

**A WALK THROUGH**  
**THE WORD**

THE BOOK OF  
MATTHEW

By Rick Shoemaker

## OUTLINE

1. THE KING'S MANGER 1:18-2:23
2. THE KING'S MINISTRY 3:1-28:20 (His entire life was ministering)
3. THE KING'S MEN 4:18-22
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11. THE KING'S MAJESTY 28:1-20

Matthew, also known as Levi (Mk. 2:14, Lk. 5:27), penned the book of Matthew. 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 who 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 extra for themselves.

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

Matthew wrote primarily to the Jews.

- . 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.

He quoted the Old Testament about fifty times and alluded to the Old Testament about seventy-five times. This helped convince a Jew that 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 His name. 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"

This helped connect Jesus with the Jews.

- 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 Jews to tell them that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. He wrote to the believing Jews to encourage them to keep trusting God. He was assuring them, that God was not finished with His chosen people, their king would come again to set up His kingdom, and the promises God had made would not be cast aside. God would do what He had said He would.

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

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

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE GENEALOGY OF THE KING 1:1-17**

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

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 on the throne of David.

Jesus was also "the son of Abraham". God promised Abraham one from his family would bless all the earth (Gen. 22:18).

Matthew tells the story of Jesus from Joseph's perspective. He wrote, "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Mt. 1:16).

Joseph did not begat Jesus. 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). Joseph was not the father of Jesus because He was birthed by the Holy Spirit.

#### **1. 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 is the engagement. This was an agreement that 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 year-long betrothal period. This began with a legal ceremony in which the bride and groom became bound to each other. The couple was considered to be husband and wife, even though they were not living together and had not come together physically. 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.

During their betrothal period, Mary was with child "before they came together" (1:18). The miracle of Jesus' birth was His conception, not his actual birth. His birth was like any other birth, but His conception was unlike any other.

### *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 assumed Mary had been unfaithful. Despite what he thought was unfaithfulness, he still loved Mary and made plans to put her away (divorce) in a private manner. The usual 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 considered the situation carefully. His reputation was at stake. Of course, most people would assume he was marrying a woman who had been unfaithful. He 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 and told him the child was the long-awaited Messiah. He instructed Joseph 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" (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 (Ro 1:16). Thank the Lord, the gospel message did not stop with the Jews. His death and resurrection provided a means whereby anyone could be forgiven for 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 spoke 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. For example, He

had no control over the fact that He was born of a virgin or where He was born. That is, unless He was God in the flesh.

### 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 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. 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. Jesus was God in the flesh (Jn.1:1, 14).

*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 physically 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 say 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.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### *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 kept writing.

The Old Testament said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Micah wrote this 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*

Matthew is the only gospel account that mentions 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. You would expect a king to be born in a palace in Jerusalem, not in some small and insignificant village.

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" was born there (Jn. 6:48).

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 find Jesus.

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

King Herod, the king of Rome, had placed over Judea. He was a power-hungry man who 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 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".

To fund his many projects, Herod laid heavy taxes on the Jews. He rebuilt the Jewish 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. They probably were aware of the writings of Daniel since Daniel spent time in Babylon and told about a Messiah who would come (Dan. 9:25-27). They came seeking the child because a star led them to Jesus' birthplace.

### *Herod searched for Jesus 2:1-23*

*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 did not want any competition for his throne. This newborn baby was being called "King of the Jews" and that made him nervous. He had obtained and kept the throne by shedding a lot of blood. He feared this one would be the next competitor.

Jerusalem was troubled because this baby was being called the King of the Jews. They had seen the cruelties of Herod before so they were afraid this would cause him to make it difficult on them.

*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.*

Herod called the chief priests and scribes to find out where Christ was to be born. They referred to prophecy in the book of Micah. Micah had written these words about 700 years earlier (Micah 5:2).

*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 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 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 wise men did not come to Jesus at his birth, as many Christmas plays suggest. The words, "young child" tell us Jesus was not an infant. 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.

They had reason to rejoice with "exceeding great joy". The Deliverer had come.

*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. Worship was the natural reaction of them seeing God in flesh.

They brought gifts for Jesus. The people of the East would never approach a king without some type of present. They believed He was the King of the Jews. The gold, frankincense, and myrrh had spiritual 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 is amazing how this small baby had already caused such a disturbance. He had not uttered a word, taken a step, nor performed a miracle, but his life was 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 follow His directions.

#### *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. 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.

*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. 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 to protect Joseph, Mary, and Jesus by taking them out of harm's way. There are times when God 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. He was angry because the wise men dared to ignore his demands, and because this "king" had escaped his hands.

*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.*

Herod's anger was not to be taken lightly. 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.

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.*

Jeremiah had prophesied of these events (Jer. 31:15). Much of Old Testament prophecy has a short-term and a long-term fulfillment. The short-term fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:15 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 2:19-21 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. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.*

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

#### *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:*

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



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

*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 a city in the region of Galilee in the land of Israel. It was the hometown 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). Being a Nazarene was often viewed as something shameful or looked down upon. 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 the Messiah would be "despised and rejected" (Isa. 53:2), and "as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa.53:2).

When speaking to Saul on the road to Damascus, Jesus referred to himself as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 22:8).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### *John the Baptist 3:1-17*

*John was from the priestly lineage and related to Jesus*

John's father (Zacharias) was a priest, and his mother (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 the forerunner of the Messiah. A forerunner was a person who went before an approaching king to announce his arrival. He shouted the message of the King's coming so all could hear and prepare.

*John was Nazarite*

John made the Nazarite vow (Lk. 1:15). We first learn of the Nazarite vow in the book of Numbers (Num. 6:1-21). The Nazarite vow was a promise where a person dedicated themselves totally 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 predetermined period of time.

The Nazarite vow consisted of three things.

ONE...they were to abstain from grapes, wine, and 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 not controlled by temporary pleasures. This person was resisting a life of ease and was dedicating themselves to the spiritual matters of life. Jesus said, "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine" (Lk 7:33).

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

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

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

The separation from dead things speaks of a desire to avoid anything 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, The New Testament believer should live a life similar to that which a Nazarite lived. We should be separated from the world and unto the Lord.

*John was the last Old Testament prophet*

Even though John's life is recorded in the New Testament, he was the last Old Testament prophet. He was the first prophet since Malachi. John came out of the wilderness preaching the message of the kingdom.

The coming of John the Baptist said ...

- . After 400 years of silence, God was speaking again
- . God had not forgotten His people
- . God had not forgotten His promises, the Messiah was coming

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **2. THE KING'S MINISTRY 3:1-28:20**

Jesus came to "minister" to, and give his life for, mankind (Mt. 20:28; Lk. 19:10).

*The message of John the Baptist*

John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the world. His entire ministry pointed to Jesus (3:11).

A note of interest: Since the Bible uses a Capitol letter in "Baptist", so will I.

*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. He was called by God to preach the message of the coming kingdom (Lk.1:80). Isaiah spoke of one who would come to prepare the way for the Messiah (Isa. 40:3).

*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. He came also into a religious world that was in darkness. His message to both was to repent.

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

The person who repents is genuinely sorry for their sin.

- . Repentance implies a change of mind.

The word "repent" means "to reconsider" or "a change of mind". They see their sin in a different light. The repenting person sees their sin as God sees it. There is a sincere change of mind. Where they had sinned without thinking much about it, now they see their sin as being against a Holy God.

A drunk quitting his drinking because his hangovers make him feel bad is not genuine repentance. He does not see his drinking as a sin. Repentance is when that same sees his drinking as a sin against God, confesses his sin, and turns his life over to God. In this case, his mind has been changed about his drinking.

- . Repentance implies a change of actions

True repentance is more than saying we're sorry. 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 at hand. The Lord was coming and they needed to get ready. The only way to be ready was to be right with God and the only way to be right was to repent.

The term, "kingdom of heaven" is found only in 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 by God's rule over all believers. Jesus said, "behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17:21).

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 disrespectfully. 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 stop writing, wipe his pen, go take a bath, and return to continue writing.

One day, this kingdom will be set up on earth and Jesus will rule and reign (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. Making His paths straight speaks of smoothing rough roads and removing all obstacles for the one who was coming. It meant doing whatever was necessary to make sure nothing hindered Jesus' progress. Every believer should live in such a way as to not be a hindrance to God.

*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 which was. The hair of a camel was used to fashion a rough and coarse cloth. John came not to impress, but to speak for God. He wore a leather girdle, the attire of Elijah (1 Kgs. 1:8). His food was, "locusts and wild honey", the food of the poorest of people. To say the least, when John came to town, he stirred things up. He drew a crowd. His message was new.

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

An angel had predicted that John's ministry would turn many to the Lord (Lk. 1:16). Only God can tell us what is going to happen before it happens and be one hundred percent correct.

*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.

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 message 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 heard 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, that John's baptism was not Christian baptism. The death and resurrection of Christ had not yet occurred. Christian baptism symbolizes repentance, but it is also an outward sign of identification. We are identifying ourselves

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.

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

John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to bring the fruit of their repentance. He was simply asking them to show proof of real repentance. Repentance and faith are connected in Scripture (Mk. 1:15; Acts 3:19; Acts 20:21). 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.

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 believed that 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 used the symbol of a tree being cut down to warn those who refused to repent of the coming judgment. This tree would be cut down at the roots, implying it would never grow again. The picture is that of a woodman who examines his trees. Those that bear fruit, he continues to care for. Those that bear no fruit, he cuts down and throws in a fire.

His "axe" is laid to the "root" means he is not coming to prune or trim some branches, he is taking the tree down at its roots. John is speaking of the Jews and their rejection of Christ but the truth applies to individuals who refuse to accept Christ.

Those who heard John's message were being examined by the Woodman 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. The one thing that determined whether the tree would be cut down or allowed to live, was fruit. 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 (2 Co 5:17). 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; that his message was not about himself. It was about the One coming after him who was mightier than he.

John was baptizing with water those who believed his message repented. 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 also baptize with "fire". That fire speaks of the fire of judgment. The next verse says He will come to burn up the chaff. 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 was not 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. God is in control to the degree of blessing, or judgment, we receive.

Jesus would gather the wheat and burn the chaff. Only He can 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 was reluctant because he recognized who Jesus was.

John realized Jesus was truly God in flesh. He recognized Jesus as the sinless Son of God. John's baptism was an act that showed the person had repented of their sin. He understood that Jesus had no sin to repent of.

John was reluctant because he recognized who he was

John recognized he was unworthy to even be in the presence of the Son of God, let alone, be the one to baptize Him. All of God's servants should have the same attitude 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).

Why did Jesus submit to being baptized since baptism was usually associated with the confession of sin? Jesus had no sin to confess. So, why was He baptized?

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

Jesus said, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness". Jesus submitted to baptism as He had submitted to circumcision. It was the right thing to do. It would do us all well if we determined, by God's grace, to simply do what is right.

- Jesus submitted to baptism to affirm John's message and ministry

His submission proved to the watching world that John was telling the truth and should be trusted.

- Jesus submitted to baptism to identify with man

The sinless Son of God identified with sinful man. This was another step of obedience in the process of God's redemptive plan. The writer of Hebrews said Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:1).

- 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. 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. What a sight it must have been.

The Holy Spirit came in a visible way. God the Father made sure the world would know Jesus was not an ordinary man. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and stayed. John wrote, "and it abode upon him" (Jn. 1:32). 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.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 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.*

God led Jesus into the wilderness where He could be tempted. God never tempts us but He will lead us to the place where the devil can tempt us (Ja 1:13). God does so to strengthen and mature us.

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

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 provides us an opportunity to trust God to help us say "no" to our flesh. It provides an opportunity to enjoy victory.

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).

John tells us we will be attacked with the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:1).

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

Luke tells us the devil tempted Jesus during the entire time in the wilderness (Lk.4:2). The temptations Matthew mentioned here were at the end of the forty days and probably the most severe. The devil's strongest temptation came when Jesus was physically weak. He often attacks us 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.*

There was nothing wrong with Jesus turning stones into bread to satisfy His hunger. The potential of wrong came because the devil used Jesus' hunger to tempt Him.

The word "If" does not mean the devil doubted if Jesus was the Son of God. Lucifer knew Jesus very well and knew He was the Son of God. The word "If" in this instance is used as a statement of fact. For example, a Sunday School teacher may say to his class, "If you are a member of this class, you should be faithful". In this case, the word "if" confirms the fact that they are members.

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

*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 southeast side of the temple. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, there was a drop of around 450 feet from this point.

The same God who threw Lucifer out of heaven (Isa. 14:12-14, Lk. 10:18) now allowed

himself to be taken by the devil. There may be times when it seems like the 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". This time, 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. 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, He does not promise to protect those who are walking in their own ways.

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

As before (v. 4), Jesus used the Word of God to resist the devil's temptation. When the tempter continued to attack, Jesus still used the same weapon to stand against him. 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. What an amazing sight this must have been.

*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 authority to offer such a thing
- Satan is called the "prince (ruler) of this world" (Jn.12:31, 14:30, 16:11)

The word "prince" means "to reign over". He is not the king but he is a ruler.

- The devil is called the "god of this world" (2 Cor.4:4)

Satan being called the god of this world means he has a tremendous influence on what happens on earth. He is the driving force behind the world's philosophies and desires. When Paul said the devil's spirit works in the "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2) he meant he influences every unbeliever on earth.

- The entire world lies in wickedness

John wrote, "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 Jn 5:19).

I am not saying the devil rules the world completely or that he has more power than 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.

We must not forget the fact that Satan has lost his rule over God's children (Mt. 12:29; Jn. 12:31; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13). The day will come when all of Satan's power will be taken away. He will cease being the prince of this world and will become just like every other suffering being in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

*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.

Satan 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.

### *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 have 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 (Heb. 1:14). We do not have to be defeated. We have victory through the power of God (1 Cor. 15:57).

### *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, just like us, He did battle the temptation of the world and the devil.

- 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.

### *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 believe He could have. They offer the argument that temptation could not be real unless there is the possibility of yielding to it. Others say He couldn't sin because He was God in flesh.

I do not believe Jesus could have sinned. Jesus was God and God cannot sin (Ja 1:13). Jesus was the God-man. 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.

## 2. THE KING'S MINISTRY 3:1-28:20

### *Jesus went to Galilee*

We must remember Matthew's intention in writing this book was not to explain every detail of Jesus' life. He intended 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 did 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 put 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 where the tribes of Zabulon and Naphtali had settled. That part of Galilee was called "Galilee of the Gentiles" because of the large number of Gentiles who lived there. That area was 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 probably means 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. In other words, they had gotten used to the darkness and it did not bother them anymore.

Jesus' ministry was described as a great light in a place of great darkness. The solution to darkness is light. Our present world needs light. The answer to the present darkness is the same as in Jesus' day. Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5). When Jesus ascended, the believers became 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,

### 3. 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 who were fishermen. He did not go into a lengthy explanation about why He needed them or what they would be doing. Not even knowing 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.

*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 called two brothers named James and John mending their nets with their father.

*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. This is quite significant in that fishing was their livelihood. Fishing was that which they depended on for all their needs.

#### *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 was going where the Jews were and preaching about the kingdom of God.

Healing all manner of "sickness" and "disease" proved He was who He claimed to be and that 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 in the hope that He would heal 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.

Great multitudes came. Sadly, many followed Him out of curiosity, they simply wondered about His message. Many followed Him because they wanted what He could do for them.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### 4. **THE KING'S MESSAGE** Chapters 5-7 (THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT)

Chapters 5-7 contain Jesus' first, and longest, recorded sermon. It is important to keep in mind, that the word "disciples" refers to those who were following Jesus. Some were saved and some weren't. This sermon will be to both, saved and lost.

*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,*

Seeing the multitudes, Jesus went to a mountain with his disciples and began to teach them the principles of His kingdom. It must have been amazing to hear the Son of God speak in person. Even though we did not hear Him speak, we have to words He spoke in the next two chapters.

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 can certainly apply to today and 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. We cannot make ourselves happy. True happiness comes only from the Lord.

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

*Jesus said the way to be blessed, is to be poor*

God's way to blessings is the opposite of what we would expect. The world thinks the way to happiness is to please themselves. They believe happiness comes through pleasure, parties, possessions, and popularity. Jesus disagrees.

*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.

The word "poor" means "a beggar". This speaks of a person who is so poor that he has to beg. He sits on the street, with a cup in his hand, reaching out to those who walk by.

How can this be applied to our lives?

- A beggar realizes his need

He is begging because he has a need he cannot supply himself. In like fashion, we will

never experience true happiness until we realize we are spiritually bankrupt.

- A beggar has no pride

A beggar's need overcomes his pride. His need is so great; that he doesn't care about what people think of him. In like fashion, when we get desperate for help from God, what people think about us will not matter.

- A beggar is desperate

The beggar must have help. His life depends on it. He is desperate. In like fashion, when getting help from God means more than anything on earth, we are at the place we need to be. The desperate one is the one who gets help.

- A beggar depends totally on those who pass by

The beggar is depending totally on those who pass by. They are his only hope. If they do not give to him, he will go without. In like fashion, 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. He who was hungry, homeless, and dressed in rags, has food, shelter, and clothing. The wonderful thing about asking of the Lord is the fact that 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" and refers 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 be the ones who are blessed? They are the ones who are forgiven because they are the ones who see their sinful condition and 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 believed 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 expected their Messiah to be a mighty deliverer who came in with might and power. Jesus described himself as 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. Abraham had a choice of the land but allowed Lot to choose first (Gen. 13:7-9). Joseph treated his brothers well 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 mighty indeed. The person who cannot control their own spirit will never please God (Pro. 25:28; Pro.16:32).

The word translated as "meekness" is used to describe a gentle breeze, medicine, and a colt that is broken. All of these, when 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 and thirsty for living right. The words "hunger" and "thirst" have 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 near death because of hunger and thirst.

Hunger and thirst are the two of the strongest impulses of man. What do you hunger for? 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 said we should hunger for a holy life.

We can spend our entire life pursuing things that are wrong. Then we will stand before the Lord and see it all burn before our eyes (1 Cor.5:15). It will be too late then.

Jesus said those who hunger to live right are the ones who 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 overlook our 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 repent. Mercy is not automatically granted to all. It is granted only 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 believed if anyone made it to heaven, surely they would.

Being "pure in heart" emphasizes the inward condition of man, not the outward actions. Jesus' emphasis was on 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.

Jesus said those who are pure in heart "shall see God". Most of us live our lives and never really "see" God. We never see how much He loves us, how powerful He is, and 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 a 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 other words, we are to be peaceable.

Peace dominates the entire Bible. There are at least 400 references to 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. There is so little peace in the world because there is so little peace in our hearts.

Being a peacemaker means we share the peace God has given us. God doesn't give us peace just for us to enjoy, He wants us to pass it on. He wants us to help others find peace.

How can we be peacemakers?

- WE MUST HAVE PEACE OURSELVES

We can not be peacemakers if we don't have peace in our own hearts.

- WE MUST SURRENDER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

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). He gives His peace only to those who surrender themselves to Him.

- WE MUST AVOID CONFLICT AND DIVISION

We will never experience God's peace when we are in conflict with God's children. Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). We need to determine to 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 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 are never more like God than when we are forgiving others (Eph. 4:32).

- WE MUST SHARE CHRIST TO THE LOST

We may not bring peace to the entire world, but we can bring peace to some 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 world hates the godly because they remind them of Jesus. He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (Jn.15:18).

The world hates believers because they are different. Sadly, modern Christianity prides itself on being popular and accepted by the world. They go so far as to encourage believers to "fit in". By doing so, they lose the one thing that makes them unique from the world, their difference.

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

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

- WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED

They persecuted "the prophets" before us, we should not be shocked when they persecute us also.

- WE SHOULD REJOICE

The disciples rejoiced when they were persecuted (Acts 5:41). Jesus tells those who are suffering to "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad". They are to rejoice because they have a "reward in heaven". One day, it will be worth it all.

- WE SHOULD KEEP LIVING RIGHT

We should not let how they treat us affect how we live. Jesus didn't. Peter wrote, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pe 2:23).

- 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. He used salt as an illustration because 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 or depressed. If anyone on earth should have joy, it is those who have Christ in their heart.

- Salt preserves

In Jesus' day, salt was used to keep food from spoiling. In like fashion, Christians are one of the main reasons why this world is not in worse shape than it is. The godly influence of believers has a positive effect on this world.

I am convinced one of the reasons God has not judged the United States is because of the salt that still remains. God would have spared Sodom if there had been ten righteous people living there. That means they were judged because of their sin, and because of the lack of godly people.

- Salt heals

Salt has a healing aspect. This world has the open wound of sin. But, the message of the gospel can heal that wound.

- Salt stings

Salt stings when it is applied to a wound. The message of the gospel stings also. 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 said salt that has lost its "savour" is "good for nothing". Salt that lost its saltiness was thrown in the streets where men and animals would walk on it.

This is a perfect picture of the influence of the testimony of a Christian. 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 likens his disciples to light*

A spiritual darkness has spread across this entire world. Sadly, men love darkness rather than light (Mt. 5:19). Mankind loves darkness and hates light because darkness conceals their sin and light reveals their sin (Mt. 5:20).

The believer is called to display the light of God that is in their heart. 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.*

You don't light a candle and then hide the light. You put it in a "candlestick" where its light will shine its brightest. You place it where it is needed. That's what God does with his children. He puts us in a place of darkness where 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 and 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 that are clearly 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. They will do so, because they saw something different in us, and they realized it is God.

## JESUS EXPLAINED HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW

5:17-20

### *Jesus came to fulfill, not destroy the Law*

*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 been taught the Law since birth and had spent their entire lives in the Old Testament system. Jesus wanted to make sure they understood that He had not come to do away with the Law. He said "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" the Law.

The word "fulfil" means "to fill or make complete". Jesus came to finish what the Old Testament began. This does not suggest the Old Testament was flawed. God never intended for the Old Testament to be His way of salvation. The Old Testament Law was like a teacher pointing 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.*

A "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, that not even the very smallest portion of the Word of God will ever pass away.

It is such a blessing to know we have a Bible we can trust. We can rest assured, our Bible is the very Word of God. We can believe it, we can live by it, 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.*

Jesus spoke of those who are the "least" and the "greatest" in the "kingdom of heaven". Jesus said those who live godly and teach others to do so are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt. 23:11-12; 1 Co 4:2).

Though spoken to the disciples (cf. v 1-2), these words could be applied to all mankind. The scribes and Pharisees longed for the uppermost positions (Lk 11:43). Even the 12 disciples wanted the more important positions in the kingdom of God (Mt 18:1; 20:1-21; Mk 9:34).

By saying "least" Jesus was not implying some commandments are less important than

others. All of God's commands are important and demand consequences. Adam and Eve took a bite of a piece of fruit, Achan took a little bit of spoils, and 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).

However, while all commands are from God and equally important, there are some that have less consequences. Certainly, breaking the "thou shalt not kill" commandment would have greater consequences than breaking the "thou shalt not steal" commandment.

Jesus spoke of those who break the commandments and 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. So many have been led into sin by a friend.

*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 on how close they lived to the Old Testament Law and the Jewish traditions. They believed that was enough to gain favor with God. Jesus destroyed their theory by saying their righteousness 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 used five subjects to show the importance of the condition of our hearts 5:21-48*

In verses 21-48, Jesus explains what He meant in verse 20. As mentioned, the scribes and Pharisees believed their outward morality would bring them favor with God. Jesus will show how outward good deeds mean nothing if the heart is not right with God. He will emphasize obedience from the heart. God wants us to do right but He wants us to do right for the right reason.

*Jesus' first subject is 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:*

Jesus spoke here about that which the Jews had "heard" from their Jewish rabbis (teachers).

The word "kill" means "murder". Some incorrectly believe this verse means it is sinful to kill anything living, even rats or mosquitoes.

The rabbis taught murder was wrong and would bring "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).

*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 words "But I say unto you", mean Jesus was about to expand on what they had heard. What they had heard was not incorrect, but it was incomplete.

Jesus wanted them, and us, to realize, that the sin of murder comes from a heart of anger. The anger that leads to murder is as much a sin as the murder itself. That is why Jesus talked about someone being "angry with his brother". The Jews focused on the outward act of murder, and Jesus focused on the inward 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 wants to do right and to be right.

In this verse, Jesus spoke of three degrees of anger and their consequences. Each of these deals with anger in the heart. If that anger was not dealt with it would lead to worse sin and ultimately bring about judgment.

One, Jesus talked about the person who was angry with his brother without a cause. If not dealt with, their anger would cause them to do something that would get them in trouble with the law. The word "judgment" speaks of a type of court system in place in that day. In most cities, there was a court that was responsible for determining the guilt, or innocence, of someone accused of breaking the law.

Two, Jesus talked about a person who says, "Raca" to his brother. The word "Raca" means, "worthless and empty" and was a word that expressed great contempt. Once again, Jesus was making the point that such anger could lead to a person doing something against the law.

The "council" refers to the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a court system much like our Supreme Court. They decided the worst of cases.

Three, Jesus talked about a person who says, "thou 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.

Jesus said the person who would use such language was in danger of "hell fire". He meant this type of anger comes only from an unsaved person. This person will end up in hell if he doesn't recognize the condition of his heart, and turn to the Lord for forgiveness.

In verses 21-22, Jesus was trying to get the Jews to recognize the danger of sin in the heart. Inward sin should be dealt with quickly and severely. If it isn't, it will lead to greater sin and punishment.

*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 to Jesus' previous comments about anger and inward sin. Jesus made it personal by saying, "if thou". He was saying anger should be dealt with quickly and severely. Failure to do so will affect our fellowship with our Lord, and with others. This is true whether we be the offender, or the offended. Jesus spoke in these verses to the one who is the offender or the one who is guilty. He spoke to the one who is offended or the one who is innocent, in Matthew 18:15-17. Notice, in both cases, whether offended or offender, the one who recognizes there is a problem is the one who should initiate the reconciliation.

Jesus illustrated His point. He spoke of a person who comes to worship the Lord and, while in the act of worship, realizes he has harsh feelings toward another believer. This person is to stop immediately, go and reconcile with their fellow believer, and then return to worship.

Issues between the family of believers are not to be taken lightly and should be reconciled as soon as possible. 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. We ought to be Christian enough to let some things go. Some problems are not important enough to discuss. If you can't put the problem behind you, it needs to be discussed.

*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.*

Here, Jesus dealt with those who had been taken to court over some wrong committed. He said the problem should be settled without going 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 should not constantly demand our rights or try to avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). We are to forgive each other as Christ forgave us (Col. 3:13). We are to forgive even if it ends up costing us (1 Cor.6:7).

It seems that Jesus was referring to an unpaid debt. The "prison" was probably a debtor's prison where a person could work to pay off what he had defrauded. Our society would be far better off if it had such a system in place today. Unpunished crime is a blight on America.

Agreeing with thine adversary quickly "whiles thou art in the way with him" means they were 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, that 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 "uttermost farthing" means they will receive no mercy but will pay the total amount due. Doing it our way instead of God's way never pays.

#### *Jesus' second subject is 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.*

The principle Jesus stated about murder (v.21-22) applies to adultery. He was making the point that all sin always starts in the heart. As previously stated, the Jewish rabbis taught there was no sin until the actual act was committed. Jesus said impure and unholy thoughts are sin themselves and will lead to worse sins.

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; that 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" and has the idea of a stone placed in the path that a person may stumble over.

I do not think Jesus was speaking figuratively in this verse. Pulling an eye out or cutting off a hand off would not erase the sin in the heart that was causing the sin.

We must remember, Jesus was speaking to a crowd where saved and lost were in attendance. In verses 29-30, He spoke to the lost. He illustrates the importance of dealing severely with any sin that would keep a person from getting saved. Many have gone to hell because they loved the bottle too much to give it up. 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.

Nothing on earth is worth going to hell over. 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 the end.

### *Jesus' third subject is divorce 5:31-32*

Jesus gave another example of how the Scribes and Pharisees had misinterpreted the Old Testament Scripture by dealing with their misunderstanding about divorce. The Old Testament made it clear, that God is displeased with divorce (Mal 2:16). His will in marriage is for a man and woman to stay together for a lifetime (Mt 19:6). 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 Deuteronomy 24:1 which said if a man put away his wife he was to give her a writing of divorcement. That verse said, "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" meant. Some believed it meant only adultery. Others believed it meant anything the wife did that displeased the husband. Many men were misusing this Scripture and getting rid of their wives over the slightest thing that displeased them.

Because of this mistreatment, Moses commanded there be a writing of divorcement to protect these neglected and mistreated 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.*

The same disagreement about the meaning of "uncleanness" (Dt. 24:1) was going on when Jesus came on the scene. As in Moses' day, some believed it meant adultery only, others, anything the wife did that displeased the husband.

But, Jesus said the only reason for divorce was "fornication". The word "fornication" is a general word that refers to any type of sexual unfaithfulness. It would include adultery, incest, prostitution, or homosexuality. So, Jesus said anyone ending a marriage for any reason other than fornication will be committing adultery.

Jesus continued by saying, "and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery". So, all this means, that anyone who gets a divorce or anyone who 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. 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).

### *Jesus' fourth subject is swearing or making promises 5:33-37*

*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:*

Jesus, as He did with the subject of divorce, refers to the Old Testament. Even though His exact words are not found in the Old Testament, the law did deal with oaths (Lev. 19:12, Num. 30:2, Deut. 23:23). To "forswear" means to swear falsely and speaks of 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. Knowing the third commandment said to not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain, they would swear by Jerusalem, the temple, the earth, or even by their own heads. They would, pretty much, swear by anything other than the name of God.

Jesus told them to not swear (make an oath) at all. If they swore by the earth, it was God's footstool. If they swore by Jerusalem, it was the city of God. He was making the point that, since God owns everything, anything they swore by 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.

### *Jesus' fifth subject is about personal retaliation 5:38-48*

The next ten verses tell us how we are to respond when mistreated or abused. Jesus will tell us to not strike back or seek revenge.

It's important to realize, the following verses are not suggesting there is never a reason for retaliation of any sort. God has given the government (police, courts, and armed forces) to protect us from our enemies (Ro 13:1-4).

Jesus speaks of our individual and personal responsibility in the next ten verses. He makes it clear that we should submit ourselves to the circumstances God allows to come into our lives and trust Him with the results.

Why does God demand we not retaliate?

- First, to get us to trust God

We can trust God when things are going well, or when everything seems to be going wrong. We are living in a day when even Christians are demanding their rights. Some say, "If I don't stand up for myself, no one will". They seem to have forgotten the fact that they have a heavenly Father who has promised to take care of them. We should trust God and not avenge ourselves. God said, "vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). Whatever our circumstances, we should trust and obey God and let Him take care of the consequences. One thing is certain, He will handle it better than we would.

- Second, that we might be like Jesus

There is no greater example of this principle than the Lord himself. Despite being mistreated worse than any man who has ever lived, He never fought back or retaliated (Isa. 53:6).

- Third, that we might deny our flesh

These verses will tell us a lot about ourselves. Our flesh resists the instructions we find ahead. Our natural tendency is to strike back and get even. We should resist that tendency and do as Jesus did. We are to overcome evil with good (Rom.12:18-21).

- Fourth, because the lost world is watching

The world needs to see God's love in action. As I have mentioned, acting in mercy towards those who wrong us is one the greatest examples of God's love.

- Fifth, that we might experience God's grace

Being misused or taken advantage of is difficult to take. It is especially difficult because Jesus tells us to not stand up for ourselves. However, God promises to give grace to those in need. He told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Co 12:9a) and His strength was its strongest when Paul was his weakness (2 Co 12:9b).

*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 (Ex.21:24; Lev. 24:20; Det.19:21). God gave these instructions to help judges determine their rulings in court and gave the legal judicial system the authority to hand out justice. It meant those who caused harm to others were to receive a similar fate.

However, the Jews had carried the eye for an eye 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.*

The words, "but I say unto you" make it personal. Jesus is speaking to individuals and what He is going to say should be applied personally. The guidelines for the court system are one thing, the guidelines for individuals are quite another. Jesus' point is, that we are not to resist or retaliate when mistreated by others. His words must have been a shock to the Jews for being stuck on the cheek was an insult to a Jew.

We should remember, someone doing us wrong does not give us the right to do wrong. It is never right to do wrong.

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 worn 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 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.

Jesus tells us to go the extra mile. Our testimony should be more important than if we are treated fairly or if someone stole from us. Being a godly example is more valuable than either.

As I have mentioned already, Jesus was trying to help us understand that we can trust the Father. We can trust Him when things are going well, or 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.*

Since the Jews were under the authority of the Roman government a Roman soldier could force a Jew to carry his load for a mile. One example is 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. God always wants us to go further. He wants us to "launch out into the deep" (cf. Lk. 5:4) spiritually.

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. Our liberality in our giving tells us a great deal about ourselves.

It is vitally important that we recognize the fact that Jesus is not telling us to give to crooks or sluggards. Most beggars of Jesus' day, unlike many today, were unable to provide for themselves. Some unavoidable circumstances had forced them to beg. Jesus said to give freely to these types of people. He was not suggesting we contribute to a person's laziness. The person who is physically able and does not provide for himself and his family is worse than an infidel (1 Tim.5:8). The same God who said those who can work, and won't, should be left to go hungry (2 Th.3:10) would not tell us to give to a sluggard.

Those who ask to "borrow" from us should not be denied if it is within our ability to assist them. A word of advice, it would be wise to accept the fact that we probably will never be repaid.

As I have already mentioned, these things are so contrary to our human nature that we try to find some way to explain them away. But, as with all of God's Word, we will do well to accept it, obey it, and trust God.

*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). However, the Jews had corrupted the Law, by adding "and hate thine enemy" to their teaching. The law said nothing about hating your enemy.

The Jews saw all of mankind as either a friend or an enemy. Jesus shocked 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. We are to do as God does, we are to love the sinner while hating their sin.

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

To "bless them that curse you" means we should speak well of those who speak evil of us.

The admonition that we "pray" for those who "despitefully" use us and "persecute" us is perhaps the most demanding of all this verse says. It's one thing to speak well of or to do good to those who mistreat us. It is quite another to honestly pray for them. Job (Job

42:10), David (Ps 35:13), Stephen (Acts 7:60), and Jesus (Lk 23:34) prayed for those who mistreated them.

In the next verse, Jesus will tell us we should love our enemies because that is what God does.

*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.

This is not suggesting that God pours His best blessings on those who refuse to obey Him. God 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 (cf. Jer 3:3; Ps 107:17; Isa. 59:2; Jer 5:25).

*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?*

There is nothing special about us loving those who love us. Jesus said, "even the publicans do the same". The Publicans (tax collector) were some of the most wicked people on earth. They overcharged the people for their taxes and kept part for themselves. Jesus said, even the wicked and selfish tax collectors love those who love 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 do as their 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 and all of them working as they should.

As 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. 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; Ja 3:2; 1 Jn 1:8).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

Chapter six should cause us to search our motives. We must guard against doing what we do to be seen of men. 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.*

The word "alms" refers to doing a good deed. In this context, it means doing good by giving 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.

Jesus said if we give to be seen of men we will receive no reward from the Lord. God rewards us now (Ga 6:7; Heb 6:10) and later (Mt 25:21; 1 Co 3:11-15; 15:58; 2 Co 5:10) for serving Him. The person who does what they do to be seen of men forfeits both. How disappointed we will be 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.*

This is the first of fourteen times Jesus uses the word "hypocrites" in the Book of Matthew.

The word "hypocrites" was a word used for actors in a play who were pretending to be someone they were not. This word, which is found seventeen times in the New Testament, and always spoken by Jesus Himself, refers to those who were pretending to be right with God.

Here, Jesus said the hypocrites pretended to care for others. They did their good deeds (alms) not because they cared for those in need, but to be seen of men. Their desire to have the applause of man proves they only care for themselves. That is the height of hypocrisy.

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 a signal to alert the poor of their gift, but it was a way to advertise their giving.

The desire to be recognized by man is an evil vice. We will never please God if our conduct is controlled by what people think about us.

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

Jesus dealt with the right way to do our good deeds. The Lord "seeth" all we do and rewards us if we do the right thing for the right reason.

The word "reward" means to "repay" or "restore". In other words, God will give back to those who give to others for the right reasons. We cannot outgive 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 5-15*

As with giving, Jesus taught we are to pray without people in mind. We are talking to God when we pray, 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.

This is the second of fourteen times Jesus uses the word "hypocrites" in the Book of

Matthew. This time, He is dealing with prayer.

The Scribes and Pharisees loved to pray long and loud. Jesus said, "they have their reward". They prayed to be heard of men, and men heard them, so they had what they wanted. Sadly, 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.

When Jesus spoke of "vain repetitions" He was talking about the thoughtless repeating of the same words in an attempt to convince God to answer. God is not manipulated by our words. This does not mean we are to never pray the same prayer more than once. 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. Some have incorrectly called this the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer is in John 17. This could be called, The Lord's model prayer.

Our Father knows what things we "have need of". He knows what is best for us. He knows when it is best to say "no". 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". Believers can go to God because He is their Father (Ro 5:2; Gal 4:6-7; Eph 3:12; Heb 4:16). We should go to Him as a little child goes to their father.

## JESUS TAUGHT US PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR *FOCUS*

### "Hallowed be thy name"

When we pray, we should be focused on our Father. The word "Hallowed" means "holy". When we pray we must not lose sight of the holiness of our heavenly Father. Since He is holy, we know He will always do the right thing. That includes answering our prayer.

He is not like an old grandpa who can be manipulated by his grandchild's whining. I am glad I have a God who will always do right because there are times when I ask for things that are not the best. He loves me enough to say "no".

## JESUS TAUGHT US PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR *FAITH*

"Thy kingdom come"

The words, "Thy kingdom come" look by faith to a future event. In like fashion, we should pray with faith, expecting the answer to come. Faith is a vital part of prayer. Faith moves God. 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 where He submitted Himself to His Father's will (Mt 26:39). A great part of our prayer should be submission. We have our needs, requests, and desires, but what He wants should be more important. Like Jesus, we should be faithful to our Father's will.

## JESUS TAUGHT US PRAYER DEALS WITH OUR *FOOD*

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Even the food on our table comes from God. Asking for our "daily" bread should remind us how we need Him constantly. 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 refers 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. 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"

We should ask the Lord to help us to "forgive our debtors" as we pray. Jesus said, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mk 11:25). Paul said, "let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph 4:26). We should never go to bed without forgiving those who have offended us. Refusing to forgive will hinder our prayers. Jesus said we should forgive

even if someone wrongs us repeatedly (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"

The words, "And lead us not into temptation" remind 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 so that we don't fall into these traps and 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 outcome in his kingdom.

This prayer ends on a mountaintop by acknowledging the power and glory of our God. In like fashion, our prayer should take us to the mountaintops 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 would 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.*

This is the third of fourteen times Jesus uses the word "hypocrites" in the Book of Matthew. This time, He is dealing with fasting.

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

Fasting, the practice of abstaining from food or drink for a set period of time, was a common practice of the Jews. They observed public fasts when everyone participated, like the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31). They also observed private fasts when an individual would fast on their own. Many Jews fasted on Monday and Thursday.

The growing concern for health has made fasting popular in our day. However, the Bible never deals with fasting on a physical level. 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 our soul needs.

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), and when

repenting and seeking God's favor (Ezra 9:5-8).

Fasting, like so many aspects of Christian living, was used by the "hypocrites". Some, wanting to appear spiritual, would make it obvious they were fasting. However, Jesus said the person fasting is to wash and dress as usual so their fasting would not be obvious. The Father will reward those who fast in "secret".

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.

Jesus said "when" not "if". It assumes a believer will fast.

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

Unfortunately, very few in our day are willing to set aside their physical desires long enough to fast.

### *Jesus taught about true treasures 6:19-24*

*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 gave two reasons why laying up treasures on earth is unwise.

- One, everything on earth will decay

So much of what we treasure on earth will be 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 is unwise to store up clothing that would be destroyed quickly. What wasn't eaten by moths will rust or decay in some way. Everything on earth 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 somewhere who is able to break in and steal them. In the bank, or under our mattress, they are not safe.

We need to recognize, 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:*

We lay up "treasures in heaven" by obeying God and serving Him faithfully on earth. Even the smallest deed done in obedience to the Lord will be rewarded (Mt.10:42).

The treasures in heaven are not affected by "moth" or "rust". All the things we store on earth, we will leave behind. That which we store in heaven, we will enjoy forever. The rewards should not be our primary reason for doing the Lord's will but they can be an incentive to encourage us to serve God. Paul told us to do what we do "heartily" because we know we will "receive the reward" (Col 3:23-24). We'll be glad we did His will when we stand before Him (1 Co 3:14).

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 hearts will be

involved with things of heaven. If our treasure is wrapped up in things of the earth, our hearts will be involved with things of the earth.

What we love will be demonstrated by how we live. Our lifestyle proves whether we love the things of heaven or earth.

It is unwise to live for things that will not last past the grave. One of the devil's most convincing lies is that riches will make us happy. 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!*

The "single eye" and "evil eye" deals 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 only on the things of heaven. The person with the "evil eye" is the person who is focused on the many things of this world.

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. A person with blurred vision cannot trust what he thinks he is seeing.

This connects with what Jesus said in the previous verses. 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.

*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 is saying, that 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" and speaks of one who is totally in control of another. This speaks of a complete and total surrender. We cannot have "two masters" because 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 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.

So, the question is simple, who will be our master, who will control us? 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?*

This is the first of three times in this chapter that Jesus tells us to take "no thought" (v. 25, 31, 34).

The words "Take no thought" mean "do not be anxious" or, "do not worry". We are 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 food, drink, and clothing, which are things we must have to live. 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.

The Bible refers to believers as sheep, sons, and soldiers. All three of these have one thing in common. They are all taken care of. The shepherd takes care of the sheep, the father takes care of his children, and the country takes care of the soldier.

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. And, God feeds them every day. If He takes care of His creation, He certainly will take care of His children.

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

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

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

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 (approximately 18 inches). Jesus' point was, 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:*

Jesus uses the lilies of the field as an example to prove 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.

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, at the right time.

All of creation is being taken care of by the architect who made it. God did not wind it up and is letting it run. He is at this exact moment, holding it all 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, probably the richest man who has ever lived, had garments of the best quality known to man. Yet, the garments of Solomon were nothing compared to the little flowers God placed 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 and used cut grass 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 us 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?*

This is the second of three times in this chapter that Jesus tells us to take "no thought" (v. 25, 31, 34).

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.

As mentioned, we should not worry about anything. We have a Father who will provide all we need. When afraid, we need to reject the devil's lies and 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. 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 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.

*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.*

This is the third of three times in this chapter that Jesus tells us to take "no thought" (v. 25, 31, 34).

We are not to worry about tomorrow. The words, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil

thereof", mean each day has its own problems. We need not worry about tomorrow before it arrives because we have enough trouble just dealing with today's problems.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Jesus taught about judging 7:1-6*

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

These verses have been greatly misunderstood. The world says we are not to judge. The vilest of sins are overlooked by those who say it is wrong to judge.

Jesus was not saying that it is always wrong to judge. He is warning against judging by appearance. The word "judge" has the idea of judging someone's motives. 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 also said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24 emphasis added).

#### THERE ARE TIMES WHEN JUDGING IS RIGHT

We must judge to determine how we will live.

1. The judge on the bench must judge the criminal and pass the appropriate sentence (Rom 13:1-4).
2. We must judge what is right or wrong (Josh 24:15)
3. The church officers must judge when exercising church discipline (1 Co 5:4-7).
4. We must judge to determine who we should witness to (Mt 7:6).
5. We must judge what is true or false doctrine (2 Co 11:4; 1 Jn 4:1).
6. We must judge 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.

1. 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 Co 5:9; 2 Th 3:6,14-15).

#### THERE ARE TIMES WHEN JUDGING IS WRONG

Why did Jesus tell us to not judge?

1. 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.

2. We usually judge out of pride

Too many times, we are like 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 (Ro 2:3).

3. God is the only one who is able and worthy to judge

God is the only One who can judge rightly all the time (Ge 18:25; Isa 33:22; Ps 50:6; 75:7; 2 C 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. 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. He tells us of someone who sees the faults of others but is 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 hearts (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 deal with those who hate the truth. That "which is holy" refers to the gospel message. The things of God are holy and should never take them lightly, or handle them carelessly.

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

Jesus likened the gospel message to "pearls". Like a pearl, the gospel message is precious. But, hogs, seeing no value in pearls, will trample them in the mud. In like fashion, some see no value in the gospel message and think nothing of ridiculing it.

A pearl is a perfect 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, also 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 tells us what we should do when we have a need. Prayer is the means 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" to gain entrance.

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

The tense of these words suggests we ask and keep asking, we seek and keep seeking, and we knock and keep knocking until the answer comes.

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?

1. 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.

2. We aren't asking in faith

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

3. 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.

4. 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 may withhold the answer in order draw us closer to Him.

5. 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.

6. God wants to increase our faith

It is easy to doubt when the answer does not come quickly. But, God wants us to trust Him even though the answer has not yet come.

7. 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 that we might have to depend on His grace to get us through what we are facing.

8. 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 child.

*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" and has the idea of being deprived. Jesus' point is, if we who are deprived give good things to our children when they ask, will not our good Father do the same? 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 (Ro 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. How different would this world be if we all followed this one simple rule?

We should treat others the way we would want to be treated. It is amazing how different a situation looks when it is us going through it. It is easy to be critical when it is someone else. Put yourself in their shoes.

The "law and the prophets" is a term used for the Old Testament. The Golden Rule was applicable 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; Ro 12:10; 13:10; Gal 5:14; Eph 4:32; Phil 2:24; Heb 13:2). 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 and did always 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 entryway.

There are only two gates. One leads to life, 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 is 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. Their disagreeing does not change the truth.

Jesus called it narrow because only one person can go through it 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.

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 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 as He speaks through preachers today. But, the devil also has prophets who speak for him. They are called false prophets because they do not speak the truth.

The word "beware" means "to be cautious". We must be careful who we listen to. The devil has always been a liar and a deceiver. He is the world's greatest counterfeiter and an expert at making a fake look like the genuine.

Jesus had just warned about a path that leads to destruction. Now, He is warning 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? We are blessed to have the completed Bible that we can use to determine if what we are hearing is true.

*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. Like a tree, we tell what a person is by the fruit they bear. In time, the truth about these deceivers will surface and 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 them?

*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 produced. A tree that would not bear was cut down, burnt, and replaced.

The end of the false prophet is the Lake of Fire (Re 20:11-15). Unfortunately, those who believe their message will go there also.

Since their message is false and their end is the Lake of Fire, 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*

1. We should listen intently to what they are saying

Does what they say agree with the Bible? Let God be true and every man a liar (Rom 3:4).

2. We should observe their lifestyle

Do they live a godly life? A godly person will display a godly lifestyle.

3. 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 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; that 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 every one 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 do not 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 and depended on Him to forgive us of all our sin. It 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 professed to know the Lord ("Lord, Lord") but did not possess Him in their hearts.

Many will expect to enter heaven because of the deeds they did. Some of them "prophesied", some "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 and he has more power than we give him credit for. The modern church looking for miracles needs to remember 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 the Lake of Fire.

They will stand before the One they rejected, and be judged by the One who died for them.

Notice, Jesus 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 forever 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. Those who hear and obey are wise. Hearing alone is not enough, we must do the Word (Jam 1:22).

Jesus talked about what the house was "built" on. A house must have a firm foundation if it is to stand. A house depends 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.

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), the Spirit (1 Co 2:9-10), and through the sermons (1 Co 1:21).

To really hear God we must be redeemed (1 Co 2:14). To really hear God we must be right. We cannot hear His voice if we have sin in our lives (Jam 1:21). To really hear God

we must be receptive (Jam 1:21). We must be open to what He says (1 Sam 3:10). To really hear God 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.*

The storm 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.

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 and 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 by 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.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## 5. THE KING'S MIRACLES 8:1-9:34

A king is in charge of his domain and 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, that 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 with leprosy were not allowed to live in towns, or near people. When coming near others the leper was to cry "unclean, unclean" (Lev 13:45-46). Despite all these obstacles, this man was determined to get to Jesus. Somehow he had heard about Jesus and believed He could heal him. Realizing Jesus was not an ordinary man, He bowed down before Him in respect and called him "Lord".

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 recognized 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.

Jesus touched him, but He did not really touch a leper, He touched a healed man, for He was healed the instant He reached out to touch 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 him 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 words to take precedence over His works.

Jesus told the man to show himself to the priest. According to Old Testament law, a person healed of leprosy had to allow the priest to examine them, and determine whether they were indeed cured. If they were 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?

1. Leprosy is a bacterial disease

Leprosy is contracted by a germ. Leprosy is contracted by getting close to someone who has leprosy. We cannot get close to sin without it affecting us. It does matter who we associate with. We should avoid those who live in an ungodly manner (Mat 18:17; Ro 16:17; 1 Co 5:11; 2 Th 3:14; Titus 3:10). They will influence us by their sin.

2. Leprosy starts small

Leprosy is not a skin disease. It starts near the brain or spinal cord. It may start small, but it is 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).

3. 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 not caring?

4. Leprosy is obvious

Leprosy starts on the inside but soon 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 hide it for a while, but sooner or later, others will notice the difference in us.

5. Leprosy is contagious

Leprosy can be spread to others. 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 sins of their husbands? How many lives have been ruined because of an ungodly friend's sinful influence?

6. 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 who was in charge of 100 men.

Luke tells us this centurion sent representatives on his behalf (Lk 7:3-6). Matthew's record words it as though he was making the request himself and 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 cared about his servant.

*Mt 8:7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.*

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, He offered to come to the house of the centurion and heal his servant.

*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.*

Luke tells us as 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.*

Being the commander of 100 soldiers, he understood the authority of leadership. He knew what it was to give orders and have them obeyed. This understanding caused him to believe Jesus had the power to simply speak, and heal his servant. 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 restricted by distance. If He could heal from two feet, from one mile, or even halfway around the world.

It will do us well to realize, that 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 "many" Jesus spoke of is speaking about the Gentiles who would accept his salvation message, and enter the kingdom of heaven. The phrase "from the east and west" refers to the extreme points of the compass or the entire world. The day would come when Gentiles from all over the world would accept Christ.

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 that He would turn to the Gentiles.

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.

*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. 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 when he heard Jesus was on the way to his house he decided to go to Jesus himself. Jesus told him to go home because his servant had 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 Jesus said to the centurion is true of us. The amount of faith we have determines what we get from God. We receive little because our faith is so small.

As the centurion believed Jesus had authority, 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 Co 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, Mt 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...

1. 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.

2. 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).

3. 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).

#### 4. There are times when God refuses 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, that God not only allows sickness but 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.

Sadly, some ridicule those who are sick and accuse them of either lacking faith or having unconfessed sin. 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 served 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. There may have been 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". 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 by demons. Being possessed 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 (Mt 9:32), blindness (Mt 12:22), seizures (Mt 17:15), supernatural strength (Mk 5:3-4), screaming and self-mutilation (Mk 5:5), deafness (Mk 9:25), nakedness (Lk 8:27), are not often seen in this country.

With all that being said, I believe there is just as much demonic activity today as in Jesus' day. It may not be as obvious, but the devil has not retired or gone into seclusion. The

pride, greed, and wickedness of today are more than human. The demon-possessed of today may wear a three-piece suit instead of rags.

Also, the devil has learned that he can do more damage as an angel of light than of darkness (2 Co 11:14). 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". As we have discussed, there were times when He did not heal everyone, but this is one of the occasions when Jesus healed everyone brought to him.

*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, that 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 are just a few of these things

1. Jesus as Lord over all (Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8)
2. Death done away with (1 Co 15:54-55)
3. The curse removed (Rev 21:1)
4. Glorified bodies (1 Co 15:53-54)
5. Sin totally done away with (2 Pet 3:13)
6. The devil's judgment (Rev 20:10)

None of the things mentioned above have been realized as of yet. Complete health will not be experienced until we get to heaven. If Calvary provided complete healing, why are so many of God's people sick? Are we to assume that they are all out of God's will? If Calvary provided complete healing, why do many who preach perfect health have physical problems themselves?

Perfect health, as some claim we should have, means no eyeglasses, hearing aids, canes, or wheelchairs. It means no headaches, toothaches, sore muscles, or even being tired. It means, 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? God said Job 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 (Job 1:12). Job said God was the One who took had given, and had taken away (Job 1:21).

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 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). Paul 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?

1. God uses sickness to teach us

There are some things that we cannot do on the mountaintop. 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 (2 Cor. 12:7). His infirmity taught him how much he needed the Lord.

2. God uses sickness to touch us

The Lord wants us to depend on Him for the comfort we need (2 Cor. 1:4). Sometimes, instead of healing us, He comforts us as we suffer. We cannot know the wonder of His touch unless we experience the pain of sickness and suffering.

3. God uses sickness 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. Some 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 came 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. Jesus could have been a world leader. He had the power to amaze the multitudes. But, He was not seeking the fame of the world. He wanted people to 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. Some 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 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, being stirred by emotions, made commitments that were not truly sincere.

Being a disciple of Jesus was not glamorous. He had no home of his own (Mt. 8:20). 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.

The life of discipleship is difficult, but, it is also the best life we can experience while in this world. 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 our declaration shall be, "It was worth it all". No true disciple has ever regretted their decision to follow Jesus.

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?

Jesus' manner of gathering disciples was 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 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 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. Jesus used this title for Himself, but his disciples never did. Jesus referred to Himself most often as the Son of man, and not as the Son of God.

Son of man means Jesus was a man. He was 100% God and 100% human. 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). The Son of man existed before He was born in a human body (Jn 3:13; Jn 6:62). Jesus was God and He is eternal.

*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. When Jesus started to leave his neighborhood, he began to have second thoughts. He asked 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 wanted to make sure he got a

proper burial before he followed 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.*

Luke's record tells us this man was being called to preach (Lk 9:60). The call to follow the Lord should take precedence over anything and everything else in our lives.

Jesus' response may seem harsh, but He was telling this man to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. As always, Jesus was thinking of eternal matters. Caring for our families is important (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. If this man had followed Jesus, the Lord would have made sure that his father was cared for. He is the God of heaven and earth; He can certainly take care of dear old dad.

### *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 and headed 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 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 were 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 a terrible storm. His ministry to others had exhausted him.

The deity of Christ is seen here also. He was "asleep". He had total peace even though the storm was violent, and the situation was dangerous.

Jesus 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 did not. This had to be an awful storm if it terrified seasoned fishermen.

*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 harsh. 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, that 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 and will tell us the truth about ourselves.

Jesus rebuked the disciples, and then He rebuked the storm. The disciples were more difficult to control than the storm. How could they doubt Him after seeing Him do so many miracles? But, how many times do we doubt him even though He has done many wonderful things for us?

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 He said, "Peace be still" (Mk 4:39). 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. They did not know there was a storm ahead, but Jesus did. They 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. Our storms may 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 sea instantly became dead still. If the storm has simply stopped on its own, the waters would continue to be agitated for a while. Not this time. The calm after the storm was as overwhelming as the turbulence had been 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". They recognized 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 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. Enduring this storm by faith could have given them faith to face the next storm without fear. 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 when God wants us to endure difficulties. He sends troubles to teach us to trust Him (Dt 8:2; Isa 48:10; 1 Pet 1:7; 1 Pet 4:12; Ja 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. The tribe of Gad, with the tribe of Rueben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, refused to cross the Jordan River when Israel went in to possess the Promised Land (Num. 32).

Two men possessed by demons came to 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. They may have been watching when Jesus calmed the storm in verse 26. No doubt, they had

watched many storms on the Sea of Galilee. But, they had never seen anyone calm a storm. Perhaps, this is what drew them to Jesus in the first place.

Mark and Luke describe one of these men, but we can safely assume that the characteristics mentioned were true of both men.

#### 1. These men were possessed by demons

Being possessed by a demon means the demon lives inside the body of the person and controls much, or all, of their thoughts and actions. Demons are fallen angels who followed Lucifer when he tried to overthrow God (Re 12:9). One-third of the angels foolishly believed Lucifer and followed him (Re 12:3-4). Some are already locked in chains of darkness awaiting their judgment (Jude 6). The rest have a limited freedom to travel about the universe (Eph 6:12). They get their directions from the devil. All will eventually be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil (Re 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 mind 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. For this reason, we should guard our minds against the works of Satan.

#### 2. These men lived in the tombs

The Jews buried their dead in hewn-out rocks or caves. These men may have had a fascination with death. Those who reject the way of life are often drawn to the things of death.

#### 3. These men wore no clothes

Luke tells us these men wore no clothes (Lk.8:27). Immodest dress displays sin controlling a person. The person who dresses in a worldly fashion is certainly not controlled by the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. These men were strong

Mark says one of these men broke the fetters and chains they used to try to bind him (Mk.5:3-4). Unusual strength is often a part of demon possession.

#### 5. 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.

#### 6. 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 rage.

*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.

#### 7. The demons know who Jesus is

They called him, "Jesus, thou Son of God". Demons probably know more about Jesus than we do. They recognized the supernatural authority of Jesus and trembled in His presence.

#### 8. 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 see how much power our Lord has so we would recognize the fact that Jesus has won the victory over the devil (Col.2:15). Those who know the Lord are on the winning side. We need to start acting like it.

#### 9. 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 and be cast into the lake of fire.

10. 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 knew the time of their judgment had not come because the signs of Jesus' return had not yet come. 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. Since the Old Testament declared pigs 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 Pe 2:4; Jude 6).

Notice, that the demons had to ask Jesus. The devil and all the demons are still under the authority of 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 the 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 certain but this may mean there were 6,000 demons in this man. Mark tells us there were 2,000 pigs (Mk 5:13) so 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 are always the devil's desire and intention (Jn 10:10).

Mark tells us after the demons were cast out the one man was "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 who had gone without clothes were now dressed.

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.

*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 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.

The demons may have wanted Jesus to send them into the pigs because they knew it would cause problems for Jesus.

Jesus left as they requested. God will not force himself on anyone who doesn't want him.