

A WALK THROUGH THE WORD

By Rick Shoemaker

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge (Pr. 23:12).

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

WHY SHOULD I WANT TO KNOW THE BIBLE

The bible is designed to help us.

THE BIBLE IS A HISTORY BOOK

Like a history book, the bible tells us what has happened in the past. We can believe it.

THE BIBLE IS A HOW-TO BOOK

Like an instruction manual, the bible tells us how to live our lives.

THE BIBLE IS A ROAD MAP

Ps. 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Like a map, the bible will lead us the right way.

THE BIBLE IS A WARNING SIGN

Like a sign warning us about danger, the bible will warn us of danger ahead and tell us how to avoid disaster.

THE BIBLE IS A BURIED TREASURE

Like a buried treasure, the bible is full of great riches. We need to dig into it every day.

THE BIBLE IS DAILY FOOD

1 Pet.2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Like the food we consume each day, the bible will feed us spiritually. We need to learn how to feed ourselves. We need more than what we get at church.

THE BIBLE IS A SWORD

Heb.4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword

Like a sword that slays the enemy, the bible can help us defeat the devil.

THE BIBLE IS A LOVE LETTER

Like a love letter from our sweetheart, the bible is like a love letter from the Lover of our soul.

THE BIBLE IS AN IOU

Like an IOU from a faithful friend, the bible is full of God's promises. If God said it, we can trust him.

The bible is the most valuable thing on earth, yet it is also the most neglected thing on earth.

WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS BOOK

Sadly, most people don't see the need to know the bible. They fail to see the damage caused by neglecting the Word.

WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO KNOW HOW TO BE SAVED

1 Pet.1:25And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO GROW

1 Pe 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO HAVE JOY

1 Jn 1:4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO OVERCOME SIN

Ps.119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word

Ps.119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

WE NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO GET DIRECTION

Ps.119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Jos.1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

You may think you don't have time to study but a few minutes a day can do wonders. Of course, the more time we spend in the bible the more help we will receive.

The bible consists of 66 different books.

Originally the Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew. The New Testament was written in Greek.

| <u>OLD TESTAMENT</u> 39 books | <u>NEW TESTAMENT</u> 27 book |
|---|--|
| FOUNDATION (first five books) | FOUNDATION (first four books) |
| HISTORICAL (12 books....Joshua to Ester) | HISTORICAL (one book....Acts) |
| TEACHING (22 books ...Job to Malachi) these books teach how to live what is found in the previous books | TEACHING (22 books.....Romans to Revelation) these books teach how to live what is found in the previous books |

The “foundational” books teach what God demands.

The “historical” books show how man lived out what was written in the foundation books.

The “teaching” books provide direction for living what was written in the previous books.

THE TRUTHS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ARE SEEN IN NEW TESTAMENT.

JESUS REFERRED TO THE OLD TESTAMENT SEVERAL TIMES.

Mt. 5:17–18 Think not that I am come to *destroy the law, or the prophets*: I am not come to destroy, but to *fulfil*. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass* from the law, till *all be fulfilled* (emphasis added).

Mt. 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Mk. 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

Lk. 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

NEW TESTAMENT (27 books)

| <u>GOSPELS</u> | <u>HISTORY</u> | <u>PAUL'S LETTERS</u> | <u>GENERAL LETTERS</u> | <u>PROPHECY</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| MATTHEW | ACTS | ROMANS | HEBREWS | REVELATION |
| MARK | | 1 CORINTHIANS | JAMES | |
| LUKE | | 2 CORINTHIANS | 1 PETER | |
| JOHN | | GALATIANS | 2 PETER | |
| | | EPHESIANS | 1 JOHN | |
| | | PHILIPPIANS | 2 JOHN | |
| | | COLOSSIANS | 3 JOHN | |
| | | 1 THESSALONIANS | JUDE | |
| | | 2 THESSALONIANS | | |
| | | 1 TIMOTHY | | |
| | | 2 TIMOTHY | | |
| | | TITUS | | |
| | | PHILEMON | | |

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF SILENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The Old Testament closes with Israel being a divided nation. Ten tribes were known as ISRAEL and two tribes were known as JUDAH.

Malachi closes with these sober words, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse".

For four hundred years, there was no word from God. Finally, the silence was broken, God spoke again.

THE RELIGIOUS STATE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

To gain a proper understanding of the New Testament we need to know the condition of the religious world.

THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS

THE SADDUCEES

The Sadducees were Jewish but they had strange beliefs.

They were wealthy and held positions of authority such as the chief priests and high priest.

They tried to get along with Rome (Israel was under the control of Rome at that time).

They did not believe in the resurrection, and therefore denied life after death.

They did not believe in reward or punishment after death.

They did not believe in miracles, angels, demons, or the spiritual world.

They depended on themselves and did not see the need for God's assistance.

They were more concerned about politics than religion. Because of this, they had little concern about Jesus until his actions started effecting the government.

The Sadducees ceased to exist in 70 AD. when Titus attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees were the largest religious group during Jesus day. They had a "holier than thou" attitude.

They were, for the most part, middle-class. They identified with the common man.

They were devoted to the Old Testament Law. However, they were equally devoted to oral traditions. This caused many problems between them and Jesus (Mt. 15:2).

Unlike the Sadducees, they believed in the resurrection, life after death, and the reward or punishment after death.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were complete opposites and did not get along. However, they joined forces to attack Jesus (Mk. 14:53; 15:1; Jn. 11:48-50)

THE SANHEDRIN

The Sanhedrin was a group of 71 men, including the High Priest. The idea of the Sanhedrin can be traced back to Numbers 11:16, where God told Moses to gather seventy men to assist him.

The Sanhedrin judged those accused of breaking the law. They were the Supreme Court for Israel. Court was in session every day. They would question the accused, the accusers, and the witnesses in an attempt to determine the facts.

The Sanhedrin met illegally in order to try Jesus (Mt. 26:57-68).

The Sanhedrin was dissolved because of Roman persecution. The last decision they made was in 358 AD.

THE PRIESTS, LEVITES, HIGH PRIEST AND CHIEF PRIESTS

The Priests were men who were of the family of Aaron. They offered the sacrifices.

The Levites were members of the tribe of Levi who were not priests.

The High Priest was chosen once a year. He was in charge of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The chief priests were the priests directly under the High Priest. The chief priest's job was to oversee the priests. They were in charge of daily and weekly temple services. They took care of the temple treasury and its vessels.

THE SCRIBES

This group were teachers of the Old Testament.

They copied documents.

They also copied the scripture. The only way of making copies of anything in print was to copy it by hand. The scribes copied the Word of God.

By New Testament times the scribes were teachers and authoritative leaders. They saw themselves as defenders of the Law. For this reason, they despised Jesus. They saw him as an impostor.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

SYNAGOGUE

Synagogues were meeting places built in many towns. All large cities had at least one synagogue.

The word "synagogue" comes from a Greek word meaning "assembly or congregation". There is some debate as to when the synagogues were actually established.

The Jews worshiped in the synagogues daily.

The synagogues were usually built on a hill, facing Jerusalem.

The synagogues functioned by donations given by those who attended.

Local elders were responsible for the oversight of the synagogue. Laymen took care of the building.

The synagogue provided a place where there could be prayer, singing, reading, and explanation of Scripture. We must remember copies of the law were scarce. Unlike us, everyone did not have a copy of the Word of God. These meeting places were a vital part of their lives.

We may have a copy of God's Word, but we also need a place to assemble with other believers. God ordained the New Testament local church for that purpose. We dare not neglect the house of God.

Jesus preached and taught in the synagogue on more than one occasion (Mt. 4:23, 9:35, 13:54, Mk. 1:39, 3:1, Lk. 4:33,44, Jn. 18:20).

THE GOSPELS

The first four books of the New Testament are called, the gospels. The word "gospel" means, "good news".

The four gospels are simply four different accounts of the same events. It's like four witnesses who appear in court to tell what they saw. They all tell the same story but each witness would see it with a different perspective. Though different, all would be accurate.

The first three gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels. The word "synoptic" means, "the same view". That means, the first three gospel accounts are very similar. These three books include many of the same stories and very similar wording. This does not mean the gospel account of John is incorrect. It simply means John wrote of some events that were not included in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

The gospels do not give us every detail of the life of Christ. We are told almost nothing about the first twelve years of his life. John said if everything Jesus did had been written down, the entire world would not be able to contain the books that would be written (Jn. 21:25).

THE VIEW OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

Each gospel shows Jesus from a different view point. It's somewhat like a man being described by four members of his family. His son would describe him as a father. His wife would describe him as a husband. His father would describe him as a son. His sister would describe him as a brother. All would be describing the same man and be correct in their description. The four gospels are four different descriptions, by four different people, about one person.

There is one vital thought we must keep in mind when considering the writing of scripture. Whether it is Old Testament or New, those who wrote the words were mere tools used by the Holy Spirit. None of the words in the bible are the words of man.

Since the Holy Spirit inspired the words, we can trust what is written. It is all....the exact Word of God.

| <u>Matthew</u> | <u>Mark</u> | <u>Luke</u> | <u>John</u> |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Described Jesus as a king Mt. 1:1 | Described Jesus as a servant Mk. 10:45 | Described Jesus as a man Lk. 19:10 | Described Jesus as God Jn. 1:1 |
| O.T. foretells Zech. 9:9 | O.T. foretells Isa. 42:1 | O.T. foretells Zech. 6:12 | O.T. foretells Isa. 40:9 |
| Written primarily to the Jews | Written primarily to the Romans | Written primarily to the Greeks | Written primarily to the world |

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew penned the book of Matthew. He is also known as Levi (Mk. 2:14, Lk. 5:27). He was a Jewish believer. Before his conversion he was a tax collector (Mt. 9:9). The Jews hated tax collectors (also called publicans). Any Jew that became a tax collector was considered a traitor. Many of the tax collectors were thieves. They would demand more money than was owed for taxes and would keep the rest for themselves.

Jesus knew Matthew's past life, forgave him, and choice him as one of his disciples. What a display of God's grace.

It seems obvious that Matthew wrote primarily to the Jew.

- He did not translate certain words because the Jews would understand their meaning.

For example, in Matthew 1:21, he does not give the meaning of the name "JESUS".

- He did not explain Jewish customs.

He knew Jewish readers would know about these customs and would not need an explanation.

- He referred to the Old Testament quite often.

Matthew quoted the Old Testament about fifty times. He alluded to the Old Testament about seventy-five times. This was vitally important if the Jew was to believe Jesus was the One the Old Testament spoke of.

- He used the term “kingdom of heaven” instead of “kingdom of God”.

The Jews honored God so highly they were reluctant to even utter the name of God. This may be the reason Matthew used the term kingdom of heaven.

- Only Matthew recorded Jesus’ words, I am not but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”
- He used the term, “son of David” more than the other gospel writers.

He did this because the Messiah was to be the son of David. Jesus was the son of David (Mt. 1:1).

Matthew wrote to the unbelieving Jew to tell them that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. He wrote to the believing Jew to encourage them to keep trusting God. He was assuring them, God was not finished with his chosen people. He assured his brethren, their king would come again to set up his kingdom. The promises God had made would not be cast aside. He would do what he had said he would do.

Matthew placed an emphasis on Jesus’ teaching ministry. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7) is the longest recorded message of our Lord.

Even though this book is clearly a Jewish book, it ends with the Lord telling his disciples to go tell the world.

THE GENEALOGY OF THE KING 1:1-17

Matthew gave the lineage of Jesus through his legal father, Joseph (1:16). The Jews were very concerned about family records, and rightfully so. For a man to be a king he must have a genealogy for he had to be able to prove he was in the line of royalty. If Jesus was to be the King of the Jews, his genealogy had to be proven.

Mt 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Jesus was referred to as “the son of David” ten times in the book of Matthew. God promised David one from his family would sit upon the throne in Jerusalem and his kingdom would have no end (2 Sa 7:13,16). Jesus was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David. This proved Jesus’ right to sit upon the throne of David.

Jesus was “the son of Abraham”. God promised Abraham one from his family would bless all the earth (Gen. 22:18). Jesus was this promised one of the lineage of Abraham.

JESUS’ GENEALOGY THROUGH HIS STEP FATHER, JOSEPH

Matthew tells the story of Jesus from Joseph’s perspective.

Mt 1:16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

The “begats” end in verse 16 where it reads, “Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (emphasis added). The Holy Spirit was careful to make sure we understand Joseph did not begat Jesus. Joseph was not the father of Jesus because he was birthed by the Holy Spirit.

THE KING'S MANGER 1:18 – 2:23

Who would expect a king to be born in a manger? But, as we will discover, Jesus was not an ordinary king.

JOSEPH WAS ESPOUSED TO A VIRGIN 1:18-19

Mt 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Mary and Joseph were espoused (engaged) to be married. A Jewish wedding consisted of three steps.

One, the engagement. This was an agreement whereby it was determined the bride and groom would be married in the future. Many times this agreement was made when the bride and groom were young and was arranged by their parents.

Two, the betrothal period. This began with a legal ceremony in which the bride and groom became bound to each other. This period lasted a year. The couple was considered to be husband and wife, even though they were not living together and had not come together sexually. A divorce was required if the betrothal was terminated (De. 24:1).

Three, the actual wedding ceremony would take place at the end of the year of betrothal.

It was during this betrothal period when the events of these verses took place.

Mary was with child "*before they came together*". The miracle of Jesus' birth was not his actual birth. The miracle was His conception. His birth was like any other birth, but his conception was unlike any other. Before Mary and Joseph came together, she was with child. The baby's Father was the very God of heaven and earth.

JOSEPH DISCOVERED MARY WAS EXPECTING A BABY

Mt 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

At this point, Joseph came to what seemed to be the obvious conclusion, Mary had been unfaithful. In spite of what he thought was unfaithfulness on Mary's part, he still loved her. He made plans to put Mary away (divorce) in a private manner. The punishment for adultery was stoning (De. 22:23-24).

AN ANGEL VISITED JOSEPH 1:20-23

Mt 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph' reputation was at stake. Of course, most people would assume he was marrying a woman who had been unfaithful to him. Anyone who would marry her would be shunned at best by the community.

While Joseph thought on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel told Joseph the child was the long awaited Messiah and instructed him to take Mary as his wife.

Mt 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The word "**JESUS**", means "savior". He came to "*his people*" (the Jews) first. Jesus would say, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mt. 15:24). Paul said the gospel was to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16). Thank the Lord, the gospel message did not stop with the Jews. Jesus would indeed save his people, and the world, from their sin. His death provided a means whereby anyone could be forgiven from their sin.

Mt 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

The words, "*that it might be fulfilled*" mean Jesus was the one the Old Testament spoken of. Other than the book of Romans, Matthew quoted the Old Testament more than any other New Testament book.

Jesus was the promised One. Below are just a few of the Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfilled. Notice especially those that Jesus would have no control over. He had no control over the fact that he was born of a virgin. He had no control over where he was born. That is, unless he was who he claimed to be.

A FEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS

He was born of a virgin Gen.3:15, Isa.7:14 fulfilled in Mt.1:20

He was born in Bethlehem Micah 5:2 fulfilled in Mt.2:1

He was called Immanuel Isa.7:14 fulfilled in Mt.1:23

He was of the lineage of Abraham Gen.12:3 fulfilled in Mt.1:2

He was from the lineage of David Isa.9:7 fulfilled in Lk,1:32-33

He came from the tribe of Judah Gen.49:10 fulfilled in Lk.3:33

He came out of Egypt Hos.11:1 fulfilled in Mt.1:23

Bitterness and weeping a part of his birth Jer.31:15 fulfilled in Mt.2:16-18

A forerunner would come before him Isa.40:3-5 fulfilled in Lk.3:4

He was rejected by his people Isa.53:3 fulfilled in Jn.1:11

He was declared to be the Son of God Ps.2:7 fulfilled in Mt.3:16-17

He spoke in parables Isa.6:9-10 fulfilled in Mt.13:10-15

Little children praised him Ps.8:2 fulfilled in Mt.21:16

He was a sacrifice for sin Isa.53:5-12 fulfilled in Rom.5:6-8

He was betrayed Zech.11:12-13 fulfilled in Mt.26:14-16

The price of his betrayal bought a potter's field Zech.11:12-13 fulfilled in Mt.27:9-10

He was falsely accused Ps.35:11 fulfilled in Mk.14:57-58

He was silent before his accusers Isa.53:7 fulfilled in Mk.15:4-5

He was spat on Isa.50:6 fulfilled in Mt.26:67

He was smitten Isa.50:6 fulfilled in Mt.26:67

His beard was pulled out Isa.50:6 fulfilled in Mt.26:67

They gave him vinegar Ps.69:21 fulfilled in Mt.27:34

His hands and feet were pierced Zech.12:10 fulfilled in Jn.20:25-27

He was mocked Ps.22:7-8 fulfilled in Lk.23:35

Soldiers gambled for his garments Ps.22:18 fulfilled in Mt.27:35-36

His bones were not broken Ps.34:20 fulfilled in Jn.19:33-36

He was forsaken by God Ps.22:1 fulfilled in Mt.27:46

He prayed for his enemies Ps.109:4 fulfilled in Lk.23:34
Soldiers pierced his side Zech.12:10 fulfilled in Jn.19:34
He was buried with the rich Isa.53:9 fulfilled in Mt.27:57-60
He rose from the dead Ps.16:10 and 49:15 fulfilled in Mt.28:2-7
He ascended to heaven Ps. 24:7-10 fulfilled in Mk.16:19 and Lk. 24:51
He sat down at his Father's right hand Ps.68:18 and 110:1 fulfilled in Mt.22:44

The facts mentioned above are not just wonderful truths. They are not just unexplainable miracles. They are undeniable facts that prove that Jesus was indeed the one foretold of in the Old Testament.

Mt 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

The one who would die for the sin of the world had to be born of a virgin. Had he been born of natural man, He would have inherited a sin nature and would have his own sin to pay for. Only one who was sinless could die for someone else. Jesus was the perfect, sinless, totally pure, Son of God. He, and only he, was able to die for the sins of others.

They shall "call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us". Jesus was as much God, as God the Father. John also tells us Jesus was God in flesh (Jn.1:1, 14). There is no doubt about it, Jesus was God in flesh.

JOSEPH DID AS THE ANGEL INSTRUCTED 1:24-25

Mt 1:24-25 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Joseph's actions reveal his faith. He believed what God said.

Joseph and Mary did not come together until Jesus was born. Some say Jesus was virgin conceived but not virgin born. In other words, they say Mary and Joseph had a physical relationship after Jesus' conception but before his birth. This verse clearly refutes this idea.

Some teach Mary remained a virgin her entire life. However, the verse above refutes that. Mary had other children (Mt 12:46; 13:55; Acts 1:14; 1 Co 9:5). Jesus is called the "firstborn" son (Mt. 1:25). This expression was used by the Jews only when there was more than one child.

JESUS WAS BORN 2:1

Mt 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Matthew does not give us the details of Jesus' birth. He simply told us where he was born and keeps going.

HEROD SEARCHED FOR JESUS 2:1-23

Old Testament scripture said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Micah wrote 700 years before the birth of Christ. Only God could predict something so long before it happened.

WISE MEN CAME SEEKING JESUS 2:1-12

Mt 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Matthew is the only gospel account that mentioned the wise men. We do not know how many were in this group. The fact they brought three types of gifts is not an indication there were three men.

Bethlehem was a small town about six miles south of Jerusalem. Who would expect the king of the Jews to be born in such a little place? You would expect a king to be born in a palace in Jerusalem.

The word "Bethlehem" means "house of bread". It probably received its name because of its fertile soil. It certainly was the house of bread in that day, for the "bread of life" (Jn. 6:48) was born there.

The Greek word translated "wise" means "magi". They were men who studied signs and astronomy. They were from "the east". That means they traveled between 800 and 900 miles to see Jesus. They probably were aware of the writings of Daniel since he spent time in Babylon and told about a Messiah who would come (Dan. 9:25-27).

Judea was a province of the Roman empire. Therefore, it was under the rule of the Roman government.

King Herod was the king that Rome had placed over Judea. He was a power hungry man. He was married ten times and had 15 children. He killed several of the Sanhedrin, his wife Mariamne, his mother, his brother in law, and at least three of his own sons.

If he suspected anyone of trying to take his throne, they would certainly face his wrath. A common saying of that day was, "it is better to be Herod's swine than his son".

In order to fund his many projects, Herod laid heavy taxes on the Jews.

Herod rebuilt the Temple in the eighteenth year of his reign (20-19 BC).

Mt 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

The wise men asked where the "King of the Jews" would be born. This tells us they came seeking the child because they had seen a star that led them to his birth place.

Mt 2:3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod and all of Jerusalem were troubled at the news of this child being born. Herod was troubled because he didn't want any competition for his throne. He had obtained and kept the throne by shedding a lot of blood. He feared this one who had been born would be the next competitor.

Jerusalem was troubled because they knew Herod would cause trouble if anyone came claiming to be a king. They had seen the cruelties of Herod before.

Mt 2:4-6 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

What frightened Herod more than anything was the fact that these wise men called this child the King of the Jews. He did not want someone coming into his territory claiming to be a king.

He called the chief priests and scribes to find out where Christ was to be born.

Mt 2:7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

Herod asked the wise men when the star had appeared in order to determine the age of the child.

Mt 2:8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Herod sent the wise men to find the child. He told them he wanted to worship the child also. He had no intentions of worshiping Jesus. He planned to put him to death as quickly as possible.

The word, "diligently" means, "carefully". He told them to search carefully to make sure this threat to his kingdom was found.

The words, "young child" tell us Jesus was not an infant. The wise men did not come to Jesus at his birth, as many Christmas plays suggest. Also, they found him in a house, and not a stable.

Mt 2:9-10 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

As they were leaving Herod the star appeared again and led them directly to Jesus. It must have hovered directly over the manger. This could not have been a meteor as some have implied. Certainly it was a supernatural event, orchestrated by the God of heaven.

Mt 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

They went into the house and saw Jesus for themselves. The natural reaction was worship.

They brought gifts for Jesus. The people of the east would never approach a king without some type of present in their hands. They knew there was something different about this child.

They gave gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts had eternal meaning behind them. The gold was a gift that spoke of His royalty and kingdom. The frankincense was a gift that spoke of His priesthood. The myrrh was a gift that spoke of His death.

It's amazing how this small baby had already caused such an uproar. He had not uttered a word, taken a step, nor performed a miracle, but his life is already making an impact.

THE WISE MEN WENT HOME A DIFFERENT WAY 2:12

Mt 2:12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

God warned the wise men and told them to go home by a different way. Thank the Lord for His protection of those who are willing to listen to him.

JOSEPH TOOK HIS FAMILY TO EGYPT 2:13-15

Mt 2:13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

God warned Joseph about Herod and told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Joseph was to stay in Egypt until God told him to leave.

Mt 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

Joseph immediately obeyed the Lord and left that night. What a fearful trip this must have been for Joseph knew Herod was after Jesus.

Egypt was under Roman rule but it was outside of Herod's jurisdiction. There were approximately one million Jews living in Egypt at that time.

God saw them safely into the land of Egypt where they remained until Herod died. God could have stopped Herod from attacking his Son, but he chose not to. He chose to protect Joseph, Mary and Jesus by taking them out of harm's way. There are times when he will use ordinary means to accomplish what he desires. This was no less a miracle.

All this was done according to Old Testament scripture (Hos.11:1).

Mt 2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Herod was angry when he realized the wise men had disobeyed his instructions. Herod's anger was not to be taken lightly. He was angry because the wise men had the audacity to ignore his demands, and because this "king" had escaped his hands.

No doubt, he had planned to kill Jesus, but now he would have to revise his plan. He had all the male children, in and around Bethlehem, from two years old and under, put to death.

Mt 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

This act reveals the horror of sin. The anger, hatred and selfishness of Herod reveal how bad man can be. So many innocent babies, so many parents in anguish, so many lives never lived, all because of one man's hunger for power. This heartbreaking event cannot be overstated.

Mt 2:17-18 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

The prophecy spoken of in this verse is in Jeremiah 31:15. Much of Old Testament prophecy has a short term and a long term fulfillment. The short term fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:5 was dealing with the heartbreak of those being taken into captivity. The long term fulfillment is dealing with the scene we see before us here.

HEROD DIED, JOSEPH, MARY AND JESUS RETURNED TO ISRAEL 2:19-21

Mt 2:19-20 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

When Herod died, the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him to go back to the land of Israel. Joseph obeyed. Herod died at seventy five years of age in the year 4 AD.

Mt 2:21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

JOSEPH, MARY AND JESUS GO TO NAZARETH 2:22-23

Mt 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

Joseph was frightened when he heard that Herod's son, Archelaus was reigning in the place of his father. He had good reason to be fear Archelaus for he was a violent man. He was as cruel as his father.

In the time of Christ, Israel was divided into three sections. Galilee was to the north, Samaria was in the middle and Judea was to the south.



Mt 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Joseph brought Mary and Jesus to Nazareth. Nazareth was the home town of Mary and probably of Joseph (Lk. 1:26-27). Nazareth had a bad reputation. Nathaniel asked whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth (Jn. 1:46). To be a Nazarene was something that would be held as a reproach. And yet, God chose to have his son born in this despised place. /we would say, Jesus was born on the wrong side of the tracks.

Isaiah said it right when he said the Messiah would be “as a root out of a dry ground” (Isa.53:2). When speaking to Saul, Jesus referred to himself as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 22:8).

JOHN THE BAPTIST 3:1-17

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS FROM THE PRIESTLY LINEAGE

John was born of Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth. Zacharias was a priest and Elisabeth came from the lineage of Aaron (Lk. 1:5). Elisabeth was the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Lk.1:36). So, humanly speaking, Jesus and John were second cousins.

JOHN WAS A FORERUNNER FOR JESUS CHRIST

John was a forerunner of the Messiah. A forerunner was a person who went before an approaching king, to announce his arrival. He shouted the message for all to hear in order that they might prepare for the king.

JOHN WAS NAZARITE

John was a Nazarite from his birth (Lk.1:15). The Nazarite vow was a promise a man or woman made in which they dedicated themselves to the Lord. The word Nazarite means “to be set apart”. It speaks of being set apart from the world and unto the Lord and his service. The vow could be for life or for a determined period of time.

We first learn of the Nazarite vow in the book of Numbers (Num.6:2).

The Nazarite vow consisted of three things.

ONE...they were to abstain from grapes, wine, any produce of the vine, and all strong drink (Num. 6:3-4).

Abstaining from wine and all products of the vine speaks of a life that was not controlled by temporary pleasures. This part of the Nazarite vow deals with a person who was resisting a life of ease and was dedicating themselves to the spiritual matters of life.

TWO... they were forbidden to cut their hair (Num. 6:5).

The long hair would be a visible sign of the Nazarites dedication to the Lord.

THREE... they were to not touch, or come close to, any dead body. This was observed even if a family member died (Num. 6:6-7).

The separation from dead things speaks of desire to avoid any thing that is corruptible. Touching a dead body made a person ceremonially unclean. The unclean person was not allowed to approach the tabernacle or to have fellowship with others.

The bible records three men who were Nazarites for life, Samson (Judges 13:4), Samuel (Sam. 1:11) and John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15).

There is no New Testament equivalent of the Nazarite vow. However, we should be willing to live a life similar to that which a Nazarite lived. We certainly should be separated from the world and unto the Lord.

JOHN WAS THE LAST OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

Even though John is found in the New Testament, he was the last Old Testament prophet. He came before the death of Jesus. He was actually the first prophet since Malachi.

John came out of the wilderness preaching the message of the kingdom.

The coming of John the Baptist said much.

- First and foremost, after 400 years of silence, God was speaking again
- God hadn't forgotten his people
- God hadn't forgotten His promises, the Messiah was coming

JOHN'S MESSAGE

Mt 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

John was called “The Baptist” because he baptized those who repented of their sin. John did baptize, but he did much more. He was called by God to preach the message of the coming kingdom (Lk.1:80).

Mt 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

John’s message was, “*Repent ye*”. He came into a world full of sin. Also, he came into a religious world that was in darkness. The answer to both....repent.

- Repentance implies a genuine sorrow for past deeds (2 Cor. 7:10).

The person who repents does so because they are genuinely sorry for their sin.

- Repentance implies a change of mind.

The word “repent” means “to reconsider” or “a change of mind”. It has the idea of seeing sin in a different light. The repenting person sees their sin as God sees it. There truly is a change of mind. Where they had sinned without thinking much about it, now they see their sin as something that is against a Holy God.

A drunk may quit drinking for a while because his hangovers make him feel so bad. That is not repentance because he does not see his drinking as a sin. Repentance is when that same drunk wakes up, sees his drinking as a sin against God, confesses his sin, and turns his life over to God. His mind has been changed about his drinking. He sees it as a violation of the law of God.

- Repentance implies a change of actions

True repentance is more than saying we’re sorry. True repentance is more than just confessing our sin. True repentance includes a change of action. We DO differently after we have repented.

John’s message was, repent *for* the kingdom of heaven is as hand. The Lord was coming, they needed to be ready. The only way to be ready was to be right, and the only way to be right was to repent.

Isaiah spoke of one who would come to prepare the way for the Messiah (Isa. 40:3).

The words, “*kingdom of heaven*” is a term found in only Matthew. The rest of Scripture uses the term, “kingdom of God”. Both terms speak of God’s dominion over those who belong to him. This kingdom is manifested at present by God’s rule over believers. Jesus made mention of this in the book of Luke 17:21, where he said, “behold, the kingdom of God is within you”.

Matthew may have used the word “heaven” in the place of “God” in an attempt to not offend his Jewish readers. The Jews considered it blasphemy to refer to God in a disrespectful manner. They were careful when speaking or writing the word “God”. When a scribe came to the word "God" while copying the Old Testament scripture, he would wipe his pen, go take a bath, and return to continue writing.

One day, the kingdom will be set up on earth as Jesus rules and reigns (Rev. 20:4-6).

Mt 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John’s message dealt with the coming of the Messiah Israel had been waiting for.

Mt 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

John’s clothing was of camel hair. The hair of a camel was used to fashion a rough, coarse cloth. He did not come to impress. He came as God’s spokesman. He wore a leather girdle, the attire of Elijah (1 Kgs. 1:8). His food was the food of the poorest of people. He ate locusts and wild honey.

Mt 3:5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

To say the least, when he came to town, he stirred things up. He drew a crowd. His message was new to those who were listening.

An angel had predicted that John’s ministry would turn many to the Lord (Lk.1:16).

Mt 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

John called for people to repent, confess their sin, and be baptized. And, many listened.

For years before Jesus’ birth, the Jews baptized Gentile proselytes. A proselyte was a Gentile who had believed the Old Testament truths and wanted to join the Jews. By submitting to baptism, the proselyte was showing they were renouncing their old beliefs, repenting of their sin, and accepting the truths of the Jews.

John’s baptism was much the same. His message was a message of repentance (Mk.1:4). He was asking those who would hear to confess their sin, repent, and demonstrate their repentance by being baptized.

The word baptize means to “immerse”. John did not sprinkle. When he baptized Jesus the bible says he “went up straightway out of the water”. Obviously, they had walked into the Jordan river. There would have been no reason to go into the river if John was going to sprinkle water over Jesus.

It is also important to understand, John's baptism was not Christian baptism. The death and resurrection of Christ had not yet occurred. Christian baptism symbolizes repentance, but it also an outward sign of identification. We are identifying ourselves with Christ and His work on Calvary. Christian baptism is identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. We are showing the world we have believed the gospel message, repented of our sin, accepted the salvation offered by the Lord, and have committed ourselves to walk in His will.

Mt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

John's message was not accepted by all those who heard him. The Pharisees and Sadducees certainly did not believe. He called them a bunch of snakes and warned them about coming judgment.

John did not baptize anyone and everyone. He looked for signs of repentance before he baptized anyone. He knew the Pharisees and Sadducees (please note the description of these groups in the introduction of this study). He demanded they show signs of true repentance before he would baptize any of them.

Mt 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to bring fruit of their repentance. He was simply asking them to show proof of real repentance. Repentance and faith are connected in Scripture. Repentance is turning from sin, and faith is turning to God. Both are vital, and neither can be excluded if a person wants to get right with God. We find these two connected throughout the Word (Mk.1:15; Acts 3:19; Acts 20:21).

John's stand against the Pharisees and Sadducees should be an example to us. As never before, we need to be real. Anyone can profess to know the Lord, but it's quite a different thing to actually live the Christian life.

Mt 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The Jews were terribly proud of the fact that they were descendants of Abraham. They believed merely being descendants of Abraham gave them spiritual security. John popped their bubble when he told them God could raise up children of Abraham from stones.

Mt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

John's message was a message of coming judgment to those who refused to repent. He used the symbol of a tree being cut down to illustrate this judgment. This tree would be cut down at the roots, implying it will never grow again. The picture is that of a gardener who examines his trees. Those that bear fruit, he takes care of. Those that bear no fruit, he cuts down and throws in a fire.

Some have said this speaks of Israel. They suggest John was speaking of how God was coming to examine them. If they refused to repent, He would deal severely with them. I understand this point of view, but the words, "trees" and "every tree" makes me think this is speaking of individuals. Those who heard John's message were being examined by the gardener of the universe. He would have no mercy on the tree that bore no fruit. After all, fruit is the whole purpose of the tree.

That which determined whether the tree would be cut down or allowed to live, was fruit. If there was no fruit, the tree would be cut down and cast into the fire. Those who believe and repent will show forth fruit. All true believers bear fruit. True salvation brings about a changed life and a different lifestyle. If there is no change, there is no salvation.

Mt 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

John made clear; his message is not about himself. There is one coming that is mightier than he.

John was baptizing with water as they who believed his message were repenting. That was as much as he could do. But, the one who was coming after him would do more. Jesus would be baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

John spoke of the power and purity of Jesus. He said the one coming after him was "mightier" (his power) than he. He said he was not worthy to carry the sandals of the one to come (his purity). John saw himself as one who needed the one who was coming.

Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:5; 2:4). The baptism of the Holy Ghost speaks of the new birth experience. Every believer receives the baptism of the Spirit when they accept Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

Jesus would baptize with fire. The fire referred to here, speaks of the fire of judgment. The next verse lets us know this by telling us He will come to burn up the chaff. Those who refuse the message will be judged. The same God who will forgive those who repent, will judge those who refuse to repent.

Mt 3:12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

John used the picture of a man winnowing grain to get his point across. Winnowing was the process of separating the wheat from the chaff after it was harvested.

The winnowing floor was usually placed at the top of a hill where the breeze could blow freely. The wheat was tossed in the air and the wind would blow the chaff away. The wheat would fall to the ground, where it could be gathered.

The person winnowing was dependent on the wind. There were times when the wind wasn't strong enough to blow the chaff away. Then, there would be times when it was so strong it would blow the wheat away with the chaff. John said Jesus would come with the fan in his hand. In other words, he would be in control of the wind that would blow the chaff away.

Jesus would gather the wheat and burn the chaff. Only he is able to discern who is real and who is not.

JESUS CAME TO JOHN 3:13-17

Mt 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

The One John had been preaching about, came on the scene. While John was at the Jordan river, Jesus came to him to be baptized. Jesus was about thirty years old at this time (Lk. 3:23).

Mt 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

The word, "forbad" means, "prevent". John, knowing who Jesus was, was reluctant to baptize him.

John's baptism was an act that showed the person had repented of their sin. John recognized he was the one who needed to be baptized. He was the one who was the sinner and needed to confess.

He recognized how unworthy he was to even be in the presence of the Son of God, let alone, be the one to baptize him. Any person who has ever had the privilege of doing something for God should have the same attitude that John had. Shame on us if we ever take lightly the absolute honor of being a servant for the King of kings.

Mt 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

These are the first recorded words from Jesus since he spoke at the age of twelve at the temple (Lk.2:49).

The question arises, why did Jesus submit to be baptized? Baptism was usually associated with the confession of sin. But, Jesus had no sin to confess. So, why was he baptized?

- Jesus submitted to baptism because it was the right thing to do

Jesus told us why he was baptized in His comment to John in verse. He said, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness". He was saying it was time to do the right thing.

- Jesus submitted to baptism to be an example of obedience to those who would follow him

By submitting to this baptism, Jesus was affirming John's ministry and message.

- Jesus submitted to baptism to identify with man

The sinless Son of God identified with sinful man. This was His first step of obedience in the process of redemptive plan.

- Jesus submitted to baptism because it was a symbol of His own death and resurrection

Baptism is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Many since have submitted baptism to signify the fact that they have been buried and risen with Christ by accepting God's plan of salvation.

Mt 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

John baptized Jesus. What a sight it must have been. As Jesus was coming out of the water, the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon him in the form of a dove.

The Holy Spirit came in a visible way. God the Father made sure the world would know this was not an ordinary man. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, and stayed. John 1:32 says, "and it abode upon him". Jesus was about to embark on his ministry and the Holy Spirit would be a vital part of that ministry.

Mt 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The Father put His stamp of approval on His Son and on this baptism. Jesus was about to do what the Father desired. He would later say, "I do always those things that please him".

The Holy Trinity is seen here. God the Son is coming out of the water, God the Holy Spirit is descending upon him and God the Father is speaking from heaven.

THE TEMPTATION OF THE KING 4:1-25

THE HOLY SPIRIT LED JESUS INTO THE WILDERNESS TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL

Mt 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

It was God who led Jesus into temptation. God does not tempt anyone but he will allow the devil to tempt us (Jam. 1:13).

If the devil will tempt the very Son of God, he will certainly tempt us. None of us are beyond his reach. Paul said temptation is “common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13). James said “every man is tempted” (Jam.1:13).

Since the Lord allows us to be tempted, it must be for our good. Temptation gives us an opportunity to trust God to give us the help we need. It helps us to say “no” to our flesh. It provides an opportunity to enjoy the rewards of victory.

Since Jesus was tempted, we can know that the temptation itself is not sin. The sin takes place when we give in to the temptation and do what is wrong.

Jesus was tempted with the “lust of the flesh” (v. 2-3), the “pride of life” (v. 5-6), and the “lust of the eyes” (v. 8-9). The devil will tempt us in the same areas (Heb.4:15, 1 Jn.2:16).

JESUS' FIRST TEMPTATION

Jesus' first temptation was an appeal to the lust of the flesh (4:3-4).

Mt 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

The devil tempted Jesus when he was physically weak. Jesus was tempted during the entire time in the wilderness (Lk.4:2), but these temptations were at the end of the forty days, and probably the most severe. The devil often attacks when we are at our weakest.

Mt 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

The tempter tried to get Jesus to turn some stones into bread that he might eat and satisfy his hunger.

The word “*if*” does not suggest the devil was doubting if Jesus was the Son of God. Lucifer knew Jesus very well, and was well aware of the fact that he was the Son of God. The word “*if*” in this instance is used as a statement of fact. For example, if a Sunday School teacher says to his class members, “IF you are a member of this class, you should be faithful”. The word “if” is not questioning if those present are members of the class. In fact, it is actually confirming the fact that they are members.

The devil tempted Jesus to turn the stones to bread, when he desperately needed bread. The devil tempts us with that which our flesh desires. James teaches us we are tempted when we are drawn away of our own desire (Jam. 1:14).

Mt 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Jesus responded to the first temptation with the word of God. He said, “*It is written*”. If the Son of God used the Word of God to fight the devil, certainly we should do the same. The Word is our sword to use offensively against the devil. It is faith in the Word that is our shield, to deflect the fiery darts of the wicked one (Eph. 6:16).

JESUS' SECOND TEMPTATION

Jesus' second temptation was an appeal to the pride of life (4:5-6).

Mt 4:5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

The pinnacle was probably a section of the roof on the south east side of the temple. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, there was a drop of around 450 feet from this point.

It is amazing to me that the Lord allowed himself to be taken by the devil. This is the same God who threw Lucifer out of heaven. There may be times when it seems like devil is in control, but he is still a puppet on God's string.

Mt 4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

As before, the devil started his temptation with the words, “*If thou be the Son of God*”. He used scripture in an attempt to pressure Jesus into doing his bidding. He was referring to Psalm 91:11-12 but he twisted its meaning. That Psalm tells us we can trust God even in difficult situations. However, it does not mean we can do foolish things and expect God to bail us out of trouble. The Lord will protect us but that does not mean we should walk in front of a train to prove his protection.

The devil also left out the phrase, “to keep thee in all thy ways” in verse 11. God promises protection to those who walk in “his” ways, but he doesn’t promise to protect those who are walking in their own ways. His promise of protection does not apply to those who walk contrary to the way that pleases him.

Mt 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

As before, Jesus used the Word of God to resist the devil’s temptation. Even though the tempter continued to attack, Jesus still used the same weapon against him. That should teach us that we do not need any other weapon than what our Lord has provided. It works.

JESUS’ THIRD TEMPTATION

Jesus’ third temptation was an appeal to the lust of the eyes (4:8-10).

Mt 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

The devil took Jesus to an extremely high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. This must have been some type of sight.

Mt 4:9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

In essence, the devil was offering Jesus the entire world and everything in it. All Jesus had to do was fall down and worship him. This had been the devil’s desire all along. As Lucifer, he was jealous of God and longed to be worshipped (Isa.14:13-14). His strategy has not changed.

The question arises; did the devil have the authority to give the kingdoms of the world to Jesus? It would seem as though he did. Please note the following.....

- Jesus did not rebuke him or tell him he did not have the power to offer such a thing
- Satan is called the “prince (ruler) of this world” (Jn.12:31, 14:30, 16:11)
- The devil is called the “god of this world” (2 Cor.4:4)
- The entire world lies in wickedness (1 Jn.5:19)
- The kingdom of Persia seemed to be under demonic control (Dan.10:13)

I am not saying the devil has more power than God. I am not saying the devil can overpower God. I am saying however, the Lord has allowed the devil to have a limited amount of authority in this world. Satan has power beyond what we can imagine. He may not be all powerful, but he is powerful.

The day will come when all of Satan’s power will be taken away from him. He will cease being the prince of this world and will become just like every other suffering person in the lake of fire (Rev.20:10).

The devil was offering Jesus a shortcut. Jesus came to establish a kingdom. The path to that kingdom would take him to the cross. Satan was offering him a way to receive a kingdom without having to experience the cross.

Mt 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

One more time, Jesus overcame the devil’s temptation with the Word of God.

JESUS WAS VICTORIOUS OVER ALL THE DEVIL’S TEMPTATION

Mt 4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The devil left Jesus (for a while) and angels came to minister to him. I’ve often wondered what exactly these angels did to minister to Jesus. He was hungry; did they bring him something to eat? He was tired; did they provide a place to rest? We aren’t told but the same God who provided help for his victorious Son will provide aid to his children when they battle the devil and win (Heb. 1:14). We do not have to be defeated. We have victory through the power of God (1 Co 15:57).

COULD JESUS HAVE SINNED

Before we finish with these verses, we need to ask ourselves a question that has been asked by many before us. Could Jesus have sinned?

We know Jesus did not sin (2 Cor.5:21, 1 Pet.2:22). But, the question is, could he have sinned?

Some say he could have. They offer the argument that temptation could not be real unless there is the possibility of yielding to it.

Others say it was not possible for him to sin because he was God in flesh.

Personally, I do not believe it was possible for Jesus to have sinned. I believe this for the following reasons.

Jesus was God and God cannot sin. That should be all we have to say. Jesus was the God-man. He was God in flesh. He was 100 % God (Col 1:19, 2:9) and 100 % man (Acts 2:22, 1 Tim.2:5). As man, he was restricted by human limitations. He grew tired, hungry and thirsty. But, as God, He was still absolutely holy. Though he was man, He never stopped being God.

WHY WAS JESUS TEMPTED

Why was Jesus tempted?

- TO PROVE HE WOULDN'T SIN

Even though Jesus did not sin, he was tempted to prove that he *would* not sin.

- TO PASS THE TEST OF THIS WORLD

Jesus was not excluded from the problems of this world, including the problems related to sin and its results.

- THAT HE MIGHT FEEL WHAT WE FEEL

Jesus faced temptation that he might feel what we feel when we face similar battles (Heb 4:15). He did not have a sin nature, but he did battle the temptation of the world and the devil, just like us. He knows how you feel.

- TO BE AN EXAMPLE TO US (Heb.2:18)

Jesus faced this temptation that he might be our example. Through his power, we can also be victorious.

THE KING'S MINISTRY 4:12-17

JESUS WENT TO GALILEE

We must remember Matthew's intention in writing this book was not to explain every detail of Jesus' life. His intention was to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah they had been looking for. Because of this fact, there are parts of Jesus' activities that Matthew does not record.

Mt 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

Jesus heard about John the baptist being in prison by Herod (cf. Lk. 3:19-20).

Mt 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Nephthalim;

Some time passed between verse 12 and verse 13. Jesus left Nazareth quickly because the people there rejected him (Lk. 4:16-30). He left Nazareth and went to Capernaum.

Mt 4:14-15 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

These events were foretold by Isaiah (Isa.9:1-2). Jesus came to the land of Zabulon and Nephthalim. The tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali had settled there. That part of Galilee was called "*Galilee of the Gentiles*" because of the large number of Gentiles who lived there. That area is described as a place of darkness.

Mt 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Matthew quoted Isaiah 9:2 but he changed the word "walked" in Isaiah to "sat" in his writing. That makes me think it was worse during Jesus' day than Isaiah's. The people "walked" in darkness during Isaiah's day. They were "sitting" in darkness in Jesus' day. It was as though, they had "sat down" in the darkness. They had gotten used to the darkness and it did not bother them anymore.

Jesus' ministry was described as a great light that goes to a place of great darkness. They were in spiritual darkness. The answer to darkness is light. Jesus was the hope they needed.

Our dark world needs light. The answer is the same as in Jesus' day. We are now the light of the world (Mt. 5:14). We should let our lights shine in this dark day.

JESUS PREACHED "REPENT "

Jesus came, offering the kingdom. The one requirement was repentance.

Mt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus saw the true condition of the world he came into. The only hope they had was to repent. They needed to admit their condition, confess and turn from it. Unfortunately, Israel did not repent. As a result, their kingdom would be postponed.

The message from God has not changed. It is still, repent or perish (Lk. 5:32, 13:3, 15:7, 10, 24:47).

THE KING'S MEN 4:18-22

Jesus began to call His disciples. He would eventually call twelve men. Their names were Peter, Andrew, James the greater, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the less, Thaddaeus, Simon, and Judas Iscariot (Mt. 10:2-4).

Jesus called these men that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach (Mk. 3:14).

Mt 4:18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

He called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen.

When Jesus called them, He did not go into a lengthy explanation about why he needed them, or what they would be doing. Even though they did not know what to expect, they left their business and followed him.

Mt 4:19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Peter and Andrew were already disciples of Jesus (Jn. 1:35-42). This was their call to serve the Lord. Jesus' instruction was that they follow him. That suggested they believe his message and follow his example.

Mt 4:20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

They asked no questions nor sought any explanation, they simply followed.

This speaks of the two necessary components of the call of God. God's call and man's response (Phil. 2:13).

Mt 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

Jesus saw two brothers named James and John mending their nets with their father. He "called them".

Mt 4:22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

James and John did as Peter and Andrew had done, they left all behind and followed Jesus.

A DESCRIPTION OF JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE 4:23-25

Mt 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching and preaching in the synagogues. He went where the Jews were and preached about the kingdom of God.

He healed all manner of sickness and disease to prove he was who he claimed to be. His healings proved he had authority over the effects of sin. Only God could do what he did (Jn. 3:2). As would be expected, his fame spread like wildfire.

Mt 4:24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Great multitudes followed Jesus. Many brought their friends and relatives to Jesus in hope he would heal them. Sadly, many followed him out of curiosity, they wondered about his message. Many followed him because they wanted what he could do for them.

Mt 4:25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

THE KING'S MESSAGETHE SERMON ON THE MOUNT Chapters 5-7

Mt 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Great crowds were following Jesus by this time. He saw the multitudes and went to a mountain with his disciples. He began to teach them the principles of His kingdom.

It is important to keep in mind, the word "disciples" is referring to those who were following Jesus. Some were saved and some weren't. This sermon will be to both, saved and lost.

The question is often asked, are these verses for now, or are they for the future when Jesus sets up his kingdom? I believe they are for now and for later. Jesus talked about praying (v. 9), persecution (v.10), and letting our light shine (v.16). These things certainly apply to today. But, these are truths which could also be applied to the Millennial reign of Christ.

THE BEATITUDES 5:3-12

Jesus spoke about how to be blessed. The word "*blessed*" means "happy". God wants us to be happy. This type of happiness is not dependent upon circumstances.

It is interesting to realize, the first recorded message by Jesus was speaking about how to be happy and blessed. The Old Testament ended with a curse (Mal. 4:6), the New Testament begins with a blessing.

The world thinks the way to be happy is to please themselves. They believe happiness comes through pleasure, parties, possessions, and popularity. Jesus did not agree with the world's idea of how to be happy.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO BE POOR

God's way to blessings is the opposite of what we would expect.

Mt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said the way to be blessed (happy) is to become poor. I think Jesus has in mind a man who is so poor he has to beg. He sits at the street, with a cup in his hand, reaching out to those who walk by.

How can this be applied to our lives?

- A poor beggar realizes his need

He is begging because he has a need he cannot supply himself.

We are on the way to finding true happiness when we realize we are spiritually bankrupt. We cannot make ourselves happy. True happiness comes only from the Lord.

- A poor beggar has no pride

A beggar's need overcomes his pride. His need is so great; he doesn't care about what people think of him.

When we get desperate for help from God, we won't care what people think about us.

- A beggar is desperate

The beggar must have help. His life depends on it. He is desperate.

When we get desperate and want help from God more than anything on earth, we are at the place we need to be. The one who is desperate will get help.

- A beggar depends totally on those who pass by

The beggar is depending totally on those who pass by. He knows those people are his only hope. If they do not give to him, he will go without.

We must depend completely on the Lord. If He does not help us, we will get no help. The good news is, we can trust Him.

- A beggar gets help

The beggar receives from those he asks of. His life is changed because he has received.

The wonderful thing about asking of the Lord, He gives us what we need.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO MOURN

Mt 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

The word "*mourn*" means "to grieve". It is referring to us being in agony over our sin. The person who thinks they aren't so bad will never be truly blessed.

True blessing comes when we realize our condition. David (Ps. 51:3), Peter (Lk. 5:8), and Paul (Rom. 7:24, 1 Tim. 1:15), recognized their sinful condition. James said we should "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep" about our sinful condition (Jam.4:9-10). These men were the best of the best. If they saw their sinful condition, surely we should.

How can those who mourn over their condition be the ones who are blessed? That's simple; they are the ones who are forgiven because they are the ones who confess. With confession, comes forgiveness, with forgiveness, comes blessing.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO BE MEEK

Mt 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The Jews thought meekness meant weakness. They taught their children to be strong and to have courage. They taught the spoils go to strong and the courageous.

Then Jesus came on the scene saying the way to be blessed was to be meek. To say the least, they were confused. They were expecting a mighty deliverer. They expected their Messiah to come in with might and power, not in meekness. Jesus would even describe himself and meek and lowly (Mt.11:29).

The kind of meekness Jesus spoke about is not weakness. It is power under control. There are many examples throughout scripture that demonstrate just that, power under control. Abraham had a choice of the land, but allowed Lot to choose first (Gen. 13:7-9). Joseph treated his brothers well even after they treated him terribly (Gen.50:20). Moses was meek but he stood up to Pharaoh and demanded he let God's people go (Ex. 5:1). Saul tried to kill David but David let him escape when he could have killed him (2 Sam. 24:3-7).

The greatest example of meekness is Jesus himself. He had all the power of the universe, yet he came serving, helping, healing, and washing feet. When he was mistreated, he did not fight back. Peter would write, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23).

The meek person is the person who allows the Holy Spirit to keep them under control. This person is a mighty man indeed. The person who cannot control their own spirit will never please God (Pro. 25:28; Pro.16:32). The word translated "meekness" is used to describe a gentle breeze, medicine, and as a colt that is broken. All of these, out of control, are very dangerous. On the other hand, these under control, can be very helpful.

So it is with our old nature. Out of control, it is truly dangerous. But, in control, God can use us mightily. We'll never be blessed until our spirit is under control.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO HUNGER AND THIRST

Mt 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Jesus spoke about those who are hungry for living right. The word "*hunger*" has the idea of being famished. It isn't talking about someone who wants a snack and can be satisfied with a candy bar. This is speaking of someone who is so hungry; they are near death.

Lucifer hungered for power (Isa. 14:14), Nebuchadnezzar hungered for praise (Daniel 4:30), the rich ruler hungered for possessions (Lk. 12:19), Demas hungered for pleasure (2 Timothy 4:10).

Jesus used hunger and thirst to illustrate this truth. Hunger and thirst are the two of the strongest impulses of man. What do you hunger for? We can spend our entire life pursuing things that are wrong. When we get to the end of our lives and see it all burn before our eyes (1 Cor.5:15), we will realize it wasn't worth it. The problem, it will be too late then.

Jesus said those who hunger to live right are the ones that will be blessed.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO BE MERCIFUL

Mt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Mercy means we do not get what we deserve. God grants us mercy when He does not give us the judgment we deserve. Mercy is for those who do not deserve it and cannot earn it. None of us deserve mercy from a holy God.

The Romans thought mercy was weakness. They believed the person who showed mercy was too weak to take a stand. But, Jesus exalted mercy.

This verse is not saying if we grant mercy to others, they will always grant mercy to us. Jesus is proof of that. He was the most merciful person who ever lived, and they hung him on a cross. This verse is saying if we show mercy, God will show us mercy. God is a God of mercy (Ps.130:3, 7; Lam 3:22; Dan.9:9; Eph.2:4; Titus 3:5).

Mercy does not mean God will just overlook sin. God can be merciful because of the cross. Jesus paid for our sin and provided a means whereby God can grant mercy to those who will repent. Mercy is not automatically granted to all. It is granted to those who confess and repent of their sin.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO BE PURE IN HEART

Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

The Jews were very proud of their religious traditions. They were the type who thought "if any one makes it to heaven, surely I will". Then Jesus came talking about being "pure in heart". He wasn't emphasizing the outward actions; his emphasis was on the inward, or the heart.

Anyone can pretend to be right. Anyone can ACT right. Jesus wants us to BE right. If our heart is right, our actions will be right.

God wants us to be pure on the inside. Jesus said those who are pure in heart "shall see God". Most of us live our lives and never really see God. We never really see how much He loves us, we don't really see how powerful He is, and we don't see how holy He is.

God wants to reveal himself to us. But, He reveals himself only to those who are "pure in heart". Maybe that's why we know so little about him and see so little of His work in our lives.

We serve a big God. Isaiah wrote, "Who hath measured the waters in the *hollow of his hand*, and meted out heaven *with the span*" (Isa 40:12 emphasis added). That means He can hold all the water on earth (326 million cubic miles of water) in the palm of his hand. That means, He can measure the universe (156 billion light years that we are aware of) with width of his hand. And that God, that big and powerful God, wants us to know Him.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO BE PEACEMAKERS

Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The word "peacemakers" means "peaceable". In others words, we are to be peaceable.

Peace dominates the entire bible. There are at least 400 references about peace. Jesus is called, "The Prince of Peace". God calls himself, "the God of peace" (Rom 15:33, 16:20, Phil. 4:9, 1 Th. 5:23, Heb. 13:20).

And yet, we see so little peace in this world. The reason there is so little peace in the world is because there is so little peace in our hearts. Being a peacemaker means we share the peace God has given us. We must remember, God doesn't give me peace just for me to enjoy, He wants me to pass it on. He wants us to help others find peace.

How can we be peacemakers?

- WE MUST HAVE PEACE

I can't be a peacemaker if I don't have peace in my own heart. True peace can only come from God. Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" (Jn. 14:27).

- WE MUST SURRENDER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

The only way we can bring peace is by the power of the Holy Spirit. He must do it through us. Therefore, we must surrender ourselves to him and to his work in us.

- WE MUST AVOID CONFLICT AND DIVISION

We need to decide, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I will not be caught up in conflict. Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). We need to determine that will not be a part of discord among the brethren. If they want to argue, they'll do it without me.

We need to pray for those who are in conflict (Ps. 34:14).

- WE MUST BE WILLING TO FORGIVE

When people will wrong us we must be willing to forgive and move on. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Mat. 5:44).

- WE MUST SHARE CHRIST TO THE LOST

We may not bring peace to the entire world, but we can bring peace to some individuals in the world by sharing Christ with them.

JESUS SAID THE WAY TO BE BLESSED, IS TO BE PERSECUTED

Mt 5:10-11 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

The bible tells the Christian to expect persecution. Jesus said He was bringing a message that would divide (Mat 10:34). He said a man's foe may be those of his own family (Mat 10:36).

The disciples certainly experienced persecution. Andrew was put to death on a cross, Peter was crucified upside down, James the less was stoned, James the greater was beheaded, Bartholomew was skinned alive, Matthew was stabbed to death, Thomas was stabbed with a spear, Luke was hanged on olive tree, Simon the zealot was crucified and sawed in half, Matthias was stoned to death and beheaded, Jude was beaten, crucified and shot with arrows, Mark was tied to horse and dragged to death, John was boiled in hot oil but survived, and Paul was beheaded by Nero. The early church experienced terrible persecution and millions of Christians have lost their lives since.

Notice, Jesus talked about being persecuted "*for righteousness sake*" (v.10). He was talking about those who are mistreated because they do right. The gospel message has always been ridiculed by the world (2 Tim.3:12). They are offended by anyone who would even suggest they are sinners and need to repent.

The world hates the godly because they are different. They hate us because we remind them of Jesus. He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (Jn.15:18). And yet, modern Christianity prides itself with being popular and accepted by the world. They go so far as to encourage the church to "fit in".

It's important to note, Jesus was talking about those who are talked about "*falsely*". There are times when we live in such a manner to where we deserve being ridiculed.

Mt 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

If we endure persecution patiently, we will receive a "*reward in heaven*". That should help us to keep going in spite of what we may face. One day, it will be worth it all.

What should we do if we are being persecuted for living a godly life?

- WE SHOULD REJOICE

Jesus told us to rejoice about it. The disciples rejoiced when they were persecuted (Acts 5:41).

- WE SHOULD KEEP LIVING RIGHT

We should do right anyway. We shouldn't let how they treat us effect how we live. Jesus didn't.

- WE SHOULD KEEP TELLING

Don't let persecution stop you from sharing the gospel (Acts 5:25).

JESUS TALKED TO HIS DISCIPLES ABOUT THEIR EFFECT ON THE WORLD 5:13-16

Mt 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Jesus likened his disciples to salt. Why did he use salt as illustration? Salt does some things that nothing else will do. Salt has some factors that should be true of believers.

- Salt seasons

Salt makes food taste better. Life without Jesus is dull and uninteresting. He adds spice to life. The Christian life is not boring. Living for the Lord is the only way to have real fun in this world. Believers should make this world a better place to live. We should not be grim and depressed. If anyone on earth should have joy, it is those who have Christ in their heart.

- Salt preserves

Salt was vital in Jesus' day. There was no refrigeration so they depended on salt to keep food from spoiling. This world is putrefied and getting worse. Christians are one of the reasons why this world is not worse than it is. Our influence does have an effect on this world. Our presence brings the blessings of God.

I am convinced one of the reasons God has not judged our country is because of the salt that still remains. When God was going to judge Sodom, He said He would spare the cities if there were ten righteous people living there. Unfortunately, ten righteous people could not be found and the cities were destroyed.

- Salt heals

Salt has a healing aspect to it. This world has the open wound of sin. But, the message of the Christian will heal that wound.

- Salt stings

Salt stings when it is applied to a wound. When a sinner hears the word, it stings. No one likes to hear they are a sinner and heading to hell. We should not be surprised if some have a negative reaction to our gospel message.

Jesus continued by commenting on salt that has lost its saltiness. What good is salt when it loses its "*savour*", As Jesus said, it is good for nothing. When salt lost its saltiness they would throw it in the streets where men and animals would walk on it.

This is a perfect picture of the testimony of a Christian. Our influence is vitally important. If we live in such a manner that we have lost our effectiveness (saltiness), men will cast our testimony aside and trample it. How many times have you heard a lost person degrading a saved person because they have not lived the Christian life? Their testimony had become useless, and even harmful, to the cause of Christ.

Mt 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Jesus likened his disciples to light.

The world is in darkness. There is a spiritual darkness spread across this entire world. The sad thing about it, men love darkness rather than light (Mt.5:19). Mankind loves darkness because darkness conceals their sin and the light reveals their sin (Mt.5:20).

The Christian is called to a life of light. Our lives are to display the light of God that is in our hearts. Jesus said, "*A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid*". The darker the world gets, the brighter our lights will appear.

Mt 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Jesus said, you don't light a candle and then hide the light. You put it to where it's light shines the brightest. You put a candle in a "*candlestick*". You place it where it is needed. That's what God does with his children. He puts us in a place of darkness that we might shine. It is not a fun place to be. But it is where He wants us and it is where we are needed. So, shine where He places you. Your light will make a difference in the darkness.

Mt 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Our light is our "*good*" and godly works. Our lifestyle is seen by those around us. It does matter how we live.

Some of those who see our light will come to the Father, be saved, and become lights themselves. Why, because they saw something different in us, and they knew it is God.

THE KING TALKED ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW 5:17-20

Mt 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

The Jews had spent their entire lives in the Old Testament system. They had been taught the Law since birth. Jesus wanted to make sure they understood that he had not come to do away with the Law. He had not come to destroy the law; he had come to fulfil it. The Old Testament pointed toward him. The Law was like a teacher bringing man to Christ (Gal.5:24).

Mt 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The Word of God will never pass away. Jesus was not doing away with, or even revising, the Word of God.

The "*jot*" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It could be likened to the "i" of the English alphabet.

The "*tittle*" is a small mark in a Hebrew letter. It could be likened to the dot over "i" in the English alphabet.

Jesus was saying, not even the smallest portion of the Word of God will ever pass away.

The Word will remain the same forever. It's such a blessing to know we have a bible we can trust. We don't have to worry, we don't have to wonder, we can rest assured, our bible is the very Word of God. We can believe it, we can live by it, we can raise our families according to its principles, and we can trust our eternity with it.

Mt 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

God says there will be consequences to those who violate the commandments found in His Word.

The Scribes and Pharisees made differences between what they considered the great, and the small commandments. Jesus made it clear that all commandments are great. No doubt, there are different consequences for different violations. Certainly, breaking the "thou shalt not kill" commandment would have a greater consequence than breaking the "thou shalt not steal" commandment. But, Jesus taught that all commandments come from God and are vitally important. Adam and Eve merely took a bite of a piece of fruit. Achan took a little bit of the spoils. Jonah refused to preach to one community. These acts don't appear too significant to us, but they are to God. He will not hold guiltless those who violate His Word (Ex. 20:7).

Jesus spoke about more than just breaking the commandments. He talked about those who teach others to do the same. Such is the nature of mankind. Doing wrong is never enough; they want to include others in their wrong actions. How many have been led into trouble by a friend who influenced them into doing something that violated the Word of God?

Jesus said, "*the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*". The disciples wanted the more important places in the kingdom of God. Jesus let them know their position in the kingdom would be determined by how they obey the commandments, and how they teach others.

In this verse, we discover how God determines greatness. He says those who are great are those who "do and teach" His commandments.

Mt 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The Scribes and Pharisees prided themselves with how close they lived to the requirements of the Law. They lived lives devoted to the Old Testament. They believed that was enough to gain favor with God.

Jesus was about to destroy their theory about righteousness. He said even the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was not good enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. This statement shocked everyone. If the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees wasn't good enough, what was?

JESUS CLARIFIED GOD'S LAW 5:21-48

Jesus explained how there is more to pleasing God than just outward deeds. God is concerned with our hearts. He wants us to do right but He wants us to do it for the right reason. He wants obedience from the heart. Jesus emphasized obedience from the heart. Doing what the Word of God says is important, but doing it for the right reason is even more important.

THE LAW AND MURDER AND ANGER 5:21-26

Mt 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

The "old time" Jesus spoke about was referring to the common interpretation of the Old Testament by the Jews. Jesus was trying to show them how what they believed was incomplete. Jesus did not disagree with the Word, but He did disagree with their interpretation of the Word. The Jewish rabbis taught there was no sin until the actual act was actually committed. Jesus said the sin starts in the heart. Impure and unholy thoughts lead to sin.

The Old Testament law said, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). And, anyone who killed would be in danger of the judgment. The "judgment" Jesus spoke of was the court system God told Moses to set up. This system determined the guilt, or innocence, of those accused of breaking the law (De.16:18). The law said a murderer was to be put to death (Lev. 24:21, Nu. 35:16).

Jesus said, "Ye have heard". They had been taught about judgment by the law since their youth.

Mt 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The Jews had heard they should not kill, but Jesus said "But I say unto you". He was about to expand on what the Old Testament had said. The Old Testament law dealt with the person's action, but Jesus was about to deal with the person's heart. He wanted them, and us, to realize, the sin of murder comes from a heart of anger. The anger is as much sin as murder is. That is why he said, "whosoever is angry with his brother". The Jews looked only at the outward act of sin, but Jesus dealt with the inward reason for sin. The Jews dealt with the actual act of murder, Jesus dealt with the anger that caused a person to commit murder.

God isn't concerned with just *what* we do, he is also concerned about *why* we do it. He doesn't want us to just *do* right, he wants us to *be* right.

Jesus said those that break the law, "shall be in danger of the judgment". As previously stated, the word "judgment" is speaking of a type of court system in place in that day. In most cities there was a court that was responsible to determine the guilt, or innocence, of someone accused of breaking the law. Anyone controlled by anger could do something that would cause them to be brought before their judicial system.

Jesus said, "whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca". The word "Raca" means, "worthless". Raca is a word that expresses great contempt. It comes from a word that means empty and vain.

When Jesus said, "shall be in danger of the council" he was speaking of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a court system much like our Supreme Court. They decided the worse of cases.

Jesus continued by saying, "but whosoever shall say, Fool". The word "Fool" was a word rarely used. It was a word that was used to describe a truly wicked person who was without God. It literally meant, a wicked idiot.

In verse 22, Jesus gave three degrees of anger. Each of these deal with anger in the heart. If that anger is not dealt with it will lead to worse sin, and ultimately bring about judgment.

One, He talked about a person who is angry with his brother without a cause. This person is in danger of doing something that would get him in trouble with the law.

Two, He talked about a person who says, "Raca" to his brother. The person who is angry enough to say this to his brother is angry enough to do something that would get him in trouble with the law.

Three, He talked about a person who says, "thou fool". This type of anger comes only from a person who is not saved. This person is in danger of going to hell. He will end up in hell if he doesn't recognize the condition of his heart, and turn to the Lord for forgiveness.

Jesus was trying to get the Jews to recognize the danger of sin in the heart. It should be dealt with quickly and severely. If it isn't, it will lead to punishment.

JESUS CONTINUED DEALING WITH ANGER ISSUES

Having shown that anger was a heart problem, Jesus directed his comments to those who were listening. He made it personal by saying, “*if thou*”. He let us know that anger must be dealt with severely. If it isn't, it will effect our fellowship with our Lord, and with others.

Mt 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

The word, “*Therefore*” connects this comment with what Jesus had just said in the previous verses about anger and inward sin.

If the person intending to worship the Lord realized there was a problem between him and another person, they were to leave their offering, be reconciled to their brother, and then come back and worship.

These verses deal with the person who remembers someone has an ought against them. Jesus dealt later with a person who has an ought with someone (Mat.18:15-17). In both cases, the one who recognizes there is a problem is the one who should initiate the reconciliation.

Are you angry with someone? Is someone angry with you? It's very important to settle these kinds of matters. When we realize there is a problem between us and another person, we are to go to them in a spirit of humility, and try to work it out.

This does not mean we have to discuss every little issue. Some problems are not important enough to discuss. We ought to be Christian enough to let some things go. A good rule of thumb, if you can't put the problem behind you, and forget it, you need to discuss it.

Mt 5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

In this verse, Jesus dealt with those who had been taken to court. He said to settle the problem before you go to court, if possible.

Paul deals with this type of issue (1 Cor. 6:6-7). Christians should be godly enough to work out their problems without going to an ungodly court system. We do not need to constantly demand our rights. We are not to avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). We are to forgive each other as Christ forgave us (Col. 3:13). We are to forgive those who have wronged us, even if it ends up costing us (1 Cor.6:7).

The problem Jesus was referring in this verse seems to be about an unpaid debt. He said, “*thou be cast into prison*”. This was probably referring to debtor's prison where a person could work to pay off what he had defrauded.

Jesus said, “*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him*”. This means they should try to talk it over with the other person and work out an arrangement to settle the issue.

The words, “*lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge*” mean, if they did not work it out between themselves, their adversary would probably take them to court, making matters even worse.

The words, “*and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison*”. mean, if it goes to court and you are found guilty, you will have to pay the price.

Mt 5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

If the issue isn't settled, and it goes to court, the guilty person will pay for his wrong.

THE LAW AND ADULTERY 5:27-30

Mt 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery;

Jesus dealt with the subject of adultery and referred to the seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14).

Mt 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Just as he had said when dealing with murder (v.21-22) he was saying sin always starts in the heart.

As previously stated, the Jewish rabbis taught there was no sin until the actual act was actually committed. Jesus said the sin starts in the heart. Impure and unholy thoughts lead to sin.

We must be careful about what we look at, listen to, or think about. Much of our sin is inward and the type that no one will know about. But, the Lord sees it all (1 Sam.16:7).

I wonder how much we hinder the work of the Lord in our lives by these inward sins. If the sin of adultery starts in the heart, so does jealousy, bitterness, envy, greed, covetousness, and many more. Jesus made it abundantly clear; we need to curb our inner appetites.

Mt 5:29-30 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Jesus used a graphic illustration to show how sin should be dealt with severely. The word “*offend*” means “to cause to stumble”. It has the idea of a stone placed in the path that a person may stumble over.

Was Jesus speaking literally? I don’t think so. Pulling the right eye out or cutting the right hand off would not deal with the sin in the heart that is causing the sin.

We must remember, Jesus was speaking to a crowd where some were saved, and some were lost. He was speaking to those who are lost in these two verses. He was trying to illustrate the importance of dealing severely with the sin that would keep a person from getting saved. For example, a sinner who loves to drink so much that he will not give it up in order to be saved. Jesus said it would be better for him to cut his hand off (so he could not hold the bottle) than to keep drinking and never get saved. Jesus was trying to point out the horror of hell and how nothing on earth is worth going there.

The salvation of the soul should be more important than anything on earth. Whatever it takes to bring about salvation will be worth it in end.

THE LAW AND DIVORCE 5:31-32

Jesus gave another example of how the Scribes and Pharisees had misinterpreted the Law. He dealt with their misunderstanding about divorce. The Old Testament made it clear, God is displeased with divorce. His will in marriage is for a man and woman to stay together for a lifetime. However, as we will see, God allowed divorce in certain cases.

Mt 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

Jesus spoke here of Old Testament scripture that said if any man who put away his wife he was to give her a writing of divorcement. He was referring to Deuteronomy 24:1. That verse says, “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some *uncleanness* in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house” (emphasis added).

Even in Moses’ day, there was much disagreement about what the word “uncleanness” in this verse meant. Some believed it meant only adultery. Others believed it meant anything the wife did that displeased the husband. Many men were abusing this scripture and divorcing their wives over the smallest of matters. If their wife did even the slightest thing that displeased them, they would get rid of them, and find another wife.

Because of this mistreatment, Moses commanded there be a writing of divorcement in order to protect these neglected and abused wives. As Jesus would explain later, God allowed divorce because of the hardness of the hearts of the men (Mt.19:8).

Mt 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

When Jesus came on the scene there was still the same disagreement. Some thought a divorce could be obtained for almost any reason. They went so far as to say a man could divorce his wife if she burnt his meal. Others thought divorce was allowed only when one of the partners had committed adultery.

Jesus dealt with the problem about the word “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 21:1. He said there was to be no divorce, except in the case of fornication. The word “fornication” means sexual immorality. Therefore, sexual unfaithfulness is the only reason for divorce. Divorce for any other reason than fornication, is adultery.

Jesus continued by saying, “*and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery*”. So, anyone who gets a divorce or anyone marries a person who has been divorced for any reason other than fornication commits adultery.

We must not forget, permission for divorce does not mean a divorce is required. The bible speaks clearly that every effort should be made to keep the family together before a divorce. It further teaches that both partners should seek reconciliation after a divorce (1 Cor. 7:11). The bible has much more to say about divorce and remarriage (Dt.24:1–4; Mt.19:3-9; Mk.10:2-5; Lk.16:18; Rom.7:1-3; 1 Cor.7:12–16).

THE LAW AND OATHS 5:33-37

Jesus dealt with the misunderstanding the Jews had in dealing with taking oaths. Even though Jesus’ exact words are not found in the Old Testament, the law did deal with oaths (Lev.19:12, Num.30:2, Deut.23:23).

Mt 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

Again, Jesus referred to what had been said in the Old Testament. To “*forswear*” means to swear falsely or to perjure oneself. It is referring to making a promise but not keeping it.

Mt 5:34-36 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

The Jews had developed an elaborate method of making oaths. They knew the third commandment said to not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain. So, they would swear by Jerusalem, the temple, the earth, or even by their own heads, instead of by the name of God. Jesus told them to stop doing this.

Jesus told them to not swear (or make an oath) at all. If they swore by the earth, it was God's foot stool. If they swore by Jerusalem, it was the city of God. Jesus was making the point that God owns everything. No matter what they swore by, it was connected to God.

Mt 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Jesus said to just tell the truth all the time and not don't swear by anything. If you say "yes", mean yes. If you say "no", mean no.

THE LAW AND RIGHTS OF RETALIATION 5:38-42

Jesus referred to the law dealing with retaliation (Ex.21:24; Lev. 24:20; Det.19:21).

Mt 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

The law dealing with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth dealt with the Old Testament judicial system. These rules were given to help judges determine their rulings. Those who caused harm to others were to receive a similar fate.

The Jews had carried this rule to an extreme that God never intended. They carried it into private conduct and used it in an attempt to gain personal revenge.

Mt 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Jesus' comments in regards to this subject caught his listeners by surprise. He said evil is not to be resisted. If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other cheek. This was unheard of by the Jews. To be stuck on the cheek was an insult to a Jew.

We see the meekness of Jesus in action. If someone does us wrong, that does not give us the right to do wrong in return. It is never right to do wrong, no matter what the circumstances.

We are living in a day when even Christians are demanding their rights. Somehow, many have gotten the idea that we must stand up for ourselves. They go so far as to say "if I don't stand up for myself, who will?" The simple answer is, God will. Our heavenly Father watches over us and He knows what we are going through. Paul gives us more insight on this subject (Rom.12:18-21). He said we are to not avenge ourselves, but to trust God. God said vengeance is His, and He will repay. We are to overcome evil with good.

Herein we find the answer to Jesus' teaching in these verses. We reach the ungodly by being godly. We'll never win them by being like them. If one person gets saved as a result of our sacrifice, it will be worth it all.

These verses tell us a lot about ourselves. Our natural tendency is to strike back, get even, and make them hurt like they did us. Jesus said we are to resist that natural tendency. After all, we are supposed to be like him. There is no greater example of this principle than the Lord himself. He did not fight back or retaliate (Isa. 53:6).

This is dealing with personal revenge and does not mean we should not defend our family or our country. God expects us to take a stand when our family is in danger.

Jesus continued this thought in the next verse by dealing with someone who may be sued in court.

Mt 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

The "coat", also called a tunic, was the garment that went under the outer clothing. The "cloke" was the more expensive garment worn on the outside. In the case of lawsuits, the Law allowed a tunic to be taken as a pledge for an unpaid loan. However, taking a cloak (coat) was forbidden because it would be needed during cold weather (Ex.22:26-27). Jesus told his disciples to go further than the law required and give their cloke to the person who was taking them to court.

Once again, Jesus is telling us to go the extra mile. Our testimony should be more important than if we are treated fairly. There are things that should be more important than our possessions. Being a godly example is more valuable than anything we own.

Also, Jesus was trying to help us understand that we can trust the Father. We can trust Him not only when things are going well, we can trust Him when everything seems to be going wrong. He can replace our loss.

Mt 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

In Jesus' day, the Jews were under to authority of the Roman government. A roman could force a private citizen to carry his load.

One example of this was when the Roman soldier compelled Simon to carry Jesus' cross (Mt. 27:32). Jesus said if they compel you to carry their load for a mile, carry it two.

Our spirituality will be evident by how we treat others. What would lost people think if Christians always went the second mile? What if the Christian business owner went overboard to be fair to their customers? What if the Christian homeowner paid their bills before they came due? What if the Christian worker did more than their boss expected? We may suffer some but the results of our godly testimony would make it all worthwhile.

Mt 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Jesus was dealing with love and loans in this verse. He said we should be free with our giving.

Most of the beggars of that day, unlike many today, were unable to provide for themselves. Because of some unavoidable circumstance they had been forced to beg. Jesus said to give freely to these type of people.

He was not suggesting we contribute to a person's laziness. The person who is physically able to provide for himself and his family is worse than an infidel if he does not (1 Tim.5:8). Those who will not work when they are able should be left to go hungry (2 Th.3:10).

Those who ask to "*borrow*" of us should not be denied if it is within our ability to assist them. However, it would be wise to look at such a loan as a gift. In this way, we will not be upset if they do not pay us back.

Once again, we are taught to not put money, or things, before our testimony.

THE LAW AND LOVE 5:43-48

Mt 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

The words, "*love thy neighbor*" summarize the second half of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:13-17). But, the Jews had corrupted the Law, by adding "*and hate your enemy*" to their teaching. The law said nothing about hating your enemy.

The Jews divided all of mankind into two groups. They considered everyone either a friend, or an enemy. Jesus amazed them by saying they were to love their enemies. This was so foreign to what they had been taught.

Mt 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Anyone can do good to those who treat them right. But, Jesus said we should love those who mistreat us.

The word, "*love*" in this verse is the same as in John 3:16. It is the type of love God has for mankind.

We usually view love as an emotion. We feel a certain way about someone. But, this love is much more than an emotion or how we feel about someone. It deals more with what we do instead of how we feel. We love our enemies by treating them right and doing good to them.

Why should God's children live this way? Jesus tells us in the next verse, because that is how God lives.

Mt 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Those who love their enemies are proving they are "*the children*" of the Father, and have His love in their heart. Our love for others is one proof of our salvation (Jn.13:35; 1 Jn.3:14).

God's love is not dependent upon the actions of the ones He loves. He causes the sun to rise "*on the evil*" as well as the good. He sends rain to the just "*and the unjust*". God is good to those who are not good to Him.

We must not misunderstand, these verses are not suggesting God pours His best blessings on those who refuse to obey Him. He is merciful and treats all people better than they deserve, but He also withholds his true touch and blessings from those who walk in rebellion to His will.

Mt 5:46-47 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

If we love only those who love us, what is so special about that? Jesus said, "*even the publicans do the same*". A publican was a tax collector. They were some of the most wicked and hated people on earth. They overcharged the people for their taxes and kept part for themselves. Even though they were wicked and selfish, they loved those who loved them.

Mt 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus summarizes this part of his message by telling his disciples to be perfect. If we wonder how we should live, we find it here. We should do as our heavenly Father does.

The word "*perfect*" means "complete". It literally means to have all the parts. Originally, this word was used when speaking of a machine having all of its parts. We need to have all our spiritual parts. Like Paul said, none of us have reached this goal, but we should not quit trying (Phil.3:12).

We must never become satisfied with our spiritual condition. Satisfaction is the Christian's worst enemy. When we think we have arrived and fail to see our need for improvement, we are playing into the devil's hand. The Holy Spirit lives in us and will enable us to walk in a way that will please our Father.

The word "perfect" does not mean sinless perfection. We will battle our flesh as long as we are in these sin cursed bodies (Mt.6:12; Rom.7:15; Gal.5:17; Phil.3:12; Jam.3:2; 1 Jn.1:8).

JESUS DEALT WITH REWARDS Chapter 6

In this chapter Jesus' teaching should cause us to search our motives. We must guard against doing what we do to be seen of men. Our good deeds are more about our relationship with God than our relationship with mankind. All our works should be done for the Lord.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT GIVING 6:1-4

Mt 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus dealt with "alms". Alms is a word that has the idea of doing a good deed. In this context it means to give financially. The words, "take heed" have the idea of "paying attention". We should examine our hearts closely to determine our motives for why we give. It matters *what* we give, but it also matters *why* we give.

We must not overlook what Jesus was saying here. He said if we give to be seen of men we will receive no reward from the Lord. We are rewarded for our service for the Lord. God rewards us here and now when we do His will. But, we will also be rewarded later when we stand before the Lord (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

The person who does what they do to be seen of men forfeits the reward here and now, and also the reward they could have received when they stand before the Lord (1 Cor. 3:15). How disappointed we when we see our works burn up, and realize we have lost rewards we could have received.

Mt 6:2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Jesus, first dealt with the wrong way to do good deeds. They should not be done to be seen of man. The desire to be recognized by man is an evil vice. If our conduct is controlled by what people think about us, we will never please God.

Sounding a "trumpet" was a way of making a thing known publicly. Tradition tells us the Pharisees would go to a busy street and sound a trumpet before they gave money to the poor. They claimed the trumpet was simply a signal to alert the poor of their gift, but it clearly was a way to advertise their giving.

Jesus said "they have their reward". They did what they did to be seen of men, men saw what they did, so they received no further reward. They got what they wanted and that's all they would get.

The word "hypocrites" was a word used for actors in a play. They pretended to be someone they were not. Those who give to be seen of men are pretending to care for others. The truth is, their desire to have the applause of man proves they only care for themselves.

God not only does not reward hypocrisy, He judges it (Mt.23:13).

Mt 6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

This is a proverbial expression that speaks of a deed being done in secret.

Mt 6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Now, in this verse, Jesus dealt with the right way to do our good deeds.

The Lord sees all we do. He will reward us if we do the right thing for the right reason.

The word "reward" means to "repay" or "restore". It means to give away. In other words, God will give back to those who give to others for the right reasons. We cannot out give God. We should not give just to get His reward, but He does give back to those who will trust and obey Him in their giving (Lk. 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6).

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT PRAYER 6:5-15

As with giving, we are taught to pray without people in mind. We are talking to God and not to man.

Mt 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

The Scribes and Pharisees loved to pray long and loud. Jesus said, "they have their reward". They prayed to be heard of men, men heard them, so they have what they wanted. This means God will not answer their prayers.

Mt 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Jesus turned his attention to the disciples by saying, "when thou prayest". Jesus taught us how we should pray. Prayer should be a vital part of the life of every Christian. We should find a place where we can get away (*thy closet*). We should shut the world out (*shut thy door*). We should realize we are talking to our heavenly Father (*pray to thy Father*). We should expect an answer (*shall reward thee openly*).

Mt 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Jesus warned against vain repetitions. He was talking about thoughtlessly repeating the same words as though that will convince God to answer. God is not manipulated by our words.

This doesn't mean we are to never pray the same prayer more than once. Jesus taught that we should keep asking until the answer comes (Mat.7:7-8).

Mt 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Jesus gave an example that we can follow to aid us in praying rightly. This has been incorrectly called, the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer is in John 17. This could be called, The Lord's model prayer.

Our Father knows how to answer our prayer because He knows what things we "*have need of*". He knows what is best for us. He knows when it is best to say "no". He knows what we need "*before*" we ask. I am so glad we have a God who knows what we need and will answer accordingly.

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FATHER "Our Father"

Mt 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Our prayer should begin with us recognizing the fact that we are talking to "*Our Father*". Because of Jesus, we have a right to come into the presence of the Father and ask of Him (Rom.5:2; Eph.3:12).

Those who are saved can go to God because He is their Father. We can call him daddy (Gal. 4:6-7). He understands us like a parent understands their child. He knows we are weak, He knows we are helpless. We should go to Him as a little child goes to their father when they need something.

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FOCUS "Hallowed be thy name"

When we pray, we should be focused on our Father. The phrase "*Hallowed be thy name*" reminds us that our God is holy. Therefore, we know He will answer rightly. He is not like an old grandpa who can be persuaded by his little grandchild's request. I am glad we have a God who will always do right. He will not be changed, even by my whining to Him.

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FAITH "Thy kingdom come"

The words, "*Thy kingdom come*", speak of a future event. We look by faith to that which is ahead. In like fashion, we should pray with faith, expecting the answer to come. Faith is a vital part of prayer. Faith moves God. He is the God of heaven and earth, and He is in control of all things. We are approaching One who is able. He is bigger than our problem (Mt. 21:22; Mk. 9:23; Mk. 11:24).

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FAITHFULNESS "Thy will be done"

The words, "*Thy will be done*", is a statement of submission. It reminds me of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. He submitting Himself and His desire to the Father's will (Mat.26:39). A great part of our prayer should be submission. We have our requests, and we have our desires, but what He wants should be more important. We should be willing to give up our desires for His will.

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FOOD "Give us this day our daily bread"

He wants us to ask Him to meet our daily needs. Even the food on our table comes from Him.

Notice Jesus admonishes us to pray for our "*daily bread*". This should remind us how we need Him constantly. It should also remind us how He will provide in his time. Asking for daily food suggests the need is urgent. There may be times when it seems like He isn't hearing us. But, at the right time, He will provide. Our God is never late, but He is never early either.

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FAILURES "And forgive us our debts"

The word, "*debts*" means, "something owed". In this context it is referring to our transgressions against God, and others (cf. verses 14-15).

Our time of prayer is a wonderful opportunity for the Lord to show us any failures in our lives. This is why Jesus admonished us to ask God to "*forgive us our debts*" when we are praying. We should confess these failures immediately. Unconfessed sin will hinder our prayer (Pro.2:13; 28:9; Isa.1:15).

Sin will keep us from praying rightly. We may preach, teach, sing and even witness through a dirty heart, but we will never pray through a sinful heart.

JESUS TAUGHT US US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FORGIVENESS "as we forgive our debtors"

The Jews believed no man should go to bed at night without forgiving those who had offended them. Jesus said we should ask the Lord to help us to "*forgive our debtors*". Refusing to forgive those who wrong us will hinder our prayers. Jesus said we should forgive even if someone wrongs us over and over (Mt.18:21-22). We should forgive others because God forgave us (Eph. 4:32).

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FELLOWSHIP "And lead us not into temptation"

This reminds us how the Lord wants to lead us. The Christian life is a walk with God. The devil will set traps in our paths. We should ask the Lord to direct our lives in such a manner to where we don't fall into these traps. We should ask God to protect us from anything or anyone who would do us harm (Mt 26:41).

JESUS TAUGHT US....PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR FINISH

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen"

Jesus' model prayer ends with a benediction that expresses the glory of the final outcome in his kingdom.

This prayer ends on a mountain top. It acknowledges the power and glory of our God. Our prayer should take us to the mountain tops of faith. The content of our prayer should lead us to a full expectation of His answer. We should close our prayers in the attitude of victory.

It would do us well to recognize how little Jesus' model prayer deals with asking. There are only three requests in the prayer. First, for our daily needs, second, for our forgiveness, and third, that God lead us.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT FASTING 6:16-18

Mt 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

To fast is when a person goes without food for a determined period of time. Fasting was a common practice of the Jews. They observed public fasts. These were fasts when everyone participated, like the Day of Atonement (Lev.16:31). They also observed private fasts. These were fasts when an individual would fast on their own. Many Jews fasted on Monday and Thursday.

Fasting was observed for several different reasons.

To get closer to the Lord (Ps.35:15). In times of heartache (1 Sam.31:13). To get direction from the Lord (Dan.9:3). To be set free of sin (Isa.58:6). When prayers hadn't been answered (Mt.17:21). When sending out servants (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23). To help someone serve the Lord (Ezra 8:21-22). When the enemy was attacking (II Chr.20:1-3). When repenting and seeking God's favor (Ezra 9:5-8).

Notice Jesus dealt with fasting immediately after he dealt with prayer. Prayer and fasting go together.

Fasting helps us put the spiritual before the physical. It means, we are willing to do without the food our bodies need in order to receive a spiritual benefit.

Mt 6:17-18 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

As with giving and praying, we should fast unto the Lord, and not to be seen of men.

Some during Jesus' day would make it obvious they were fasting. They wanted to appear spiritual. Jesus said the person who is fasting is to wash and dress as usual so their fasting won't be obvious. The Father will reward those who fast in secret.

Unfortunately, very few fast in our day. Sacrificing the physical desires and needs is difficult, but the spiritual blessings will be well worth the physical discomfort.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT TRUE TREASURES 6:19-24

Jesus told us where to not lay up our treasures on earth

Mt 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Jesus said laying up treasures on earth is unwise. He gave two reasons for his statement.

One, everything we have on earth will decay.

So much of what we treasure is destroyed by "*moth and rust*". Clothing and garments were a way to display wealth in Jesus' day. But, their garments were very susceptible to moths. It was unwise to store up clothing that would be destroyed quickly. What wasn't eaten by moths will rust or decay in some way. No matter how well we build, or what materials we use, all things will decay.

Two, everything we store on earth is vulnerable to thieves. No matter how secure we think our belongings are, there is a thief who is able to break in and steal them. Whether we store our riches in the most secure bank on earth, or under our mattress, they are not safe.

The things of this earth will not satisfy, and will not last. The love of money and things destroys (1 Tim. 6:10). We should learn how to be content with what the Lord gives us (Heb. 13:5).

Mt 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Jesus told us where to lay up our treasures. We lay up "treasures in heaven" by obeying God on earth. By serving the Lord faithfully we are laying up treasures in heaven. Even the smallest deed done in obedience to the Lord will be rewarded (Mt.10:42).

All the things we store on earth, we will leave behind. That which we store in heaven, we will enjoy forever. Sacrificing and serving the Lord faithfully now is a wise investment. The rewards should not be our primary reason for doing the Lord's will but they can be an incentive to encourage us to do what we should. We'll be glad we did His will when we stand before Him.

Jesus was not implying that all riches are evil, or that no one should be rich. Many of God's choice servants were rich (Job, Abraham, Solomon, David, and Philemon). It is not wrong to have riches, as long as the riches do not have us. Money can be used for the glory of God. It takes money to operate churches, send missionaries, and keep the work of God active.

Mt 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Our "treasure" is what we care about. It is that which we love. Where our treasure is, our heart will be. If our treasure is wrapped up in the things of heaven, our heart will be involved with things of heaven. If our treasure is wrapped up in things of the earth, our heart will be involved with things of the earth.

What we love will be demonstrated by how we live. If we love the things of heaven, it will be evident by how we live. If we love the things of the earth, it also will be evident by how we live.

How sad it would be to live for things that will not last past the grave. One of the devil's most convincing lies is we would be happy if we were rich. How many have fallen for this lie and have been disappointed. No matter how much we get, it is never enough. The truth is, riches do not satisfy, riches won't make us happy, and the more we get, the more we want.

The only way to find true happiness is to be saved and give our all to the Lord. Then, and only then, we will experience real happiness.

Mt 6:22-23 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

In these verses, Jesus talked about a "single eye" and an "evil eye". He was dealing with what we are looking at. How we view things will affect our entire life.

The person with the "single eye" is the person who is focused on one thing, and only one thing. This is the person who has their focus on the things of heaven.

The person with the "evil eye" is the person who is focused on the many things of this world.

What Jesus said here is connected to what he said in the previous verses. He just warned us about laying up treasures in heaven and not overly desiring the things of this world.

He was trying to get us to realize, if we keep our focus on the things of heaven, we will be able to perceive what is truly valuable. If we keep our focus on the many things of this world, our perception will be flawed.

Jesus said, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness". If our spiritual vision is so flawed that the things of this life appear more valuable than the things of heaven, we are truly living in darkness. We are like a man whose vision is blurred. He cannot trust what he *thinks* he is seeing.

Mt 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus continued his instructions about laying up treasures in heaven. Here, he was saying, if we are going to lay up treasures in heaven, we cannot allow the things of the world to control our lives. We must make sure we love that which is eternal as opposed to that which is temporary.

The word "serve" means to "be a slave to". The word, "masters" means "controller". It is speaking of one who is totally in control of another. This speaks not of an occasional service, but a complete and total surrender to.

We cannot have "two masters". We can totally serve only one at a time.

The word, "mammon" means "wealth". In this context it is used to describe anything connected to the world. The person who desires only the things of the world will not obey God, and does not love God

Notice, Jesus mentioned only "hate" and "love". There is no middle ground. We cannot love the Lord without hating the world. Nor can we love the world without hating the Lord. An amazing amount of people try to divide themselves between God and the world.

As Jesus made abundantly clear, that is impossible. The godly life and the worldly life at complete opposites. We can no more live for both than we can go north and south at the same time.

Common sense tells us we cannot have two masters. We cannot be totally controlled by two powers. So, the question is simple, who will be our master, who will control us? We must decide whom we will serve. Joshua's message still rings true today, "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Jos 24:15).

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT WORRYING 6:25-34

Mt 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

The words "Take no thought" mean "do not be anxious" or, "do not worry". The Word of God admonishes us to worry about nothing, but to pray about everything (Phil.4:6). We do not have to worry because we can trust God. What is it in our lives that our God cannot handle? We can say with the disciples, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him" (cf. Lk. 18:27; Phil. 4:19).

Jesus told us to not worry even when the need is serious. He talked about "*what ye shall eat*", and "*what ye shall drink*", and "*what ye shall put on*". Food, drink, and clothing are vitally important. We cannot live without these items. And still, Jesus said we are not to worry, even about these very serious matters.

Jesus said, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment". God gave us life. If He gave us life, will He not give us what we need to sustain life? God gave us our bodies. If He gave us our bodies, will He not give us what our bodies need? If He gave us the more important, He certainly will give us the less important.

WE CAN TRUST GOD BECAUSE THE BIBLE REFERS TO US AS SHEEP

Sheep are unable to care for themselves, but the shepherd took care of them. Jesus is our shepherd, so there is no reason for us to worry.

WE CAN TRUST GOD BECAUSE THE BIBLE REFERS TO US AS SONS

A good father takes care of his children. Since God is our Father, we can depend on Him. Like a small child depends on their daddy, we can depend on our heavenly Father to supply our every need.

WE CAN TRUST GOD BECAUSE THE BIBLE REFERS TO US AS SOLDIERS

All the soldier's needs are provided by the country they are fighting for. They do not have to sell lemonade in order to raise the money to buy their guns, bullets and uniforms. The country they represent provides it all.

In like fashion, we can trust our God to supply our every need. How big is your God? Our view of God is so important. If we see God as He is, we will never worry again. Why would we worry when our God is the One who has the power to speak the universe into existence?

Mt 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Jesus gave an example of how birds trust God to meet their needs. They do not fret or become anxious; they do not gather food in barns because they are afraid there won't be anything to eat tomorrow. They simply go out and find what God provides. And, they do it every day.

The words, "*Are ye not much better than they*" remind us we are much more important to God than the birds. If the birds can simply trust God, surely we can do the same.

Feeding all the birds on earth is not a small task. They estimate there are as many as 400 billion birds on earth. But, God feeds them every day. If He takes care of His creation, He will take care of us.

Mt 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Jesus mentioned "*taking thought*". This reminds us how important our thought life is. Thinking right is vitally important to our spiritual walk (Pro. 23:7).

When Jesus referred here to, "*taking thought*", He was talking about us worrying.

Our thoughts are powerful, but they are limited. All the thoughts we can muster will not add "*one cubit*" to our stature. A "*cubit*" was the distance from a man's elbow to the end of his longest finger. Many times the cubit is rounded off to 18 inches. Jesus' point was, all our worry will not change anything.

Mt 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Now, Jesus uses the lilies of the field as an example to prove how we can trust God to provide our clothing.

He says, "*why take ye thought for raiment*". Think of all the time, effort, and money that go into what we wear.

We are to "*consider*" these things. The word "consider" means "to note carefully". When we consider how God cares for all his creation, it should give us peace.

Are you worried about something today? May the Lord reveal his love and his power to you. You can rest assured, he is aware of your need, and he will provide in the right way, and at the right time.

One more thought comes to mind as I read these verses. All of creation is being taken care of by the architect who made it. God is at this moment, controlling the entire universe. God did not wind it up and is letting it run. God is at this exact moment, holding it together (Col. 1:17).

Mt 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Solomon was probably the richest man who has ever lived. To say the least, his garments were of the best quality. Yet, the garments of Solomon were nothing compared to the little flowers God places in the fields. God's simplest is much better than man's best.

Mt 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

They cooked in ovens made of clay or brick. In order to get a fire started quickly they would cut grass, let it dry, and use it to start the fire. Even though the grass was temporary, God clothed it with beautiful flowers.

If God clothes the grass which is temporary, will he not clothe we who are eternal?

Mt 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Jesus summarized his point once again by saying "take no thought". As previously stated, our thoughts are so important. Our thoughts can be good or bad, they can be right or wrong, and they can be helpful or harmful.

We should not worry about what we will eat, drink, or wear. We have a Father who will provide all we need. When the devil attacks us with his lies, we need to listen to the Spirit of God.

Mt 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

A Gentile was anyone who was not a Jew. They were those without the law. The Jews saw Gentiles as people without God. Jesus said when we worry we are acting like a person without God.

These words in no way advocate laziness. Jesus certainly was not implying that we should not work to provide for ourselves, and our families. In fact, God provides for our needs through our work. God deals harshly with those who are too lazy to work (Ec.3:13; Pro.19:15; 2 Th.3:10).

Our Father knows. He is not in the dark about what we need.

Mt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The kingdom of God is the same as the kingdom of heaven (see introduction to this study).

Jesus made an appeal that we put first things first. He said we should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. If we'll put Him first, He will take care of "all these things". When we keep our focus on the spiritual, God will take care of the material. When we follow the Lord and do His will, He will always provide what we need.

It would do us well to note, we cannot experience His kingdom without seeking His righteousness. We want the glory of His blessing without having to live right. This will never happen.

Mt 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

We are not to worry about tomorrow. The words, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof", mean each day has its own problems. There is no need to worry about tomorrow before it arrives because there is enough trouble in dealing with today's problems.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT JUDGING 7:1-6

Mt 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

These verses have been greatly misunderstood. The word "judge" means "to decide, to try, or to condemn". It has the idea of judging someone's motives. But, we cannot know the reason people do what they do. We can see only *what* they do, not *why* they do what they do.

Jesus was not saying that it is always wrong to judge. That's what the world believes. They'll talk about someone who is in the depths of sin and say something like, "well, we don't have the right to judge".

Jesus warned against judging by appearance. He said we are to judge rightly. He said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN JUDGING IS RIGHT

We must judge in order to determine how we will live.

- The judge on the bench must judge the criminal and pass the appropriate sentence (Rom.13:1-4).
- We must judge what is right or wrong (Josh.24:15)

- The church officers must judge when exercising church discipline (1 Cor.5:4-7).
- We must judge to determine who we should witness to (Mt.7:6).
- We must judge what is true or false doctrine (2 Cor.11:4; 1 Jn.4:1).

Jesus will say to beware of false prophets in verse 15 of this chapter. We must judge the message in order to determine if it's truth or error.

- We must judge in order to determine if a person is a heretic (Titus 3:10).

The bible should be our measuring rod when we are trying to discern if someone is preaching the truth. We can rightly judge when we use the bible as our guide.

- We must judge to determine who we will associate with.

We should not be best friends with those who deny the truth or live ungodly (1 Cor.5:9; 2 Th.3:6,14-15).

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN JUDGING IS WRONG

Why did Jesus tell us to not judge?

- We don't know the heart of others

As previously stated, these verses are talking about us judging the motives of others. We cannot know another person's motives because we do not know their hearts.

- We usually judge out of pride

Too many times, we are the Pharisee who thought he was better than others (Lk.18:11). It is easy to see the faults of others, but miss our own faults (Rom.2:3).

- God is the only one who is able and worthy to judge

We are not the Holy Spirit. We are to leave judging to him (Gen.18:25; Isa.33:22; Ps.50:6; 75:7; 2 Cor.5:10; Rev.20:12)

Mt 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

We should judge others by the standards we would want to be judged by. If we are harsh in our judgment of others, it will affect how they treat us. Our harsh judgment will cause others to judge us harshly. People avoid those who are constantly judgmental and critical. No one likes to be around a critic.

Mt 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Jesus gave an illustration of inappropriate judging. It is talking about those who see the faults of others but are blind to their own.

The "mote" was something like a small splinter. The "beam" was like a large slab of wood.

Mt 7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

The person with the beam in his eye cannot see clearly to help the person with the splinter.

Mt 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

These verses tell us, we all have problems with our flesh. One man had a splinter and one had a beam, but they both had problems that needed to be dealt with.

These verses tell us, we should examine ourselves closely. We don't know our own heart. The bible says our hearts are desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). We should ask God to show us ourselves.

These verses tell us, the Lord is willing to help us with our faults.

These verses tell us, we should be concerned about others. Jesus wasn't saying we should not be concerned about others, but He was saying we shouldn't be critical of others.

These verses tell us, we can be a help to others. The man with the beam could be a help, once he removed the beam.

Mt 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Jesus dealt with how we are to handle the gospel when dealing with those who hate the truth. He spoke about "that which is holy". He was talking about the gospel message. We should realize how the things of God are holy. We dare not take them lightly, or handle them carelessly.

The gospel is to be preached to every creature (Mk. 16:15). However, there are people who have hardened their hearts. They ridicule, mock and oppose the message that provides their only hope of escaping hell. The gospel is to all (Mk. 16:15). It has the power to save anyone who will accept it (Rom. 1:16). But, God will not force it on anyone. God Himself will quit speaking to certain people (Rom. 1:27).

Jesus called this message “*pearls*”. Like a pearl, the gospel message is precious. But, hogs see no value in pearls. They will trample them in the mud, just as they would a stone. In like fashion, there are people who see no value in the gospel message. They think nothing of ridiculing it.

It is easy to see why Jesus used a pearl as an example of the gospel message. A pearl is developed through pain. In like fashion, the gospel came through the pain of the cross.

Jesus described what can happen when we try to give the message to those who hate it. He said, “*lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you*”. Those who hate the gospel, hate those who deliver it. Millions of Christians have lost their lives because they tried to give the message to a lost world.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT PRAYER 7:7-11

Mt 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Jesus spoke about how we are to deal with our needs. We are to ask God. Prayer is the way whereby, God gives us what we are in need of.

We “*ask*” for that which we need. We “*seek*” for that which we have lost. We “*knock*” in order to gain entrance.

Implied in the words is the fact that we are asking for that which is the Lord’s will. We certainly cannot expect God to give us that which would be against His nature or His plan.

There are times when God answers our prayer quickly (Isa. 65:24). However, there are times when it seems like the answer will never come.

Why does God delay?

- We haven’t really asked

So many times we look at prayer as our wish list. We just hope things will work out. But, we haven’t really gotten serious and asked God specifically to do what we desire.

- We aren’t asking in faith

God is moved by our faith (Mt.21:22; Jam.1:6; 1Jn.5:14).

- We have sin in our lives

Sin hinders our prayer. God refuses to answer so we will see our sin, and get rid of it.

- God wants us to draw closer to him

We must be honest; it is so easy to neglect prayer when all our needs are met. God will withhold the answer in order draw us closer to Him.

- We haven’t been thankful for the answer of past prayer

So many times, God answers our prayer, and we forget to thank him. I believe there are times when God delays answering simply because He wants us to appreciate what He has already done.

- God wants to increase our faith

It is easy to doubt when the answer does not come quickly. But, God wants to give us assurance even when the answer has not yet come. How wonderful it is to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit assuring us that the Lord will hear and answer.

- That we might experience God’s grace

We will never know God’s grace until we face difficulty. There are times when God waits to answer our prayer in order that we might have to depend on His grace to get us through what we are facing.

- The devil may be fighting

Daniel prayed but the answer did not immediately because the devil was opposing Michael (Dan. 10:12-13).

Mt 7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Jesus assured those who continue to ask, that it shall be given, and those who continue to seek, they shall find, and those who continue to knock, it shall be opened unto them. We shall receive if we keep asking.

Mt 7:9-10 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

No father would give a stone or snake to his hungry son.

Mt 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

The word, "evil" means, "wicked" or "bad". It has the idea of being depraved. His point is simple, if we who are depraved give good things to our children, will not our good Father give good things to us when we ask Him? So, the implication is, do not stop asking. Your heavenly Father loves you and wants what is best for you. Keep asking, keep trusting, and keep expecting.

I wonder how many times we have quit praying too early. I wonder how many times God was just about to answer our prayers, but we stopped asking. We should keep asking until God answers, or until He tells us to quit asking (Rom. 12:12; Lk.18:1; 1 Th. 5:17).

THE GOLDEN RULE 7:12

Mt 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

These words are commonly called the Golden Rule. We should treat others the way we would want to be treated. Put yourself in their shoes. How different would this world be if we all followed this one simple rule?

It is amazing how different a situation looks when it's us going through it. It is easy to be critical when it is someone else going through it.

The "*law and the prophets*" is a term used for the Old Testament. Treating others as we would want them to treat us displays the love for others taught in the Old Testament (Mt. 22:37).

So much of the bible deals with how we are to treat others (Mt.5:44; Jn.7:24; 15:12; Rom.12:10; 13:10; Gal.5:14; Eph.4:32; Phil.2:24; Heb.13:2). So many of our problems come from not treating each other as the bible teaches. If followed, this one rule would end all murder, lying, cheating, adultery, stealing, slander, selfishness, impatience, gossip and any other sin against man. Jesus was a walking example of this rule. He always did that which was best for those he came in contact with.

THE TWO GATES 7:13-14

Mt 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Jesus talked about two gates and two ways (paths). A gate is an entry way.

There are only two gates. One leads to life and the other leads to destruction. The Old Testament also speaks of the two ways (Dt.30:19; Jer.21:8).

The gate leading to life is "*strait*". The word "*strait*" means "narrow".

Jesus called it narrow because there is no room for discussion about this gate. He said, "I am *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life: no man cometh unto the father, *but by me*" (Jn.14:6 emphasis added). He said he was the way to heaven, not one of many ways. Anyone claiming to have another way is wrong. A lot of people have problems with there being one way. But, the facts about it will never change.

Jesus called it narrow because only one person can go through at a time. We get saved individually. Salvation is not something that we can do as a group. Several people may get saved at the same time, but they will be saved as individuals.

Jesus called it narrow because we cannot take anything with us. We must lay pride and sin aside in order to pass through this gate. We must be willing to give up the world to pass through this gate.

The gate leading to destruction is "*wide*" (broad). This speaks of anything other than the gospel. It would include good works, false religions, and anything else that promises the way to heaven. A lot of people believe there are many ways to heaven. Jesus did not agree.

Jesus said we should "*enter*" the gate that leads to life. We enter by faith. The bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" (Eph.2:8). We cannot enter this gate by our works. Our good deeds are no good in the eyes of God (Isa.64:6; Eph 2:8-9). No one will brag in heaven about what all they did to get there.

These words tell us there is something beyond this world. Death is not the end. They also tell us there are only two places to go. There is a heaven, and there is a hell. We must prepare now for what's ahead. If you have never repented of your sin and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please do it right now. Do not delay another second, for you have no promise of tomorrow.

JESUS WARNED ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS 7:15-20

Mt 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

God spoke through prophets like He speaks through preachers today. But, the devil also has prophets who speak for him. These are called false prophets because they do not speak the truth.

The devil has always been a liar and a deceiver. He is the world's greatest counterfeiter. He is an expert at making a fake look like the genuine. He controls people by making them think they are getting something real.

The word "*beware*" means "to be cautious". We must be careful who we listen to. We are blessed to have the completed bible that we can use to determine if what we are hearing is true.

Jesus had just warned his disciples about a path that leads to destruction. Now, he was warning them about those who try to get people to follow that path. They say the wide way is a good way.

These false prophets come in "*sheep's clothing*". They pretend to be something they aren't. They come as gentle sheep, but they are actually ravenous wolves. Many times, these false prophets do not just deceive others, but they are deceived themselves. They have believed the devil's lies.

It is easy to see the reason why Jesus warned about these false prophets. What could be worse than to believe a lie, and to convince others the lie is the truth?

Mt 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

To "*know them*" means we will be able to discern what they really are. You can tell what type of person they are by the fruit they bear. We determine what type a tree is not by its leaves, bark, or blossoms, but by its fruit.

In time, the truth about these deceivers will surface. Their wicked practices will reveal their true nature.

You do not gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles. In like fashion, we cannot gather spiritual benefits from an ungodly source. Their hearts are not right, and their message is wrong. How could any good come from this?

Mt 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

The "*good tree*" is an illustration of a person with a good (godly) heart. The "*corrupt tree*" is an illustration of a person with an evil heart. Since the false prophet has a corrupt heart, his message will be corrupt.

Mt 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

What the heart is, the life will be. A tree will produce fruit according to what type of tree it is. It cannot do otherwise. A godly person will live a godly life, and an ungodly person will live an ungodly life.

Mt 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

In Jesus' day, trees were used for beauty but they were mostly used for the fruit they bore. A tree that would not bear was cut down and replaced.

The end of the false prophet is hell. Unfortunately, those who believe their message will go there also. The message of the false prophet sends people to hell.

Since their message is false and their end is hell, we need to be able to determine if someone is a false prophet. How do we do that?

HOW CAN WE DETERMINE IF WE ARE LISTENING TO A FALSE PROPHET

- We should listen intently to what they are saying

Does what they say agree with the bible? Fortunately, we have the Word of God to help us determine if what we hear is the truth. Let God be true and every man a liar (Rom.3:4).

- We should observe their lifestyle

Do they live a godly life? A godly person will display a godly lifestyle.

- We should observe the results of their preaching

Does their message help people? Are lives changed for the better? Are those who listen to them closer to God because they have listened? True prophets preach a message that converts sinners.

Mt 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Their lifestyle will prove what they are.

A tree can't be changed but I am so glad God can change the heart of a sinner, and make it pure.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALSE PROPHETS AND THOSE WHO FOLLOW THEM

Those who are not real will face a horrible judgment.

Mt 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Notice Jesus said "*my*" Father, and not, "your" Father. God was not their Father. It is obvious; these people had never been saved.

Anyone can claim to be saved, but real salvation is a change of the heart. Many profess salvation, but don't possess salvation. Those who are truly saved will have a desire to do what pleases the Lord.

Those who "*doeth*" the Lord's will are those who are really saved. But, what is the Lord's will? The first step in doing the Lord's will is getting saved. Jesus said, "And *this is the will of him* that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and *believeth on him*, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:40 emphasis added). The second step in doing the Lord's will is to walk as He leads and do what He says.

Good works do not earn salvation, but real salvation will produce good works (Eph.2:10; Jam.2:26). We are not saved by our works but if we are really saved we will work. If you don't have a desire to please the Lord, you need to check up and make sure you are really saved.

A saved person is not perfect. They will still sin, but sin will not be the pattern of their life. When they sin, it will break their heart.

Believing *on* the lord is totally different than believing *in* the lord. Believing *in* Him means that we believe there was a man named Jesus. Believing *on* Him means we have put our trust in Him. It means we have depended on Him to forgive us of all our sin. Believing *on* the Lord means we believe what the bible teaches about how we are lost in our sin, how Jesus died for us on the cross, and we have repented of our sin and placed our trust in Him for forgiveness.

Mt 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

In "*that day*" refers to when all of lost humanity will stand before the Lord. Some of those in that group will be ones who professed the Lord ("*Lord, Lord*"), but did not possess Him in their hearts.

One day we will stand before the Lord. Those who are saved will stand before the Lord at the Bema Seat (Rom. 2:16; 14:9; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Those who are lost will stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Many will expect to enter heaven because of the deeds they did. Some of them "*prophesied*", some of the "*cast out devils*", and some did "*wonderful works*". However, good works are not a guarantee of salvation. Even miraculous works are not a guarantee of salvation. The magicians of Egypt did the same miracles Moses did (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18). The devil is a master counterfeiter. He has more power than we give him credit for. He can still do miraculous works.

Mt 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

These verses are some of the saddest in the Word of God. Some who think they are going to go to heaven will not. Instead of entering the gates of pearl and spending eternity with the Lord, they are sent to the torment of hell.

Just think, they will stand before the One they rejected, and be judged by the One who died for them.

The Lord's reason for judging them will be the fact that He never knew them. Notice, He will not say, "I once knew you, but you lost your salvation". He will say He "*never*" knew them.

No matter what argument is given, the verdict will not be changed. Those who are lost will be condemned.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE 7:24-27

Mt 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

In these verses, Jesus gave an illustration to show the importance of hearing, and doing, the Word of God. He said those who hear and obey are wise. Hearing alone is not enough, we must do the Word (Jam. 1:22).

A house must have firm foundation if it is to stand. The house is depending on its foundation.

The person who hears and obeys the Word is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. He builds on a firm foundation. Like the house depends on the foundation, the wise man depends on the Word of God. He believes it, he depends on it, and he obeys it. The person who hears and obeys the Word of God is depending on something he can trust.

Jesus' illustration dealt with how we listen to his Word and how we apply it to our lives. Hearing is not just listening to the words. Hearing means, listening, believing, and applying to our lives what we have heard.

What a privilege it is for God to speak to us. He speaks through the Scriptures (Jam.1:18; 2 Tim.3:16). That is why it is so important for us to stay in Word. He speaks through the Spirit (1 Cor.2:9-10). If He doesn't speak, we will not get any spiritual help. He also speaks through the sermons (1 Cor.1:21). We need to listen to the preacher when he delivers the Word.

To really hear God when He speaks, we must be redeemed (1 Cor.2:14). To really hear God when He speaks, we must be right. We cannot hear His voice if we have sin in our lives (Jam. 1:21).

To really hear God when He speaks, we must be receptive (Jam.1:21). To really hear God when He speaks, we must be responsive. We must do what He says (Jam.1:22).

Mt 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

A storm came but it did no damage to the house on the rock. Remember, this is a picture of a person who has built their life on the Word of God. The obedient listener was prepared because he had a firm foundation

This storm can be applied to the time when we stand before the Lord as Jesus speaks of in the previous verses. The storm could also be applied to the troubles of life we all have to face. The only way to be ready for life's storms is to hear and obey the words of Christ. Then, and only then, will we be ready to face the hardships that will certainly come.

Mt 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

If building a house on the rock (v.25) was speaking of a person who builds his life on God's Word, building a house on the sand must be speaking of building our lives on anything other than God's Word. The sand is anything other than Jesus, and his word. Many build their lives on pleasure, popularity, or prosperity. None of these things will weather the storms of life. God's Word is the only thing we can trust in. It is the one thing on earth that will never let us down.

Jesus rightly called this man, "foolish". Anyone who hears the words of Christ and does not obey, is foolish.

Mt 7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The house built on the sand could not endure the fierce storm. It crumbled completely. Everything the foolish man had worked for, was gone, nothing was left.

Jesus' message deals with the need to prepare for what is ahead. Both houses seemed fine until the storm hit. There was no indication the wise man's house looks stronger, or better than the foolish man's.

Notice, a storm came to both, the wise and the foolish. The one difference is, one was prepared, and the other was not. One endured the storm, and one was devastated by it. It would be wise for us all to take a good look at our lives. Do we live according to the word of God? Do we live according to its principles?

JESUS ENDED THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT 7:28-29

Mt 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

Jesus concluded his message. Those who heard him were amazed.

Mt 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

They were not amazed about his eloquent speech. He did not impress them with his big words or his intellect. They were amazed because what they heard touched their hearts. When he spoke, the Spirit moved.

They had heard the best of the best, but none of them were like this man. They had listened to the intellectuals of their day, but none of them spoke with the insight this man had. Truly, there is no one like Jesus.

THE KING'S MIRACLES 8:1-9:34

A king is in charge of his domain. He has control over all he oversees. So it is with Jesus. He shows his authority over all things. He is about to show his authority over sickness.

THIS KING HAD POWER OVER SICKNESS 8:1-17

Mt 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

Jesus came down from the mountain where he preached the sermon on the mount. It is important to realize, Matthew now returns to the circumstances taking place before Jesus went to the mountain to preach the sermon on the mount.

To get an idea of what's happening, try reading the last few verses of chapter 4 and then turn to the first few verses of chapter 8.

Jesus was traveling throughout the land of Galilee (Mt. 4:23). He was preaching the message of the kingdom and doing miracles. Multitudes are following him (Mt. 4:24-25).

Jesus did many miracles. He did these miracles because he cared for the people. But, he also did miracles to prove he was truly the Messiah the Jews had been waiting for. The bible calls his miracles “signs” (Jn. 20:30). His miracles were a sign that he was the Messiah.

JESUS HEALED A LEPER 8:2-4

Mt 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Those who were afflicted with leprosy were forced to live away from people. They were not allowed to live in towns, or near people. When near others the leper was to cry “unclean, unclean” (Lev. 13:45-46). In spite of all these obstacles, this man who was determined to get to Jesus. Somehow he had heard about Jesus and believed he could heal him. He knew Jesus was not an ordinary man. He bowed down before Jesus in respect and called him Lord.

This man was trusting Jesus to help him. He did not say, “if you can”, he said “if thou wilt”. He did not question Jesus’ ability to heal him. His cry shows us he was admitting his condition. He was willing to admit his need.

This should remind us of the fact that the Lord has a will. The leper said, “if thou wilt”. What He wants should be more important than what we want.

Mt 8:3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Jesus said, “*I will; be thou clean*”. As he spoke these words he did something no other man on earth would have done, he touched the leper. No one would touch a leper for fear of catching the disease. Also, no one would touch a leper because they would become ceremonially unclean by doing so.

But, Jesus touched him. However, the fact is, Jesus did not really touch a leper, he touched a healed man, for he was healed the instant he touched him.

Mt 8:4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Jesus told the healed man to tell no one what happened to him. Jesus knew publicity would hinder his ability to travel freely and preach his message. He did not want to be known as just a miracle worker. He wanted his message to take precedence.

Jesus told the man to show himself to the priest. According to Old Testament law, a person who had been healed of leprosy had to show themselves to a priest, allow the priest to examine them, and determine whether they were indeed cured. If they were indeed healed, they would offer a sacrifice, and the priest would declare them clean (Lev. 14:10-22).

Leprosy is a picture of sin in the bible. How is leprosy like sin?

- Leprosy is a bacterial disease

Leprosy is contracted by a germ. A person catches leprosy when they get too close to someone who has leprosy. We cannot get close to sin without it affecting us. It does matter who we associate with. The bible clearly teaches that we should avoid those who live in an ungodly manner (Mat.18:17; Rom.16:17; 1 Cor.5:11; 2 Th.3:14; Titus 3:10). They will influence us by their sin.

- Leprosy starts small

Leprosy is not a skin disease as we might think. It actually starts near the brain or spinal cord. It may start small, but that does not mean it isn’t serious. Like leprosy, sin may start small but it spreads and causes horrible damage. If you doubt that, ask David (Ps. 38:1-11). What started as a simple look at a beautiful woman ended up costing him greatly (2 Sam.12:10).

- Leprosy causes numbness

Leprosy damages the nervous system, causing the person to lose their feelings. Some with leprosy have actually had their fingers eaten off by rats as they slept because they could not feel the pain. Like leprosy, sin dulls our senses. We no longer feel. We don’t feel for those in need. We are not touched by those who are hurting. What could be worse than to not care?

- Leprosy is obvious

Leprosy starts on the inside but before long it reveals itself on the outside. Tumor-like growths develop, and the skin becomes scaly. In other words, leprosy is a disease that cannot be hidden. The same is true of sin. We may be able to hide it for a while, but sooner or later, others will notice the difference in us.

- Leprosy is contagious

Leprosy can be spread to others. We dare not forget this when it comes to sin. Our influence will affect those around us. How many children have followed the sinful path of their parents?

How many wives have been caught up in the same sin they see in their husbands? How many lives have been ruined because of an ungodly friend's sinful influence?

- There was no cure for leprosy in bible times

In bible times there was no medicine that would cure leprosy. Like this man, the only hope for the leper was the mercy of God. But, I am so glad there is a cure for spiritual leprosy. The blood of Christ will cleanse us from all sin. He is ready and willing to forgive (1 Jn.1:9).

JESUS HEALED A CENTURION'S SERVANT 8:5-13

Mt 8:5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

Jesus went to Capernaum where he is met by a centurion. A centurion was an officer in the army of Rome. They were named centurions because they were in charge of 100 men.

Luke tells us this centurion sent representatives in his behalf (Lk.7:3-6). Matthew's record words it as though he was making the request himself. Matthew does not mention these representatives. There are other occasions where a person is said to do something that others did on their behalf (Jn.4:1-2; 19:1). He sent representatives because he felt unworthy to even approach Jesus on his own.

Mt 8:6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

The centurion's representatives approached Jesus on behalf of one of his servants who was sick. Palsy was a type of paralysis. The servant "*lieth at home*". His affliction had reduced him to a state of uselessness. The word, "*tormented*" means "torture". Certain types of palsy include severe pain. Luke tells us this servant was ready to die (Lk.7:2). Most men would have gotten rid of a servant who was unable to do their tasks. This centurion obviously cared about his servant.

Mt 8:7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

Jesus offered to come the house of the centurion and heal his servant. The centurion was a Gentile. A Jew would not normally go to the house of a Gentile (cf. Jn.18:28). But, Jesus was not an ordinary man.

Mt. 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

As the Jesus and the representatives got near the centurion's house, he sent friends to ask Jesus to not come all the way to his house (cf. Lk.7:6). Once again, he did this because he felt unworthy (Lk.7:7).

Mt 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

The centurion understood the use of authority. Since he had authority over 100 soldiers, he realized his authority gave him the power to command the men under him. Because of his authority they would obey his instructions. Since the centurion understood the power of authority, he believed Jesus had the power to simply speak, and his servant would be healed. What faith. He recognized Jesus had authority from heaven.

Mt 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Jesus "*marveled*" at the centurion's faith. He had not seen such faith, even among the Jews.

The centurion believed Jesus could heal his servant without having to go to his house. He was right. Jesus' power was not be restricted by distance. If he could heal from two feet away, could he not heal from one mile away, or even half way around the world?

It will do us well to realize the authority of our Lord. Jesus' has authority over all things. Whatever your problem, he has power over it.

Mt 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

The term "*from the east and west*" refers to the extreme points of the compass. It is referring to the entire world. Jesus was speaking about the Gentiles who would accept his salvation message, and enter the kingdom of heaven. The day would come when Gentiles from all the world would accept Christ.

The phrase "*shall sit down*" refers to sitting with someone at a meal. The Jews spoke of the kingdom as a feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We do much the same thing when we refer to heaven as "walking on streets of gold".

Mt 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

People from the farthest parts of the earth accepted the gospel message, but many of the Jews rejected it. Jesus said some of the "*children of the kingdom*" (the Jews) shall be cast out into outer darkness. They were God's chosen people but they rejected Christ. As a result, they will be cast into the lake of fire.

The Jews saw themselves as the children of Abraham and believed that guaranteed them a place in the kingdom. Jesus warned them of the consequences of rejecting him and his message. The Old Testament speaks often of how the Gentiles will be allowed access into the kingdom (Isa. 2:2–3; 11:10; 49:6, 12; 54:1–3; 59:19; Jer. 3:18; Hosea 2:23; Amos 9:11–15; Micah 4:1–2). God knew the Jews would reject his Son and how He would turn to the Gentiles.

Salvation isn't something we can inherit from our parents. Being raised in a Christian home by godly parents does not save you. Salvation is an individual relationship with Jesus Christ.

Some have tried to use these verses to teach a person can lose their salvation. However, as we have seen, these verses deal with Israel as a nation and not individuals.

Mt 8:13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

It appears as though the centurion finally came himself. Perhaps he heard Jesus was on the way to his house and decided to go to Jesus himself. Jesus told him to go home because his servant has been healed. His servant was healed "*the selfsame hour*" (immediately). Jesus was moved by the faith of the centurion. He said "*as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee*". He received that which he had believed.

What about us? How much would we receive if we received according to how we believe? Many times, our faith would be so small, we would not receive much. But, the fact is, we do receive according to how we believe. Like with the centurion, the amount of faith we have determines what we get from God.

As the centurion believed Jesus had authority, and knew he could heal his servant, we should believe he still has the authority to answer our prayer. Simply put, faith is believing and trusting God. Faith is seeing things that have not happened as though they have (Rom.4:17). Faith is knowing that God is working even though we can not see any evidence of it (Heb.11:1).

Faith is based on the Word of God, not on our feelings (Ro 10:17). We trust what God said.

Faith is a vital part of the Christian life. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph.2:8; Jn 20:31; Acts 16:31; 1 Jn. 3:23). We walk by faith (Mt.6:25; 2 Cor.5:7). We serve God by faith (Mt.17:19-21). We overcome the devil by faith (1 Jn. 5:4; 1 Pet. 5:9). We endure difficult times by faith (Ps 56:3; Isa. 26:3; Dan. 3:17; Ps. 9:9; Ps. 46:1-2; Ps. 62:8; Jam 1:2-3). We cannot please the Lord without faith (Heb 11:6). When we don't believe God, we are calling him a liar (1 Jn 5:10). Lack of faith grieves God (Mt 17:17; Mt 8:26; Mk 16:14). Lack of faith hinders God (Mt 13:58, Matt.17:20). Our faith should be growing (Lk 17:5; Mk 9:24; 2 Th 1:3).

Before we leave the centurion and his servant, it would do us well to look at a subject that has caused much disagreement in the body of Christ. The subject of healing brings much disagreement in our day. Some think anyone who has enough faith will be healed of any infirmity.

A thorough study of Jesus' healings will show us the following...

- There are times when people were healed when there was no faith exercised at all

Jesus simply healed them (Mt.8:14-15; Mt.8:16; Mt.14:14; Mt.15:30; Lk.6:19; Lk.8:26-39; Lk.9:11; Lk.17:11-14). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Certainly it was not Lazarus' faith that healed him.

- There are times when healing came because of the faith of the one who was sick

We can find examples of this (Mt.8:2-4; Mt.20:29-44; Jn.9:1-7; Jn.5:1-9).

- There are times when healing came because of the faith of someone other than the sick person

The centurion is a perfect example of this. There are other cases (Mt.15:22-28; Mk.2:2-12; 5:35-42).

- There are times when God refused to heal

There were times when Jesus left cities with people who were still sick (Mt. 8:18). God refused to heal Paul (2 Cor. 12:8-9) and Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23). There are times, in His wisdom, God allows us to get sick. He even uses sickness to accomplish His will. I rejoice in a God who does so. I am glad we can trust Him, even when we don't understand.

One of the saddest things about this subject is how so many people are being told that they should always be healed. They are told their sickness is because of a lack of faith, or because some type of sin in their lives. How many of God's people are going through agony, not just because they are having to endure some sickness, but because someone has told them that if they were right with God they would not be sick to begin with? They not only have to deal with the sickness but also the guilt of thinking that they have failed the Lord.

JESUS HEALED PETER'S MOTHER IN LAW 8:14-15

Mt 8:14-15 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

Jesus went to Peter's house and healed Peter's mother in law from a sickness that was described as a fever. These verses let us know that Peter was married. You can't have a mother in law unless you're married.

We do not know much about Peter's mother in law, but it would seem that she was a godly woman. As soon as she was healed, she serves Jesus and those in the house.

We know nothing about Peter's wife. Since she isn't mentioned in these verses, some have suggested she had already died. It seems that there was a time when Peter took her with him on some of his evangelistic trips. When Paul talked about being able to "lead about" a wife he mentioned Peter (1 Cor. 9:5).

Once again, we see the compassion of Jesus in healing Peter's mother in law. He "*touched her hand*". I can see him drawing close and being moved by her infirmity. His touch was a gentle, but powerful touch.

JESUS HEALED MANY 8:16-17

Mt 8:16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

As we would expect, the word spread quickly about a man who can heal. It is amazing how many show up when there is something for them. No doubt Jesus was weary from helping so many. He needed rest, but he kept helping those in need.

These people came to Jesus, "*when the even was come*". The Jewish day began at sundown.

Many of the ones brought to Jesus were possessed with demons. Being possessed by a demon means the demon had actually taken up residence in the body of the person. That meant, for the most part, the demon controlled the person.

In America, we may not see so much of the obvious demonic activity that took place in Jesus' day. Things like inability to speak in Mt. 9:32; blindness in Mt. 12:22; seizures in Mat 17:15; supernatural strength in Mk. 5:3-4; screaming and self-mutilation in Mk. 5:5; deafness in Mk. 9:25; nakedness in Lk. 8:27, are not often seen in this country. However, I am convinced the devil and his demons are as active today as ever. The devil has learned that he can do more damage as an angel of light than of darkness. He has transformed himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He is a counterfeiter. He tells people they will go to heaven by being good. He draws people into the riches of this world to keep their minds off spiritual matters. He is an expert at what he does.

I do not believe a saved person can be possessed by demons. I do not believe the Holy Spirit and demons could dwell in the same body. The believer may not be able to be possessed, but they certainly can be oppressed. The devil will do all he can to deceive, distract, discourage, and defeat us. Paul wrote, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

Jesus cast out the demons with his Word. The same word that created all things (Gen. 1:3), commanded these demons, and they had to obey.

Jesus "*healed all that were sick*". This was one of the occasions when Jesus healed everyone who was brought to him. As we have discussed, there were times when he did not heal everyone.

Mt 8:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

Jesus was referring to Isaiah 53:4-5. Those verses are used by faith healers more than any other in an attempt to teach that physical healing is included in the atonement.

There is no doubt, when Jesus hung on the cross; he took upon himself all the sin of man. He had on him everything that sin had caused. His work on Calvary purchased all that Adam lost when he sinned.

However, there are many things that were provided by Calvary that we have not experienced yet, and will not experience until we get to heaven.

The following is just a few of these things

- Jesus as Lord over all (Eph. 1:22; Heb 2:8)
- Death done away with (1 Cor. 15:54-55)
- The curse removed (Rev. 21:1)
- Glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:53-54)
- Sin totally done away with (2 Pet. 3:13)
- The devil's judgment (Rev. 20:10)

None of the things mentioned above have been realized as of yet. Since this is true, why is it so difficult to recognize that total health will not to be experienced until we get to heaven? If Calvary provided healing that we are to experience here and now, then why are so many of God's people sick? Are we to assume that they are all out of God's will? Why do so many who preach perfect health have physical problems themselves?

If we are supposed to have to have perfect health as some have suggested, then we would never have any physical problems. There would be no need for eye glasses, hearing aids, we would never have headaches, toothaches, sore muscles, or even grow tired, no one would be overweight, or too skinny. If we are to experience perfect health, how would we die, since most death is the result of some type of sickness?

What about the sickness of Job? We know that Job was not in sin. He was a "perfect and an upright man" (Job 1:8). Job suffered physically like very few men ever have and it is clear that the Lord allowed it. Even though God allowed the devil to attack Job, he recognized that his problems came from the Lord. Job acknowledged the fact that God was the One who took had given, and had taken away (Job 1:21).

In the New Testament, Jesus said sickness can be for God's glory. He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but *for the glory of God*, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (Jn. 11:4 emphasis added). Timothy had continual stomach trouble. Yet, Paul did not rebuke him for being out of God's will. Instead, he told him to drink wine in order to help his problems (1 Tim. 5:23). This is equivalent to our taking medicine for an ailment. Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20). He gave no indication that it was wrong for this man to be sick, or that he was upset that he could not heal him. God refused to heal Paul of his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-10). He asked the Lord three times to remove this thorn, but the Lord refused to do so. Paul actually thanked the Lord for this thorn 2 Cor. 12:9b-10). James tells us what to do when we are sick (Jas 5:14). If we are promised healing, why are we told to call the elders, and have them pray?

Why does God allow sickness?

- God uses sickness in order to teach us

There are some things that we cannot learn while we are on the mountain top. The Lord is more concerned about our spiritual man than our physical man. If need be, He will use a physical affliction in order to help mature us spiritually.

Job learned things about himself, and God, that he would never have learned if he had stayed well and prosperous. Paul clearly says that his thorn was sent in order to keep him humble (II Cor. 12:7). Through this infirmity he was taught that he needed the Lord.

- God uses sickness in order to touch us

The Lord wants to comfort us. He wants us to depend on him for the comfort we need (2 Cor. 1:4). Instead of healing us, sometimes He comforts us as we suffer. We cannot know the wonder of His touch unless we experience the pain of sickness and suffering.

- God uses sickness in order to turn us

There are times when the Lord uses sickness in order to chasten us. He does it in order to turn us around. Hosea said of the Lord, "He hath torn" (Hosea 6:1). The Lord made them sick. There were people who were sick because they had partaken of communion in an unworthy manner (1 Cor.11:30).

Conclusion: God's purpose is always what is most important. He will not abandon His purpose just to satisfy our desires. At times, God will refuse to answer the requests of His people because He has a greater purpose (Ex.33:20; Deut.3:26; 1 Sam.12:16-18; Ezk.20:3-4).

THE COST OF FOLLOWING THE KING 8:18-22

Mt 8:18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Multitudes heard about Jesus' miracles and come running. By this time Jesus had healed thousands of people. John tells us that he did many works that are not recorded in the bible (Jn.20:30-31).

Jesus saw the multitudes and prepared to go to the other side of the lake.

Jesus' popularity was growing, yet he did not seek the admiration of man. If anyone could have been a world leader, it would have been Jesus. He had the power to amaze the multitudes. Through his miracles he could have had all men flocking to him. But, he was not seeking the fame of the world. He wanted those who come to him to come because they saw him as the answer to their spiritual needs.

Mt 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

As Jesus and the disciples were preparing to board the boat to cross the lake a scribe came expressing his desire to follow Jesus. He certainly sounded sincere for he said he was willing to follow Jesus anywhere.

Not everyone was drawn to Jesus because of his miracles. There were some who genuinely wanted to follow him. However, Jesus made it abundantly clear that anyone who wanted to follow him should first count the cost. His life was not a life of glamour. The miracles and the crowds were exciting, but there was a lot more involved with being a disciple than miracles. The life of a true disciple was difficult. It was wonderful, it was fulfilling, but it was difficult. It still costs to be a disciple of Christ. It is worth the cost, but it still costs.

Mt 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Any leader seeking fame would have jumped at the chance to have another follower. But, Jesus was not the average leader. He warned the scribe about the difficulty of being one of his followers. He wanted those who were thinking about following him to count the cost of discipleship (Lk. 14:28). He wanted genuine disciples. It would be better to not start, than to start and quit.

It's easy to make a decision in the heat of the moment. Many have been stirred by emotion and made commitments that were not truly sincere. The Lord knows our heart and He knows if we mean business.

Jesus described the details of being a disciple that are not so glamorous. He had no home of his own. He depended on others to provide him a place to stay. Imagine, the God who spoke the universe into existence had no place to call home. We remember how he gave his life on the cross, and we should, but we should also remember how he lived a difficult life in a human body. He experienced the worst this world had to offer.

This certainly refutes the idea that Jesus was rich. He described a life of trust, not a life of ease.

We are not told what the scribe decided. What is your decision? Have you decided to give the Lord your all and follow him no matter what the cost?

The life of discipleship is a difficult life. But, it is also the best life we will experience while in this world. In spite of the difficulties, walking with the Lord is a wonderful experience. His grace sustains us, His love comforts us, and His presence embraces us. And, when our life is over and we stand before the Lord, our declaration shall be, "It was worth it all". No true disciple has ever regretted their decision to follow Jesus.

Jesus' manner of gathering disciples was totally different than what we are taught today. The so-called soul winner of today does whatever it takes to get a person to pray a prayer. They speak of salvation as the way to get everything you have ever dreamed of. The focal point of Jesus' message was repentance. Yet, the modern "soul winner" sees little, or no, need to even mention the need to repent.

I am grieved by the modern methods of so-called soul winning. I know we do not know the hearts of the people we talk to. I am aware of the fact that salvation is by grace through faith. But, if the person we talk to is not under conviction, they cannot be saved. Jesus said no man could come to him except the Father draw him (Jn.6:44). Salvation is not something we can just grab when we want it. It is the result of the convicting power of God in the heart of a repentant sinner.

Jesus called himself the "*Son of man*". This phrase is used 84 times in the gospels. It is a title Jesus used to refer to himself but his disciples never referred to him by this title. Jesus referred to himself most often as the Son of man, and not as the Son of God.

The title Son of man means Jesus was a man. He was 100% God, but he was also 100% human. Daniel spoke of the Son of man and lets us know the Son of man, is God (Dan. 7:13-14). Several references to the Son of man in the New Testament deal with Jesus' power and authority (Jn.5:27; Mt.24:30; Mt. 26:64; Mk.13:24-27; Lk.21:27). On at least two occasions in the bible, the Son of man is said to exist before he was born in a human body (Jn.3:13; Jn.6:62). Jesus was God and he is eternal.

So, we find the title "Son of man" speaks of the fact that Jesus was a man. But, it also speaks of how he, being God, will one day set up a kingdom on earth, where he will rule and reign.

Mt 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Another person who had been following Jesus (not one of the twelve) came with a request. His request reveals how his commitment to Christ is limited. The word "disciple" means "a learner". It simply means someone was learning from Jesus. Multitudes followed him and were therefore called disciples, but not all were true followers of Christ.

This man was called a disciple because he was following Jesus. However, when Jesus started to leave his neighborhood, he began to have second thoughts. There were many who followed the Lord as long as it did not cost them anything.

This "disciple" asked Jesus to allow him to first bury his father before he followed. This verse has been greatly misunderstood. In our western way of thinking, we assume this man's father had died, and he simply wanted to make sure he gets a proper burial before he follows Jesus. This is not possible for it was their custom to bury the dead the same day they died. Had his father just died, it would be very doubtful that he would be where Jesus was.

These verses speak of the custom of that day whereby the son was expected to take care of his parents until their death. He was asking to stay with his father until he died, and then he would follow Jesus. Even though the care of his father was important, it should have not been as important as obeying the call of God.

Mt 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Jesus' response seemed harsh, but he was telling this man to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. We must keep in mind, Jesus was thinking of eternal matters. Caring for our families is vitally important. We are admonished by the Word of God to do so (Ps.127:3; Pro.1:8; Pro.22:6; 1 Tim.5:8; Titus 2:4; Eph.6:1-4). But, caring about the things of God is more important.

As important as the matters of earth can be, they are not as important as the things of heaven. The souls of the lost are more important than the care of the elderly. We must realize, if this man followed Jesus, the Lord would have made sure that his father was be cared for. He is the God of heaven and earth; he can certainly take care of dear old dad.

Luke's record of this occasion lets us know that Jesus was not merely asking this man to follow him. His call to this man is the call to preach the word of God (Lk.9:60). The call to follow the Lord should take precedence over anything and everything else in our lives. Be honest with yourself, how important is God's will in your life? Where does he fit on your priority list?

THIS KING HAD POWER OVER STORMS 8:23-27

Mt 8:23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

Jesus and his disciples boarded a ship. They were heading toward the country of the Gadarenes.

Notice how this verse is worded. Jesus entered the ship, and his disciples followed him. That ought to be the way we live our lives. We should simply follow the Lord. Where the Spirit of God leads us, we should follow. We should go where He says to go, and say what He tells us to say, without hesitation.

Jesus was about to reveal his power again. He had healed many diseases, but now he would show he has control over nature itself.

Mt 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Storms arise quickly, and without notice, on the Sea of Galilee. Such a storm came as Jesus and the disciples are in the midst of the sea. The storm was so severe the waves were covering the ship.

The humanity of Christ is seen here. He was so tired he was asleep in the middle of a terrible storm. His ministry to others had exhausted him.

The deity of Christ is seen here also. He was asleep in the middle of a terrible storm. He had total peace even though the storm was violent, and the situation was dangerous.

If Jesus can have such peace in the middle of a storm, so can we. He had peace because he knew his Father was taking care of the situation. We who know the Lord have the same God watching over us. We need not fear no matter what the circumstance.

Mt 8:25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

The disciples awaken Jesus. Jesus had peace, but his disciples certainly didn't. They were terrified. We should remember, some of his disciples were fishermen. All of them were probably used to ships and storms. This had to be an awful storm if it terrified seasoned fishermen. I believe the devil was trying to kill them all. When Jesus calmed the storm, the bible says, he "rebuked" the winds and the sea.

Mt 8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Jesus rebuking the disciples for being afraid may seem somewhat harsh to us. I mean, they were in a severe storm, there was real danger, and they could have easily drowned. But, were they really in danger? When Jesus is on board it doesn't matter how bad the storm, how hard the wind blows, or how much rain falls, the storm can do us no harm. That ship could not have sunk no matter how severe the storm.

Notice, Jesus got straight to the root of the problem. He said, "O ye of little faith". The disciples were afraid because of their lack of faith. I am glad we have a God who will deal with our failures. I am glad He tells us the truth about ourselves.

Jesus rebuked the disciples, and then he rebuked the storm. Actually, the disciples were more difficult to control than the storm. They had seen Jesus do so many miracles. It looks like they would not have doubted him. But, how many times do we doubt him even though he has done so many wonderful things for us?

One thing is certain, if they were not supposed to be afraid even though they were in a tremendously dangerous storm, surely we should never be afraid no matter what we face.

Jesus rebuked the storm. The word "*rebuked*" has the idea of forbidding. He forbade the storm to continue. He put a muzzle on the storm. Mark tells us the actual words he spoke, "Peace be still" (Mk.4:39). Notice, his word brought peace. He still speaks peace to us through the written Word.

The disciples did not know where they were headed when they boarded the ship, but Jesus did. The disciples did not know there was a storm ahead, but Jesus did. The disciples did not know if they would make it through the storm once it hit, but Jesus did. We may not know what is ahead, but Jesus does. Since he knows, that should be enough. He is well aware of what is ahead. We can trust him totally. Our storms can be severe, but we can still depend on him.

When Jesus calmed the sea, there was “a great calm”. The word “calm” has the idea of tranquility. The storm didn’t just quit, but there was an overwhelming tranquility. The sea itself laid down. Usually the waters stay agitated for a while after a storm. Not this time. The calm after the storm was as overwhelming as the turbulence during the storm.

Mt 8:27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

The men “marvelled” at what they saw. It means they were astonished. They recognized the fact that what happened was impossible. No other man could make the wind and rain obey. His power is just as miraculous today. His word is just as powerful today. My friend, all he has to do is speak, and your situation will be changed.

I personally believe the Lord wanted the disciples to trust him through the storm. It was wonderful that he calmed the storm. But, I believe it would have been even more wonderful if they had trusted him all the way to the other side. How their faith could have increased if they simply let him take care of them all the way through the storm. No doubt, there were more storms coming later. They could have faced the next storm with faith had they just trusted him in this storm. It is great when God takes our problems away, but it is even better when He gives us grace to endure the problems.

There are times God wants us to endure difficulties. He sends troubles in order to teach us to trust Him (Dt. 8:2; Isa.48:10; 1 Pet.1:7; 1 Pet.4:12; Jam.1:3-4). We should trust Him to give us His grace to see us through to victory.

THIS KING HAD POWER OVER SATAN 8:28-34

Mt 8:28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

Jesus and his disciples got to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and near the city of Gadara. The city of Gadara was populated mostly by those from the tribe of Gad. When God told the Jews to cross the Jordan River and possess the Promised Land, Gad was one of the tribes that asked to be excused. They, along with the tribe of Rueben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, stayed on the east side of the river (Num. 32).

Two men possessed by demons come to meet Jesus. Mark and Luke mention only one of these men (Mk.5:2; Lk.8:27). The one they mention was probably the worst of the two.

Mark tells us these men met Jesus “immediately” when the boat pulled to shore. These men may have been watching when Jesus calmed the storm in verse 26. Since they lived outside, they had probably watched many storms on the Sea of Galilee. But, this time it was different. They had never seen anyone calm a storm. Perhaps, this is what drew them to Jesus in the first place.

The bible gives a good bit of detail about the lives of these men. Mark and Luke describe one of these men, but I believe we can safely assume that all of the characteristics mentioned were true of both men.

- These men were possessed by demons

Demons are fallen angels who followed Lucifer when he tried to overthrow God (Rev.12:9). One third of the angels foolishly believed Lucifer, and followed him (Rev.12:3-4). Some of the demons are already locked in chains of darkness awaiting their judgment (Jude 6). The rest of the demons have a limited freedom to travel about the universe (Eph.6:12). They still get their directions from the devil. All the demons will eventually be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil (Rev. 20:10).

Like the devil, demons are the enemies of God, and God’s people. In conjunction with the devil, they do all they can to hinder the work of God. Demons can enter a person if that person opens their minds and will to the work of the devil. A saved person cannot be possessed by demons, but they can be oppressed by the devil, and the demons. That is why it is so important that we guard our minds against the works of Satan.

- These men lived in the tombs

The Jews buried their dead in hewn out rocks, or in caves. These men may have had a fascination about death. It is amazing how those who reject the way of life are many times drawn to the things of death.

- These men wore no clothes

Luke tells us these men wore no clothes (Lk.8:27). This is another display of sin controlling a person. The person who dresses in a worldly fashion is certainly not controlled by the Holy Spirit.

- These men were strong

Mark says one of these men had often been bound with fetters and chains, but he broke them in pieces (Mk.5:3-4). It is quite possible that both of these men had this unusual strength given by the demons.

- These men were in torment

Mark tells us one of these men was “crying, and cutting himself with stones” (Mk.5:5). Sin brings torment.

- These men were dangerous

Matthew said one of these men was “*exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way*”. The word “fierce” means “furious”. These men had an embedded anger.

Mt 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

We discover a good bit of information about demons in these verses.

- The demons know who Jesus is

They called him, “*Jesus, thou Son of God*”. These demons probably knew more about the Jesus than we do. How we need to learn more about Jesus. These demons were more aware of the authority of Jesus than we are. They trembled in his presence.

- The demons know God has power over them

They did not try to defend themselves. They knew better than to try to stand against the Lord. I wish we would understand what these demons understood. I wish we would see how much power our Lord has. I wish we would recognize the fact that Jesus has won the victory over the devil (Col.2:15).

- The demons know there is coming a day of judgment

They asked Jesus if he was going to “torment” them “before the time”. There is a day set when all the demons will stand before God. He will cast them all into the lake of fire. This should remind us who know the Lord that we are on the winning side. We need to start acting like it.

- They know the time of judgment had not yet come

Even though the devil, or the demons, cannot tell the future, they do know what the bible teaches. They probably know more about the bible than the average Christian. They know the bible talks about certain signs that will come before Jesus returns. They knew those signs had not yet been manifested, so they knew the time of judgment was not yet. We should study and learn more about the end time events, so we will be ready for His coming.

Mt 8:30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

It is possible the pigs belonged to some Gentiles who lived in the area, but it is more likely they belonged to the people of Gad. Of course, the people of Gad were Jews. The Old Testament declared pigs to be unclean. The average Jew would not even come in contact with a pig, let alone become a pig farmer. Disobedience will take us further down than we expect.

Mt 8:31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

The demons asked Jesus to cast them into the pigs. Luke tells us they asked this because they did not want Jesus to cast them into the “deep” (Lk. 8:31). The “deep” is speaking of the prison where some demons have already been placed (2 Pet.2:4; Jude 6).

Notice, the demons had to ask Jesus to send them into the pigs. The devil and all the demons are still under the authority of the God. He still has to get permission from God before he can attack one of God's children (Job 1:6-13).

Mark tells us more about this conversation between Jesus and the demons. Jesus addressed one of the demons, and asked his name. The demon replied, “My name is Legion: for we are many” (Mk.5:9-10). A legion in the Roman army consisted of 6,000 soldiers. We cannot be absolutely certain that this meant there were 6,000 demons in this man, but we can be sure it means there were many demons. Mark tells us there were 2,000 pigs (Mk.5:13). There must have been at least 2,000 demons for there had to be at least one demon in each pig.

Mt 8:32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

If there is anything this teaches us, it is the fact that the devil's desire is to harm and destroy. The demons had wanted to harm or destroy the men just as they destroyed the pigs. Harm and destruction is always the devil's desire and intention (Jn.10:10).

Mark tells us more about the condition of these men after the demons were cast out. The one man Mark emphasizes was found “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind” (Mk.5:13). What a difference Jesus makes. The men, who had been tormented, were now at peace. The men who caused harm to themselves and others, were no longer angry. They had gone without clothes, but now they were dressed.

Mt 8:33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

The keepers of the pigs went to tell everyone in the city and the country what Jesus had done (Mk.5:14).

Mt 8:34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Instead of being thrilled about the deliverance of the demon possessed men, they were upset about their pigs. Their business took a loss and they didn't like it. That was not the first, or last, time people have chosen money instead of the Lord.

That may be the reason why the demons wanted to be driven into the pigs. By causing their death, they caused trouble for Jesus.

We see in the next verse, Jesus left as they requested. God will not force himself on anyone who doesn't want him.

I have often wondered, where did the demons go after the pigs perished? One thing is certain, they are still somewhere in this world, still trying to cause trouble.