Note that His healing ministry to the masses continues as He approaches the city.

Confrontation with the Pharisees

³ Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”

Matthew says that this was a test, a test to see which side Jesus favored in the debate about the subject of divorce. The test was as follows.

¹ When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, ² and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife, ³ and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who

took her to be his wife, ⁴ then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.

At that time there were two interpretations of Deuteronomy 24:1-4:

- **Rabbi Shammai** – This teacher said that no reason other than shameful (sexual) conduct was grounds for divorce.
- **Rabbi Hillel** – This teacher said that any cause of displeasure by the husband was reason enough to divorce one's wife (at that time only men could sue for divorce, not women).

If Jesus sided with the stricter view He could be reproached for His friendly treatment of sinners (forgives prostitutes, moves among the divorced). If He sided with the more lax view, the Pharisees would side with Shammai and accuse Him of moral laxity. If He declared Himself against all divorce for any reason they would charge Him with contradicting the Law which did permit divorce.

⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

In responding to their questions Jesus begins by revealing the error in their thinking that God's will concerning marriage was fully contained in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The Pharisees saw marriage and its dissolution in terms of law. They were lawyers and so they asked, "Is it lawful?" Jesus points them to the original teaching concerning marriage, Genesis 2:24:

²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

God created marriage as the perfect union for man. Its physical and emotional bonds were stronger than the paternal ones. That to dissolve such a bond was to go against what God had done (not that it was impossible to do so, just that it was sinful to do so).

Having established the basis, Jesus now is in a position to put into context their next question.

⁷ They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?"
⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

The Pharisees assumed that Moses' "commands" somehow promoted divorce, and their understanding of the entire issue was based on this premise. The reality of the matter was that Moses never changed the original teaching or purpose of marriage as it was described in Genesis 2:24. He added legislation that mitigated (tried to reduce) the evil and hardship resulting from divorce among his people.

Genesis 2:24 was given when Adam and Eve were without sin. After sin came into the world there also came a degradation of marriage and family from the ideal that had been set forth in the Garden with them. In answer to this God established the Law as a guide and tutor until Jesus came to save. The legislation concerning divorce was not a change in the principle upon which marriage was based, but rather additional instructions to help deal with the failed marriages that were bound to occur because of sinfulness. Jesus expresses this idea in verse eight - divorce was failure/sin and this law was given to deal with it. After the sin of Adam, divorce was to be a fact of life and Deuteronomy 24 dealt with it.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.

The common practice among Jews, especially Pharisees, was to find some pretext to send away their wives in order to marry someone else, and then claim innocence based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. They fulfilled the Law by giving their wives a proper bill of divorce and did not re-claim her later on.

Jesus reveals their hypocrisy by applying the principle of Genesis 2:24 as the moral indicator to their actions, not just a twisted view of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In effect, He says, "If you want to judge how lawful you are, compare your actions to a combined view of Genesis 2 and Deuteronomy 24."

Sending away the one to whom you are joined without proper cause (Numbers 5:12; Deuteronomy 22:13; 24:1-4 all describe sexual sin as a proper cause, Jesus now confirms this in Matthew 19:9) in order to marry another, this is adultery. A person can

dissolve a marriage (the Law permitted this) but to do so without proper reason was adultery.

There is a debate on this verse in our day that goes like this:

1. The adultery is committed when the person marries again for a second time (“adulterous marriage”). The reason for this view is the belief that the verb in the Greek (commits adultery) is in a *linear* or *continuous* action mode (i.e. is continuing to commit adultery). In this view, the second marriage is an ongoing adulterous act. However, there is no such term in the Bible as “adulterous marriage.”

This line of reasoning requires that those who have divorced without just cause and remarried must break up existing marriages and go back to their original spouses or remain celibate in order to properly repent of their sin. Without this course of action a person cannot be baptized, and those who are already baptized and in this situation must go back to an original partner or stay celibate in order to remain in the church.

2. The other position is as follows. The adultery in question is committed when the partner violates the marriage covenant. The basic meaning of the word “adultery” is to break covenant or violate a promise. In this instance it is through sexual infidelity.

It has also been shown that the verb in the Greek (commits adultery) is not necessarily *linear* denoting continuing action but on the contrary, according to proper translation, should be considered as “*point action*” or a one-time occurrence. Actually, the decision

on *linear* or *point action* depends on the context. When we take these ideas together the conclusion on this verse is that when a person violates his marriage covenant through sexual infidelity he commits the sin of adultery, whether he remarries or not. This is a one-time sin. (Like stealing a car, how many counts of car theft can a person be charged with for stealing a car? Even if he keeps driving it for a month or a year...he is only charged with 1 count of stealing.)

If a person divorces in order to marry someone else without proper cause, the sin of adultery is committed in violating or breaking his original marriage covenant, not in the contracting of the second marriage. This thinking is not being “soft” on divorce. This line of reasoning upholds the principle of fidelity in marriage, condemns any violation of the marriage covenant as adultery but does not consider remarriage as the adultery. After all, Jesus called them marriages, not “adulterous marriages.” Repentance from this perspective means recognition of the violation and a commitment to fidelity in the situation one finds oneself in now.

¹⁰ The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”

The disciples, influenced by the lax divorce laws of their day, are dismayed. If the only reason one had of discharging our wives is her fornication (a remote possibility) then it is probably better not to marry, they say. How far away they are from God’s original ideal of a husband and wife as partners in marriage, being transparent and sharing in all areas of life.

¹¹ But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.

Jesus tells them that not everyone can accept the saying, “... it is better not to marry.” They assume celibacy is the way to go if one is to remain faithful, but Jesus tells them not everyone can manage this.

¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”

Jesus reviews the cases where celibacy occurs:

- Some are genetically so, born without sexual desires.
- Some were made that way, castrated.
- Some exercise self-control in order to serve in the kingdom exclusively (the ability to do so, however, is a gift from God, I Corinthians 7:7).

Jesus also shows that celibacy is not compulsory since the Apostles were all married, and Paul encourages people to marry (I Corinthians 7:8-9). Only those who are able to live celibate lives should do so, the rest the people should marry in order to satisfy their normal human sexual needs.

SUMMARY

In Matthew 19 Jesus combines Genesis 2 and Deuteronomy 24 to present the complete will of God concerning marriage and divorce.

1. Marriage comes from God and the marriage bond is sacred and not to be broken by man (Genesis 2).
2. If marriage is dissolved for improper cause (Deuteronomy 24, other than sexual immorality) and one remarries, they commit the sin of adultery. Why is this adultery? Because violation of the covenant of marriage in any way (including sexual immorality) is adultery. You are not allowed to break apart what God has put together. To break a marriage covenant and to marry another is adultery.

COMPARATIVE PASSAGES

³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

This same issue is addressed in an earlier part of Matthew by Jesus, except in this passage He includes Exodus 20:14 (You shall not commit adultery). The commandment forbidding adultery, as well as Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which was the legislation on divorce in relationship to what God wanted in marriage. This passage in His Sermon on the Mount is describing the conduct and character of those within the kingdom.

The difference between this section and the one in Matthew 19 is that here Jesus describes the nature of the trespass or offense against the innocent spouse and that person's future relationships.

The Jews felt that all obligations to their spouses were over if they obtained a legal document of divorce. They believed that in providing this legal formality, their conscience in the matter was clear.

Jesus demonstrates that the one who divorced without proper cause in that day and time caused their innocent partners shame. In Matthew 19 He talks about the guilty party, in Matthew 5 He talks about the innocent party.

So here we have to examine grammar again in order to get the exact meaning. The Greek word "... makes her commit adultery..." should be translated in the *passive tense* in order to bring out what Jesus is saying about a man who divorces his innocent wife. It would be clearer in the passive tense to say that a man who puts away his innocent wife "... stigmatizes her as an adulterous woman." If we use the active tense the innocent wife becomes guilty of adultery; if we use the passive tense, she is the victim of adultery, which makes more sense in context.

It is not that this woman did anything wrong, but by virtue of her dismissal she is now seen as being adulterous by her society. This happens to her because the only good reason for her being put away in the first place was sexual immorality. If she was innocent and divorced anyways, she would be considered as such, and so would anyone who would legally marry her in the future. For people who were righteous and moral, a divorced woman was automatically considered to be adulterous. It was

this shameful condition that Jesus is referring to here, falsely created by a wrongful divorce.

In translating we can use the active or passive tense, but in using the active tense we heap more guilt and suffering on the innocent party; this is poor Bible study and does not square with the gospel. To say that innocent partners are guilty, or automatically forced into celibacy or adultery, is not in keeping with Jesus' other teachings on grace and forgiveness.

Jesus, in this passage, wants to draw out the extent of the sin and the responsibility of the one who was sending away his wife without cause.

In Matthew 5:32 He shows:

- The offense is against his partner in causing her public shame.
- The offense will be against her future husband in causing him public shame.

In the Matthew 19 passage He shows:

- The hypocrisy of using only Deuteronomy 24 to judge the morality of their actions without considering Genesis 2:25.
- The only legitimate cause for divorce according to the Law was fornication, and to put away a partner for lesser reasons in order to marry another was wrong... was adultery!

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

- Luke 16:18

Jesus is not legislating on divorce or remarriage. He has already explained in Matthew 5 and 19 that:

1. Marriage is for life.
2. Sexual sin is the only legitimate cause for divorce provided by the Law (the Apostle Paul will add to this, but Jesus is referring to what they were dealing with at the time).
3. To divorce without this cause does 2 things:
 - a. Makes one guilty of adultery.
 - b. Makes one guilty of bringing shame on the innocent party and their future partners.

In Luke 16:28 Jesus hurls an accusation against the Pharisees who were scoffing at Him, by charging them with adultery in their careless divorcing and remarrying for any reason. This was a claim they were guilty of. If Jesus was explaining the rules for marriage, divorce and remarriage here He would have been contradicting the Law and His own teaching elsewhere. What He is reinforcing, however, is that covenant breaking (putting away) is what constitutes adultery. He is talking to the Pharisees!

¹ Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more

began to teach them.

² Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. ³ And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” ⁵ But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. ⁷ For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

¹⁰ In the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. ¹¹ And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.

- Mark 10:1-12

One other passage that deals with this subject is in Mark 10:1-12. It covers the same ground as the other passages but includes the mention of a wife putting away her husband; an example probably included for Mark’s Gentile readers since a woman initiating a divorce would not be possible in Jewish society.

As for the other passages in the New Testament that deal with the issue of marriage, divorce and remarriage, Paul the Apostle devotes an entire chapter to this topic in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter seven. I will not include that material in this book, but if you are interested in reading more on this topic, I

discuss it in chapter four of my book, "1 Corinthians for Beginners."

12. Rejection and Judgement: Discourse #5

MATTHEW 23:1-25:46

In narrative five Matthew describes the various encounters that Jesus has with people on His way from Galilee in the north to Jerusalem in the south. In most of these meetings, and especially with the religious leaders, Jesus finds lack of faith and hardness of hearts. The poor and the helpless are eager to make Him king but would soon abandon Him and even demand His crucifixion. The leaders and priests were openly hostile and rejected His teachings and claims despite the fact that what He had done was all according to Scripture. They plotted to take His life even

though He was innocent of any crime. In discourse five Matthew records Jesus' response to this rejection by those to whom He had been sent.

WARNING AGAINST THE PHARISEES

Jesus' main antagonists were the Pharisees. They hated Him and wanted to kill Him because He posed such a threat to their position. In this passage Jesus reveals them for what they are and warns the people not to emulate them.

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.⁴ They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

Jesus tells the people that the Pharisees placed themselves in Moses' position claiming authority from God for the things they commanded. They burdened the people with the yoke of the Law (without reference to grace or faith which was promised in the Law) but they themselves did not try to lighten the load with that promised grace or faith. They insisted on a strict measure of law keeping by the people that they, in most cases, did not adhere to.

⁵ But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. ⁶ They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and

respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

What they did was based on pride and the desire to receive the honor of men. The motivation for their religious practice was evil, and Jesus said that God saw not only the behavior; He also saw and judged the motivation for the behavior.

⁸ But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

Jesus ends the passage by exhorting His disciples not to emulate the Pharisees who try to “lord” over others in religious authority without support from God or the Scriptures:

- Do not be called “rabbi” in the sense that the Pharisees had, with self-appointed authority to speak where God had not spoken.
- Do not be called “my father,” again in the same sense that one had unquestioned authority and lordship over another brother.
- Do not become a “leader” as the Pharisees had become. Leaders who gave no honor to Christ.

There are teachers, elders and leadership in the church, but that leadership is always under the authority of Christ, always for the building up of the brethren, and always with the understanding that we are all brothers in Christ.

¹¹ But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

¹² Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

In verses 11 and 12 Jesus reminds them of the true spirit that must exist in those who lead and teach; a spirit of humility and service. Those who are like this are raised up in the kingdom to greater service and leadership by the authority and power of Christ. Those, like the Pharisees, who exalt themselves will ultimately be rejected.

THE EIGHT WOES

Jesus' discourse in this section follows the style and pattern of the Old Testament prophets: warning, lament, prophecy of judgment and call to repentance. In the Old Testament the prophets preached using this format and Jesus, now speaking to the Jews who would be quite familiar with this format from their study of the prophets, speaks to them concerning the things that are to happen because they rejected Him.

He begins with the woes on the Pharisees who typified the worst of that society in their religious hypocrisy and refusal to believe in Him.

¹³ "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Woe for disbelieving and causing others to disbelieve while all the while pretending to believe.

¹⁴ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

Woe for using religion to mask greed.

¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Woe for leading others into error.

¹⁶ "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.'¹⁷ You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold?¹⁸ And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.'¹⁹ You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?²⁰ Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.²¹ And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it.²² And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

Woe for blasphemy in using God's name in making vows without considering God Himself.

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

24 You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Woe for majoring in minors. Making the small points of the law the most important in order to avoid doing what the Law says in regards to justice and mercy.

25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

26 You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

Woe to false rituals.

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to hypocrites.

29 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, ‘If we had been

living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’³¹ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.³² Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

³⁴ “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,³⁵ so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.³⁶ Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Woe to those who shed innocent blood.

Jesus finishes with a strong condemnation of the Pharisees and those like them upon whom He says will come punishment for their sins.

JESUS' LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM AND HER PEOPLE

³⁷ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

³⁸ Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

Jesus mourns the fact that they have and will ultimately reject Him. He yearns for them to come to Him so that He might spare them the terrible judgment that awaits them. He declares the Jewish nation desolate and shakes His robe and stamps His sandals to shake off their dust from His feet as those who have not received Him.

In verse 39 He tells the Jews, those listening, that from this moment on He will no longer appear to those who reject Him. For the Jews, only those who recognize Him as Messiah will “see” Him (in the sense of see Him by faith). There is only the sign of Jonah left for them, and if they believe they will see Him again, if not they will see judgment, which He explains in the next section.

DISCOURSE ON THE JUDGMENT

CHAPTER 24 AND 25

Jesus leaves the temple and as He leaves the Apostles point out the magnificent buildings of the temple which He has just said will be desecrated (fifty years of reconstruction work was in progress at the time).

1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

Jesus responds to their comment by saying that the buildings will not only be empty, they will be completely torn down. This sets up further questions by the Apostles (Peter, James, John, Andrew) who wanted to know more information about what He has just said.

³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

They questioned Him about when the destruction of the temple would be, what signs will accompany the second coming and the end of the world that the second coming will bring. Whether they thought both these events would happen at the same time or after a lapse of time is unknown. They did not know and were asking Jesus to instruct them in these matters.

This section is complex but can be divided into three views:

1. Panoramic view of world history from that moment until the second coming of Jesus that includes the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (verses 4-14).
2. Telescopic view that focuses only on the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (verses 15-35).
3. Telescopic view that focuses only on the events that lead to the second coming of Christ at the end of the world (verses 36-44).

Panorama Until Second Coming

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.

Note that these instructions are given so that they will know and avoid false teachers and prophets in these matters.

⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. ⁶ You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸ But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

The cycle of false prophets, woes and trouble in the world will continue until the end, but these in themselves are not the signs. They are only the beginning of things that will get progressively worse before not only the end of Jerusalem comes, but also the end of the world comes.

⁹ “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹² Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.

This passage is in parallel to II Thessalonians where the Apostle Paul talks about the end of the world and what must take place first.

- Apostasy (falling away, love grows cold).
- The “Man of Lawlessness,” who deceives many through false signs and tries to take the place of God, will be revealed.
- Jesus describes the devolution of the world.

13 But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

In contrast, He promises that the faithful will be saved despite these trials and evils.

14 This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

He also promises that the great commission will be carried out and must be carried out before the end can/will come.

This is a panoramic view of the events and flow of history that will occur until His second coming.

Telescope to the Fall of Jerusalem

Judea was rebellious and longed to return to the glory days of independence and power that they experienced at the time of King Solomon’s reign. In early 60 AD they had such unrest that Rome sent troops to quell the rebellion. From 66-70 AD the Roman armies successfully laid siege to Jerusalem and totally

destroyed the city and temple along with over one million people. This total destruction of the Jewish nation was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy to the disciples 33 years earlier described in this passage. The disciples wanted to know when this would happen and Jesus gives them the "signs" to watch out for.

¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. ¹⁸ Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.

The first sign was the Abomination of Desolation. The point He makes here is that when the temple would be desecrated this would be a sign that destruction was near and that they should escape the city.

Daniel (11:31; 12:11) had prophesied that the temple would be defiled. This happened during the reign of the Syrian King, Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BC), who sacrificed a pig on the altar of the temple. Jesus picks up this idea and says that in the same way, when the temple would be defiled by Gentiles during their lifetime, it would be the signal to escape.

Luke 21:20 tells us that the surrounding of the temple by foreign armies in 70 AD was what constituted defilement. The standards (shields) of the Roman army were idolatrous and often used for worship by the soldiers. Surrounding the temple with these would desecrate it. Many scholars differ here as to what the abomination was and refer to Jewish historians for events that

occurred before, during or after the siege that could fit, but Luke 21:20 is the only biblical reference that fits in context.

“He who reads” means he who reads Daniel, and along with Christ’s cryptogram, will be able to know when it is time to get out, and many did. In 68 AD the majority of Christians living in Jerusalem escaped to Pella thus avoiding being killed in the massacre.

¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

The tribulation is the suffering caused by the Romans which wiped out the nation. Over one million killed. The combination of the gravity of the sin (Jews who received the blessings and promises but killed their messiah) and the horror of the punishment (nation wiped out) has not been equaled.

²² Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

God’s providence permitted this war to end so that the Christians would not also be annihilated along with the Jews. Their city was destroyed and Romans made no distinction between Christian and non-Christian Jew.

²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. ²⁴ For false

Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ Behold, I have told you in advance.

²⁶ So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them.

The believers would naturally associate the destruction of Jerusalem with the return of Jesus, so the Lord warns them against being deceived by those who would claim to be the Lord or speak from God. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the time, documents how during this period rumors of the Messiah coming or being present circulated in order to keep people in the city. In those days hysteria and fear produced many "prophets" who claimed visions and messages from God.

²⁷ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

He tells them that when He returns it will be evident to all, like lightening across the sky, all will easily and readily know that it is He.

²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The corpse is the Jewish nation, and the vultures are the false Christs and prophets. When you see them in abundance, they will be a second sign that the end of Jerusalem, not the world, is near.

²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its

light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

The first word in this verse presents a problem to some, “immediately.” If we make this next section a discussion about the end of the world or of the second coming of Jesus, then it must occur right after the destruction of Jerusalem (some believe and teach that Jesus has already returned).

Since the “Man of Lawlessness” that Paul talks about in II Thessalonians chapter 2 has not been revealed, and Jesus has not returned, this passage must still be talking about events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Verses 30-31 speak about the destruction of Jerusalem and the effect that this will have on others as well as believers. The language in this passage is apocalyptic in nature and was used by prophets to describe cataclysmic historical and political events (Isaiah 13 describes the destruction of Babylon in similar language). This type of language used the symbolism of the destruction of heavenly bodies to describe the very real fate of the world at the end of time (II Peter 3:10) but also the end and destruction of nations on the earth in the present or near future. In this case the end of the Jewish nation as a people under God’s special care.

The coming of the Son of Man refers to both the second coming at the end of the world and the final judgment, but also any judgment God makes on a nation, in this case the nation of Israel. It also fits the context of this passage. The Jews who rejected Him now will see Him coming as a form of judgment on their nation, a terrible catastrophe that would horrify the world but liberate Christians and the gospel from Jewish persecution.

The Greek word translated “angel” can also be translated as “message.” This verse can be seen as prophesy concerning the spreading of the gospel throughout the world after the fall of Jerusalem. Verse 14 said this needed to be done before Christ returned and now with the ideological and cultural restraints of Judaism removed, Christianity would flourish even more.

³² “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. ³⁴ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Jesus warns them to pay attention to the signs He has given them because these things are coming in their generation, and He promises by His word that they will happen.

Telescope to the Second Coming

He has just explained to them the signs that will preview the destruction of Jerusalem:

- Preaching of the gospel to all nations (Romans 10:18).

- Multiplication of false Christs (Josephus).
- Abomination of the temple (Luke 21:20).
- Great tribulation (Josephus).

Now in verses 36-44 He makes a contrast with the second coming at the end of the world.

³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

No one knows the time; not even Jesus while He is with His disciples.

³⁷ For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

There will be no cataclysmic signs. All will seem normal. Normal in the sense that the believers will be preparing themselves for the second coming and the end of the world, and the rest of the world will be ignoring it until it will be too late (just like in the time of Noah).

⁴⁰ Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

Some take this verse to mean that before Jesus returns some will be taken in what is called a “rapture,” and disappear to be with God in heaven. This is part of the “pre-millennial” view of the rapture and thousand-year reign. In context, however, Jesus is talking about readiness, and He says that when He returns suddenly one will be saved, one lost. There will be no time for rapture and change. Just like Noah, when the rain came they were taken and disappeared into the ark, the others remained to die in the flood. When Jesus comes, the faithful will be taken to be with Him and the disbelievers immediately put away from His presence.

⁴²“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

Since the end is to be like this we should always be prepared, and not foolishly lapse into sin thinking we have plenty of time to repent and be ready for the return. We never know, we must simply be ready.

EXHORTATIONS TO VIGILANCE

After responding to the question of the judgment on Jerusalem and His return, Jesus warns them to be vigilant and does so with three parables.

Parable of the evil slave

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

⁴⁷ Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; ⁵⁰ the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Here, the lesson is not to presume we have the luxury of sinning because the end is far away. It can come at any time and the judgment is sure for those who are unfaithful.

Parable of the 10 virgins

¹ “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’

⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

⁸ The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your

oil, for our lamps are going out.’⁹ But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’¹⁰ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.¹¹ Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’¹² But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’¹³ Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Here, Jesus warns against the foolishness of not being ready. In this parable the problem is not a question of gross evil, but rather negligence. To neglect Christ will bring destruction in the end as well.

Parable of the talents

¹⁴ “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹ “Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five

more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

²² "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

²⁴ "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

²⁶ "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷ Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸ Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'

²⁹ "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

³⁰ Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Here, the warning is for those who are in the kingdom but who fail to expand its borders, and fail to serve the king with zeal. This slave was not caught or surprised unprepared, he just assumed that his preparation was sufficient when it was not.

All three parables have the element of preparation, judgment and punishment for those who neglect to prepare for the return of the master.

Judgment scene

³¹ “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?’ ³⁹ When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine,

even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

⁴⁴ Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The climax of the discourse is the judgment scene at the end of the world. Those found to be righteous have obeyed the commands to love God (refer to Him as Lord) as well as their neighbor. Those condemned have the same judgment and are condemned because they did not love their neighbor. The punishment and reward is eternal in nature.

13. From Passover to Communion: Narrative #6

MATTHEW 26:1-28:20

Jesus has finished His public ministry, has indicted the Pharisees for their disbelief and hypocrisy, has pronounced judgment on the nation and prophesied concerning its destruction as well as His own return at the end of the world. He now retreats to be with His disciples for their final hours together before He will be taken, tried, crucified, and finally resurrected from the dead.

Matthew continues to tell the story in this last narrative, always being careful to demonstrate how all the features of Christ's life

are in accordance with the Old Testament scriptures' prophecy about the life and the death of the Messiah (remember, Matthew wants to show that Jesus is the Messiah according to the Word. This was important for the Jews).

REVIEW OUTLINE

As we have seen in Matthew's gospel there is a certain order and sequence in the way he lays out his material:

- **Narratives:**
An orderly telling of events taking place in Jesus' life and ministry. There is dialogue, to be sure, but the narrative sections are used to move the action along.
- **Discourses:**
The narratives are followed by discourses where Matthew records the various teachings and conversations that Jesus has with His followers as well as His enemies.

I have demonstrated that Matthew's gospel has six narratives and five discourses. In this last chapter we will look at a key part of his sixth and final narrative: the last supper. Before we do that however, let us review briefly the main events described by Matthew in his sixth narrative.

NARRATIVE SIX - OUTLINE

1. Final hours with his Apostles (26:1-56)
 - a. Anointing and betrayal by Judas.

- b. The Passover meal and institution of the Lord's Supper/Communion.
 - c. The time of prayer and His subsequent arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- 2. The two trials (26:57-27:31)
 - a. Trial before the Jewish High Priest, Caiaphas.
 - b. Trial before Pilate.
- 3. The crucifixion and burial (27:33-56)
- 4. The resurrection and commission (28:1-20)

We are familiar with these events, but since this is the last chapter, I would like to focus on one particular event in this final narrative, the Passover meal and institution of the Lord's Supper.

I believe we know well the story of Jesus' death, resurrection, and the great commission He gave to the Apostles to make disciples of all nations. However, the Lord's Supper is something we still do today, and I would like to examine how and why it was begun.

HISTORY OF THE PASSOVER

Origin of the Passover Meal - Exodus 12

The story of the Passover begins in Exodus 12. The Jewish nation had lived in Egypt for 400 years. By the end of that time they had

been enslaved by a cruel Egyptian king/pharaoh who was afraid that their great numbers would overrun his nation.

During this time God appeared to Moses and commissioned him to lead the Jewish people out of Egyptian slavery and resettle them in a land promised to their ancestors centuries before. When Moses went before Pharaoh to ask for the release of his countrymen the king refused and oppressed them even more. In response to this, God sent many plagues on the Egyptians as a punishment for not releasing the Jews, but the king stubbornly refused to give in to God's will.

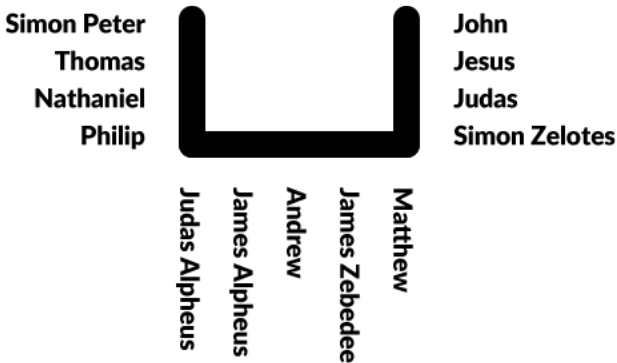
The tenth and final plague that would eventually force the Pharaoh to give in was the sending of an angel to kill every first-born Egyptian child and animal, but spare the Jewish children and animals. This protection of the Jewish people however, was based on their careful obedience and behavior on the terrible night when the angel of death would pass through the land. This Moses explains in the book of Exodus, chapter 12:1-13.

True to God's word, on that fateful night the angel of death passed through every home and field taking the first-born child and animal to the horror of the pharaoh and his people, but not a single Jewish person or animal belonging to them was harmed.

Completely defeated and afraid, the king released the Jews, and Moses led them out of the country where they had lived for four centuries.

In the following passages Moses recounts how this great event in the history of the Jews was to be memorialized by a special feast to be celebrated each year (Exodus 12:23-28).

In the spring of every year for the next 1400 years the Jews celebrated the Passover. For seven days before the actual meal, they would make sure that there would be no trace of leaven of fermentation in their homes, since these had the negative connotation of worldliness and decay and the Passover was to renew their sense of purity and dedication to the Lord who had saved their nation with mighty deeds.



In this picture we can see the “look” of a typical Passover meal, a table and items that would have been present when Jesus, a good Jew, and His Apostles (all Jews) would have gathered for the last Passover meal that they would have eaten together.

Every item was filled with significance, history, and function for their culture:

The low table and cushions:

- There is a famous painting by Leonardo Da Vinci of the Last Supper showing Jesus and the Apostles sitting on chairs, with Jesus in the middle, and the Apostles are on either side of Him. This placement is incorrect according to Eastern custom of the time.
- The table was U shaped, low to the ground and the men (men ate separately from the women) reclined on cushions. They sat on the same side to permit service on the other.

- The first position on the extreme right was for the host, to his left was the honored guest or leader (the host sat first to protect and serve the honored guest). To the left of the honored one were the rest of the diners, seated in proportion to their importance and relationship to the honored guest.
- From the accounts in the gospels, we learn that John was next to Jesus since he rested his head upon the Lord (John 13:23) so he must have been seated to His left with Peter to the right acting as host and leader of the Apostles.
- In Luke 22:8 we learn that Peter and John were the ones sent to set up the meal and later on there was an argument as to who was the most important among them, so it seems that they had taken the best spots on either side of the Lord, putting Judas last thus causing jealousy and dispute among the others.
- An interesting theory is that after this dispute and grumbling, Peter in his impulsive way, switched places with Judas to calm things down. This would explain two things:
 - How Jesus was able to hand Judas a morsel of bread in order to show who the traitor was (He must have been seated next to him in order to do this, John 13:26).
 - Why Peter was last to have his feet washed. He would have to have been sitting in the furthest position (John 13:6).

The food and drink:

- There have been many additions made to the original Passover meal eaten first in Egypt. At that time the Jews ate the meat from a lamb, representing the sacrifice made to save them, and unleavened bread as a symbol of their haste in leaving the land of Egypt along with the bitter herbs (mixed greens) as a reminder of their bitter experience.
- By Jesus' time there were several items added to the meal:
 - There was still the meat and unleavened bread, and the mixture of greens referred to as "bitter herbs."
 - There was also a sharing of wine (four cups by Jesus' time), which represented the good life and blessings they enjoyed in the Promised Land. Each cup symbolized something in particular: sanctification, rejoicing, redemption, and thanksgiving.
 - We know that at Passover time no leaven or fermentation was permitted in the home so the wine they drank was new wine or grape juice, which had little or no alcohol content.
- In later times the Jews added other items to the meal to symbolize Jewish religious significance, but the supper that Jesus and the Apostles shared had these basic elements.

The order of the meal:

- In normal circumstances the father or head of the household would preside over the meal. He would take the cup and offer a blessing, and the others would follow suit. He would

dip the bread/meat into the bitter herbs and eat, and the others would follow his lead.

- This eating and drinking and offering of blessings would continue until the four cups of blessing and the food would be consumed completely.
- During this process, in a regular family setting, one of the children would ask the father what the meaning of this meal was, and this set the stage for the father to recount, once again, the great story of redemption from Egyptian slavery experienced by the Jewish nation by the powerful hand of God.

This was the order and nature of the meal that Jesus was having with His disciples, when three extraordinary things happened (Matthew recounts two of these, and John the other one).

The Lesson of the Towel

⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you

are clean, but not all of you.”
- John 13:5-10

According to the custom of the times, the owner of the room had left a bowl, towel and pitcher of water so that the guests could wash their feet before entering the room for their meal. In normal circumstances a slave or the youngest person would do this as a courtesy for his master’s guests who were cleansed and refreshed after a long walk on the dusty back roads of the day.

I mentioned before that Peter and John had taken the places of honor next to Jesus, and an argument arose over the issue of each Apostle’s importance, probably because of this. This attitude explained why no one’s feet had been washed by the time the meal had begun. Each Apostle had walked in, seen the water and towel, but refused to lower himself to wash his own feet, and certainly was in no mood to wash someone else’s feet. They were the “chosen” Apostles, men of importance, certainly above this common task.

Jesus, knowing the divisive and destructive nature of pride, resolves this issue by lowering Himself beneath all of His Apostles in order to teach them that the true nature of discipleship is service, not position. This was the lesson of the towel.

We do not wash feet today because it no longer is a sign of courtesy and hospitality, and with modern footwear it is not necessary. We do, however, continue to humble ourselves in mutual service in the name of the Lord. This is done, of course, in many ways and situations as we volunteer our time, talents and resources in serving the church.

The Revealing of the False Disciple

²⁰ Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. ²¹ As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." ²² Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" ²³ And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. ²⁴ The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." ²⁵ And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."
- Matthew 26:20-25

After washing the feet, the meal continues in its normal course, everyone having been uncomfortably silenced by Jesus' act of humility.

It is at this moment that the Lord reveals that there is a traitor among them. They are mortified to hear this and immediately begin questioning Jesus. Mark 14:18-31 tells us that all asked Jesus if they were the one, and Jesus replied nothing. Luke 22:23 says that they even whispered among themselves questioning who the traitor might be. Matthew, in the passage we have just seen, explains that Judas asked Jesus directly and the Lord replied, "you have said it yourself" which is a Hebrew way of saying, "what you say is what you are."

It is left to John, seated next to Jesus, to tell us that after Jesus exposes him, Judas leaves the room and seeks out the Jewish officials in order to offer his help in betraying Jesus for thirty

pieces of silver. After his departure the group continues with the Passover meal, able to truly enjoy it now that Jesus has removed the final leaven of impurity with the removal of Judas from their midst.

Judas' departure sets the scene for the third important event of their gathering that night.

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." ²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."
- Matthew 26:26-29

They are nearing the end of the meal with only one cup of blessing remaining and a piece of unleavened bread to share. It is at this point, however, that Jesus changes the direction and meaning of the meal, from past to future.

The bread without leaven will no longer represent the holiness and purity that the people should have, but will now represent His holy and pure body given for them as a sacrifice for sin. The fruit of the vine will no longer represent the blessings and abundance of the Promised Land, but rather a symbol of His blood, His life, freely given in order to bring the blessings of forgiveness to all men. There will no longer be a lamb to sacrifice

and eat in remembrance because the perfect “Lamb of God” will be offered once and will be an acceptable sacrifice for all men forever. There will no longer be bitter herbs as a memory of suffering because the memory of Christ’s suffering will be eclipsed by His glorious resurrection. No one will have to ask what these things mean each year at this time because the good news will be preached every day and every hour until His return.

This is Jesus’ last Passover, but it will also be the Apostles’ last Passover because from now on they, and all disciples after them, will remember this night and share the bread and wine as a reminder of their freedom from the slavery of sin and death to the glory of eternal life through the offering of the body and blood of Jesus Christ the Savior.

CONCLUSION - MATTHEW NARRATIVE SIX

Matthew will conclude his eyewitness account of Jesus’ final hours, crucifixion and resurrection. These are the darkest hours of mankind:

- The Lord wrestles in prayer in a lonely garden spot while His Apostles lay back in a weary sleep.
- Judas appears to betray the Holy One and the Lamb of Life is led away like a common criminal and condemned to die a cruel death on a Roman cross.
- The harsh dawn rises to see the Son of God labor up to Golgotha’s hill, the burden of men’s sins on His bruised and bloodied back.

- The Roman soldiers, skilled in death, quickly mounted this despised Jew on His cross between two criminals, satisfied that their work was nearly done for the day.
- The crucifixion provides amusement for the crowd as the people and priests taunt the suffering savior, and hear Him cry out to the Father, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Shortly thereafter Matthew says that Jesus yields up His spirit.
- All that was left was to dispose of the body that, to their surprise, was claimed by prominent Jews, saving the guards the trouble of carrying the dead man to the common grave where all criminals were buried.

And so He lay three days; cut, scarred, pierced, battered and bruised, awaiting the glorious outcome for which men and angels had hoped for since the beginning of time.

¹ Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. ² And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. ⁷ Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of

you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

⁸ And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

- Matthew 28:1-10

¹⁶ But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- Matthew 28:16-20

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